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Research Articles

Disembodied Ego and Non-human Dasein: The Question of Anthropological Difference

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to discuss the question of anthropological difference from a phenomenological perspective, taking as the point of departure Heidegger's view on this matter and his thesis that the relationship between man and animal is basically an abyss, a chasm that cannot be overcome in any sense, through any mediation, an "abyssal bodily kinship". In order to carry out this analysis, it is necessary to take a brief look at the problem of embodiment. After examining this question, I will turn my attention to Heidegger's first confrontations with Husserlian phenomenology and thus to the concept of life (*Leben*) developed by Heidegger in his first lectures held in Freiburg. In the course of these lectures he develops, step by step, the terminology employed in *Being and Time* and in later works, in order to raise the question of anthropological difference. To complete the overview of the analysis concerning anthropological difference as explained from Heidegger's perspective, I will try to argue, from a hermeneutical perspective indebted to Derrida that the difference between *humanitas* and *animalitas* cannot – and should not – be conceived of as absolute.

Keywords: anthropological difference, humanism, animality, embodiment, Dasein, ego, attunement (*Befindlichkeit*), being-in-the-world

1. Introductory remarks

One of the fundamental ideas developed by Heidegger in the letter he sent to Beaufret in order to answer to his question: "Comment redonner un sens au mot 'Humanisme'?", is that the human – and, by extension, his essence, that is, his humanity –

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cannot be understood in terms of the seemingly indisputable metaphysical definition of man as a rational animal. Moreover, in his discussions on this subject, Heidegger also rejects any attempt to define the human being on the basis of (his) animality. In his Letter on “Humanism”, Heidegger even claims that the starting point for understanding animality itself must be the human ‘essence’, which Heidegger conceives as existence: “Thus even what we attribute to the human being as *animalitas* on the basis of the comparison with ‘beasts’ is itself grounded in the essence of *ec-sistence*.” (Heidegger 1998, 247)

The aim of this paper is to discuss the question of anthropological difference from a phenomenological perspective, taking as the point of departure Heidegger’s view on this matter and his thesis that the relationship between man and animal is basically an abyss, a chasm that cannot be overcome in any sense, through any mediation, an “abysmal bodily kinship” (Heidegger 1998, 248). In order to carry out this analysis, it is necessary to take a brief look at a central problem of Husserlian phenomenology, namely the problem of embodiment (of the transcendental ego). After examining this question, I will turn my attention to Heidegger’s first confrontations with Husserlian phenomenology and thus to the concept of life [*Leben*] developed by Heidegger in his first lectures held in Freiburg. In the course of these lectures he develops step by step the terminology employed in *Being and Time* and in later works, to raise the question of anthropological difference. To complete the overview of the analysis of anthropological difference as explained from Heidegger’s perspective, I will briefly discuss a few passages from the *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* (1929/30), attempting to sketch Heidegger’s „ontology of animality” by contrasting it with the existential-ontological analysis of *Dasein*.

In the final part of this paper I will try to argue, from a perspective indebted to Derrida that the difference between *humanitas* and *animalitas* cannot – and should not – be conceived of as absolute. On the contrary, the difference between them must be thought of as a ‘belonging together’ of the two. The rejection of any common denominator risks making any form of relationship between the former and the

latter if not impossible, at least unintelligible and, moreover, risks isolating the animal – and animality as such – in an inaccessible strangeness that allows no form, however diluted, of otherness. But, precisely because the human world is a world that he has always already shared, in the most diverse ways, with all other animals – and to a greater extent with some than with others - I will conclude this study by trying to problematize the type of anthropological difference proposed by Heidegger in the *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* and in the Letter on “Humanism”, showing that, viewed in itself, Heidegger's conception is fundamentally contradictory.

2. Bracketing the body

Bracketing the world and all validity claims based on it is the overture of Husserl's transcendental-phenomenological method. By means of this *epoché*, not only is the natural attitude towards the world is short-circuited, but also my own self-understanding as an inhabitant of this world, as a human self, as a living body, as a psychophysical reality. A major consequence of this phenomenological bracketing is that my human embodied self becomes a simple object of worldly experience; a thing among other things¹. This short circuit of the lived body is fundamental for the establishment of an essential difference between pure psychology and transcendental phenomenology. If this difference collapses, Husserl's philosophical project seems threatened. Derrida brings to light in the most eloquent way both the identity and the essential difference between pure psychology and transcendental phenomenology, between psychological and transcendental consciousness, an otherwise very complex problem in itself which cannot be discussed here. However, it is worth reviewing the observation of Derrida, who considers that “[L]a conscience transcendantale n'est rien de plus ou d'autre que la conscience psychologique. Le psychologisme transcendantal méconnaît ceci: que si le monde a besoin d'un supplément d'âme, l'âme, qui est dans le monde, a besoin de ce rien supplémentaire qu'est le transcendantal et sans lequel aucun monde n'apparaîtrait. Mais on doit à l'opposé, si l'on est attentif au renouvellement husserlien de la notion de

‘transcendental’, se garder de prêter quelque réalité a cette distance, de substantialiser cette inconsistance ou d’en faire, fût-ce par simple analogie, quelque chose ou quelque moment du monde” (Derrida 2005, 13).

The idea of an essential difference between psychological and transcendental consciousness only makes sense if my whole psychophysical existence, and thus my own body, are placed in brackets. The disembodied transcendental subject seems to be, therefore, the cornerstone of Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology. Nevertheless, the question of embodiment – which is not only given directly but is also the condition of phenomenological donation in general – is one of those question to which Husserl constantly returns, oftentimes from radically different perspectives, rewriting, reinterpreting and revising on many occasions his own position regarding this fundamentally ambiguous relationship between the transcendental *ego* and the embodied human self.

The idea that the lived body is itself constituted in the flow of consciousness already appears in some manuscripts dating back to 1908 (Hua XIII, 5). However, Husserl notes from the outset that there is a problematic interdependence between body (as it is constituted in consciousness) and consciousness, which relies on the body and its perception. He tries to explain this interdependence by insisting that the body is not a mere representation of consciousness (*Bewusstseinsvorstellung*), but something that constitutes itself in consciousness (Hua XIII, 6). However, this statement is not able to clarify the problem of the constitution of one’s own body. Moreover, Husserl insists in the same passage that the body is only “an indication for a specific unity of consciousness” (Hua XIII, 6) an explanation that only further complicates the matter. Another attempt to solve the puzzle of the constitution of the body is modeled on the constitution of spatial objects in general. But this endeavor is too doomed to failure, because the human body, unlike all other physical objects is by no means constituted based on its adumbrations, nor is it a kinesthetic summation of the various perspectives in which it is given to us, but is rather, as Husserl writes in the same paragraph, “a system of real or possible sensations” (Hua XIII, 7) that can belong to me or to another.

In a 1909 manuscript, Husserl turns his attention again to this issue of the incarnation of the transcendental self, bringing a new concept into play, namely that of self-perception (*Selbstwahrnehmung*). He argues that the lived body (*Leib*) - understood as a physical body (*Körper*) is given to me through self-perception (Hua XIII, 24). However, Husserl places the term *Selbstwahrnehmung*, self-perception, in quotation marks, which is often a sign in his case that the term needs to be further clarified – a kind of implicit formal indication *avant la lettre*. In his attempt to clarify this concept, he distinguishes in the same passage, in an unequivocal manner, between the ego of self-perception, the “psychophysical reality” – which, he cautions, should not be equated with the concept of man – and the pure ego. This hermeneutical perspective is in line with the idea of a “disembodied” transcendental self, one whose own body needs to first be constituted, in one way or another, in consciousness. For if the ego of self-perception were the transcendental ego, then the phenomenological difference, namely the difference between the psychological and the transcendental self – which is crucial for Husserlian phenomenology – would simply collapse: the transcendental ego would cease to be transcendental if it simply “discovered” his own body with the help of self-perception, since his body, as a psychophysical reality, belongs to the world placed in brackets through *epoché*, as I pointed out from the beginning. If the body “constitutes” itself, so to speak, through self-perception, how can it be reduced to transcendental consciousness, and what is the element that would allow me, as transcendental ego, to regard this lived body as mine? Whose body is this, since the transcendental self is literally a disembodied ego? To whom belongs the transcendental self, since my body is constituted through self-perception? Husserl can't really answer these questions. That is why, in the next passage, he notes: “Wahrgenommen wird der Leib als ‘mein’ Körper, und zwar gründet dieses ‘mein’ zunächst in eigener, zu beschreibender Erscheinungsweise, die ihn auszeichnet vor andern wahrgenommenen Körpern. Wahrgenommen wird dann auch, und zwar als zugehörig zu diesem so ausgezeichneten Körper,

alles ‘Seelische’, ihn als ‘mein» dadurch charakterisierend’² (Hua XIII, 25).

Husserl tries to define the (human) body as a special type of physical body, which differs from all other bodies in its specific mode of manifestation. If the (human) body can fundamentally be conceived as a physical body (spatial object) to which something extra thing is added, then the problem of its transcendental constitution is almost solved.

The problematic and ultimately contradictory nature of this perspective is nevertheless exposed by Husserl himself. In *Ideen II*, for example, the question of constitution of one’s own body occupies a prominent position. In order to clarify the matter, Husserl the distinction between two fundamental ways of constituting the body as a starting point for his endeavor. On the one hand, he argues, the body is constituted as a physical object, as matter, and on the other hand, as a sensitive “thing”, as a “system of perceptions”. In a strange way, according to Husserl, the body is both an object and a subject-object (Merleau-Ponty 1960, 165). In a passage from a manuscript dating from 1914/15, the problematic nature of the constitution of the lived body is brought to light perhaps in the most radical manner: “Mein Leib ist das Hier, aber er ist nie im objektiven Raum als Objekt erfahren: ‘ursprünglich’ erfahren, wahrgenommen im primären Sinn, nicht Einheit von Erscheinungen von derselben Struktur wie ein Außending. Und so bin ich mir auch nicht gegeben als ‘in’ einem objektiven Ding ‘waltend’ und als einem Objekt zugehörig”³ (Hua XIII, 240).

This is one of the few places where Husserl seems to be explicitly aware of his residual Cartesianism, which he resolutely rejects⁴. The concept of a body understood as a vehicle or organ controlled or maneuvered by an ego is obviously tributary to the Cartesian distinction between *res extensa* and *res cogitans*. Precisely because of the fact that Husserl seems to have internalized – at least to some extent – the Cartesian dualism, he cannot give a satisfactory account of the problem of embodiment and he cannot explain how the relationship between the ego and its lived body ought to be understood. His view that the lived body is nothing more than a physical body endowed with certain sensory fields is precisely

what prevents him from adequately addressing the question of embodiment (Cf. Overgaard 2005, 200). Despite his explicit rejection of Cartesianism in this specific passage, Husserl will continue to use the terminology of Cartesian metaphysics. The passage quoted earlier clearly states that the lived body should not be confused with its bodily manifestation. The specific character of the lived body (*Leiblichkeit*) is not something that belongs, in one way or another, to a physical body (spatial object), which can thus be understood as “mine”, nor is it a result or an epiphenomenon of the juxtaposition between *res extensa* and *res cogitans*.

In the passage quoted earlier, however, Husserl explains only *ex negativo* the meaning of the original experience through which, according to him, my own body is given, because it is not at all clear whether these expressions he uses (“originally experienced” and “perceived in the primary sense”) are synonymous with the concept of *Selbstwahrnehmung*. In order to try to solve this intricate problem concerning the embodiment of the transcendental ego, we need to return to the first part of the passage discussed here, in which Husserl puts forth the idea of a fundamental aspatiality of the body. If “the body never appears in the objective space”, then one very specific question immediately arises: How should we understand its specific mode of manifestation, of appearance. Husserl’s answer to this question is the following: the body is the “absolute *here*”, but this here has a very special character, since it “does not designate the place where the self is, but designates the self itself” (Figal 2015, 4). The world around me, things and other people are all perceived from this nullpoint of orientation, from this absolute here, but it would be wrong to say that this is where my body is, since this absolute here is precisely my body, its own mode of “manifestation”. Within the space accessible through this absolute here, there is only one “thing” that cannot appear: precisely this nullpoint of orientation, i.e. precisely my own lived body. The body opens up a space in which it fundamentally cannot appear, precisely because it functions as a condition for the possibility of phenomenality as such. Consequently, the body remains fundamentally inapparent. The body cannot be conceived as the

totality of some adumbrations or perspectives, it is not “a phenomenon in the sense of phenomenology” (Hua XIII, 442). This phenomenological inaccessibility specific to the body, this strange, but necessary, opacity of it is precisely what makes possible the transparency of the phenomenal world.

But if the body is in a sense inapparent, how can we talk about “its transcendental constitution” (Hua XV, 549)? In several manuscripts Husserl tries to make plausible the idea of a self-constitution (*Selbstkonstitution*) of the body. But what exactly does it mean that the body constitutes itself? Doesn't that mean that the very constitution of my own body presupposes a body already constituted? This explanation seems to lead us to a dead end.

3. Husserl's residual Cartesianism and the irreducibility of the body⁵

The difficulty of the problem of embodiment, however, has to do, in my opinion, primarily with the fact that the body can neither be bracketed through *epoché*, nor can it be reduced to or constituted from consciousness.⁶ The body cannot be constituted within the transcendental consciousness or through it, within the limits of the original or primordial sphere, since it is the very condition of possibility for this original sphere. Husserl himself acknowledges this fact, when he writes: “Jedes andere Ding meiner originalen Sphäre ist für mich so da, aber *vermittels* meines Leibes und seiner Originalität, *vermittels* seiner originalen Kinästhesen”⁷ (Hua XV, 567). It is therefore clear that one's own body cannot be the mediator of the originality of objects constituted within the primordial sphere of the ego and at the same time be itself constituted within it. It follows that the only way to answer this question is to have as a starting point the idea that consciousness is always already embodied.

The question concerning the relation between ego and its lived body, whether this relationship is conceived as constitution, deduction etc. is meaningless, because the embodiment of the ego is the necessary condition for the possibility of any relationship with something outside the ego in general and for donation as such. The subject does not have a

body-vehicle or a body-organ, it is a body: the evidence of the body is, in a sense, as apodictic as that of the *ego cogito*. Husserl always talks about the life of consciousness or the living present, without ever clarifying this concept of life. Derrida considers these Husserlian concepts extremely problematic and even speaks of the “enigma of the concept of life”, noting that life somehow “escapes” the transcendental reduction (Derrida 2005, 9). But why is this relevant? Precisely because it indicates in the clearest way that the body has, in fact, never been short-circuited, that it cannot in principle be bracketed, that the body evades the phenomenological epoché no matter how radical it is conceived – an idea that Merleau-Ponty formulates in an exceptionally clear manner, in a passage from the *Phenomenology of Perception*⁸.

In other words, the transcendental ego is always already embodied, which does not only mean that its body cannot be “short-circuited”, but also that it can never be completely detached from the world. This does not mean that transcendental phenomenology is impossible, but that the way the phenomenological reduction functions must be rethought. And it is no wonder that this is the task that Husserl was particularly concerned with in his last writings and unpublished manuscripts, in which he oftentimes speaks about what he calls radicalized reduction.

4. Back to the things themselves, back to the factual life!

From the first lectures held in Freiburg, Heidegger set out to develop a new concept of phenomenology, conceived, in the first instance, as “pre-theoretical science”. Heidegger’s critique of Husserl’s theoretical approach – which short-circuits the concrete lived-body and the whole world itself, ending up with the aporetic transcendental ego – focuses primarily on rejecting Husserl’s theorising approach which objectivises life, “mortifying” it in order to explain it. (GA 56/57, 11) As an alternative to this reflexive phenomenology, Heidegger develops the idea of a hermeneutic phenomenology, which should understand life through itself, without pursuing a scientific understanding of it. In a sense, Heidegger continues the

Husserlian, Cartesian-inspired approach from the point where it got stuck. His point of departure, however is not Husserl's disembodied ego, but the "factual life" as such, the human "subject" in its concreteness. (Cf. GA 56/57, 65) This novel approach is supported by the way in which Heidegger himself chooses to formulate the most urgent task of phenomenology, that of uncovering the true, unobjectified life, the factual life as such before any mortification or reification. (Cf. GA 59, 156)

But what does Heidegger mean when he talks about factual life – an extremely ambiguous concept with multiple possible uses? From Heidegger's phenomenological perspective the phenomenon of life is never considered in a psychological, anthropological or biological way. In a lecture held during the summer semester of 1922, Heidegger arrives for the first time at an unequivocal definition of what he considers to be the task of philosophy in general: "Die Problematik der Philosophie betrifft das Sein des faktischen Lebens. [...]. Das heißt, Philosophie ist [...] Ontologie der Faktizität."⁹ (GA 62, 364)

What is really relevant for Heidegger is precisely the capture and explanation of factual life according to its essential possibilities of being, the uncovering of an "ontological infrastructure" that subtends facticity. The fact that Heidegger would abandon the concept of factual life in favor of *Dasein* becomes therefore a perfectly justifiable fact, since the German term, usually translated as existence, is constructed from the infinitive of the verb *sein* (to be) and is thus much better suited to Heidegger's onto-phenomenological approach.

The fundamental thing that both concepts – that of factual life and that of *Dasein* – have in common is a "specific dynamics (*Bewegtheit*) of life" (Figal 2003, 37). The concept of *Dasein* is much more suited for Heidegger's phenomenological and hermeneutical perspective and helps him explain the two dimensions that were only implicit in the concept of life, namely facticity and existentiality, at the cost of what one may call the biological dimension of factual life, the fact that each and every life is a life of a living body, an embodied factual existence. And if the question of embodiment was never approached other than absolutely incidentally during the first critical confrontations with Husserlian phenomenology, the ontological turn of

Heideggerian phenomenology will make tackling *Dasein's* body even more difficult, if not impossible, since the human existence is basically reduced to an *ek-sistence* of a disembodied self. Like Husserl, after all, Heidegger retains only the scheme, the ontological infrastructure of life, and does not account for its vitality, for its living character. Through the concept of *Dasein*, Heidegger disembodies the self of the factual life.

5. Existentiality, animality and anthropological difference

In works such as *Being and Time* or *What Is Called Thinking?* Heidegger does not discuss the question of embodiment or the issue of anthropological difference explicitly, although he develops a complex phenomenological and hermeneutical analysis of the hand, to which he largely reduces the problem of body¹⁰. In *Being and Time* he develops a whole regional ontology based on the phenomenological and hermeneutical analysis of the hand, which he later understands purely as a function of the *logos*, since he states that: “Only a being can speak, that is, think, can have hands and can be handy in achieving works of handicraft.” (Heidegger 1968, 16). Nevertheless, the question of the lived body plays a central role in his lecture *Fundamental Problems of Metaphysics*. Heidegger argues here in favor of an ontological abyss between the world-poor and self-absorbed animal, whose being is defined as a state of captivity, and the world-forming man, whose being is defined as the state of openness that allows him access to the manifestation of being as a whole. On the basis of this difference of essence between human and animal, which is actually implicitly assumed in the reduction of the living character to existentiality, Heidegger practically denies man his animality, trying to conceive the human body not as an organism, but as something grounded in the ec-static character of existence. Heidegger tries to argue, using a laborious terminology created practically in opposition to the terminology of existential-ontological analysis employed in *Being and Time* that the animal loses its world in the very moment it has it, being always already completely absorbed by it. The animal is completely absorbed in itself and captivated (*hingenommen*) by

the things in the world (GA 29/30, 359) and thus incapable of having a relationship with the world as a whole. The world of the animal is not a poor one, compared to the rich world of man, it is not a rudimentary world, but the poverty of the animal world consists in the fact that this “world” is always only on the verge of being a world. The animal is always on the verge of having a world, every time it interacts with what surrounds it, and yet its every interaction absorbs it without rest, captivates it.

Considered from this perspective, Heidegger’s claim that “even what we attribute to the human being as *animalitas* on the basis of the comparison with ‘beasts’ is itself grounded in the essence of ec-sistence.” (Heidegger 1998, 247) becomes perfectly clear. From an ontological perspective, the human has nothing in common with the animal, his being cannot be understood in terms of *animalitas* and therefore the metaphysical definitions of the human being, which defines him as *animal rationale* must be rethought, according to Heidegger, in order to take into consideration the “essence” of man, that is, his existentiality.

But although Heidegger explicitly rejects the metaphysical definition of what was traditionally understood as human nature, he is not at all willing to subject the metaphysical concept of animality to a similar radical “destruction”, even if he criticizes the understanding of the organism in mechanical terms or in terms of a vital principle. The concept of humanism and humanity is obviously the expression of a metaphysical understanding of human existence, but also the opposition humanity-animality in general belongs to and is indebted to the metaphysical tradition. In an essay whose starting point is Heidegger's understanding of animality, Derrida questions the very nature of the anthropological difference. Derrida argues that no philosopher, from Plato to Heidegger, protested against this general term in the form of the singular, namely that of *animal* (Derrida 2002, 408). That is why, Derrida argues, philosophy has always assumed that there is a unique and irreducible boundary between humanity and animality, the latter forming what Derrida calls “a single and fundamentally homogeneous set that one has the right, the theoretical or philosophical right

to distinguish and mark as opposite, namely, the set of the Animal in general, the animal spoken of in the general singular” (Derrida 2002, 409).

In his attempt to reject this metaphysical perspective based on the traditional understanding of the anthropological difference, Derrida introduces a new concept “a double clone or a portmanteau word, a sort of monstrous hybrid, a chimera” (Derrida 2002, 410). This new concept, *animot*, formed by the agglutination of the words “animal” (*animal*) and “word” (*mot*), is a word that does not exist in French although its pronunciation is identical to that of *animaux* (the plural for animal): “*Ecce animot*. Neither a species nor a gender nor an individual, it is an irreducible living multiplicity of mortals.” (Derrida 2002, 409). *Animot* is a concept by which Derrida indicates, in fact, that the term animal can only be used *sous rature*, that is, accepting and assuming its hermeneutical inadequacy, and that the homogeneous unity which this concept claims to designate is only a fictional, non-existent one. Moreover, by making up this impossible linguistic chimera which violates all the rules of the French language, yet leaving the feeling, when heard, that it obeys them – *animot* should be pronounced, as previously mentioned, just like *animaux* –, Derrida brings to light in the most ingenious way a fundamental form of (hermeneutical) violence to which the animal has always been subjected in western thought.¹¹

Although Heidegger emphasizes at every turn that there is an essential difference between human and animal, there are certain cracks in his seemingly homogeneous conception, certain passages in which his own perspective seems to be put into question and where the anthropological difference becomes problematic for Heidegger himself.

For example, it is true that, according to Heidegger, it is not possible for animals to exist in the same world with us, that it would be absurd to speak of a kind of being together of humans and animals, much less of a being together of animals. Being-with, the fact of being together, is reserved, *par excellence*, for those beings whose “essence” is existence, to cite a recurring definition in *Being and Time*. However, Heidegger himself is forced to admit that, in one form or another, animals

live with us, share our world (GA 29/30, 308). But to paraphrase a question that gives the title of a Heideggerian study, *what is called "living"*? It is clear that if human and animal share the same world by living together, life is not something that can be explained solely in terms of existence, it cannot be grounded in the essence of existence, as Heidegger would argue, without falling into contradictions, since this would lead to the collapse of the anthropological difference. If we were to try to understand both the life of the animal and that of the human in terms of existence, we would be compelled to admit that the life of the animal should also be understood, at least to a certain extent, in terms of existence! It follows that in order to argue in favor of an essential difference between *humanitas* and *animalitas*, life – or, more precisely, the living character of the living being – must be understood other than in terms of existentiality. Heidegger himself admits that “we can only determine the animality of the animal if we are clear about what constitutes the animality, the living character of a living being, as distinct from the non-living being which does not even have the possibility of dying (*Möglichkeit zu sterben*). A stone cannot be dead because it is never alive” (Heidegger 1995, 265). Heidegger does not clarify here this distinction he makes between living and non-living being, and he never returns to it, to discuss it more thoroughly, in the course of this lecture or anywhere else, as far as I am aware.

It is worth noting, however, that in this passage Heidegger speaks of the “possibility of dying”, which seems to be the defining character of the living being. This statement is interesting for two reasons. First of all, because when he discusses the specific character of the animal being, Heidegger does not attribute it possibilities, but only abilities or faculties (*Fähigkeiten*). Therefore, the discussion about the possibility of dying, which is defining for the living beings implies or at least indicates a terminological fracture that Heidegger himself, otherwise extremely precise and acerbic when it comes to terminology, does not seem to notice. Secondly, the idea that the living being is defined by its possibility to die seems to contradict other passages in the same work, in which Heidegger denies the animal precisely this possibility of dying. (Cf. GA

29/30, 388). Moreover, in *Being and Time* he explicitly states that only *Dasein* has the possibility of dying: “The ending of that which lives we have called ‘perishing’. *Dasein* too ‘has’ its death, of the kind appropriate to anything that lives; and it has it, not in ontical isolation, but as codetermined by its primordial kind of Being. In so far as this is the case, *Dasein* too can end without authentically dying, though on the other hand, *qua* *Dasein*, it does not simply perish while other living beings can only end.” (Heidegger 1962, 247) Given the terminological coherence between the two works, which Heidegger repeatedly invokes, both implicitly and explicitly, when referring to paragraphs in *Being and Time*, this incongruity is extremely eloquent. Death and dying is, *par excellence*, a possibility of *Dasein*; and not any possibility, but a possibility which has an extraordinary character that makes it different from any other possibility, in so far as it is an insurmountable possibility, “the possibility of the impossibility of any existence at all” (Heidegger 1962, 262). The possibility of dying, as the extreme possibility of *Dasein*, is precisely the possibility “to project itself on its ownmost potentiality-for-Being means to be able to understand itself in the Being of the entity so revealed—namely, to exist.” (Heidegger 1962, 262-3) From this passage, which is by no means the only one or even the most eloquent, it is clear that death or the possibility of dying belong, according to Heidegger, exclusively to the sphere of existentiality, of the human being conceived as *Dasein*.

But here lies the problem: The ownmost possibility of *Dasein* can in no way be understood as the defining “property” of the living being, without falling into a whole series of difficulties, or without admitting that *Dasein* shares something fundamental with all other living beings. However, it cannot be disputed that while in *Being and Time* Heidegger reduces both life and death of living beings (organisms) to physiological processes (Heidegger 1962, 264), in his lecture of 1929/30 he clearly states that when the living character of the animal is under discussion: “It is not sufficient merely to provide a morphological description of the animal’s form, its limbs, and so on; it is insufficient to explore the physiological processes and then to add on some form of animal psychology. For in all of

this we have already presupposed that the animal is alive, that in its behavior the animal is also disposed in a certain manner.” (GA 29/30, 266). The need to answer the question concerning the nature of the living character (of the “essence of life”) thus leads Heidegger back to the question of death and the possibility of dying – previously considered to be something that is solely reserved for the human Dasein – and therefore confronts him with the question regarding the enigmatic relation between animality and existentiality. If the possibility of dying is something that all living beings have in common, Heidegger’s whole ontological project needs to be rethought.

Another interesting detail that can be found in the same passage discussed earlier is that Heidegger states here that the animal “is also disposed in a certain manner” (*so und so ist*), that is, in other words, as I will try to show, that it has a *mood*. Heidegger uses this expression – “so und so sein” – several times in the course of his famous lecture, but he always employs it only when discussing the fact that Dasein is defined, in its essence, by what in *Being and Time* is called mood (*Befindlichkeit*). For example, he begins §68 of his lecture noting that: “We already know from our introductory observations that attunements as such are not merely subjectively coloured experiences or epiphenomenal manifestations of psychological life but rather fundamental ways of Dasein itself, in which one is attuned in such and such a way (so und so ist), ways of Dasein in which Dasein becomes manifest to itself in such and such a manner” (GA 29/30, 410). If both Dasein and animal share this fundamental dimension that constitutes, together with understanding and discourse the structural articulation of care, which is, in turn, understood as the being of Dasein, than one has to admit that the two – Dasein and animal – have something fundamental in common. Mood/state-of-mind (*Befindlichkeit*) together with understanding and discourse constitute the Being of disclosedness which essentially belongs to Dasein (Heidegger 1962, 180). But since mood seems to be something that defines the animal, it follows that it too has a kind of disclosedness (*Erschlossenheit*) and, therefore, a world it is thrown into, and a world it can share with other (human) beings. The question if understanding and

discourse also belong to the specific ‘disclosedness’ of the animal is too complex to be raised here and would require an extensive analysis that goes far beyond the scope of this paper.

In this way, living character (the “essence of life”) and existentiality (“the essence of existence”) could be conceived, at least in principle, without being reduced to one another, but rather as somehow correlated or intertwined, as sharing a common denominator. This would obviously lead to the shattering of the anthropological difference and thus open the way for a reflection on the relationship between *animalitas* and *humanitas* in a horizon different from the metaphysical one to which Heidegger himself is – albeit in a small extent – indebted to. After all, following in Derrida’s footsteps, the difference between *humanitas* and *animalitas* can only be thought of in conjunction with the closeness, the affinity of the two.

NOTES

¹ Cf. for example: E. Husserl, Hua VIII, 71: “Ich, gemäß meiner gewöhnlichen Ich-Rede, besagt Ich, das Menschen-Ich. Konkret voll genommen, bin ich beseelter Leib, psychophysische Realität, zur Welt, dem All der Realitäten gehörig. Ich bin ein Objekt meiner mundanen Erfahrung unter anderen. Muss ich davon nicht scheiden dasjenige Ich, das hierbei das Subjekt der Erfahrung ist, das Ichsubjekt für das Ichobjekt?”

² “The body is perceived as ‘my’ body, and this ‘my’ is initially based on its own appearance, that is still to be described, and which distinguishes it from other perceived bodies. Everything that is ‘soul’ is then also perceived, namely as belonging to this so distinguished body, thereby characterizing it as ‘mine’” (my translation).

³ “My body is the Here, but it is never experienced in objective space as an object: ‘originally’ experienced, perceived in the primary sense, not a unity of appearances, with the same structure as a spacial object. And so I am also neither given to myself as ‘controlling’ an objective thing, nor as belonging to an object” (my translation).

⁴ In his work on the husserlian phenomenology of embodiment and the constitution of subjectivity, J. Taipale invokes a series of other passages from Husserl’s work in which the understanding of the lived body as a vehicle is explicitly rejected by Husserl (Cf. Taipale 2014, 60).

⁵ For a more detailed account of this issue, cf. Paul Sandu, *Koexistenz im Ineinander* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021), 80-89.

⁶ This irreducibility of the body is asserted perhaps in the clearest form by Schmitz, who regards the body as the foundation of the personality (*Persönlichkeit*). (Cf. Schmitz 2014, 45).

⁷ “Every other thing of my original sphere is there for me [...], but *through* my body and its originality, through its original kinaesthetics” (my translation).

⁸ Cf. Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), 467: “Si, réfléchissant sur l'essence de la subjectivité, je la trouve liée à celle du corps et à celle du monde, c'est que mon existence comme subjectivité ne fait qu'un avec mon existence comme corps et avec l'existence du monde et que finalement le sujet que je suis concrètement pris est inséparable de ce corps-ci et de ce monde-ci.”

⁹ “The problem of philosophy concerns the being of factual life [...]. This means that philosophy is an ontology of facticity” (my translation).

¹⁰ A more elaborate discussion of this issue can be found in my paper, “Dasein, Raum und Leib – Eine Kritik der Existenzialanalyse von *Sein und Zeit*”, *Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai-Philosophia* 59, no. 3 (2014): 17-33.

¹¹ Following Derrida's suggestion, the term “animal” is intentionally crossed out to emphasize its hermeneutical inadequacy.

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Personale Individuation und die Anderen bei Husserl

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Abstract Personal Individuation and the Others in Husserl

In this paper I claim that the Husserlian ego in its full sense is a personal individual, and that it comes into being under the influence of others through a process which I call “personal individuation.” In the first part, I briefly summarize the development of the term “person” in Husserl and argue that the question of the concrete genesis of the ego and the concerns of intersubjectivity and ethics motivate him to give the term “person” an increasingly important sense. In the second part, I introduce three elements of personal individuality. In the third part, I discuss the relationship between a person and others in their shared environment from a phenomenological-personalistic approach, showing to what extent the person may be determined by the influence of others. In the fourth part, I talk about love as the absolutely individuating call of each person, whereby the others will show themselves, furthermore, to be an indispensable factor for the constitution of the innermost individuality of the person.

Keywords: personal individual, intersubjectivity, personalistic approach, genetic phenomenology, ethics

Sage ich „Ich“, so gehört das alles dazu, in besonderer Weise spricht es mich als Person an, aber als Person, die ist als im Leib und der Umwelt waltend, unter Anderen lebend, von daher Erwerb und Besitz habend. (Hua XXXIV, S. 283).

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Einleitung

Wer oder was ist das Ich bei Husserl? Das ist eine oft gestellte, aber nicht abschließend beantwortete Frage. Die Schwierigkeit ergibt sich vor allem aus den zahlreichen Namen, die Husserl dem Ich gibt: transzendentes Ich, reines Ich, Ich-Pol, fungierendes Ich, Ur-Ich, aber auch, neben weiteren, *persönliches* Ich (z.B. Marbach 1974; Taguchi 2006; Lohmar 2009). Wenn wir heute von Phänomenologie sprechen, sind wir gewohnt zu sagen, dass es eine Philosophie ist, die das Bewusstseinsleben aus der Perspektive der ersten Person untersucht. Von was für einer „Person“ sprechen wir hier? Geht es nur um eine „Erfahrbarkeit“, die Fähigkeit des Subjekts innerlich erfahren zu können unter dem Titel des ersten *Personalpronomens* „Ich“ – also um eine Ipseität - und hat es demgemäß gar nichts mit der „Person“ zu tun? Oder geht es doch um die Persönlichkeit einer jeweiligen Person? Meines Erachtens ist die „Person“, wenn von einer „Perspektive der ersten Person“ die Rede ist, nicht ein abstraktes *ipse*, sondern tatsächlich eine *Person*, wie das Zitat zu Beginn anzeigt, verstanden als Ego im vollsten Sinn, d.h. als Ego in seiner konkreten Auseinandersetzung mit der Umwelt und den Anderen. Meine These in diesem Aufsatz ist die, dass eine Person (ein personales Individuum) auf der einen Seite von anderen Personen und den Dingen der Umwelt unterschieden ist und sie konstituiert, sich aber auf der anderen Seite trotzdem zugleich von Ihnen bestimmen lässt. In diesem Sinn ist klar, dass die Anderen eine wesentliche Rolle bei dem Personales-Individuum-Werden einer jeden Person spielen. Diesen Prozess nenne ich „personale Individuation“.

Dementsprechend ist die Konstitutionsrichtung eine andere als in z.B. den *Cartesischen Meditationen*, wenn dort der Sinn der Anderen vom Ich ausgehend konstituiert wird. Die Untersuchung der personalen Individuation setzt nicht an bei der Klärung des Phänomens des Anderen in der egologisch reduzierten Eigenheitssphäre des Egos aus. Vielmehr hat das Ego oder besser gesagt, die Individualität jedes *personalen* Egos ihre Konstitutionsquelle in den Anderen. Demzufolge findet die phänomenologisch-egologische Reduktion bei der Analyse der personalen Individuation keine Anwendung. Um meine

Behauptungen zu stützen, werde ich im ersten Teil eine kurze Zusammenfassung der Entwicklung des Begriffs „Person“ bei Husserl referieren und dafür argumentieren, dass die konkrete Genesis des Ich, die Intersubjektivität und mithin die Ethik, drei motivierende Probleme Husserls sind, die dem Begriff „Person“ einen immer positiveren und gewichtigeren Sinn geben. Diesbezüglich werde ich im zweiten Teil drei Elemente der personalen Individualität skizzieren. Im dritten Teil werde ich das Verhältnis von Person und Anderen in ihrer geteilten Umwelt aus einer phänomenologisch-personalistischen Einstellung heraus diskutieren. Dabei werde ich zeigen, dass und inwiefern sich die Person von den Einwirkungen der Anderen bestimmen lässt. Im vierten Teil werde ich über die Liebe als den absolut individuierenden Ruf jeder jeweiligen Person sprechen, wobei sich die Anderen ebenfalls als unentbehrlicher Faktor bei der Konstitution innerlichster Individualität der Person zeigen werden.

1. Die Entwicklung des Begriffs der Person bei Husserl und deren Motive

Husserl spricht in seinen Werken auf unterschiedliche Weise von der „Person“. Während in den *Ideen I* die „Person“ als empirische Person in der natürlichen Einstellung auftritt – welche durch die transzendente Reduktion (vgl. u.a. Hua III/1, 118-119, 123, 129) eingeklammert werden sollte – spielt die „Person“ in den späteren Werken eine immer konstitutivere Rolle. In den *Ideen II* steht die personalistische Einstellung der naturalistischen entgegen, die die soziale, kulturelle und spirituelle Dimension des subjektiven Lebens ignoriert und Subjekte als bloße physische Gegenstände behandelt. Anders als in den *Ideen I* ist es hier die personalistische Einstellung, die der Phänomenologe einnehmen sollte, um die „Person“ als ein konkretes Thema zu behandeln, wobei jene sich konstituierend entwickelt und sich mit anderen Personen in einer bestimmten sozialen, kulturellen und historischen Umwelt befindet. In einem die *Ideen II* vorbereitenden Manuskript schreibt Husserl z.B., dass er unter dem Titel „Person“ ein geistiges Ich versteht, welches das nicht nur ein reiner Ichpunkt ist, sondern ein „Konkretum“, das sich „in dem Sich-Verhalten zur Umwelt

empirisch als Individuum einer individuellen Eigenart“ (A VI 10/48a) bekundet. In den *Cartesischen Meditationen* ist das „persönliche Ich“ als Substrat von Habitualitäten eine von drei wesentlichen Charakterisierungen des „Ich“ (Hua I, § 32). Der Ausdruck „Person“ wird dort verwendet, um die persönliche Geschichte hervorzuheben, durch die das „Ich“ sich selbst zeitlich und aufgrund erworbener Habitualitäten konstituiert. In manchen Untersuchungen zur phänomenologischen Reduktion schlägt Husserl ferner den Begriff der „transzendentalen Person“ vor und suggeriert, dass sie den Sinn des transzendentalen Ich besser trifft. Die transzendente Person eignet sich „das voll umfassende, das alle Vermöglichkeiten ins Spiel bringende Leben“ (Hua XXXIV, 200) an und ihr Begriff bringt damit die Selbsterhaltung und Selbstausbildung des transzendentalen Ich zum Ausdruck. Darüber hinaus ist es nicht ungewöhnlich, dass, wenn Husserl im phänomenologischen Sinn von „Ich“ spricht, er unmittelbar den Begriff „Person“ hinzufügt, um zu spezifizieren, was für ein „Ich“ er meint (vgl. z.B. Hua Mat VIII, 17, 112).

Was motiviert Husserl dann dazu, seine Haltung gegenüber dem Begriff „Person“ zu ändern und die „Person“ zunehmend in den Fokus phänomenologischer Untersuchungen zu rücken? Obwohl Forscher dafür argumentiert haben, dass der Begriff „Person“ und insbesondere der der „transzendentalen Person“ Gegenbegriffe zu „Dasein“ seien, mit denen Husserl sich gegen die Heidegger-Kritik verteidige (vgl. Luft 2005), ist die Entwicklung des Begriffs „Person“ bei Husserl meines Erachtens eine Weiterentwicklung des Begriffs des „transzendentalen Ich“ und ist aus seinem transzendental-philosophischen Projekt selbst hervorgegangen.

Kants transzendente Philosophie ist eine der wichtigsten theoretischen Ressourcen für Husserls transzendente Phänomenologie. Jedoch greift Husserl die Idee des „transzendentalen Ich“ nicht ohne Vorbehalt und kritiklos auf. Obwohl Husserl dem transzendentalen Standpunkt insofern zustimmt, dass die Subjektivität grundlegend bei der Rechtfertigung objektiver Erkenntnis sei, kritisiert er, dass das kantische „transzendente Ich“ eine formale und abstrakte Voraussetzung für die Gegenstandserfahrung bleibt, die nicht durch Intuition – das Prinzip aller Prinzipien der

Phänomenologie – ausgewiesen werden kann. Deshalb habe Kant nach Husserl die Korrelation von Welt und lebendiger Subjektivität auch nicht mit ausreichender Konkretheit und Intuitivität berücksichtigen können (vgl. Hua XXXII, 102). Sicherlich ist der Begriff des formalen „transzendentalen Ich“ als Ich-Pol, dem transzendente Gegenstände gegenüberstehen, zentral bei statischen Untersuchungen, wie der der korrelativen Struktur von konstituierendem Bewusstsein und konstituierten Gegenständen. Was sich mit der transzendentalen Reduktion aufdeckt ist allerdings komplizierter als eine vereinfachte Erkenntnistheorie der Konstitutionsbeziehung Subjekt-Objekt. Genetisch betrachtet ist der Ich-Pol kein starrer und fester Punkt, sondern ein immer werdendes – eine „Werdenseinheit“ (Hua XIV, 34) oder die „Einheit des lebendigen Werdens“ (Hua XIV, 36). Wenn Phänomenologen die konkrete Genesis des transzendentalen Ich selbst bzw. die Entstehung der Dynamik der subjektiven Erfahrung erfassen wollen, dann darf das Problem der Selbstkonstitution des Subjekts bzw. der Individuation jedes konkreten Subjekts nicht ignoriert bleiben. Das Problem der genetischen Individualität ist also eine wesentliche Ergänzung des Projekts der Phänomenologie selbst:

[Als] statisch kann ich wohl phänomenologische Forschungen bezeichnen, die den Korrelationen zwischen konstituierendem Bewusstsein und konstituierter Gegenständlichkeit nachgehen und genetische Probleme überhaupt ausschliessen. [...], ohne aber die Individualprobleme im Zusammenhang zu betrachten. Endlich haben wir die Phänomenologie der monadischen Individualität, darin beschlossen die Phänomenologie einer zusammenhängenden Genesis, in der Einheit der Monade erwächst, in der die Monade ist, indem sie wird. (Hua XIV, 38)

Dazu kommt, dass, wenn das Aufgeben der nicht-egologischen Auffassung von Bewusstsein, die Husserl in den *Logischen Untersuchungen* vertritt, teilweise auf das Interesse für das Problem der Intersubjektivität bzw. eine „Mehrheit absoluter Bewusstsein“ (vgl. Marbach 1974, § 14). zurückzuführen ist, das gleiche Anliegen Husserl dazu drängt, sich von der bloß formalen und abstrakten Konzeption des „transzendentalen Ich“ zu distanzieren. Denn mit einer solchen Konzeption des „Ich“ gäbe es keine unterschiedlichen

konkreten und individuellen Egos. Um aber von Inter-subjektivität sprechen zu können, muss es unterschiedliche Egos, muss es also eine „Vielfalt der Bewusstseinsströme“ geben. Das abstrakte „transzendente Ich“ würde schlicht eine Art *supra-subjektive* Struktur bedeuten, die über alle konkreten einzelnen Subjekte hinauswirkt und die anstelle einer *inter-subjektiven* Struktur stünde, in der verschiedene konkrete Individuen miteinander umgehen. Das Ich muss als Bestandteil der Intersubjektivität in einer transzendentalen Subjekt-gemeinschaft betrachtet werden, da, so Husserl selbst, andernfalls alle Aussicht auf eine transzendente Selbst- und Welterkenntnis verloren gehen würden (vgl. Hua XXIX, 120).

Ferner wird mit der genetischen Phänomenologie deutlich, dass das transzendente Ich sich nicht nur selbst konstituiert, sondern ebenso von den Anderen konstituieren lässt. Wie E. Caminadas systematische Studie der die *Ideen II* vorbereitenden Manuskripte zeigt, hatte Husserl zur Zeit ihrer Abfassung bereits den Plan einer erweiterten Konstitutionsanalyse entwickelt, auch wenn in der von Edith Stein editierten und veröffentlichten Ausgabe der Eindruck erweckt wird, dass die höherstufige intersubjektive und geistige Welt einseitig vom Subjekt konstituiert werde (Caminada 2019). Die Konstitutionsrichtung ist dabei jedoch die genau umgekehrte. Das heißt, dass das intersubjektive Geistige bei der Selbst- und der Gegenstandskonstitution in jedem konkreten Subjekt bereits wirksam ist und schon eine „Einbettung der sozialen Strukturen der Subjektivität“ (vgl. Caminada 2019, 147f.) vorliegt. Der Konstitutionsprozess ist notwendig intersubjektiv.

Hieran schließt die Ethik Husserls an. Entgegen des Eindrucks, der sich aus den zu seinen Lebzeiten veröffentlichten Werken ergibt, ist sie doch eines der wichtigsten Anliegen seiner Phänomenologie (Melle 2002, 229–248). Für Husserl ist das höchste Telos der Philosophie „die Seele des praktischen Kulturgeistes“ (Hua XXVII, S. XIII) und die Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft soll nicht nur „den höchsten theoretischen Bedürfnissen Genüge leisten“, sondern auch „in ethisch-religiöser Hinsicht ein von reinen Vernunftnormen geregeltes Leben“ (Hua XXV, 3) ermöglichen. Das Ego, das ethische Verantwortung übernehmen kann, soll weder

generische strukturelle Rationalität, noch ein bloß leerer Pol gegenüber Gegenständen sein. Stattdessen muss es, um ethisch Werten und einen Willen ausbilden zu können, ein selbstauffassendes Bewusstsein der Einmaligkeit, Ganzheit und Einheit seines gesamten Innenlebens haben. Nur das Ego als individuelle Person erfüllt diese Forderung. Ferner deutet der Begriff der individuellen Person bereits an, dass sie sich in einer Gemeinschaft mit anderen personalen Individuen befindet. Demzufolge schließt die Auseinandersetzung mit meinem individuellen, persönlichen und ethischen Leben die Beschäftigung mit dem Leben der Anderen und der Gemeinschaft mit ein (vgl. z.B. Melle 2002, 242).

2. Elemente der personalen Individuation

Was unterscheidet eine individuelle Person von der abstrakten strukturellen Konzeption des Egos? Wie sieht die personale Individuation, d.h. der Prozess des ein Personales-Individuum-Werdens aus? Aus einer Reihe wichtiger Manuskripte aus den zwanziger Jahren, die jetzt in *Husserliana XIV* veröffentlicht sind, kristallisiert sich dieser Prozess heraus, wobei es sich so darstellt, dass Husserl personale Individualität und monadische Individualität identifiziert. Verbunden mit Untersuchungen, die Husserl in anderen Texten wie den *Ideen II* und den Manuskripten über das Zeitbewusstsein anstellt, lassen sich drei zentrale Elemente feststellen: zeitliche Genesis, Sedimentierung der Habitualitäten und die freie Entscheidung.

2.1 Zeitliche Genesis

Bereits in den *Ideen I* problematisiert Husserl das Individuum. Ein Individuum wird dort formal als ein Dies-da ($\tau\acute{o}\delta\epsilon \tau\iota$) definiert, dessen sachhaltiges Wesen ein Konkretum ist (Hua III/1, 35). Es ist hauptsächlich bezüglich des Gegenstands relevant, wobei der Zusammenhang zwischen Individuum und Ego nicht thematisiert wird. In den *Bernauer Manuskripten* behandelt Husserl erneut das Problem der Individuation. Obwohl die meisten Ausführungen der Individuation des Gegenstandes gewidmet sind, weist Husserl immer wieder darauf hin, dass sich das Bewusstsein in seiner Selbstzeitigung

individualisiert und diese Selbstzeitigung wiederum die Individualisierung der Gegenstände ermöglicht (vgl. Hua XXXIII, 131). Das gegenständliche Individuum ist also nicht unmittelbar ein *τόδε τι*, sondern es entsteht aus einem Prozess der Individualisierung; einem Prozess der zeitlichen und räumlichen Besetzung, wobei die Raumbesetzung im Allgemeinen aus seiner Zeitstrecke stammt. Die Zeitlokalisation des Gegenstands bezieht sich auf die erlebte subjektive Zeitlichkeit. Das subjektive Individuum ist seinerseits aber in seiner von ihm selbst erlebten Erlebnisgeschichte dem Bewusstsein gegeben.

Der gleiche Standpunkt wird schon in den *Ideen II* vertreten. In den Worten der *Ideen II* ist der Unterschied zwischen objektiver und subjektiver Individuation ein Unterschied zwischen natürlichen und spirituellen Individuen (vgl. Hua IV, 298). Dort bezeichnet Husserl die Individuation des Gegenstands als sekundär und die Individuation des Subjekts als originär (vgl. Hua IV, 301). Während sich die gegenständliche Individuation in real kausalen Netzwerken abspielt (vgl. Hua IV, 299), verläuft die absolute Individuation des Subjekts nach einem ganz anderen Gesetz. Und zwar findet die absolute Individuation des Subjekts nicht nur auf der Ebene des abstrakten reinen Ich statt, sondern sie geht in das persönliche Ich mit ein (vgl. Hua IV, 301). Dementsprechend kann man sagen, dass die Subjektivität tatsächlich „die individuelle Persönlichkeit konkret in ihrem Leben“ (Hua IV, 381) ist. Das Individuum, das ein konkretes personales Ich ist, ist kein vorausgesetzter leerer Ich-Pol gegenüber dem Gegenstand ohne Rücksicht auf die lebendige Zeit. Es ist stattdessen „notwendig gegeben als Seiendes im Werden“ (Hua XIV, 15), es ist eine „Werdenseinheit“, die die „Einheit der unaufhörlichen Genesis“ (Hua XIV, 34) ist. Das Gesetz der ursprünglichen Zeitkonstitution ist das Urgesetz der Genesis, durch welches das personale Individuum sich selbst als Einheit konstituiert (vgl. Hua XIV, 39).

2.2 Sedimentierung der Habitualitäten

Während die zeitliche Ordnung des Gegenstands als ein bloßes Nacheinander konstituiert wird, bildet die intentionale

Verzeitlichung des personalen Individuums selbst einen motivationalen Zusammenhang. Weder verschwinden die vergangenen Erlebnisse, noch passieren sie, ohne Spuren zu hinterlassen. Im Gegenteil: Sie sedimentieren sich, d.h. sie bleiben latent wirksam und bilden die sogenannten sedimentierten Habitualitäten des Ich. „Dieses Erlebnis selbst mit dem in ihm konstituierten Gegenständlichen mag ‚vergessen‘ werden; damit ist es aber keineswegs spurlos verschwunden, sondern bloß latent geworden. Es ist nach dem in ihm Konstituierten ein habitueller Besitz, jederzeit bereit zu erneuter aktueller assoziativer Weckung.“ (EU, 137) Das personale Individuum ist also nicht nur als Seiendes im Werden gegeben, sondern darin liegt auch „notwendig, dass es gegeben ist in einer schon erfüllten Dauerstrecke, sei es einer, noch so kleinen“ (Hua XIV, 15). Die vergangenen, aber sedimentierten Habitualitäten bilden die Grundlage der Motivationen zu Stellungnahmen des Ich und zwar zu sich selbst sowie gegenüber Gegenständen. Dadurch wird ein persönlicher Stil oder Charakter von Verhaltensweisen ausgebildet, der die Zuneigungen, Interessen und Handlungen des personalen Ich prägt. In dem Wesensstil sind dann gewissermaßen die zukünftigen persönlichen Stellungnahmen und Verhaltensweisen der Person vorgeschrieben. Das stets neue Jetzt wird sich wiederum als Habitualität sedimentieren. Demgemäß schreibt Husserl: Das personale Ich ist „Träger seiner Habitualitäten, und darin liegt, es hat seine eigene individuelle Geschichte“ (Hua IV, 300) bzw. innere Verschiedenartigkeit. Es ist daher „nicht das bloße reine Ich [...] Es ist notwendig sich entwickelnd und entwickelt habend, es hat seine notwendige Genesis (*Teleiosis*).“ (Hua IV, 349) Ein solches Ich als Pol ist kein bloß formaler, leerer Subjekt-Pol gegenüber einem Gegenstands-Pol. Es bezeichnet vielmehr ein Funktionszentrum der „Affektionen und Aktionen (auch

2.3 Freie Entscheidung

Obwohl die Sedimentierung von Habitualitäten dazu beiträgt, die Motivationen zu formen und verständlich zu machen, handelt es sich hierbei offensichtlich um einen passiven Prozess. Husserl zufolge bedeutet die Passivität

jedoch eine Art „Untergrund“ – eine zwar notwendige, aber nicht hinreichende Grundlage der persönlichen Individuation, weshalb auch die Passivität hier nicht das alleinig bestimmende Prinzip sein kann. Um dies zu erklären, vollzieht Husserl ein Gedankenexperiment, in dem wir uns nachvollziehend zwei sehr ähnliche Monaden vorstellen, bei denen es denkbar ist, dass sie dieselbe Passivität und dieselben hyletischen Daten durchleben. Sie bleiben aber trotzdem noch immer zwei verschiedene Monaden, solange sie unterschiedliche Aktionen und Reaktionen haben. Der Unterschied zwischen ihren Akten hängt nicht hauptsächlich von ihrem persönlichen Stil oder Charakter ab, die passiv aus den Habitualitäten stammen, sondern eher von den Aktionen und der freien Entscheidung der Monade, d.h. der Person. Es ist die Aktivität statt der Passivität, die das hauptsächlichste Kriterium der persönlichen Individuation darstellt.¹

Entsprechend ist Husserl der Ansicht, dass der passive Instinkt keine Spur von Individualität zeigt. Die triebhafte Realisierung, die rein passiv ist, ist nicht die Demonstration der Persönlichkeit, insofern das Ich hierbei nur einer Triebpassivität nachgibt (vgl. Hua XIV, 20). Die Regulierung durch die Vergangenheit, d.h. das einfache Folgen der Habitualitäten ohne Reflexion, ist irrational (Hua XIV, 17).

Die Individualität bekundet sich nicht in der passiven Doxa, in der ein sinnliches Datum z.B. in Perzeption oder Reproduktion als in Gegenwart oder Gewesenheit seiend dasteht, nicht in dem passiven Spiel von Anmutlichkeiten und Vermutlichkeiten, sondern in der tätigen doxischen Erwägung und Entscheidung, im aktiven Denken und allen intellektiven Tätigkeiten mit ihren aktiven Stellungnahmen des Ich, das sich nach „Gründen“ entscheidet. (Hua XIV, 20)

Das persönliche Ich in seiner strengen Individualität ist kein Schauplatz, auf dem der passive Prozess sich von selbst abspielt. Es ist nicht auf die Passivität beschränkt, sondern frei. Obwohl die Habitualitäten die Zukunft des personalen Ich gewissermaßen vorzeichnen, bleibt der Zukunftshorizont ein noch nicht erfüllter und daher offener Horizont. Die Vorzeichnung ist demgemäß nicht eindeutig inhaltlich festgesetzt. Die Freiheit liegt aber nicht in irgendeiner Art von Willenskraft, sondern gründet in rationaler Tätigkeit. Und

Rationalität ist hier nicht nur als Reflexion über die Instinkte, die persönliche Geschichte und die Habitualitäten zu verstehen, sondern auch als die Fähigkeit, ihnen entgegenzutreten und sogar über sie hinwegzugehen. „Das personale Ich ist *frei*, es entscheidet sich, wie es sich entscheidet, es kann sich aber auch anders entscheiden“ (Hua XIV, 21).²

Inwiefern haben die Anderen inmitten der drei Elemente ihren Platz? In den Manuskripten, die oben herangezogen worden sind, weist Husserl nur in einer Fußnote darauf hin, dass die personale Selbsterfahrung und Selbstwertung „offenbar bedingt [ist] durch die in der Einfühlung vollzogene Fremderfahrung und Wertung fremder Personen und Einwirkung auf fremde“ (Hua XIV, 19) – aber wie genau?

3. Die Entwicklung des personalen Individuums und der Wirkende Einfluss der Anderen

In den *Cartesianischen Meditationen* vollzieht Husserl eine thematische Reduktion mit dem Namen „primordiale Reduktion“, wodurch die Anderen und alle auf die Anderen bezogenen Bestimmungen artifiziell reduziert werden und der Phänomenologe in der sogenannten Eigenheitssphäre landet, in der alle Einwirkungen der Anderen „noch nicht“ im Gang sind. Von da aus wird Husserl zeigen, wie die Apperzeption der Anderen als andere Egos durch Appräsentation und zwar auf Grund der eigenen Leib-Körpererfahrung zu rechtfertigen ist. Diese Reduktion, wie Husserl selbst anerkennt, ist trotzdem nur eine *Abstraktion* (Vgl. Hua I, § 44). Die Erfahrung der Anderen gehört aber doch zum Leben des „konkreten vollen Ich“ (Hua Mat VIII, 14). In einem Manuskript, das etwas früher als die *Meditationen* entstand, schreibt Husserl, dass wenn das Untersuchungsinteresse auf die Erfahrung der Anderen geht, in der der Andere, so wie Ich selbst, als seiend gesetzt ist, sich dann zeigt, dass das Ich bzw. seine Gedanken und evtl. sein Wille in einer kommunikativen Beziehung mit den Anderen steht, selbst dann, wenn der Phänomenologe eine Reduktion der objektiven Geltung vollzieht. In diesem Fall zeigt sich:

Mein Wille, die Forderung des Anderen zu erfüllen, ist nun nicht bloß mein Wille in mir, sondern, da der Andere für mich da seiender ist und *nicht etwa durch Reduktion ausgeschaltet ist*, so ist mein Wille in Einheitsbeziehung zu dem Anderen; ebenso wie das ihm zugehörige Bewusstsein, dass ich bin und seinen Willen übernehme und erfülle, eine Gegenbeziehung ist, die *von ihm zu mir herüberläuft*. (Hua XIV, 402, Herv. von mir)

Der Andere wird nicht als bloßer Leib-Körper, sondern eben als eine *Person*, wie ich eine Person bin, erfahren. Wenn es zur Interaktion zwischen mir und einem Anderen kommt, fällt der Andere nicht unter den Schlag der Reduktion, sondern er bleibt zusammen mit mir und „geht“ zu mir herüber, dadurch, dass er einen Willen in mir fordert. Die Reduktion im Sinne der primordialen Reduktion ist also bei den Untersuchungen der personalen Beziehungen nicht zu gebrauchen.

Wie oben erwähnt, bemüht sich Husserl in den *Ideen II* schon darum, die personalistische Einstellung zu beschreiben und zu verteidigen. Sie meint eine Ureinstellung (vgl. Staiti 2009, 219–233, hier 228), die das lebendige Subjekt in der Lebenswelt einnimmt. Das lebendige Subjekt in der Lebenswelt fasst sich als eine Person, d.h. für Husserl, als ein geistiges Ich auf³. Der Geist beschränkt sich nicht auf ein in sich selbst geschlossenes Subjekt, sondern er geht über es hinaus. Ein Geistesleben vollzieht sich in einem interpersonalen Zusammenhang (Hua IV, 419). Das unterstreicht, dass eine Person bzw. ein geistiges Ich, kein bloß abstrakter Ichpunkt sein kann. Stattdessen findet es sich immer als eine Person in ihrem eigenen sich entwickelnden persönlichen Erlebnisstrom vor und in konkretem Bezug zu Anderen, d.h. in einem intersubjektiven Zusammenhang und bezieht sich auf durch Kommunikation und Komprehension übertragene intersubjektiv konstituierte Dinge, Überzeugungen usw. (A VI 10/48°).

So sind die individuellen persönlichen Eigenschaften immer mit der Dingumwelt und den anderen Subjekten mitgegeben. Das Subjekt unter der Lupe der personalistischen Einstellung zu betrachten, bedeutet das Subjekt als eines in Bezug auf den Anderen sich entwickelndes und entwickelt habendes, d.h. als Person zu betrachten. Statt einer reduktionistischen oder minimalistischen Konzeption des Ich,

betont der Begriff der Person die geistige intersubjektive „Fülle“ des Ich, die im konkreten Werden anwächst.

In der Umwelt gibt es nicht nur die bloßen Dinge, sondern Gebrauchsobjekte, kulturelle Objekte und Gemeinschaften (vgl. Hua IV, 182), wo Personen durch Komprehension interpersonale Beziehungen zu anderen Personen haben und in der sie Einwirkungen von den Anderen erfahren können. Andere Personen können Wirkung auf mich ausüben, die im Sinne einer Kraft zu verstehen ist und meine spezifischen Aktionen oder Reaktionen motiviert (vgl. Hua IV, 192). Die Einwirkung der Anderen erweist sich auch in meinem aktiven Sich-an-den-Anderen-Wenden. Wir verhalten uns anders, je nach der geltenden sozialen Norm oder aufgrund von uns angenommener Gedanken Anderer, ihrer geäußerten Wünsche oder ausgesprochenen Befehlen. Husserl nimmt hierbei Hegels Herr-Knecht-Beziehung zum Beispiel und merkt an, dass der Wille des Herrn kein rein externer Vorgang ist, sondern dass mit den Akten des Dieners, die der Erfüllung des Willens des Herrn dienen, der Wille des Herrn in die Subjektivität des Dieners hineinreicht. Die Subjektivität des personalen Individuums ist also nicht in sich selbst geschlossen. Vielmehr hat es „Fenster“. Es lässt *bewusstseinsmäßig* die Wirkungen der Anderen in sich hineinreichen und kann wiederum Wirkung auf den Anderen ausüben. Die herüber- und hinüberlaufenden Wechselwirkungen bringen das Ich und die Anderen zur Einheit (vgl. Hua XIV, 403) in einem geistigen Zusammenhang, und zwar nicht wie eine Versammlung von „äußeren“ getrennten Gegenständen „wo außen und innen sich ausschließen“, sondern er, der Zusammenhang, besagt vielmehr eine wechselseitige „Implikation“ (Hua IX, 484) wodurch jedes Ich *innerlich* von den Anderen bestimmt wird. Unsere Stellungnahmen und Verhaltensweisen sind von den jeweiligen (sie verlangenden) Situationen und insbesondere vom Umgang mit den Anderen beeinflusst. Genauer gesagt gibt es einen

Zusammenhang als reine Monaden, sofern die Intentionalität der einen in die Intentionalität der anderen mit eingeht und verschiedene Monaden in der Identität des einzelweise geleisteten gegenständlichen Sinnes zusammentreffen, ja indem intentionale Aktion der einen, ihre Frage, ihr Ziel, ihre Entscheidung, ihre

Urteilsentscheidung, Wertentscheidung, zwecktätig gerichtete Willensentscheidung usw. von der anderen Monade oder vielmehr von ihrem Ich übernommen wird, in die andere Monade hineingeht, die Frage beantwortet, der Wunsch erfüllt, das Urteil anerkannt oder verworfen werden kann, sofern der eigene Wille sich im Dienst des fremden betätigen, der fremde im eigenen *wirksam* leben und zu einem *Funktionsglied* des fremden Ich werden kann, usf. (Hua IX, 484-485, Herv. von mir)

Auch wenn die Akte und Handlungen von jeder Person selbst vollgezogen werden, umgreifen diese Akte und Handlungen „*bewusstseinsmässig* das Leisten wie Geleistetes der anderen Personen“ (Hua XIV, 198, Herv. von mir). Das heißt, dass das Bewusstsein der Anderen weder als ein reelles Moment in meinem Bewusstsein enthalten ist, noch *vice versa* und dass die Einheit zwischen Ich und den Anderen überhaupt keine reelle ist, und trotzdem: Sie wirkt im Bewusstseinsleben des Ich. Das Bewusstsein der Anderen kann das jeweilige Funktionszentrum nicht ersetzen, aber es trägt darin doch als „Funktionsglied“ bei und dadurch wirken Subjekte auf Subjekte. Sie lassen sich gegenseitig voneinander bestimmen, in dem Sinn, dass sowohl das Selbstbewusstsein bzw. die Selbstauffassung als auch die Selbstgestaltung des persönlichen Individuums von den Anderen geprägt bzw. entscheidend beeinflusst sind.

Der Modus des Selbstbewusstseins des personalen Individuums ist ein anderer als der des absoluten inneren Bewusstseins. Um personales Selbstbewusstsein zu erlangen, reicht es nicht aus, dass sich das Subjekt bloß als Subjekt- oder Funktionspol betrachtet: Es wird vielmehr nur dann sich konstituieren, wenn das Subjekt sich in intersubjektiven Beziehungen befindet und sich dessen bewusst ist. Mit anderen Worten: Meine Selbstauffassung als menschliche Person, so wie ich sie in der Lebenswelt, darin ich lebe, vollziehe, ist unmöglich ohne die Komprehension der Anderen und die Aufnahme der Wirkungen der Anderen bei der Komprehension: “Zur Auffassung als Menschen (im geistigen Sinn) komme ich in Beziehung auf mich selbst durch Komprehension der Anderen” (Hua IV, 242; vgl. auch Caminada 2019, 240). Das Subjekt als Person fasst sich als ein Individuum auf, welches trotz seiner Differenz mit den Anderen doch neben und unter

den Anderen lebt. Beim Selbstbewusstsein des personalen Individuums im Sinne der Selbstauffassung geht es nicht um ein einzelnes „Selbst“, sondern um ein „Wir“, um einen „Wechselverkehr zwischen Personen“ (Hua IV, 351). Ein Subjekt in seiner Konkretheit, Ganzheit und Fülle konstituiert sich erst durch seine intentionalen Beziehungen zu den Anderen.

Ferner ist die Selbstgestaltung, die den geistlichen Charakter und die Entwicklung eines personalen Individuums fördert, auch von den Anderen bzw. von den gemeinschaftlichen Wertungen, Maßstäben, Sitten, Traditionen usw. abhängig. Nicht nur unsere Zeitgenossen, sondern auch „Personen der Vergangenheit“ können Wirkungen auf uns ausüben. Obwohl in diesem Fall die Wechselseitigkeit der Wirkung fehlt, können vergangene Gedanken trotz objektiven zeitlichen Abstands auf ein jetziges Ich wirken: „Der von ihm früher erzeugte [Gedanke] ist derselbe, den ich jetzt nacherzeuge und der auf mich jetzt weiter motivierend wirkt“ (Hua XIV, 200). Als in einem historisch-sozialen Milieu lebendes, schlägt sich die Individualität des personalen Individuums in der intersubjektiven Geschichte und Tradition nieder. Das personale Individuum eignet sich die Tradition an, verflucht sich sogar mit ihr und gestaltet somit seine eigene personale Individualität weiter (vgl. Hua XLII, 130). Sogar die Weise und der Grad der Einflussnahme des Instinkts und der Neigungen auf mich und meine Handlungen kann durch die historisch-sozialen Traditionen beeinflusst werden. So regt z.B. scharfes Essen mehr Appetit bei Personen an, die aus Regionen stammen, in denen traditionell scharf gegessen wird. Wir nehmen die Gedanken, die Überzeugungen, die Verhaltensweisen sowie die Habitualitäten von Anderen an und übernehmen sie als unsere eigenen. Sie charakterisieren also nunmehr unsere eigene Individualität. Husserl beschreibt dies wie folgt:

Fremde Gedanken (erweisen sich als) in meine Seele eindringende [...] Eventuell eigne ich es mir selbsttätig an, und es wird zu Meinem. Es hat nun nicht mehr den Charakter einer Zumutung, der ich träge nachgeben (habe), die mich von außen bestimmt (hat), es ist eine Stellungnahme geworden, die von meinem Ich entspringt, ausgeht (nicht ein bloßer Reiz, der darauf hin geht). (M III 1 I 5/71)

Die Einwirkungen oder der Einflüsse der Anderen bestimmen also „die persönliche Entwicklung, ob die Person selbst später etwas noch davon weiß, sich daran noch erinnert, den Grad und die Art des Einflusses selbst zu bestimmen vermag oder nicht“, und sie sind folglich die Regeln der inneren Entwicklung der Persönlichkeit. Daher wird deutlich, dass die personalen Habitualitäten, die eben sedimentierten, nicht von einem geschlossenen Ego „erfunden“ werden, sondern dass sie sich unter den Mitwirkungen der Anderen ausgestalten und sie sind deswegen der individuellen Kontinuität sowie der durchgehenden Typisierung jeder Person eigen. Daher ist zuzustimmen, dass es sich bei der Vorstellung „eines völlig unbeeinflussten vernünftigen Subjekts“ um eine „Fiktion“ (vgl. Lohmar 2016, 147-170, hier 149) handelt. Das Subjekt als Person bildet eine „Ingerenz“ (M III 1 I 5/71)⁴ mit anderen Personen, die miteinander eine Umwelt bewohnen und es lässt sich dabei von den Anderen beeinflussen und bestimmen.⁵ Der Sinn der sogenannten Polarität der Person geht demzufolge über den eines Subjekt-Pols hinaus, demzufolge es dem Gegenstand gegenübersteht und mehr noch: auch geht er über den eines Funktionszentrums der eigenen Habitualitäten hinaus. Die Person als ein Pol ist ein „Pol des Wirkens und Leidens“ (Hua XIV, 34), wobei die Anderen schon impliziert sind.

Deshalb kann auch die Grundlage der Fremderfahrung, aus der personalistischen Einstellung betrachtet, keine abstrakte Eigenheitsphäre sein. Die Grundlage ist vielmehr jene Ingerenz, in die das lebendige Subjekt – das heranwachsende und sich vertiefende personale Individuum – sich im Prozess seiner Individuation integriert und da die Anderen immer schon impliziert sind. Dementsprechend ist meine Erfahrung einer anderen Person, wiederum aus personalistischer Einstellung betrachtet, keine bloße Appräsentation des Leibes am wahrgenommenen Körper: Die andere Person wird eben als eine Person aufgefasst, „in ihrem Ichleben, ihrem Ichwollen, Ichwirken etc.“ und zwar wird sie in ihrer personalen Individualität erfasst:

Die Person kann [...] auch von anderen Subjekten komprehensiv erfasst werden. Ihr Ich mit ihrem Erlebnisstrom, dem der emporquellenden Akte, wird einverstehend erfasst, und in der Art der dabei miterfassten

Motivationen, in dem *habituellen Typus* derselben, wird die *Individualität* erfasst. (Hua IV, 389–390, Herv. von mir).

4. Liebe als der individuierende Ruf der Person

Worin aber besteht die Freiheit des personalen Individuums, wenn es sich so stark vom Wirken der Anderen beeinflussen und bestimmen lässt? Die Antwort lautet: Obwohl wir „unbemerkt“ und passiv von den Anderen beeinflusst werden, bleibt trotzdem die Freiheit zur Wahl. Jede Person hat die Möglichkeit, den Einwirkungen blind zu folgen, ihnen zu versagen oder eine andere aktive Stellung zu ihnen einzunehmen, z.B. können wir trotz eines Dissens mit Anderen willentlich Kompromisse eingehen, gesetzt, wir schätzen sie. Von daher ist die intersubjektive Geistessphäre in der Umwelt ein „Reich der freien, in eigentlichen Akten tätigen oder leidenden Subjektivität“ (Hua IV, 370). Die Individualität der Person als eine geistige Einheit liegt also über das Sich-gehen-und-tragen-lassen hinausgehend in der freien vernünftigen Wahl (vgl. Hua XLII, 303). Ein personales Individuum zu sein, bedeutet in der Konkretion der Ingerenz mit den Anderen zu sein und sich als ein solches Seiendes aufzufassen. Es bedeutet weiter, sich wahr zu erhalten. Die wahre Selbsthaltung besagt vernünftige und freie Entscheidungen zu treffen und ihnen durch Handlungen treu zu bleiben. Sie kann daher auch als „Rechtfertigung und Selbstverantwortung“ (Hua XLII, 358) des personalen Ich bezeichnet werden. Bedeuten dann aber nicht Selbstentscheidung, Selbsttreue und die Selbstverantwortung einer Person die Forderung, sich von den Wirkungen der Anderen freizumachen und vor ihren Einflüssen zu verschließen?

Dies ist keineswegs der Fall. Wie oben im zweiten Teil gezeigt, gründet die personale Individuation letztlich in der Freiheit: Die Fähigkeit der Person, aus vernünftigen Gründen sich personalen innerlichen Habitualitäten bzw. Passivitäten entgegenstellen zu können und sogar über sie hinwegzugehen. Eine wichtige Frage ist hier noch unbeantwortet geblieben: Woher kommt die „Kraft“ der Person, solche Handlungen entgegen der eigenen persönlichen Prägung zu vollziehen? Wodurch kann die Person, die mit ihren persönlichen

Neigungen und den Vorzeichnungen der Habitualitäten kämpft, endlich eine neuartige Entscheidung gemäß dem, was sie in vernünftiger Hinsicht soll, treffen? Und was ist dann dieses Sollen? Mit diesen Fragen kommen wir auf die andere Motivationsquelle Husserls zurück, den Begriff des personalen Individuums zu etablieren: die Ethik, und zwar die Ethik der Liebe.⁶ Denn „zum ‚Wesen‘ jedes personalen Individuums, jedes Ich, gehört, dass es sein Gebiet persönlicher Entscheidungen, persönlicher Liebe, persönlichen Sollens hat“ (Hua XLII, 355). Das, was der Person anbefiehlt, etwas tun zu sollen, ist die Liebe. Das personale Individuum entscheidet sich *individuell* „für das, was es als dieses Ich *liebend* erfasst, erfasst als für es wert, als etwas, was wertlich *ihr ursprünglichst eigen* ist, als ihre *ganz persönliche* Sache und Angelegenheit“ (Hua XLII, 356, Herv. von mir). Betrachtet aus der Perspektive der Liebe bekommt das Ich-Zentrum noch eine weitere und tiefere (wenn nicht tiefste) Bedeutung:

Ein Besonderes ist es aber, dass das Ich nicht nur polare, zentrierende Innerlichkeit ist, dabei aus sich Sinn und Wert und Tat leistende Innerlichkeit, sondern dass es auch *individuelles Ich* ist, das in all seinem Vorstellen, fühlend Werten, *Sich-Entscheiden* noch ein *tiefstes Zentrum* hat, das Zentrum jener Liebe im ausgezeichneten *personalen Sinn*, das Ich, das in dieser Liebe einem „Ruf“, einer „Berufung“ folgt, einem innersten Ruf, der *die tiefste Innerlichkeit, das innerste Zentrum des Ich* selbst trifft und zu neuartigen Entscheidungen, zu neuartigen ‚Selbstverantwortungen‘, Selbstrechtfertigungen bestimmt wird. (Hua XLII, 358, Herv. von mir)

Statt der egozentrischen Polarität, die angeblich vor allen egologischen Passivitäten, Aktionen und Reaktionen schon da ist und die Voraussetzung der Leistungen der letzteren sei, ist die personale Liebe die *tiefste Innerlichkeit* eines individuellen Ich. Die personale Liebe und der Liebeswert sind das absolute Sollen, das die Person dazu anruft, eine solche oder jene Entscheidung zu treffen und dadurch ihre *tiefste Innerlichkeit, ihr Innerstes*, anzurufen. Es ist während dieses Prozesses des Anrufens und dessen Ergehens, dass eine Person sich radikal individuiert – dieser Prozess ist daher der der personalen Individuation. Dazu bemerkt Husserl: „Das Ich, als welches ein solches innerstes Ich hat, an das Berufungen

ergehen, die seine, dieses Ich, Berufungen sind, hat Individualität. Es steht als dieses Ich unter absoluten persönlichen Normen“ (Hua XLII, 359; vgl. auch 397). Ich bin wer ich bin durch meine Liebe und durch das, was ich für meine Liebe tue. Insofern die Liebe das absolute Sollen ist, das die Person dazu anstachelt Selbstverantwortung zu übernehmen, Entscheidungen zu treffen und Selbstrechtfertigungen zu üben, denen möglicherweise ihre bisherigen Passivitäten und fraglos gefolgt habituellen Neigungen zuwiderlaufen und das die Person von ebendiesen befreien kann, darf die Liebe als die höchste Freiheit bezeichnet werden. Insofern sich also die Person dadurch in einem tiefsten und individuellsten Sinn vollendet, dass sie dem Ruf der Liebe folgend sich ihr zuwendet, ist die Liebe das Individuierendste.

Aber auch wenn die Akte Aktion aus der Liebe von einer Person her geleistet wird und das Innerste dieser Person bestimmt, bezieht sich die Liebe notwendig verschiedenmaßen auf die anderen Personen. In den zentralen Arten der Liebe, wie z.B. der Liebe der Mutter zum Kind, ist die Mutterliebe direkt auf ihr Kind als eine Person gerichtet; in anderen Arten, wie z.B. der Liebe des Bürgers für das Vaterland, des Wissenschaftlers für die Wissenschaft, des Künstlers für die Kunst, ist die Liebe auf einen „intersubjektiven Wert“ (Hua XLII, 418) gerichtet. Das demnach Individuierendste, die Liebe als höchste Freiheit, erweist sich am Ende als wesentlich interpersonales Phänomen. Von daher wird es deutlich, dass die Bedeutung des *innersten Zentrums* des individuellen Ich weit über das Fungieren eines Funktionszentrums hinausgeht. Das *innerste Zentrum* wird ironischerweise allererst angerufen von einem „Äußeren“ – dem Anderen. Der Andere ist der vorbestimmende Faktor meiner personalen Individuation.

Schluss

Zu Schluss bleibt zu wiederholen, dass die individuelle Person kein abstrakter, starrer und geschlossener Ichpol ist, der eine statische Konstitutionsstruktur als Ausgangspunkt voraussetzt. Bei der personalen Individuation geht es um „die Probleme vom Ursprung und der Wirkung der personalen

Selbstgestaltung“ (Hua XIV, 19). Die individuelle Person betont die Konkretheit, Ganzheit und Fülle der Subjektivität. Sie ist eher ein Endpunkt, der durch einen Prozess der Individuation hindurch erreicht wird, wobei die Anderen durchgehend eine konstitutive Rolle spielen. In der Auseinandersetzung mit den Anderen kann sich eine individuelle Person konstituiert. Durch die fortlaufende Auseinandersetzung mit Anderen vertieft und erweitert sich die Individualität einer Person. Husserls Beschreibung der Person ist, mit den Worten E. Caminadas zu sprechen, zur Kennzeichnung der Husserl'schen Philosophie des Geistes, zugleich *individualistisch* und *holistisch* (vgl. Caminada 2019, 347 ff.). Dadurch grenzt sich Husserl von einem banalen Individualismus ab, in dem das Interesse des einzelnen Individuums denen der Anderen und der Gemeinschaft vorangeht. Die konkreten ethischen und politischen Auswirkungen der Ausführungen Husserls zur personalen Individuation werden an anderer Stelle zu untersuchen sein. Meine Ausführungen möchte ich mit folgendem Zitat Husserls abschließen: „*Mein Leben ist aber nichts für sich; es ist einig mit dem Leben der Anderen, es ist Stück in der Einheit des Gemeinschaftslebens und reicht darüber hinaus ins Leben der Menschheit*“ (Hua XLII, 302, Herv. von mir)⁷.

ANMERKUNGEN

¹ Bemerkenswert ist hier, dass die analysierten Manuskripten nicht berücksichtigt haben, dass Passivität und Aktivität relative Begriffe sind und dass sie nicht strikt zu trennen sind (vgl. EU, 119 ff.). Die freie Entscheidung befindet sich in der Tat als Endstation der verflochtenen Passivität und Aktivität auf unterschiedlichen Stufen. Die Einwirkung der Anderen auf mich gehört z. B. auch zu einer Art der höherstufigen Passivität. Vgl. Teil 3 dieses Aufsatzes.

² Zu bemerken ist, dass Kant auch den Begriff der Person bzw. die *personalitas moralis* entwickelt. Laut Kant ist Person „dasjenige Subjekt, dessen Handlungen einer Zurechnung fähig sind. Die moralische Persönlichkeit ist also nichts anders, als die Freiheit eines vernünftigen Wesens unter moralischen Gesetzen“ (Kant, AA VI, 223) und die Persönlichkeit ist „die Freiheit und Unabhängigkeit von dem Mechanismus der ganzen Natur“ (Kant, AA V, 86) Für eine genauere Diskussion von Kants Ausführungen zur Person, vgl. z. B. Nenon 1993, 159–168; Grandjean 2016, 387–399.

³ Laut Caminada gibt es trotz ihrer engen Beziehung einen signifikanten Unterschied zwischen Person und Geist, nämlich den, dass die Person als Forschungsobjekt der Geisteswissenschaften den seelischen Untergrund des Geistes darstelle und darüber hinaus die Leibessubstanz und den physischen Körper umfasse (vgl. Caminada 2019, 234 Anm. 43). Aber meiner Meinung nach benutzt Husserl „geistig“ und „personal“ fast synonym. Vgl. z.B. Hua IV, 325, 323, 350, 419.

⁴ Husserl gebraucht das Wort „Ingerenz“ nicht im juristischen Sinn, sondern er meint hier mit Ingerenz etwas wie „Einmischung“, „Einflussbereich“ und „Wirkungskreis“.

⁵ „Das Subjekt als Person (wird) verstanden als in der Erfahrung sich durchhaltende Einheit der Verhaltensweisen gegenüber der personalen Umwelt. (Wir haben) Subjekte, durch Ingerenz aufeinander Einfluss nehmend, einander personal bestimmend, unmittelbar im leiblichen Ausdruck.“ (M III 1 I 5/71) Darüber hinaus sind die Wirkungen von den Anderen bzw. die Einflussnahme der Anderen so üblich und stark, dass sich das personale Ich „durch sie bestimmt [fühlt], zu positiver und negativer Wertung, zu einem Begehren oder Fliehen usw. Durch Personen findet es sich, beeinflusst, es, richtet sich nach ihnen.“ (Hua IV, 326)

⁶ In seiner ausgezeichneten Einleitung in die Ethik Husserls „From Reason to Love“ spürt Melle den verschiedenen Phasen der Entwicklung der Husserl'schen Lehre der Ethik nach und stellt heraus, dass deren Schwerpunkt sich von der Vernunft zur Liebe verlagert. Es ist aber zu bemerken, dass, obwohl die Liebe als das absolute individuelle Sollen dem objektiven Wert, der von der objektiven Vernunft gefordert wird, gegenüber steht, sie dennoch zum *telos* der Vernunft in einem höheren Sinn gehört.

⁷ Der Sinn, den Husserl dem Begriff Mensch gibt, ist viel komplizierter als das biologische oder physikalische Verständnis des Menschen in der naturalistischen Einstellung. Der Mensch, sowie die Person, kann aus einer phänomenologisch-personalistischen Einstellung betrachtet werden, wobei ein Subjekt als Person und als Mensch verstanden werden kann und muss.

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The Tragedy of Culture and the Culture of Tragedy: Some Remarks on Georg Simmel's Sociology of Culture and His Interpretation of Schopenhauer's Philosophy

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Abstract

Georg Simmel furnished many profound resources to social sciences and philosophy of culture: his contribution stands as a pillar within the frame of humanities also for his efforts in order to understand his epochal historical-cultural shift. Founding a new science (sociology) crosses to Simmel's conviction to highlight and to explain both modern individual and social lives. In this regard, the question arising from the very sociological field belongs to the need to focus on the new mechanisms in the cultural sphere, that is grasping a radical fracture between "subjective and objective spirit". This paper aims at exploring the interpretation of Schopenhauer's philosophy in the sociology of culture of Georg Simmel towards his cultural theory. Analysing Simmel's works on Schopenhauer and pessimism, it emerges a philosophical and sociological frame which basically fits with some topics regarding his view on the "tragedy of culture". It will be argued through three main phases in Simmel's thought: 1. the question of pessimism (from the early writings to *Philosophie des Geldes*); 2. the discovery of (the "dialectics" of) the tragedy of culture (middle intellectual production); 3. Schopenhauer and the *Lebensphilosophie* (the last writings). Finally, this paper shows the convergence of some Simmelian hints and views with the recent debate in sociological and philosophical fields which argue for a "crisis" theory or for the analysis of the "pathologies of the social life".

Keywords: Simmel, Schopenhauer, pessimism, society, culture, tragedy

In his book *The Metamorphosis of the World* Ulrich Beck claims that our times are characterized by a "predominant cultural pessimism" in which any given catastrophism can become the normal state of the world, even with an

emancipatory effort (Beck 2015; 2016). In this regard, the new task for the sociologists should be to decrypt – in Beck’s words – the contemporary “dystopian and pessimistic constellation.” We are constantly confronted with new pessimistic views (primarily due to the recent economic conjunctures up to the recent pandemic Covid19 scenario), so we cannot easily disengage from any “crisis” category attempt to interpret our times. These crucial facts are not mere measurable through material or economic indicators because they have a cultural effect on our lives and surely contribute to re-shape our social interactions. The crisis itself is a social and cultural construction, according to the “cultural sociology” paradigm of Jeffrey Alexander, and we could feel as a collective “trauma” exactly in the sense that agents share a collective space which consists of social and cultural representations. As Alexander sustains:

“It is by constructing cultural traumas that social groups, national societies, and sometimes even entire civilizations not only cognitively identify the existence and source of human suffering but ‘take on board’ some significant responsibility for it. Insofar as they identify the cause of trauma, and thereby assume such moral responsibility, members of collectivities define their solidary relationships in ways that, in principle, allow them to share the sufferings of others.” (Alexander 2004, 1; Alexander 2012)

Moreover, I advocate that trauma basically generates social and cultural pathologies, that is shared and common experiences impeding the flourishing of the “good life”. Axel Honneth remarked that has come the necessity to detect any form of emerging “pathology of the social” (Honneth 2000) in order to respect and preserve the “good life” of individuals.¹ He explicitly refers to Simmel to explain the genesis of ethical and cultural “crisis” facing modernity as well as to grasp the contradictory and paradoxical nature of the modern social life (Honneth 2002).

According to Georg Simmel, the crisis is the main interpretative category in order to focus on what the modern culture means: the modernity arose from manifold crisis. In other words, we could share the core idea that Simmel is a *Krisis-Denker* as well as a *Zeitdiagnostiker* (Habermas 1986):² he was, in fact, not only a diagnostician of modernity and its paradoxical aspects within individual life but he also assumed

the crisis as the primary subject of his philosophical and sociological inquiries.³ If we interpret crisis to mean “division,” “fracture,” “fragmentarity” (Frisby 1986), “ambivalence” (Nedelmann 1992; Junge 2000), “antinomy,” we can consider Simmel to be one of the most meaningful thinkers who in the so-called *Jahrhundertwende* spent his forces on this subject.⁴

The philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer plays a central role in the formation of Simmel’s theoretical investigations and he has a multidimensional function under a hermeneutical meaning. I would like to address Schopenhauer’s legacy in Simmel’s work in three main periods:⁵

- *The question of pessimism* (from the early writings to the *Philosophie des Geldes*)
- *The discovery of (the “dialectics” of) the tragedy of culture* (middle intellectual production)
- *Schopenhauer and the Lebensphilosophie* (the last writings)

Across these periods, Simmel refers to Schopenhauer’s tackling the question of the inner relationship between the explanatory categories of “tragedy” and “culture.” In modernity, they assume a complementary, intertwined definition and role: on the one hand, culture is the product of a tragedy (that is the division of life and its forms, *subjective* and *objective Spirit*); on the other hand, tragedy itself is necessary to feed modern culture (see Mencke 2005).

1. The question of pessimism

“Schopenhauer und Nietzsche” book (Simmel 1907) somehow represents an intermediary phase of diachronic division of Simmel’s interpretation: he discovered Schopenhauer’s philosophy at least twenty years before the publication of this work. In 1887, Simmel wrote an anti-pessimistic crusade titled “Über die Grundfrage des Pessimismus in methodischer Hinsicht”, published in the precious «*Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik*» (Simmel 1989a, 9-19). The profound influence that Schopenhauer’s philosophy exerted on the young *Privatdozent* Simmel is confirmed by his decision to lecture on Schopenhauer and pessimism in his early academic career, almost every year

between 1885 and 1894 (Gassen and Landmann 1958, 343ff.; Köhnke 1996, 194ff.). This is a synthetic prospect of Simmel's lectures during these years:

Figure 1

Synthetic Prospect of Simmel's lessons (source: Köhnke 1996, 194ff.)

Semester/Jahr	Bezeichnung der Vorlesung oder Übung	Zuhörer
SS 1885	<i>Kant's Philosophie/ Über die Sittenlehre Kants</i>	124 (publ.)
WS 1885/1886	<i>Grundzüge der Ethik Über den Pessimismus</i>	16 (priv.) 104 (publ.)
WS 1887/1888	<i>Neueste philosophische Theorien (insbesondere in ihren Beziehungen zu den Naturwissenschaften)</i> <i>Über den Pessimismus (mit ausführlicher Darstellung der Schopenhauerschen Lehre)</i>	26 (priv.) 131 (publ.)
WS 1890/1891	<i>Neueste philosophische Theorien (insbesondere in ihren Beziehungen zu den Naturwissenschaften)</i> <i>Ethik (mit Berücksichtigung sozialer Probleme)</i> <i>Über den Pessimismus (insbesondere den Schopenhauerschen)</i>	16 (priv.) 23 (priv.) 135 (publ.)
WS 1894/1895	<i>Sociologie (mit Berücksichtigung der Geschichte der Familie)</i> <i>Neueste philosophische Theorien (Philosophischen Theorien der letzten dreißig Jahre)</i> <i>Über den Pessimismus (insbesondere den Schopenhauerschen)</i>	42 (priv.) 49 (priv.) 269 (publ.)

From this framework came the enlightening, aforementioned essay “Über die Grundfrage des Pessimismus”, an invective against pessimism as both a systematic and socio-cultural problem: the pessimism aims to be *empirically* demonstrated on a supposed metaphysical basis. Simmel's polemic target is the “negative *eudaemonological* balance” (Hartmann 1880; 1885) between life's pleasures and pains, as described in the middle of XIXth century by Eduard von

Hartmann's philosophy. In Simmel's essay, Hartmann is surprisingly only cited once and without a precise reference, as was Simmel's tendency. Halfway through the paper, we also encounter Schopenhauer's name, when Simmel asserts that he grounded his metaphysical "will to live" on the preference of Non-being rather than Being because of the *general* existence of pain.

If the requirement of a proportion other than the real proportion between the total suffering and the total pleasure has no objective justification, if the privilege of non-being over being cannot be based on the excessive pain price of joy, then the pessimist still has a logic possible point of view: namely the one adopted by Schopenhauer, according to which it was not the quantitative relationship between pleasure and suffering, but the occurrence of suffering that preferred non-existence to being, because no amount of bliss outweighed even the smallest pain. This is, of course, a matter of personal feeling or metaphysical belief; it does not seem to me methodically refutable alone - any more than its direct reversal in the optimistic sense (Simmel 1989a, 18; *translation mine*)

This is meaningful evidence. While Hartmann defends his theory using a comparison between the pleasures and pains in life, Schopenhauer interprets these as simple "epiphenomenons" of the inexorably hidden essence of reality. Schopenhauer repeatedly highlights ways to rescue our individual existence from illusion and pain, namely with the arts or with *Mit-Leid* ethics. Schopenhauer thus embodies the modern pessimist *κατ'ἔξοχήν*, who defended the worst thought with his best efforts, as Simmel affirmed in "Schopenhauer und Nietzsche":

An aspect of the tragedy in Schopenhauer is that he defends the weaker cause with more impact. He is without a doubt a greater philosopher than Nietzsche. He has a mysterious relation to the absolute of all things that is shared alike by the great philosopher and the great artist. Listening to the depth of his own soul, he awakens the murmurs of the deep reasons of being in himself (Simmel 1991, 12-13; Simmel 1995, 188).

In his personal interpretation of Schopenhauer's philosophy, Simmel constantly deals with an *uncomfortable legacy* (that is pessimism as a consequence of Schopenhauer's metaphysics) and, therefore, his approach to Schopenhauer is continuously characterized by a sort of "double bind." Simmel,

in fact, greatly appreciates Schopenhauer's writings and mentions them frequently, and not always with the intent to criticize. When Simmel compares Nietzsche to Schopenhauer, he sees that the optimistic faith in the eternity of Nietzsche, who probably more than Schopenhauer experienced the tragic path of pessimism, has become the positive *Zarathustra* dogma of the Will to live.

If pessimism cannot stand in an empirical "eudemonological balance,"⁶ as Simmel also demonstrates in "Schopenhauer und Nietzsche" book (Simmel 1995, 241ff.), the pessimistic perspective could be explained as a personal *Stimmung*. This analytical viewpoint is what emerges from another one of Simmel's anonymous articles titled "Zur Psychologie des Pessimismus", published in the "Baltische Monatschrift" journal in 1888. This paper, which Simmel devoted to Wilhelm Dilthey, has the same anti-pessimistic vigour as its predecessor ("Ueber die Grundfrage des Pessimismus"), even though the argumentation is highly reminiscent of Moritz Lazarus' and Heymann Steinthal's *Völkerpsychologie*. In this paper, Simmel's analysis of pessimism is twofold: firstly, pessimism as a "best seller" literary genre (specifically referred to the *belletristische Literatur*) and secondly, pessimism as *Weltanschauung* and a result of some particular *fin de siècle* mood in the European *Zeitgeist*, which is considered a socio-cultural issue.

According to Simmel, within the modernity people require to need and feed more and more the "spectacular" [*das Aparte*]. There is an important difference that abysmally divides pessimism as a *human feeling* and pessimism as a *cultural product*. The former is a mere sceptical, tragic, and nihilistic trend of humankind arising from subjective and solitary reflections; the latter is a function of the public sphere and refers to the objective side of the Spirit [*Geist*] (the cultural products).

The time in which we live is once again one in which everything that is "spectacular", eccentric, exceptional is applauded from the outset and has an appeal. Such a time suggests strong pessimistic trends; for it must have recognized - or believed to recognize - that the general, everyday, bad and worthless and that all good is only a rare, apart; because this is the only way to explain the reversal, which is

just as logically incorrect as it is psychologically understandable, that everything that is distinctive and unusual must also be good and valuable (Simmel 2004b, 221; *translation mine*).

The modern pessimistic philosophers (e.g. Schopenhauer, Tolstoj, Dostojewski) are described by Simmel as *rhetoric thinkers*. They are able to capsize the masses' spirits by convincing them of the "negative value of being" (Simmel 2004b, 224). They use their "rhetoric weapons," the *Zauberung* (*incantation*, to recall some Weber's suggestions) of their words on the stimulus [*Reize*]⁷ of sensory life [*Empfindungsleben*] to persuade the masses that existence is misery. The pessimistic *typus*, as a figure or mask of modern times, turns the positive truth of reality upside down, using his "destroying critique" [*zerstende Kritik*], the other side of its nihilistic *skepsis* (Simmel 2004b, 225).

On this topic, Simmel seems very close to Lukàcs' description of the Critical Theory pessimism through the famous metaphor of the "*Grand-Hotel Abgrund*." According to Simmel, destruction is more satisfying than construction and this conviction plays a role in the "ego-expansion" of the pessimistic-nihilistic *typus*. The pessimist feels this destructive force as the power that feeds his egoity, and thus cannot be an impartial judge of reality. Using sharp-witted wordplay, Simmel claims that the pessimistic thinker judges [*beurtheilt*] the whole world with his thoughts while, at the same time, he despises it [*verurteilt*].⁸

In *Philosophie des Geldes* book, Simmel argues that Schopenhauer basically holds a "pessimistic and quietist *Weltanschauung*" due to his belief in the "permanent quantity of values" (morality, happiness, and knowledge) [*Sittlichkeit, Glück, Erkenntnis*]. Simmel then wrongly assigns to Schopenhauer the conviction of the world containing an *a priori* amount of pleasure and pain – it was actually Hartmann (Hartmann 2012; 2014) –, so that Schopenhauer sees any struggle for life as simply a "dislocation of values" [*Hin- und Herscheiben von Werten*] that cannot shift the fate of the world (Simmel 1989b, 383).

2. The discovery of (the “dialectics” of) the tragedy of culture

The deep interconnectivity emerging in the theoretical organization of the work examining the questions of the *Philosophy of Culture* and the *Philosophy of Life* is very meaningful. The publication of *Philosophie des Geldes* book represents the first attempt to build a systematic philosophy of culture, that is the theory explaining modernity thorough the *money* paradigm. Thus, after 1907, Simmel discovers the “hidden king” [*der «heimliche König» der Geistesepoche*] of his *Zeitgeist* under the category of *Lebensphilosophie* (Simmel 1999, 186); he refers to Schopenhauer and Nietzsche on the one hand and to Henri Bergson on the other. As he testifies in a letter to Herman Graf Keyserling in 1911, Simmel believed that the “highest value” occurring in the XIX century was the *life* concept (Simmel 2008, 956). Lukàcs was ruthless with Simmel, particularly regarding his philosophy of life (Lukàcs 1954). He considered Simmel’s philosophy to be an expression of bourgeois society, in the same vein of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche.⁹ Despite Lukàcs’ interpretation (and discrediting) of Simmel’s metaphysics, a highly critical (and self-reflexive) strength is maintained by Simmel’s *Kulturpessimismus*. Simmel does not share with his contemporaries any wailing for the loss of values and stability (Belardinelli 1992): on the contrary, Simmel prefers to enhance the unpredictable and contingent character of modern forms of life.

Schopenhauer’s pessimism is the “symbolic code,” the “signature” of a whole *Zeitgeist*, as Simmel explicitly sustains in *Schopenhauer und Nietzsche* on the issue:

During the past several dozen years, the absolute preponderance of suffering over happiness in life is the definitive portrait of life’s value that gave Schopenhauer’s philosophy its general significance and signature, with respect to the culture of emotion [*Stimmungskultur*] (Simmel 1991, 53; Simmel 1995, 241).

For Simmel, Schopenhauer grasps the processes that internally erode Western culture. It was the collapse of the very transcendence epoch (according to the Judaic-Christian worldview): the *Lebensphilosophie* was merely the achievement of the immanence of life itself and any transcendent issue was

simply resolved using a functionalist view of an interactive process. In his late writings, Simmel uses a language strongly influenced by this conviction. The concept of culture is twofold: according to Simmel's famous intuitions, we may refer to an "objective" and to a "subjective" side; culture is basically a "perfection of the soul" [*Vollendung der Seele*].

I mean for culture the perfection of the soul [*Vollendung der Seele*] that it does not obtain directly from itself (as it happens in its religious deepening, moral purity, primary creativity), but by taking the detour through the structures of the spiritual-historical works; through the science and the forms of life, the art and the State, the profession and the knowledge of the world: this is the cultural path of the subjective spirit [*der Kulturweg des subjektiven Geistes*], on which it returns to itself as a higher and more complete one (Simmel 1999, 37; translation mine).

The modern culture then consists of two fundamental self-contradictions [*Selbstwiderspruch der Kultur*]:

1. The technology [*die Technik*] and the proliferation of means (the unforeseeability of series means/aims) – the question of the *rationalization* (intellectualization) of the world
2. The reciprocal extraneousness between objective and subjective culture

The double path of the modern culture is cemented in this contradictory situation. The **tragedy of culture** [*die Tragödie der Kultur*] (Simmel 1999, 42) and the **paradoxes of cultural life** [*Paradoxien des Kulturlebens*] (Simmel 1999, 51) are both shibboleths for Simmel's theory of culture. On the one hand, the tragedy of culture represents the opposition of cultural "objective" forms to the life itself as "subjective spirit;" on the other hand, the paradoxes of cultural life arise from the fact that objective culture (forms) develops more and more quickly and widely, than the "subjective spirit" might embrace.

The idea of the loss of any purpose in modern culture already flourished in his "Schopenhauer und Nietzsche" book, where Simmel purports that the conscience is trapped in a web of means and technology grows without limit, by becoming itself an ultimate end.

[...] consciousness is bound up with the means, whereas the final goals which import sense and meaning into the intermediate steps

are pushed toward our inner horizon and finally beyond it. Technology, which is the sum total of the means of a civilized existence, becomes the essential object of struggle and evaluation. Thus, people are eventually surrounded everywhere by a criss-crossing jungle of enterprises and institutions in which the final and definitely valuable goals are missing altogether (Simmel 1991, 3-4; Simmel 1995, 176-177).

This absolute absence of any end has become the legitimation of cultural pessimism: life is the central topic for both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, who philosophically embody the modern culture. Such as the *Will to live* has no other end but itself, so the modern culture is the pure process, the pure function that becomes absolute “form.”

According to Simmel, in the history of philosophy Schopenhauer attests to the discovery of the negative character of Being (the negative ontology *tout court*), and thus underlines a “formal difference” [*formale Differenz*] between being and conscience. Humankind is able to “represent” reality using “intellectual” categories, even if the discrepancy between being and representation can never be overcome. The metaphysics of Will to live is beyond the difference between rationalism and irrationalism because Will simply represents what is “over” the conscience and not what stands against it. In this regard, Schopenhauer is “deeper” and more “radical” than Kant and Marx.

Schopenhauer has the courage to proclaim a radicalism which he creates to evade the concept of man as a rational being: the images of consciousness which limit our empirical life do not enclose the reality of our being and, indeed, cannot even touch it because this being is not of the same essence as rational consciousness (Simmel 1991, 30; Simmel 1995, 211).

According to Schopenhauer’s metaphysical perspective, the world is the “representation of a radical contradiction” [*die Welt ist die Darstellung des radikales Widerspruch*] (Simmel 1995, 239); this is a very synthetic prospect of Simmel’s interpretation of the metaphysics of Will. Schopenhauer’s view is a “metaphysics of conflict” (Ruggieri 2016). It consists of a clear division (1) – that is the first metaphysical dualism – between the world as Will (unitary) and the world as Idea/Representation (characterized by its fragmentarity):

according to Simmel, the world *as* representation legitimizes the reality we perceive in “relational” (Donati 2011; 2015) and “reciprocal” terms (Simmel 1995: 221). The same double impulse (2) – the second dualism – is found in the destiny of our “personality,” which lays as a contended issue between the typical modern need for superficiality and the need for depth, between misapprehension and truth. The third dualism (3) from Schopenhauer’s doctrine is the fracture between the scientific and the metaphysical human essence [*dem wissenschaftlichen und dem metaphysischen Menschen*]: since Schopenhauer discovers the non-rational character of the inner essence of the world, science and metaphysics must relate to their own world and language (Simmel 1995, 231-232). Schopenhauer has reversed the Hegelian motto, and thus contends “[...] all that is real is irrational [*alles was wirklich ist, unvernünftig ist*]” (Simmel 1995, 234).

3. Simmel, Schopenhauer, and the *Lebensphilosophie*

It’s quite difficult to draw conclusions about Simmel’s *Schopenhauerismus*, if we reduce to exclusively consider his theory as development of Schopenhauer’s philosophy (see Ruggieri 2008; Jeske *et al.* 2014; Kohl 2018). However, Franz Mockrauer, President of the Schopenhauer-Gesellschaft and Hans Simmel’s schoolmate in Berlin (then he probably knew directly his father Georg), ascribes Simmel’s thought to the current of those philosophers that refer to themselves (directly or not) as the *Schopenhauerismus*. Particularly because of the use of *Intuitionism* and a “metaphysical explanation of world” in *Lebensphilosophie*, Mockrauer was quick to associate Simmel’s philosophy and methodology with Schopenhauer’s (Mockrauer 1925, 34-36).

We can hold that *Schopenhauerism* deals with Simmel’s specific views on culture later in his career. Simmel offers, within the crisis of philosophy, a possible new path and he considers the *Lebensphilosophie* as a new impulse and a new beginning for philosophy itself.¹⁰ This conviction covers philosophy as well as sociology, as Simmel focuses in his last writing on any attempt to assess a *Lebensphilosophie* beside a *Lebenssoziologische Projekt* (Ruggieri 2017; Seyfert 2008; 2019).

Schopenhauer is considered to be the “father of the modern *Lebensphilosophie*” as Fellmann explicitly claims (Fellmann 1996, 280). This citation is very close to Michael Landmann’s words:

Schopenhauer is the first to pursue the philosophy of knowledge as a philosophy of life. While he considers cognition not only immanent, but also in its regard to life and he locates it within the global reality of humankind, a deeper reality of the cognition flourishes to him (Landmann 1957, XXXIX; *translation mine*).

Both of these statements fit with the ideas espoused by Simmel, who claimed in his lectures on the history of philosophy in the *Wintersemester* 1913/14:

Schopenhauer is the first philosopher who philosophies on life in a modern manner [*er ist der erste Philosoph, der über das Leben im modern Sinne philosophiert*]” (Simmel 2012, 123; *translation mine*).

According to Simmel, Schopenhauer asks for the *value* of life itself,¹¹ since he renounces to inquiry life under a particular form. In this regard, Schopenhauer is the first *Lebensphilosoph* of modernity. Life is both the *terminus a quo* and the *terminus ad quem* of his metaphysics and his epistemology¹².

Simmel often uses Schopenhauer’s famous incipit *Die Welt ist “meine Vorstellung”* to address his interpretation of the metaphysical issue, for instance, in his course on the history of philosophy, claiming “*Die Welt ist mein Erlebnis*” (Simmel 2012, 124) and in *Soziologie*, namely the *Excursus: wie ist die Gesellschaft möglich?*, where he argues for an explication of the three sociological *a priori*, proclaiming that “*Die Gesellschaft ist meine Vorstellung*” (Simmel 1992, 44).

Schopenhauer’s contribution to the *Lebensphilosophie* tradition is formally presented by Simmel in “Schopenhauer und Nietzsche”. Simmel explicitly claimed: “Die Philosophie Schopenhauers ist der absolute, philosophische Ausdruck für diesen inneren Zustand der modernen Menschen” (Simmel 1995, 178). Some lines before, Simmel draws a draft – typical of his style – of an “unexpressed” anthropology, imbuing humankind with an “indirect essence” [*indirekte Wesen*]. Humankind is characterized by the pursuit of objects through indirect and mediated ways. Humankind is able to construct cultural forms (e.g. science, art, ethics, technology) to grasp

inner ends. Cultural forms should represent simple means, yet they become “uncountable” ends that humankind hangs on to but cannot completely grasp and gather anymore. They become *values* and we lose the meaning of the near ends. We are, as Simmel sustains, “prisoners in a network of pure means, detours, and temporariness [*Mittel, Umwege, Vorläufigkeiten*]” (Simmel 1995, 177).

The epochal turn in the history of ideas, provided by Schopenhauer, is again commented on by Simmel in his essay *Der Konflikt der modernen Kultur* (1918).

Schopenhauer is the modern philosopher who, within the deepest and decisive enquires, does not ask about any *content* of life, ideas or beings, but exclusively: What is life? What is its meaning as pure life? (Simmel 1999, 188; *translation mine*).

In early January 1912, Simmel gives three seminars in Vienna with the title “Die Philosophien des Lebens,” in which he basically tackles the question of *Lebensphilosophie* through three philosophical portraits, namely “Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Bergson” (Simmel 2016: 630) as he had planned (and testified to) in a letter to his colleague Heinrich Rickert in late 1911 (Simmel 2008, 1020-1022). In the *Sommersemester* of 1915, he lectures then Strasbourg on the “Ethics in Schopenhauer’s Philosophy” (Simmel 2016, 622).

During this period, Simmel is constantly considering the topic of the “Tragödie der Kultur,” that is the understanding of modernity under the conflict between life and its forms, primarily the *cultural* forms. To Simmel, modern culture resembles an “illness.” In many of his works from this period, Simmel focuses on the concept of the “pathology of culture” [*Pathologie der Kultur*] (Simmel 1999, 40). This formulation is formally presented in the essay *Die Krisis der Kultur*, that is Simmel’s speech in Vienna in 1916, and it supports the other systematic formulations found in “Tragödie der Kultur.” The unrestrained character of the increasing means illustrates the impermanence of any given end and this is a sign of the illness infecting our culture. The more the means increase, that is the *intellectualization* or rationalization of life addressed by Simmel in *Philosophy of money*¹³, the more we lose sight of our purposes and ends. This process has an immediate effect on our

personal lives because we gradually lose the emotional disposition toward life and the character of our personality.

In his essay “The Individual Law”, Simmel uses the metaphor of the dialectics health and illness, borrowing from an ancient Jewish proverb, to explain the relationship between individuality and universality within the morality issue. The original proverb suggests that it is perplexing that God created a manifold of illnesses yet only one health. Simmel defined health as the “normal functionality of any organism towards its minimal particular parts” (Simmel 1999: 369); similarly, morality and culture can be canonically considered as an organism in which each particular aspect serves to function the whole. Modernity well-illustrates the illness described in *Die Krisis der Kultur*.¹⁴

The most persuasive defence of Simmel’s definition of culture is found in “Der Begriff und die Tragödie der Kultur” (1911). Culture consists of two interweaving components: the subjective spirit and the objective products. The path to cultural acquisition requires the subjective spirit to abandon its “subjectivity.”¹⁵ the tragedy of culture exists in the destructive and erosive power of these objective elements over the subjective “forces.” Hence, Simmel asserts:

It is the concept of culture consisting of the spirit [*Geist*] creating something independently objective through which the development of the subject takes its path from itself to itself; but precisely that integrating and culture-conditioned element is predetermined by a self-development, which still consumes the forces of the subjects, still drives subjects on their way, without thereby leading them to the peak of themselves: the development of the subjects can no longer now get the path given by those objects; nevertheless, following them, it runs down a dead end or in an emptiness of innermost and most intrinsic life (Simmel 2001, 219; *translation mine*).

This is the tragic “achievement” of the modernity and the paradoxical path of cultural forms. This conviction becomes more and more seductive and effective during the era of the World War I. That which gives stability and identity (e.g. values such “labour,” “love,” “thinking,” “willing” and “religiosity”) is destined to waver and fail; when the victory of a nation becomes the primary aim, the nude life turns into a simple means.

This inversion of the “teleological series” is at the core of the mechanism in modernity and Schopenhauer certainly is the *maître à penser* of many intellectuals who shared this idea. Splengler, Weber, Klages, and many more of Simmel’s contemporaries were convinced of this “teleological inversion” in the modern *Zeitgeist*. I use the term “teleological inversion” to denote the Simmelian theoretical framework according to which a totality (e.g. social, cultural, individual) is organized in order to respond to the pure mechanisms of the mean (to become an autonomous end) and their *formal* constellation: the “money” paradigm, or the reciprocal processes within an immanent logic mediated by forms.

In conclusion, the tragedy of culture consists of the loss of the subjective recognition towards any objectivation (that is, cultural forms) and, vice versa, the culture of tragedy is the achievement of the inversion of the teleological series as well as the admission that the world has lost its meaning and its values. Modernity requires a constantly increasing “differentiation” variable and an individual predisposition to “reciprocity.” This is not only the tragic destiny of Western society but can also be envisioned as a positive factor that enables more novel forms of subjectivity and individual liberty to flourish, and thus weakens the pessimistic view of Simmel’s tragedy of culture. This represents surely a challenge for social theory, as it testifies not only to the claim of an increasingly “objectified” society but also the possibility of new forms of subjectivities. In this regard, we can look back to Simmel and refer to his work toward building a new critical theory in the path of the dialectics of the tragedy of culture and the new forms of social lives in the era of globalization. Axel Honneth literally affirms that the social philosophy has “[...] to reveal the moral constraints underlying social interaction on different levels in this form of society.” In other words, social philosophy should represent “[...] the general idea – I quote – that the inclusion of members of society always takes place through the mechanism of mutual recognition – that is how individuals learn to intersubjectively affirm one another in particular respects or facets of their personalities” (Honneth 2003, 249).

This statement could be read as an ideal persistence and corroboration of Simmel's theoretical intuitions.

NOTES

¹ Honneth identifies the birth of sociology (including Georg Simmel's theory) as the systematic answer to the modern ethical crisis, namely showing how the sociology of culture is assimilated to the diagnostician responding to a "pathology of the social" [*Pathologie des Sozialen*]. Regarding Simmel's theory, it is partially true, since the ethical issue is surely very thick and urgent, but he did not furnish any "condemnation" or "absolution" of the tragedy of culture under the meaning of a good life, as Honneth does. For Simmel, the role of sociology is neither to condemn nor to legitimize: it simply aims to explain the social and cultural realm, which he explicitly states in *Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben*.

² He is surely a "transitional thinker" in the path of a pessimistic theory on modernity and the destiny of the individuals, such as some of his eminent contemporaries such as Tönnies and Weber (Pyythinen 2008: 295).

³ In this regard, Klaus Lichtblau in *Kulturkrise und Soziologie um die Jahrhundertwende* considered Simmel as one of the most representative thinkers of his epoch (Lichtblau 1996).

⁴ Similarly, Ulrich Beck (Beck, 1997a; 1997b) and Axel Honneth (Honneth, 2002; 2010) recently described, in a different manner, the *Globalisierung-Prozess* as a self-contradictory phase of the "Second Modernity."

⁵ It substantially fits with Max Friescheisen-Köhler's systematic-diachronic division of Simmel's thought in three main areas: 1. *Soziologie*; 2. *Philosophie der Kultur*; 3. *Metaphysik des Lebens* (Frischeisen-Köhler, 1919).

⁶ In the essay *Über die Grundfrage des Pessimismus*, the decisive proof of an impossible balance between pleasure and pain is given by the irreducible incommensurableness between the two. It is inconceivable to think of compensating a pain with a calculated pleasure; there is no precise criterion (or "scale") to determine the value to assign to both. Simmel talked in economic terms, saying that it is impossible to think of ransoming a pain, as we could "pay" it with a price or change it with a pleasure (Simmel, 1989a: 11-12). The value of something is set by the relation between the available merchandise and the concrete existent money. In the case of pleasure and pain, it is impossible to set such relations because we cannot calculate a definite existent number of pleasures and pains. Simmel upheld that we also cannot define a stable value towards creating a *commercium* for pleasure and pain because "[...] the price is nothing but the analytical expression for the relationship between available money and available goods" (Simmel 1989a: 13).

⁷ It is interesting and bizarre that in German *Reiz* means "stimulus," a sensorial impulse in a physiological meaning, but also "fascination." Simmel may have used a word with double meaning intentionally.

⁸ “[...] Er wie der landläufige Pessimismus gleichsam mit einem Worte die ganze Welt nicht nur beurtheilt, sondern auch verurtheilt [...]” (Simmel, 2004: 229).

⁹ “Die Lebensphilosophie ist die herrschende Ideologie der ganzen imperialistische Periode in Deutschland [...] Die Lebensphilosophie, wie sie in die imperialistische Periode als philosophische Richtung auftritt und sich entfaltet, ist ein spezifischer Produkt dieser Zeit: der Versuch, von Standpunkt der imperialistischen Bourgeoisie und ihrer parasitären Intelligenz jene Fragen philosophisch zu beantworten, die von der gesellschaftlichen Entwicklung, von den neuen Formen des Klassenkampfes gestellt wurde”(Lukács, 1962: 351-352).

¹⁰ Extensive literature exists on this topic. I have limited this discussion to the most meaningful: H.Rickert, *Die Philosophie des Lebens. Darstellung und Kritik der philosophischen Modeströmungen unserer Zeit*, Mohr, Tübingen 1920; O.F.Bollnow, *Die Lebensphilosophie*, Springer, Berlin-Göttingen-Heidelberg 1959; R.Gorsen, *Zur Phänomenologie des Bewußtseinsstroms*, Bouvier, Bonn 1966; M.Großheim, *Von Georg Simmel zu Martin Heidegger. Philosophie zwischen Leben und Existenz*, Bouvier, Bonn 1991; F. Fellmann, *Lebensphilosophie. Elemente einer Theorie der Selbsterfahrung*, Rohwolt, Hamburg 1993. See also: H.Müller, *Lebensphilosophie und Religion bei Simmel*, Duncker&Humblot, Leipzig 1960.

¹¹ Simmel explicitly questions: “Was ist das Leben in sich Wert?” (Simmel 2012: 124).

¹² Maybe Max Scheler, who lectured in Köln (1921-22), referring to Simmel’s work, really grasped this idea when he used the word “Umdrehung” (Scheler 2005: 122) to explain the reciprocal effect between the act and the subject (i.e. between life itself and its forms or values) in the construction of knowledge and universal cognition (Ruggieri 2018).

¹³ Simmel explicitly writes: “[...] since the whole structure of means is one of a causal connection viewed from the front, the practical world too increasingly becomes a problem for the intelligence. To put it more precisely, the conceivable elements of action become objectively and subjectively calculable rational relationships and in so doing progressively eliminate the emotional reactions and decisions which only attach themselves to the turning points of life, to the final purposes” (Simmel 2004a: 435; Simmel 1989b: 594).

¹⁴ In his wartime writings, Simmel often uses a “pathological” language: it recurs when he explicitly talks about the “pathology of culture” in the essay *Krisis der Kultur* (1916) and he defines the war itself as an epidemic “fever” in *Die Idee Europa* (1915). These texts are organic developments of the Simmel’s themes and analysis of culture. Patrick Watier has remarked that the *War writings* must not be considered as atypical or extraneous to Simmel’s intellectual work (Watier 1991: 219-233).

¹⁵ “Culture arises - and this is what is absolutely essential for its understanding - by bringing together two elements, none of which it could exist for itself: the subjective soul and the objectively intellectual product. [...] So the subjective spirit has to leave its subjectivity but not its spirituality in order to experience the relationship to the object through which its cultivation takes place. This is the only way in which the dualistic form of existence -

directly set with the existence of the subject - is organized into an internally uniform relationship" (Simmel 2001: 198-199; *translation mine*).

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Bergson and the theory of natural selection

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Abstract

In this paper I compare Henri Bergson’s theoretical attitudes towards life with the ones embedded in the theory of natural selection, as found in Charles Darwin’s *Origin of Species*. I identify five “meta-theoretical attitudes” along the lines of which this comparison is made. I also argue that Bergson attempted to provide a general theory meant to solve certain difficulties of the theory of evolution by natural selection that occupied the mind of the evolutionary theorists of his time – and most notably that of the “co-ordination of parts”, found, among others, in works by Herbert Spencer and August Weismann. But the general allure of Bergson’s view of evolution is, I argue, Lamarckian (though not neo-Lamarckian!) in some crucial respects and is thus at odds with the Darwinian view. Therefore, though Bergson seems to adopt (even in a more radical form than Darwin himself) some of the meta-theoretical attitudes that are inherent to the theory of natural selection, his reintroduction of a “principle” of life (conceived of as an interiority, i.e. as a striving, tendency or impetus) leads him to positions that are, in fact, across the board opposed to those embedded in the theory of natural selection.

Keywords: Henri Bergson; Charles Darwin; natural selection; *élan vital*; anti-essentialism; anti-determinism; relativism

1. Introduction

The aim of this article is to examine the similarities and differences between Henri Bergson’s approach to the evolution of life and the theory of natural selection. But I do not aim to unpack here all the aspects of Bergson’s relationship with the theory of natural selection. Indeed, there are many questions that I will not dwell upon in this paper. Does (in Bergson’s view) the theory of natural selection explain the evolution of life

on Earth or does it leave some crucial phenomena unexplained? What strength does Bergson's critique of the theory of natural selection possess? And did this critique stem from or was it at least partly based on a misunderstanding of certain aspects of the theory of natural selection? These questions are legitimate and interesting ones, but I will not engage with them here for a number of reasons. First, because these issues have already been addressed by various authors or are in the process of being addressed (e.g. Barreau 2007; François 2020; Tahar, unpublished manuscript). But, most importantly, because these are factual issues. For Bergson, there are certain evolutionary *facts* that the theory of natural selection cannot explain (the homology of the human eye and that of the Pecten; the extreme complexity of certain organic structures; the accuracy of certain instincts) and this inability to explain is, in his view, also a fact. Also, the infinite task of interpretation of texts notwithstanding, whether or not Bergson partly misunderstood Darwin's theory is a matter of fact. Of course, on all these facts we may carry out endless pro and con debates, but at the end of the day these debates will always concern the factual adequacy of a theory to certain facts pertaining to life on Earth or the factual inadequacy of a particular reading of a particular corpus.

In this paper, I do not intend to address issues of fact, but issues of principle. My goal here is that of determining to what extent (some of) the main principles of the approach to life embedded in the theory of natural selection's are or are not embraced by Bergson's own approach to life. The way in which Bergson directly relates to the theory of natural selection – his critique of its logic, his indication of the facts it leaves unexplained – does not directly concern me here, though some of the points I will make below may shed some light on the biological sources of Bergson's critique of the theory of natural selection and of how these sources helped shape Bergson's alternative theory about the evolution of life on Earth. Here, I am more interested in determining to what extent Bergson's position and the theory of natural selection diverge with respect to their meta-theoretical attitudes towards life. In other words, the main question I will try to provide an answer to is the following: what fundamental assumptions about how life should

be theoretically approached render Bergson incapable of straightforwardly accepting the theory of natural selection?

As it has become obvious, my approach here is contingent upon the assumption that there are such “meta-theoretical attitudes” that one adopts when dealing with the problem of life and that these attitudes have such a high degree of generality that they may characterize both a scientific (i.e. biologic) and a philosophic approach to life, thus rendering a comparison between them feasible. I will not make a full-fledged defense of this assumption here, but I hope that my discussion of these meta-theoretical attitudes will show that making such an assumption is not completely without ground or promise.

In order to reach my objectives, I will first identify five meta-theoretical attitudes with respect to life that are inherent to the theory of natural selection, as it was presented by Charles Darwin in the *Origin of Species*¹ (Section 2). I will then show that Bergson seems to adhere to at least three of these attitudes (Section 3). Finally, though, I will show that Bergson’s dissent with respect to the other two attitudes distinguishes his view of life from that of the theory of natural selection in such a radical way (Section 4) that even the points of apparent agreement between the two views actually become – when seen in this new light – points of partial disagreement (Section 5).

The guiding intention of this paper is to start a discussion that would eventually allow us to provide a more accurate placing for Bergson’s theory among the biological and philosophical theories on the evolution of life, rather than simply cast him into the “orthogenesis” category (as biologists and analytic philosophers of biology too quickly do) or rather than too hastily claiming that there is a fundamental convergence between the Bergsonian and Darwinian points of view (as continental philosophers and Bergson scholars sometimes tend to do).

2. Five meta-theoretical attitudes inherent to the theory of natural selection

In this section, I will briefly describe five meta-theoretical attitudes towards life that are inherent to the theory

of natural selection, using Darwin's *Origin* as the main reference. I will discuss each of these attitudes in turn.

a) *The indifference with respect to the origin of life*

The first meta-theoretical attitude I will briefly discuss is the decoupling of the problem of the evolution of life from that of life's origin. To put it more bluntly, one of the innovations brought forth by Darwin's theory of evolution by selection is the idea that the way in which life presents itself today to our eyes – the forms it takes, its levels of organization etc. – is not dependent on the issue of how life appeared in the first place. Darwin is very clear about this:

I must premise, that I have nothing to do with the origin of the primary mental powers, any more than I have with that of life itself (Darwin 1872², 205).

The expression "I have nothing to do with" is as blunt as could be and it leaves no doubt in the reader's mind³. While this might be viewed as a secondary attitude of his, I believe it serves as a clear demarcation of Darwin's approach to the study of life from previous ones. Obviously, studying the evolution of life without reference to its origin boils down to going in the exact opposite direction to that of natural theology (e.g. Paley 2006 [1802]) and, more specifically, goes against the doctrine that each species has been created by a "special act of creation" (Darwin 1872, 44) in order to fit its conditions of existence. But Lamarck's evolutionism – against which many of Darwin's ideas may have been forged (Gould 2002, 194-95) – also required an assumption about the origin of life, and it required it precisely in order to account for the way in which life presents itself today. Indeed, if, as Lamarck teaches, life has an inherent tendency to progress, one has to explain why there are still simple forms of life on Earth today, and Lamarck's answer is that this is due to the fact that organisms at the very bottom of the ladder of the organization of life are continuously born by spontaneous generation (Lamarck 1809, 65). Darwin discusses this point and shows that his theory of natural selection does not have any difficulty in explaining the continuous existence of simple forms, but also adds, with respect to Lamarck's idea of a spontaneous generation of life that: "Science has not as yet

proved the truth of this belief, whatever the future may reveal” (Darwin 1872, 98).

Here is how Darwin defends his indifference with respect to the problem of the origin of life:

It is no valid objection [against the theory of natural selection] that science as yet throws no light on the far higher problem of the essence or origin of life. Who can explain what is the essence of the attraction of gravity? No one now objects to following out the results consequent on this unknown element of attraction; notwithstanding that Leibnitz formerly accused Newton of introducing “occult qualities and miracles into philosophy.” (Darwin 1872, 421)

Interestingly, Darwin couples here “the essence” and “the origin of life,” as if to suggest that one cannot explain how life has originated without also proposing a theory about what life is.⁴ Regardless of whether this is indeed so, it is obvious that, for Darwin, the theory of natural selection is only meant to provide an answer to the question: “how do *forms* of life *change* in time?” The theory of natural selection is not concerned with “life itself”, but only with the forms it takes (particular species, varieties, individuals etc.); and it is not concerned with how life in general has originated, but only with the modifications that its forms undergo.⁵

b) Anti-essentialism

This second meta-theoretical attitude is directly opposed to the view that, having been created by a “special act of creation,” each species remains identical with itself – i.e. its “type” is forever fixed – even though the individuals of that species may accidentally – and fleetingly – vary around the type. This sort of position involves, of course, a kind of Platonism, given that it grants a higher ontological dignity to what is general as opposed to the individual, the latter being what it is only insofar as it participates, in its own imperfect way, to the general type. According to this essentialist view, there is therefore a qualitative difference between species (there is a discontinuity between essences or *eide*) and these essences are immutable: only individuals vary, the species itself does not.

Darwin’s position that we should explain the current status of life forms by way of “descent with modification” (i.e. by

viewing each species as deriving from another species via a modification of some of its traits) is, of course, the exact opposite of the essentialist view. For him, the individuals constitute the starting point, it is the individuals that exist in the first instance and the “type” of a species is nothing more than an average taken over the individuals belonging to that species.⁶ Darwin does not shy away from this endorsement of nominalism:

I look at the term species as one arbitrarily given, for the sake of convenience, to a set of individuals closely resembling each other, and that it does not essentially differ from the term variety, which is given to less distinct and more fluctuating forms. The term variety, again, in comparison with mere individual differences, is also applied arbitrarily, for convenience sake (Darwin 1872, 42).

Two points need to be highlighted here. First, once we assume that there are no qualitative differences, but only quantitative ones, between the differences exhibited by individuals, those exhibited by more marked varieties of a species and those exhibited by species, it becomes possible to argue that the latter differences – the differences between two or more species – are obtained simply by the augmentation and fixation of the differences between individuals. The mechanism by which this augmentation and fixation are obtained is, Darwin argues, natural selection.

But Darwin also sets some limits for this pure nominalism, and these limits stem from his dynamic view of life. Indeed, contrary to the above quotation, for Darwin, it is not enough for a set of individuals to “closely resemble each other” in order to belong to the same species. The similarity of structure, no matter how great, is not enough to place these individuals in the same species. What is also required is that they have a common ancestry, a common evolutionary past: “On my theory, unity of type is explained by unity of descent” (Darwin 1872, 166). A species is thus not just a grouping of individuals based on their present similarities, but also a grouping based on a common genealogical past.

Similarly, in the case of sexually reproducing organisms, a grouping of individuals – even closely resembling ones – must also share a potential evolutionary future in order to be

grouped in a single species. Indeed, in such species, only organisms that are able to breed and produce fertile offspring together will be considered part of a single species. In other words, these organisms must *together* be the potential ancestors of possible future embranchments of life (e.g. of possible varieties, subspecies, species, clades etc.). This is how Darwin's dynamical view of life limits his own nominalism about species: "similarity" of structure is not sufficient for grouping individuals into a species; what is also required is a common evolutionary past and, for sexually reproducing organisms, also a potential evolutionary future.

However, note that this limitation of nominalism about species does not revert back to any form of "essentialism." On the contrary, it transforms the mutability of species into a necessary criterion for identifying them: given that Darwin identifies species on the basis of the past or future evolutionary trajectories of their individual members, no form of essentialism survives in his theory.

c) Anti-determinism

Darwin's anti-determinism is manifested by the significant role his theory gives to chance. To understand this role, we need to connect it to one of the crucial thought mutations operated by Darwin's theory, namely his shifting of the center of gravity of natural history from individuals to populations. Think of Lamarck's notion of adaptation: according to him, a given environmental feature will force individual organisms to alter their habits; in turn, these altered habits will alter the organism's structure and, finally, this modified structure gets, at least in part, transmitted to the next generation. The environment acts upon individual organisms here, "bending" their traits (e.g. their morphology or physiology) in this or that direction.

The theory of natural selection completely transforms the picture: it is not individuals that get adapted to environmental features, but populations. Rather than altering the habits (and consequently the structure) of individual organisms, the environment now chooses those organisms whose structure is better suited to it: it discriminates between

parts of the population (this is, of course, why the theory bears the name of natural *selection*) and thus alters the population's composition. Unlike Lamarck, for Darwin the environment modifies the average trait of a population, instead of modifying the traits of the individuals of that population.

But this conceptual shift operated by Darwin also introduces chance into the theory of evolution by natural selection: by acting on the average trait of a population, the environment will have a probabilistic effect on the population. Darwin does not emphasize this probabilistic effect too much, but his formulations do not let any doubt linger about this. Here is an example:

any being, if it vary however slightly in any manner profitable to itself, under the complex and sometimes varying conditions of life, will have a *better chance* of surviving, and thus be *naturally selected* (Darwin 1872, 3, emphasis of "a better chance" added).

Similar statements pepper the presentation of his theory in the *Origin* (e.g. Darwin 1872, 49, 63, 71, 81, 109). Their point is clear: each and every individual possessing a given trait may not survive for longer or reproduce more than a member of the population that does not possess it, but it is likely that, on average, the individuals that possess the trait will survive and reproduce better than the others. Thus, the theory of natural selection is not about deterministic forces driving evolutionary change, but about how modifications in environment have a bigger or smaller likelihood of operating changes in average population traits (and, in time, the augmentation of these changes might lead to the formation of new species).⁷ The theory of natural selection is thus intrinsically probabilistic precisely because it is concerned with the effects of the environment on populations and not on individuals.⁸

d) Eliminating vital "interiority" from evolution

The following quotation will give a first idea about what this meta-theoretical attitude consists in:

It may metaphorically be said that natural selection is daily and hourly scrutinising, throughout the world, the slightest variations; rejecting those that are bad, preserving and adding up all that are good; silently and insensibly working, whenever and wherever opportunity offers, at the improvement of each organic being in

relation to its organic and inorganic conditions of life (Darwin 1872, 65-66).

What I would like to emphasize in this fragment is the exterior relation between living and being “scrutinized” by natural selection: organisms go about their living in their own way, but over and above this living-making of each organism, there is the “silent and insensible” exterior look that evaluates each organism and compares it to the others with which it shares an ecological niche. The theory of natural selection thus institutes a coextensiveness between living (or being alive) and being weighed up and compared to other living organisms: being “scrutinised” is coextensive to being alive, the “silent and insensible” work of selection is carried out for each organism (“throughout the world” for “the improvement of each organic being”) and without cessation (“daily and hourly scrutinizing”). Each way of living is, concomitantly and necessarily, seen from the outside in order to be weighed up against other ways of living. The theory of natural selection essentially consists in seeing life in its entirety from the outside.⁹

Another way to make this point is to say that the theory of natural selection is fundamentally a theory about the traits that organisms bear, rather than about what these organisms are or do. In Aristotelian terms, we would say that the theory of natural selection is about attributes, and not at all about substances. The theory marks a shift from “being” or “doing,” to “having.” What matters is what traits organisms have and everything about these living beings is turned into a possessed trait: a way of doing things by a particular organism thus becomes a behavioral trait possessed by that organism. In Lamarck’s theory of acquired characteristics, the form taken by an organism’s offspring will depend on what the parent organism did, on its habits. In the theory of natural selection, acting one way or another is just a trait on which selection may act from the outside (and, if found advantageous, the trait will survive and spread in future generations).

More profoundly, this shift from substances to attributes consists in a rejection of any potential metaphysical “principle” that would allegedly be intrinsic to all living forms. Assuming that, today, all living forms exhibit something like

Schopenhauer's "will to live," does this mean that this constitutes a sort of "essence" of life? Not at all: it just means that this "will to live" is a trait among others that has reached fixation at some moment of the biological history of our planet. Any inherent principle that would characterize life is thus eliminated by trivialization. No "vital principle" could survive once the interiority of life is evacuated by turning the theory of evolution into a theory about attributes or traits, rather than a theory about substances or acting subjects.

e) Relativism

According to the strict logic of natural selection, there are no intrinsically good traits, there are no traits that are universally preferable to others: whether a trait is good or not depends entirely on the context, i.e. on the living conditions encountered by the organisms in question. In certain living conditions, one trait may be better than others, in other living conditions, it may be worse. A trait is only as good as the "fit" it ensures in a particular context. What takes the center stage in the theory of natural selection is not some universally preferable trait or complex of traits, nor the environment that would somehow directly change the organisms (as in Lamarck): what matters is the *relationship* between traits and environment, as only this relationship determines whether a trait is good or not. This is what I mean by the "relativism" of the theory of natural selection: the fact that there is no ontological superiority of one trait over others, but only a factual superiority that depends upon its relationship with the environment.

This relativism entails that there is no ultimate goal of evolution: natural selection does not work towards the attainment of some ultimate trait or complex of traits, it only works to improve the fit between the traits of a given population/species and the context that they happen to encounter at a particular time. Darwin says this much, for example when he states about Foraminifera that:

When advanced up to any given point, there is no necessity, on the theory of natural selection, for their further continued process; though they will, during each successive age, have to be slightly

modified, so as to hold their places in relation to slight changes in their conditions (Darwin 1872, 308).

If there is no ultimate goal of evolution, then progress is not a “necessity” according to this theory. We can thus understand why Darwin has openly claimed, in a letter to Alpheus Hyatt on December 1872, that: “After long reflection I cannot avoid the conviction that no innate tendency to progressive development exists” (see Gould 2002, 468). Again, Lamarck is the target here, with his progressive becoming of life under the influence of “the cause that progressively composes the organization”¹⁰ (Lamarck 1809, 132). But if there is no necessary progress inherent to the theory of natural selection, this does not mean that it cannot accommodate *actual* progress as long as some additional assumptions are made. Indeed, as Gould (2002, 467-79) has shown, given the predilection he granted to the biotic environment in selection (and especially to the intraspecific competition and to competition between related species) and given his assumption of a relative uniformity of the environment (with no major, radical or cataclysmic disruptions), Darwin could also see natural selection as leading to actual progress in the complexity of forms of life, i.e., in his terms, to the increase in the “the degree of differentiation and specialisation of the parts in organic beings” (Darwin 1872, 307). Therefore, relativism, in the sense used here, is not incompatible with the idea of actual progress, it is only incompatible with the idea of a necessary progress leading towards some ultimate goal or with the idea of some intrinsic tendency towards progress manifested by organic beings.

To sum up, we could say that the five meta-theoretical attitudes sketched in this section mark just as many ways of carving up the domain of the theory of natural selection: the issue of evolution is decoupled from that of the origin of life; the “steps” in this evolution are conventionally separated species, but it is the mutability of species itself that provides the limits for this conventionalism; the environment operates the selection via its interaction with the population, not with individuals, and this marks Darwin’s statisticalist type of anti-determinism; the “exteriorization” of life limits the scope of the

theory to “properties”, “characters” or “traits,” rather than to substances or acting subjects; finally, setting the relationship between environment and populations at the heart of the issue of evolution eliminates the possibility of intrinsically good traits. Anti-originarism, anti-essentialism, anti-determinism, the rejection of the “interiority” of life and relativism thus form the backbone of the theory of natural selection.

3. Common attitudes (or seemingly so)

In this section I will briefly discuss, in turn, three meta-theoretical attitudes towards life that Bergson seems – at first sight, at least – to share with Darwin.

a) Anti-essentialism

Saying that Bergson is an anti-essentialist is, of course, an understatement. One would be hard pressed to find an author more opposed to the fixity of things in general, let alone that of consciousness or life. For Bergson, becoming is, as a general rule and in all aspects of existence, more real than being. Without dwelling too much on this here, let us recall that, in *Creative Evolution*, Bergson proposes a distinction between two kinds of definitions, static and dynamical ones. A definition in the proper sense of the term may only be offered of realities that are already “made,” realities whose properties are fixed once and for all. This is precisely *not* the case for properties of life:

A perfect definition applies only to a *completed* reality; now, vital properties are never entirely realized, though always on the way to become so; they are not so much states as tendencies (Bergson 1944, 16).

Any biological property is therefore not fixed, it is only “on its way” towards completion and any essentialism (about species, about higher taxa and even kingdoms) appears to be out of the question. A conclusion that Bergson does not fail to draw, with regard to biological groups in general, by saying that “*the group must not be defined by the possession of certain characters, but by its tendency to emphasize them*” (Bergson 1944, 118).

Note the similarity with Darwin. For the latter, a species could not be identified simply as a grouping of individuals with a similar structure; what was additionally needed was the common ancestry of these individuals and, in the case of sexually reproducing organisms, also the potential to create together new evolutionary trajectories. “Defining” a species was, for Darwin, not a static endeavor of comparing traits or structures of organisms; it also implies a dynamical assessment of the evolutionary past and future of these organisms. While Bergson’s view on defining biological groups is not the same, he shares with Darwin the idea that any definition of a biological group should be made with a view towards its potential future, rather than simply on the basis of the present possession of traits.

b) Anti-determinism

Darwin’s statisticalism amounted to two theses: a) even though not all the organisms possessing a trait *t* will fare better than non-*t* organisms, it is likely that, if trait *t* is advantageous, on average, *t*-organisms will survive and reproduce better than non-*t*-organisms; b) but this “likelihood” is just what it says it is: it is not a certainty, not something that will necessarily happen, but a possibility that has a certain probability of occurring attached to it. Along with certain other conditions that I will not dwell upon here, point b) above may serve as a premise for the idea that there are no certainties in evolution, that even if we were to perfectly recreate the conditions of life of a given past ecosystem, the evolution of that experimental ecosystem may lead to different outcomes than the ones that were obtained the first time around. This thesis has been famously developed by Stephen Jay Gould’s idea that if we were to “replay the tape of life,” we would likely get a different outcome (Gould 1989; see, also, Beatty 2010). On the whole, Bergson would agree with this point: if, for Bergson, life is – like duration itself – the creation of novelty, then “replaying” it may not – and indeed should not – lead to the same outcome.

But Bergson’s anti-determinism is certainly much more radical than Darwin’s. For Bergson, determinism is an essentially retrospective view of things, a perspective one takes

by placing oneself *after* the event under consideration has taken place and asserting that this event could not have been any different than it actually was. For Bergson, such a view denies the very existence of duration by only taking into account an already completed reality and ignoring reality in the making. But a statisticalist position of the type adopted by Darwin is equally unacceptable for Bergson, insofar as it regards the future as a set of predetermined possibilities, only one of which will eventually be realized. This position also denies the existence of duration and it also amounts to a retrospective view on the considered event: there may be multiple possibilities for the future, but they are known in advance, they are already given; and, even though only one of them will be realized, nothing is created, nothing new appears. We are dealing here with nothing more than an arbitrary or, as Bergson sometimes likes to say, a “capricious” choice between multiple predetermined possibilities: with respect to human action, this very scenario had been rejected by Bergson in his *Time and Free Will*, when, along with determinism, he also rejected the doctrine of free will (Bergson 2001, 174-83). For Bergson, there can be no predetermined possibilities in life’s evolution just as there are no such possibilities in human action: “it would be wrong to regard humanity, such as we have it before our eyes, as pre-figured in the evolutionary movement” (Bergson 1944, 289). Darwin’s statisticalism is therefore too shallow an anti-determinism, in Bergson’s eyes.

c) Relativism

Bergson also provides us with examples in support of the idea that there are no intrinsically “good” traits in evolution. When, for example, Bergson wants to highlight the main directions of the evolution of animals, he does not proceed in a deductive manner, i.e. he does not try to identify, on some *a priori* grounds, the main traits of what animals “should” be; on the contrary, Bergson proceeds in an empirical manner, by trying to find out which of the numerous animal forms mark the “culminating point” of life’s main phyla. As for how we could pinpoint these “culminating points” or how we can determine

which species is more advanced than others, Bergson's main strategy is the following:

It is unquestionable, for example, that success is the most general criterion of superiority, the two terms being, up to a certain point, synonymous. By success must be understood, so far as the living being is concerned, an aptitude to develop in the most diverse environments, through the greatest possible variety of obstacles, so as to cover the widest possible extent of ground. A species which claims the entire earth for its domain is truly a dominating and consequently superior species. Such is the human species, which represents the culminating point of the evolution of the vertebrates. But such also are, in the series of the articulate, the insects and in particular certain hymenoptera (Bergson 1944, 147-48).

Thus, there are no intrinsically superior traits; superiority must be determined on empirical grounds, on grounds of the survival success that the traits bring about, which Bergson identifies with the ability to develop in heterogeneous environments, to overcome the various obstacles raised by these environments and consequently to thrive in vast geographic areas. According to these criteria, in Bergson's eyes, the human species and eusocial insects are the culminating points of animal evolution.

Note that this superiority is "relative" in two important ways. First, it is relative to the environment, in the sense that the superior species is the one that manages to thrive in the more diverse environments and on the largest area or areas. Second, it is relative to other species, given that "superiority" is a comparative term: a species is only superior with respect to other extant species, just like a trait is not "good" in itself, but only *better* by comparison with other extant traits.

Incidentally – and interestingly – let us note that Bergson also provides a second criterion for superiority, a chronological one. Here is Bergson's argument: "On the other hand, a group of species that has appeared late may be a group of degenerates; but, for that, some special cause of retrogression must have intervened. By right, this group should be superior to the group from which it is derived, since it would correspond to a more advanced stage of evolution." (Bergson 1944, 148) Though Bergson does not insist much on this – only noting that man seems to be the last development in the Vertebrate

phylum and that Hymenoptera are the last one in the Arthropod phylum, with the exception of the “parasite” or “degenerate” order of Lepidoptera (*ibid.*, 148) –, it is worth noting that this secondary criterion is somewhat similar with Darwin’s endorsement of *actual* evolutionary progress, as discussed above. The difference is that, for Darwin, this actual progress was based on the theory of natural selection *when combined with* the assumption of the all importance of biotic competition in the struggle for life and with the assumption of relative geological uniformity. For Bergson, the idea that, in evolution, what comes later is “by right” better (unless some intervening factor of degeneration kicks in) seems to be undergirded by the conviction that what comes later corresponds to a new creative impulse that propagates itself in the most recent life forms. But this point of divergence already brings us on the threshold of the main differences between Bergson’s position and the theory of natural selection. To this we now turn.

4. Diverging attitudes towards life

The greatest difference with respect to the theory of natural selection undoubtedly consists in the Bergsonian principle of all life, the “*élan vital*.” And pointing out that Bergson did demarcate himself from vitalism – and even refused the notion of “vital principle” – is not a valid objection here. Indeed, in the two passages where Bergson seems to push back against vitalism, he is, in fact, only rejecting certain forms of vitalism, thus clearing the path for his own version of it.¹¹ In the first passage (Bergson 1944, 48-50), he simply deplores the fact that the forms of vitalism of his day constitute a kind of fragmentary finalism, a finalism that is deemed internal to each individual organism (each organism having a “vital principle” coordinating all its parts for the organism’s own sake). Bergson shows that such a position is problematic (given that it is nearly impossible to trace the diachronic and synchronic boundaries between living individuals) and goes on to state that “if there is finality in the world of life, it includes the whole of life in a single indivisible embrace” (Bergson 1944, 50). Instead of a miniaturized “vital principle” for each living

individual, we should, Bergson argues, look for a vital principle that allows us to make sense of life as a whole.

The second passage where Bergson demarcates himself from the vitalisms of his day deals with the way in which we should conceive the relationship between matter and the vital principle. Instead of thinking that the vital principle is a kind of “skilled foreman” (Bergson 1944, 246) that coordinates the countless bits of material that are needed to create living forms, we should, Bergson argues, see matter simply as the flipside of vital activity, as the decaying part of the simple acts that are the source of life and of its evolution. Matter and the “vital principle” are not two realities that exist independently of one another and that influence each other from the outside, with the latter coordinating the former as a “skilled foreman” would; on the contrary, matter is simply the inner limitation of the “vital principle.” For Bergson, therefore, vitalism is not wrong in postulating a “vital principle;” rather, it is wrong in the way it portrays the relationship between this principle and matter.

It follows that Bergson’s “vital principle” cannot be a “substance” of any sort, a substance that would complement (inform, model or coordinate) matter. This principle can only be a “consciousness,” which, for Bergson, always means a series of synthetic acts.¹² While the theory of evolution essentially deals with attributes or properties that organisms possess, for Bergson life and its evolution is a matter of acts, the simple acts whose paradigmatic example is provided by the one of the invisible hand moving through iron filling¹³ (Bergson 1944, 106-107). When an invisible hand moving through iron filling arrives at the end of its effort, the filling will automatically take the shape of the hand. This is not because some force – be it chance accompanied by selection (as Darwinians would say) or a vital principle (as finalists or vitalists may say) – has set about arranging each and every one of the individual bits of iron in this pattern. Rather, it is because the form that the filling takes is just the flipside of the hand and this is due to the fact that the filling is the environment through which the hand moves, i.e. the resistance that the hand encounters. The organs of living organisms – the eyes of various species, as per Bergson’s famous example – are thus not obtained by painfully

arranging and coordinating infinitesimal parts; on the contrary, the very different eyes of evolutionary history always appear fully coordinated, fully formed, as so many different arrests or fixations of a unique “progress towards vision” (Bergson 1944, 107) that is an inherent tendency of the *élan vital*.¹⁴

Let me note that, with this daring hypothesis that may seem overly speculative today, Bergson aims to provide an answer to problems that were occupying the minds of evolutionary theorists of his day. The issue of the “co-operation of parts” in evolution was at the center of a dispute between Herbert Spencer and August Weismann in 1893¹⁵. For Spencer (1893), any modification of an already existing organ or tissue may not be useful or even viable unless it were coordinated with a whole host of other adjoining (or sometimes not) organs or tissues. A viable variation in a part of the organism would thus have to be accompanied by a myriad of coordinated variations in other parts of the organism and, for Spencer, this marks an important limit for the theory of natural selection (at least when superior or more complex organisms are our focus); the only way out of this difficulty is, for Spencer, the theory of the inheritance of acquired characteristics. In turn, Weismann (1893, 318-19) argues – following an argument from Darwin’s *Origin* that he curiously fails to quote – that the case of neuter insects clearly shows that the inheritance of acquired characteristics is not a requirement for the radical anatomical modifications that appear in various lineages. In certain ant species, for example, worker and fighter ants have over time become very different from one another even though they extremely rarely, if at all, reproduce. Therefore, even admitting that worker or fighter insects may acquire certain characteristics during their existence, they cannot pass these modifications down to future generations. Weismann concludes that natural selection remains the only valid explanation for the coordinated modifications of parts, but openly admits that, when it comes to the manner in which such complex coordinated variations are obtained in functional organs, “we know, indeed, nothing at all but the chief foundation of the process” (Weismann 1893, 320). This is a striking, though by no

means singular, admission of ignorance made by Weismann in this article.

Bergson does not quote this debate. But there are reasons to believe that its central issue spurred Bergson in his own proposal of a view of evolution. First, Bergson's expression of "co-ordination of parts" (e.g. Bergson 1944, 72, 74-75) and Spencer and Weisman's expression of "co-operation of parts" refer to this exact same problem¹⁶. Second, the issue of the "co-ordination of parts" is at the very heart of Bergson's critique of Darwin. Rather than saying that selection cannot explain co-ordination (as Spencer did), Bergson claims that, in order to explain how an organ or tissue may remain viable despite variation in one of its parts, Darwin is forced to presuppose this variation "insensible". But then, Bergson argues, Darwin is incapable of explaining how these variations may be accumulated over time in a directional manner: because these variations are insensible, selection may not account for their accumulation (Bergson 1944, 72-73). Third, Bergson's view of evolution seems geared precisely towards solving the issue of co-ordination of parts and the solution he proposes is that an organ is not formed by painstaking accumulations of infinitesimal modifications, but is formed in one piece, by one single movement:

In reality, the cause, though more or less intense, cannot produce its effect except in one piece, and completely finished. According as it goes further and further in the direction of vision, it gives the simple pigmentary masses of a lower organism, or the rudimentary eye of a *Serpula*, or the slightly differentiated eye of the *Alciope*, or the marvelously perfected eye of the bird; but all these organs, unequal as is their complexity, necessarily present an equal co-ordination (Bergson 1944, 106-107).

A similar statement reads:

the materiality of the organ is made of a more or less considerable number of mutually coordinated elements, but the order is necessarily complete and perfect. It could not be partial, because, once again, the real process which gives rise to it has no parts (Bergson 1944, 106).

These three points provide ample support for the conclusion that, far from being a mere metaphysical fancy, Bergson's position was aimed at proposing a solution for

difficulties that evolutionary theorists of his day clearly recognized as such.

The general outlook of evolution that stems from adopting the “*élan vital*” as a vital principle presents some strikingly Lamarckian features often neglected by the Bergsonian exegesis¹⁷. Let me state, though, that by “Lamarckian” I refer here to Lamarck’s original views, and not to the partial reading of them that is often made today and was already often made in Bergson’s time. For Lamarck, the evolution of life was the work of two main factors. The first one is “the cause that incessantly tends to compose the organization” (Lamarck 1809, 132), which is responsible for the progressive evolution or “improvement of the organization plan” (*ibid.*, 160) of the forms of life on Earth. The second is what Lamarck succinctly calls the “influence of circumstances”: changes in environment bringing about changes in the habits of organisms (e.g. in their using or disusing organs), which in turn modifies their anatomy and – by inheritance of acquired characters – the anatomy of their descendants. If only the first of these two factors had acted, the results of evolution would have offered us the spectacle of a “nuanced and regular gradation” (*ibid.*, 160). We would have witnessed an “everywhere very-regular” progression (*ibid.*, 132) were it not for the influence of circumstances that intervenes and sees the progressive work of nature “often altered, countered and even changed in its direction” (*ibid.*, 160).

Bergson, in his turn, would say that “the act by which life goes forward to the creation of a new form, and the act by which this form is shaped, are two different and often antagonistic movements” (Bergson 1944, 142). Indeed, “evolution in general would fain go on in a straight line” (*ibid.*, 141), but “each particular species, in the very act by which it is constituted, affirms its independence, follows its caprice, deviates more or less from the straight line, sometimes even remounts the slope and seems to turn its back on its original direction” (Bergson 1944, 20). This “caprice” or independence is, in other places called “convenience”, the convenience of adapting as best as possible to local environmental conditions instead of pursuing further directions of life in general: “each of

the species, through which life passes, aims only at its own convenience. Absorbed in the form it is about to take, it falls into a partial sleep, in which it ignores almost all the rest of life; it fashions itself so as to take the greatest possible advantage of its immediate environment with the least possible trouble” (ibid., 142). In a very Lamarckian (and decidedly anti-Darwinian) fashion, “adapting” to environmental conditions is a deviation, a side alley, and not the main evolutionary alley. The definitive formulation given by Bergson about this fundamental gap between the act by which life sets about creating a new form and the act by which a species is born is certainly the following: “The truth is that adaptation explains the sinuosities of the movement of evolution, but not its general directions, still less the movement itself. The road that leads to the town is obliged to follow the ups and downs of the hills; it *adapts itself* to the accidents of the ground; but the accidents of the ground are not the cause of the road, nor have they given it its direction” (Bergson 1944, 113-14).

This ties in with a second important Lamarckian feature. Given that the progressive order of life as it is produced by “the cause that progressively composes the organization” “had to experience various deviations in its products” (Lamarck 1809, 132) at the hand of the influence of circumstances, this progressive order may only be visible at levels higher than that of species. The “graspable degrees” in the progression of life cannot be found “in the species, not even in the genera” (Lamarck 1809, 107), but only at the level of what Lamarck calls “the main masses of the general series” (ibid.), i.e. the higher taxonomic ranks in the tree of life, “the classes and the grand families” (ibid.,108). In a very similar fashion, for Bergson, though the general evolution of life may continue through them, each species is a stop, an arrest, a deviation; in Bergson’s plastic terms, each species is “absorbed in the form it is about to take,” “partially asleep” (Bergson 1944, 142), hypnotized by its own form (ibid., 115), self-absorbed. Studying the direction of life at the level of species would lead us astray, and we need, according to Bergson, to move to a higher vantage point. So, like Lamarck who aimed to study the progression of life by analyzing the appearance and improvement of new

organs and new functions above the species level, in the “main masses” of life, Bergson would study life not at the deceiving level of the self-absorbed, locally adapted species, but at the level of the main functions of life which were, for him, its main directions: the direct fixation of energy reserves, on one side (the vegetable world), and the two ways of acting guided by instinct and intelligence, on the side of the animal world.¹⁸

Thus, studying the evolution of life is not a matter of analyzing the superficial attributes that organisms and species possess and their utility for survival and reproduction, as it was for Darwin; studying life is essentially about determining the main directions of life, i.e. what life essentially strives for. Indeed, adopting a vital principal that is specifically defined as an *élan*, as a “vital *impetus*” boils down to linking what life is at core with what life strives for: life is not a substance, nor a sum of attributes, but it is itself an *élan*, an impetus, a striving. The “being” of life is nothing else than its striving interiority, than its inner most striving-for-something: and this is why the notion of “will” makes its presence felt in a few key passages as a main determinant of the *élan* (see François 2009). Bergson thus aims to reinstate, at the center of our view of life, with one and the same movement, both a vital principle and the interiority of life, by means of “an original impetus, I mean an *internal* push that has carried life, by more and more complex forms, to higher and higher destinies” (Bergson 1944, 113, my emphasis).

But, as the term “original impetus” shows in the above quotation – and in other places in the book (Bergson 1944, 58, 97-98, 107, 277) –, the *élan* is not just the interior principle of life, but also its source. Reinstating a principle and an interiority of life also entails reconnecting the study of the evolution of life with the issue of its origin: „The profound cause [of the transformation of species] is the impulse which thrust life into the world” (Bergson 1944, 146). And Bergson does not hesitate to place this origin of life further in the past than everything we may identify as an actual life form¹⁹.

5. Consequences

One important consequence of this Lamarckian view of the evolution of life is that the meta-theoretical attitudes that

Bergson seemed to share with Darwin – and even seemed to possess in a more radical form than Darwin – need to be amended to some degree.

Let us start by discussing how Bergson's anti-essentialism needs to be nuanced. No doubt, for Bergson, no species is fixed once and for all and the idea that species would have a higher ontological dignity than individuals is also not one he shares. However, this is because species are seen by Bergson – in a similar manner to Lamarck – as accidental. Each species, in its selfishness of adapting to its local environment, in its convenient following of its own momentary interest of drawing as much as possible from the environment with the least effort, each species therefore is nothing but an accident of evolution. What is at stake in this evolution, what really matters therein is, just like for Lamarck, not to be found at the species level, but at the superior level of the grand "directions" of evolution. We thus find in Bergson's *Creative Evolution* something that might be called a deeper or "superior" (in the sense of above-species level) Platonism: when Bergson speaks of a „contrast between life in general, and the forms in which it is manifested" (Bergson 1944, 142), he is distinguishing between the inner-most tendencies embedded in the *élan vital* and the accidental manners in which each species – each form of life – is formed (even though, to some extent, these accidental "forms of life" incarnate one or more of these essential tendencies of life). Thus, each species exists insofar as it "participates" to one or more directions of life, but in incarnating it, it is also bound to – at least in part – deny it, deviate it, obscure it etc. because of the other characteristics that the "selfish" emergence of each species implies (i.e. because of adaptation). Platonism rings distinctly through this position.

Of course, we are dealing with a peculiar Platonism, one in which "life in general" (Bergson 1944, 30, 141-42, 164, 194, 269, 281) is inherently multiple, one in which the principle of life is characterized by its inner indistinct multiplicity.²⁰ Therefore, the "essentialism" at work here is far from a Parmenidian self-identity. But, in a way, this deepens Bergson's Platonism insofar as each form of life not only deviates or partly falsifies one or more inner tendencies, but

insofar as it inevitably leaves aside, it inevitably abandons one or more of these inner-most tendencies of life. Thus, every species not only deviates or partly falsifies the tendencies of life it incarnates, but also truncates life. To substantiate this, here is how Bergson describes, at one point, the evolution of life on Earth:

„It is as if a vague and formless being, whom we may call, as we will, man or superman, had sought to realize himself, and had succeeded only by abandoning a part of himself on the way. The losses are represented by the rest of the animal world, and even by the vegetable world, at least in what these have that is positive and above the accidents of evolution (Bergson 1944, 290).

What is “positive,” what is above the “accidents of evolution” that each new species brings with it is, in the vegetable world, the ability to accumulate energy, while in the non-human animal world it is the ability to act instinctively. Thus, even the human species (which, as we will see, Bergson regards as the “end” of evolution) truncates life.

This leads us to an interesting position about determinism. Evolution, for Bergson, is not and cannot be predetermined. And this, in two ways. First, the course of evolution is fully contingent and it may neither be predicted, nor “prefigured” in any way in some past state. Second, there is no predetermined end-state of evolution in the sense that there is no species that were in some way “destined” to constitute the final stage to which the previous transformations of life were to lead to²¹. But this only means that the path of evolution is contingent and that the forms of life it creates are similarly contingent. It does not mean that the main properties that these forms of life possess or that the main type of acts that characterize these forms of life are similarly contingent. Bergson even goes so far as to state the contrary, i.e. that the realization – in one form or another – of the inner-most tendencies of the *élan vital* is necessary:

“The part played by contingency in evolution is therefore great. Contingent, generally, are the forms adopted, or rather invented. Contingent, relative to the obstacles encountered in a given place and at a given moment, is the dissociation of the primordial tendency into such and such complementary tendencies which create divergent lines of evolution. Contingent the arrests and setbacks; contingent, in

large measure, the adaptations. Two things only are necessary: (1) a gradual accumulation of energy; (2) an elastic canalization of this energy in variable and indeterminable directions, at the end of which are free acts” (Bergson 1944, 278).

In this very particular sense, there is “determinism” in evolution. This determinism does not concern the course of biological transformations, nor the forms of life obtained by these transformations. Rather, it concerns or applies to the abilities of these beings or, more precisely, to the main acts that these beings are capable of staging. And, perhaps, even to the abilities that support the main ones, given that, at least in one place, Bergson argues that there is “determination” in the course of the evolution of the eye (and, consequently, of visual perception as an aid for animal action):

“Of course, the evolution of the organic world cannot be predetermined as a whole. We claim, on the contrary, that the spontaneity of life is manifested by a continual creation of new forms succeeding others. But this indetermination cannot be complete; it must leave a certain part to determination. An organ like the eye, for example, must have been formed by just a continual changing in a definite direction. Indeed, we do not see how otherwise to explain the likeness of structure of the eye in species that have not the same history (Bergson 1944, 96).

But how about Bergson’s relativism? If he may be suspected of a form of essentialism and if he may claim that some things are necessary in evolution, may we still say that he is a relativist? Yes and no. To understand why, let us take a step back. We stated above that Bergson’s relativism consisted in the idea that there is no intrinsically good trait and that an empirical criterion must be sought for the superiority of one species over another, a criterion that Bergson identifies as evolutionary “success” in the sense already discussed. But, at the end of this analysis, the main directions of life on Earth determined by Bergson were photosynthesis, on one part, and instinct (eusocial insects) and intelligence (human species). However, Bergson may later state that „in the last analysis, man might be considered the reason for the existence of the entire organization of life on our planet” (Bergson 1944, 203). Does this mean that intelligence was the intrinsically good or desirable trait that the *élan vital* sought to realize on Earth?

The answer is no. Intelligence – like instinct – is not an intrinsically good trait, and a good deal of Bergson’s work (including *Creative evolution*) consists in a critique of the illusions of intelligence: in this sense, relativism still stands in Bergson’s oeuvre.

But intelligence also overcomes the mere comparative superiority (according to which its success is its ability to lead to the occupation of diverse and vast environments) initially granted to it by Bergson. If, for Bergson, the whole movement of the *élan vital* is meant to introduce indetermination into nature or into the realm of matter, then intelligence allows the human species to *indeterminately* introduce indetermination in nature:

„The human brain is made, like every brain, to set up motor mechanisms and to enable us to choose among them, at any instant, the one we shall put in motion by the pull of a trigger. But it differs from other brains in this, that the number of mechanisms it can set up, and consequently the choice that it gives as to which among them shall be released, is unlimited. Now, from the limited to the unlimited there is all the distance between the closed and the open. It is not a difference of degree, but of kind.” (Bergson 1944, 287)

Intelligence enables the human species to imitate the *élan vital* in the sense that it enables it to change indefinitely, to constantly produce or bring forth novelties into the realm of matter. Intelligence is therefore not an intrinsically good trait, nor the end-state of some plan, but a trait that enables our species to reiterate the action of the *élan*, to reenact the *élan* by allowing it to indefinitely bring novelty into the world. Every form of life is a “continuation” of the *élan vital*, but every form of life is also a dead-end because it is not open to indefinite possibility and endless novelty. On the other hand, “man (...) continues the vital movement indefinitely” (Bergson 1944, 290): the only real continuation of the *élan vital* is the “indefinite” one. If “the spontaneity of life is manifested by a continual creation of new forms succeeding others” (*ibid.*, 96), it is only by repeating, by reiterating the *endless* creation of novelty that one can properly continue the movement of the *élan vital*. It is in this sense that the *élan* finds its “end” on Earth in the human species. And it is in this analogical sense – the human species reiterating or reenacting the openness of the *élan* – that intelligence ceases to be a merely relative trait whose

importance must be assessed based on the relationship with the environment.

6. Conclusion

I have argued here that Bergson attempted to provide a general theory meant to solve certain difficulties of the theory of evolution by natural selection that occupied the minds of the evolutionary theorists of his time – and most notably that of the “co-ordination of parts” (e.g. Spencer 1893, Weismann 1893). But the general allure of Bergson’s view of evolution is, I argued, Lamarckian (though not neo-Lamarckian!) in some crucial respects and is therefore at odds with the Darwinian view. Therefore, even though Bergson seems to adopt (even in a more radical form than Darwin himself) some of the meta-theoretical attitudes that are inherent to the theory of natural selection, his reintroduction of a “principle” of life (conceived of as an interiority, i.e. as a striving, tendency or impetus) leads him to positions that are, in fact, across the board opposed to those embedded in the theory of natural selection.

NOTES

¹ Though I will use Darwin’s *Origin* in order to spell out the meta-theoretical attitudes towards life embedded in the theory of natural selection, this does not mean that I attempt to outline here a direct comparison between Bergson and Darwin (see Miquel 2007 for a brief comparison of this sort).

² All quotations of *The Origin of Species* are from the 6th edition of the book.

³ Darwin also makes sure to make this point more than once: “How a nerve comes to be sensitive to light, hardly concerns us more than how life itself originated” (Darwin 1872, 144).

⁴ The indifference with respect to the origin is therefore linked, in Darwin’s eyes, with a meta-theoretical attitude that I will discuss below, namely the elimination of any “vital principle” from the study of life.

⁵ Darwin even famously leaves open, in the concluding chapter of the *Origin*, the possibility that God has been at the origin of life on Earth. But this indifference to whether science or theology should solve the issue of the origin only serves to emphasize the extent to which it is decoupled from the issues of interest to the theory of natural selection.

⁶ If we take varieties (or subspecies) into account, the “type” may be seen as the older variety that has given way to the other varieties.

⁷ This is why C. S. Peirce (1955, 7) could state that: “Mr. Darwin proposed to apply the statistical method to biology. The same thing has been done in a widely different branch of science, the theory of gases.”

⁸ Elements of what I call Darwin’s anti-essentialism and anti-determinism are sometimes grouped together under the term “population thinking” (Mayr 2002, 80-81). But things are clearer if we take care not to fuse together these two meta-theoretical attitudes (see Hey 2011).

⁹ In Jeler (2012), this amounts to adopting a third-person perspective on life.

¹⁰ More on this in Section 4 below.

¹¹ Recall that, in a letter to Harald Höffding, Bergson counted himself among the vitalists (Höffding 1916, 161).

¹² For more on this point, see Worms (2004, 58-88), Francois (2009, 67-69), Jeler (2019, chapter 7).

¹³ The way natural selection acts is often compared to the manner in which global patterns may be obtained through individual actions that have no concern other than themselves, i.e. to Adam Smith’s “invisible hand” theory. It is ironic that Bergson takes the “invisible hand” expression literally and uses it against the theory of natural selection.

¹⁴ As a parenthesis, let me add here that Bergson’s idea that the eye of a particular species is a particular “arrest” of a unique progress towards vision is facilitated by his idea from *Matter and Memory* that our vision is simply the limitation of a vision that is, by right, unlimited, i.e. of a vision that has access to (“sees”) the whole universe. If we were to speak of a different organ than the eye, Bergson’s evolutionary view might become less convincing in the absence of additional theoretical props. Deleuze and Guattari’s (1972) idea that the main act of desiring machines is that of stopping or fragmenting a flux that is, by right, unlimited may be traced back to this Bergsonian idea.

¹⁵ Let me add that this problem of the coordination of parts dated back at least to Joseph John Murphy (1869). And to St George Mivart (1871), who quotes Murphy on this issue. Whether Bergson arrived at this problem by reading Mivart or by way of the debate between Spencer and Weismann or by some other way is an issue I will not directly tackle here. But I insist here on Spencer and Weismann because they are crucial references for Bergson in *Creative Evolution*.

¹⁶ Murphy (1869) also uses “co-operating parts” in the same sense and his version of this argument is extensively quoted by Mivart (1871), one of Bergson’s other potential sources on this issue.

¹⁷ But one paper that does seem to underline the Lamarckian inspiration of Bergson’s view of life – though in a different manner to the one I adopt here – is François (2016).

¹⁸ These similarities between Bergson and Lamarck should not deter us from seeing their significant points of divergence. One of them consists in their contrasting views on materialism. Another one stems from Bergson’s rejection (following Weismann) of the inheritance of acquired characters. As counterintuitive as it may sound for us today, in accepting that the impetus of life towards the creation of new forms makes its present felt in sexual cells, Bergson’s position might be baptized a “Weismannian Lamarckism.”

¹⁹ “Such may have been the condition of life in our nebula before the condensation of matter was complete, if it be true that life springs forward at the very moment when, as the effect of an inverse movement, the nebular matter appears” (Bergson 1944, 280).

²⁰ “Such is my inner life, and such also is life in general. While, in its contact with matter, life is comparable to an impulsion or an impetus, regarded in itself it is an immensity of potentiality, a mutual encroachment of thousands and thousands of tendencies which nevertheless are ‘thousands and thousands’ only when once regarded as outside of each other, that is, when spatialized. Contact with matter is what determines this dissociation. Matter divides actually what was but potentially manifold; and, in this sense, individuation is in part the work of matter, in part the result of life’s own inclination. Thus, a poetic sentiment, which bursts into distinct verses, lines and words, may be said to have already contained this multiplicity of individuated elements, and yet, in fact, it is the materiality of language that creates it” (Bergson 1944, 281-82).

²¹ “Life, we have said, transcends finality as it transcends the other categories. It is essentially a current sent through matter, drawing from it what it can. There has not, therefore, properly speaking, been any project or plan. On the other hand, it is abundantly evident that the rest of nature is not for the sake of man: we struggle like the other species, we have struggled against other species. Moreover, if the evolution of life had encountered other accidents in its course, if, thereby, the current of life had been otherwise divided, we should have been, physically and morally, far different from what we are. For these various reasons it would be wrong to regard humanity, such as we have it before our eyes, as pre-figured in the evolutionary movement” (Bergson 1944, 289).).

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Abū Bakr ar-Rāzī on the Progress of Knowledge

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Abstract

Abū Bakr ar-Rāzī's intense philosophical activity started after more than a century since the enormous corpus of Greek science and philosophy was translated into Arabic, and the philosopher's thought bears witness to the assimilation of the legacy of Late Antiquity, through the multiple influences present in his work: from the Galenic medical texts, the Platonic tradition, or Hellenistic science. In this paper I will outline ar-Rāzī's attitude towards the epistemological relevance of the philosophical tradition, as it was transmitted to the Islamicate civilisation. I will analyze the influence of Ancient philosophy on a particular topic of ar-Rāzī's thought: the eternity of the world. The chosen topic allows to clarify ar-Rāzī's position in the debate regarding the eternity of the world, but also to assess the influence of Galen on this issue.

Keywords: Abū Bakr ar-Rāzī, arabic philosophy, natural philosophy, Galen, Science, epistemology, eternity, history of science

Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Zakariyyā ar-Rāzī (lat. Rhazes) was a physician and philosopher active in 'Abbāsīd Baghdad and in the city of Rayy in the second half of the ninth century and the first decades of the tenth century. While in the Latin West only his medical treatises were translated, in the Arabic philosophical tradition he remained known for his scientific view opposed to Neoplatonic and Aristotelian mainstream modes of thought, but also for his radical view of the legitimacy of prophecy. His philosophical work is an expression of ninth-

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century Arabic humanism, and it is inspired by both the tradition of ancient Platonism and the natural philosophy of Galen. Ar-Rāzī proposed an original explanation of the origin of the world, in which four other eternal realities are associated with a divine principle: the universal soul, absolute matter made up of atoms, absolute space and time. In addition to his critique of revealed religions, the doctrine of the five principles is the reason for the hostility of Muslim theologians and philosophers towards ar-Rāzī.

By the time ar-Rāzī became a recognized intellectual in the philosophical circles of Baghdad, the cultural policy of the ‘Abbāsīd caliphs al-Manṣūr (754-775), al-Mahdī (775-785) and al-Ma’mūn (813-833) had already materialized in the massive translation of the Greek-language philosophical and scientific corpus. Once the ancient heritage, but also the scientific contributions of the Iranian and Indian space were assimilated by the ‘Abbāsīd culture, intellectual phenomena peculiar to the Islamic world appeared very quickly.

The influx of Hellenistic science and philosophy modified deeply the Islamic culture of the 8th-9th centuries, by causing highly original intellectual phenomena, which were at the same time indebted to the scientific and philosophical inheritance of Late Antiquity. In ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān Badawī’s terms, this appropriation of Greek philosophy meant at first an almost unanimous acknowledgement of Hellenistic superiority in science and philosophy, which resulted in Greek thought permeating all strata of Arabic culture (Badawī 1968, 13; Gutas, 1999a).

Naturally, ar-Rāzī’s work is clearly influenced by Greek thought, but it is also true that his activity can be ascribed to a tendency of reevaluating Ancient philosophy and of replacing classic texts belonging to that tradition with original contributions (Gutas, 1999a, 153)¹. In this paper I intend to show what relation ar-Rāzī had towards this scientific heritage, and in what degree his theoretical borrowings, which are manifest in his philosophical vocabulary and his choice of themes, are just doctrinal building blocks that ar-Rāzī adopted without modifications, or whether because of his tendency of clashing with authority he overthrew the same theoretical assumptions

that his contemporaries accepted without reservations. Before answering this question, I have to describe first ar-Rāzī's beliefs regarding the process of knowledge acquisition.

In one *mağlis*^{un}, i.e. a public debate, in which ar-Rāzī confronted the Ismaili missionary Abū Ḥātim ar-Rāzī, the two discussed about the historical progress of knowledge and the place of ar-Rāzī in this history. Although perhaps it was not Abū Ḥātim's intention, the initiator of this debate, one of the aspects they turn to in their discussion is whether knowledge was obtained once and for all in the distant past or it is a matter of constant historical development. In accordance with the tenets of his Ismaili beliefs, Abū Ḥātim thinks that truth was revealed in the past through the vehicle of revelation, and that with regard to this truth there is no intermediary attitude between uncritical acceptance and apostasy. Therefore, the bone of contention between them is a thesis for which apparently ar-Rāzī was famous, and to which Abū Ḥātim alludes in the following text:

(1) I debated him at another learned assembly and said, "Tell me about the basis of your belief in the Five Eternals: the creator, the soul, substance, space, and time. Is this a view that you and earlier philosophers hold in common, or is it one where they disagree with you?"

(2) He said, "In point of fact, ancient philosophers hold diverse views on this matter. But I was able through diligent examination and investigation of their principles to deduce this view, arriving at a truth that is irrefutable and inescapable."

(3) I said, "Why is it that the minds of these philosophers were inefficient and their views diverged, although you claim that they were independent thinkers who had occupied themselves exclusively with philosophical inquiry to the point where they attained knowledge of very complex sciences and became real experts and intellectual paragons? Nevertheless, you allege that you have attained what they failed to attain by constant inquiry into their systems of thought and their writings, although they are your leaders and you are their follower. And all because you studied their systems and examined their principles and learned their books?! How is it possible that the follower is superior in rank to the one followed, that the one being led is more proficient in wisdom than the leader?"

(4) He said, "I shall argue here in a manner that will convince you that the matter is as I say it is, and so that you can distinguish right from wrong in this affair. Know that if every later philosopher

applies his full energy to philosophical inquiry, does so diligently, uses independent reasoning, and investigates those issues over which philosophers' views diverge because of their complexity and difficulty, he would acquire the knowledge of predecessors, digest it, and arrive through his intelligence, intensive inquiry, and investigation at different conclusions. This is because he would have mastered the knowledge of his predecessors, become aware of other valid conclusions, and preferred them. For the process of investigation, examination, and independent reasoning necessitates augmentation and excelling." (Abū Ḥātim ar-Rāzī 2011, 8-9)

Ar-Rāzī's general line or reasoning is familiar to those accustomed to the regular interpretation of scientific progress in ancient and medieval philosophy. On that account, scientific knowledge implies an accumulation process in which the theoretical contributions of the newcomers are added to the body of knowledge obtained by the previous researchers. The textual source of this positive view on scientific discovery is identifiable in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, α, 1, 993a29-b11, where Aristotle envisions a historical process whereby a community of researchers constantly approximate the truth making use even of minor contributions and errors, since those too play a role in discovering the truth. Ar-Rāzī might have read the said passage in the Arabic translation made by Uṣṭāṭ, one of the translators of the al-Kindī circle, in the second half of the 9th century.²

Unlike the layout of the books of *Metaphysics* found in the Greek version, the Arabic tradition of *Metaphysics* placed book α in the opening of the treatise, which accidentally granted the passage mentioned above the status of a research programme for philosophy in the Islamicate culture. For instance, al-Kindī's *On first philosophy (Fī l-falsafati l-ūlā)* has as one of its starting premises the same thesis of the history of thought as an ongoing common research project (al-Kindī 2012, 11). Furthermore, this idea seems to have been diffused by more than one route in muslim intellectual circles, since a popular text, namely Alexander of Aphrodisia's epilogue to his *On the Principles of the Universe (Fī mabādi'i l-kullī)*, reiterates the need for adopting a "critical, but constructive stand" in science (Gutas 2014, 245). According to Gutas, this treatise influenced the attitude toward the philosophical tradition of Avicenna (Gutas 2014, 248), but perhaps it played a role in shaping ar-Rāzī's beliefs as well. On

this account, it would be hard to deny the influence of the Aristotelian tradition on ar-Rāzī.

Furthermore, Gutas suggests that a group of other texts, pertaining to the Alexandrian tradition, might have had an impact on ar-Rāzī's view on knowledge as a gradual process of acquisition (Gutas 2014, 240). Nevertheless, a nuanced interpretation of the debate recorded by Abū Ḥātim, which would take into account also ar-Rāzī's personality as a scientist, might eventually intimate that ar-Rāzī adopted in fact a different view of the historiography of philosophy, one in which he departs from a continuist theory. In this regard, one can highlight the possible meanings of the term *aṣl^{um}* (translated with "principle" in the English version) in the specific context of the confrontation between ar-Rāzī and Abū Ḥātim. In the plural, the term refers to the fundamental principles, the axioms or the rules of a certain science (Wehr, 1993, 23). Indeed, in the Arabic philosophical vocabulary the term received this meaning by way of the translation of the Aristotelian corpus. One of the Greek terms that were transposed in Arabic through this word was ὑπόθεσις, which has the frequent meaning, in the Aristotelian texts, not of hypothesis in the modern acception, but of assumption.³ Consequently, philosophical activity acquires at ar-Rāzī the meaning of identifying the fundamental assumptions of its predecessors, so as to highlight their theoretical shortcomings and to eventually overcome these by proposing alternative *'uṣūl^{um}* or fundamental assumptions of the respective domain of knowledge.

In accordance with this interpretation, ar-Rāzī's reply to Abū Ḥātim's question would suggest a view on the development of science in which the piecemeal accumulation of knowledge is fractured by eventual changes of the assumptions adopted by the philosophers. These replacements of the theoretical principles of a science take place when one philosopher criticizes his predecessors and strives to put knowledge on a more solid ground. Without neglecting the danger of anachronism, I see a conceptual resemblance between ar-Rāzī's argument and the modern concept of scientific paradigm proposed by Thomas Kuhn (Kuhn 1962).⁴ For Kuhn, a paradigm designates the whole of scientific theories, methods of

research, scientific achievements and examples which, through the consensus of the practitioners of a certain science, forms the normative model of engaging in scientific research which is considered valid in that specific domain. A paradigm is replaced by another when one or more than one of the scientists abandon the fundamental presuppositions of that science.

There are, of course, major differences between ar-Rāzī's concept of science and the Kuhnian theory of scientific revolutions. In the case of ar-Rāzī, since the domain of inquiry is philosophical, the effort of overcoming the theoretical principles of past philosophies is mainly conceptual and does not involve reevaluating research practices, types of experimentation etc., as it happens in the case of the sciences taken by Kuhn as examples. Next, in the modern context a paradigm is grounded in the *tacit* consensus about certain propositions, while for ar-Rāzī assumptions (*'uṣūl^{um}*) can be explicitly put at the core of a philosophical theory; such is the case of the assumptions he explicitly assents to with regard to his theoretical beliefs.

Therefore, one can understand ar-Rāzī's philosophical commitment as a program of reevaluating the main theories transmitted by Greek and Arabic tradition and of calling attention to the incongruities between the old theories and surveying phenomena anew, a fact that we can name, in a Kuhnian manner, detecting 'anomalies'. In order to showcase this argument, I will discuss a topic on which ar-Rāzī is critical towards the Graeco-Arabic tradition: the eternity of the world.

Ar-Rāzī against the eternity of the world

One of the fundamental problems that has fueled reflection in all historical periods of Greek philosophy has been the dispute between two cosmological models, one that affirms the eternity of the world, as opposed to one that postulates a temporal beginning of the universe. Within Hellenistic culture, the tension between the two models led to the creation of a rich literary corpus concerning this problem. This aporia then spread to the Islamic and Jewish worlds, with Greek philosophy and science being absorbed into these two host cultures, where the revealed message of monotheistic religions led to a long

process of accommodating the ideas of Hellenistic philosophy to the spiritual climate.

One of the basic arguments in favour of the eternity of the world thesis was the absolute incorruptibility of the superlunary world, i.e. the heavens. The thesis of the incorruptibility of the heavens is a tenet of Aristotelian cosmology, since Aristotelians argue that the substance of celestial bodies is unalterable due to its lack of interference with the four elements - fire, air, water, and earth.⁵ The thesis of the indestructibility of the heavens attracts as a consequence, however, the assumption of an overall incorruptibility of the whole universe, which therefore cannot be other than eternal.

Nevertheless, the inseparable link between the indestructibility of the heavens and the eternity of the world may not seem obvious.⁶ This connection is supported by Aristotle through an argument in the first book of the treatise *De caelo*. Thus, in *De caelo* 1, 3, 270a12-22, Aristotle puts forth an argument in favour of the ungenerated nature of the supralunary region starting from the observation that circular motion, which is characteristic to this region, does not support opposites. Instead, everything that supports opposites, such as the rectilinear movements of the sublunary world, involves the transition from a state of non-being to being. Therefore, the heavens are ungenerated and incorruptible.

This argument, as well as the other arguments put forward by Aristotle against the thesis of a generated universe, was taken up by the ancient exegetes of the Aristotelian work and later transmitted to the Islamic world. In this regard, the impact that the physician and philosopher Galen had on the development of Arabic philosophy and science plays an important role. Hence, the first relationship to be investigated is that between ar-Rāzī's work and the Galenic corpus. First of all, because Galen has a double influence on the philosopher: it is the medical authority par excellence that defines his medical practice and related theoretical activity (not only in ar-Rāzī's case), and at the same time he nourishes ar-Rāzī's philosophical reflections. Second, Galen reworks Platonic philosophy — reorienting its problems and solutions — and offers an image of

Platonism that is most likely much more important to ar-Rāzī than the various versions of Arabic Neoplatonism.

The importance of Galen for the rebirth of philosophy in the ‘Abbāsīd period cannot be diminished, even if we evaluate only the symbolic importance that he acquired in the transmission of knowledge from late Antiquity to the Islamicate world. It is worth mentioning here the role played by Galen in inspiring the complex of Arabic-language narratives on the transmission of studies from Alexandria to Baghdad. There are at least four textual sources that have in common the rendering, in almost the same terms, of the transfer of knowledge from sixth century AD Alexandria, via Antioch and Harran, to the Islamic culture of the ‘Abbāsīd caliphate. As Dimitri Gutas points out, the narration of this *translatio studiorum* is another case of a fictitious reconstruction of the origin of the rebirth of science in the Islamic realm, which would ideologically justify the ‘Abbāsīd takeover of power (Gutas, 1999b, 177). But these narratives start from a real historical basis: the decision of the Alexandrian scholars towards the end of the sixth century to reorganize the method of teaching medicine, shortening the Galenian corpus and reducing it to a core of fundamental texts, conventionally called *Summaria Alexandrinorum* / *Ġawāmi‘u l-Iskandarāniyyīn* (Gutas 1999b, 174).

Beyond the assimilation of the Alexandrian model of structuring medical knowledge, which was of paramount importance for the evolution of a physician such as ar-Rāzī, it is equally important that Galen's plea to elevate the study of logic to the rank of propaedeutics of medicine is kept in the new context of ‘Abbāsīd education (Gutas 1999b, 173). As will become clear below, the understanding of logic as a tool for studying the problems of natural philosophy is an important aspect of the scientific theories that ar-Rāzī is developing. Furthermore, Galen's authorial persona is endorsed by Arabic philosophers as an example of philosophical conduct and they also have adopted Galen's personal references in his own works as a model of autobiographical writing (Gutas 2015, 49), although Galen has never composed an autobiography himself. Ar-Rāzī is no exception, since the autobiographical elements

from his work are often linked to the invocation of Galen as his model. Thus, in one of the few references to his own scientific path, ar-Rāzī expresses his early attachment to Galen, whose philosophy he prefers to the Aristotelian model (Mohaghegh 1991, 16). In the following, I will show to what extent the theoretical content of the Galenic corpus articulates for ar-Rāzī a coherent epistemological model.

The ubiquity of methodological considerations spread throughout Galen's writings is a fact recognized in the scholarship (Tieleman 2008, 49), a feature of his work that actually reflects a common interest of his time (Chiaradonna 2009a, 44). From the sum of these considerations one can reconstruct the theory of Galenian science. At the heart of Galen's theory is the belief that the safest way to obtain certain knowledge is through demonstration. In this regard, Galen is deeply influenced by Aristotle, more precisely by the theory of science that the Stagirite developed in his *Posterior Analytics* (Chiaradonna 2009a, 44). Consequently, Galen composed a treatise entitled *On Demonstration*, which survived only fragmentary. Nevertheless, some scholars have attempted, with some success, to reconstruct the theory of knowledge articulated by Galen starting from the preserved fragments of the treaty.

At the forefront stands the concept of experience. Galen does not question the veracity of the senses, as the skeptics do, because for him sensation is the medium through which we receive information about the external world and is, in fact, the basis of the opinions that people form about the natural world. In an Aristotelian manner, Galen does not discredit these opinions, but takes them as a starting point in his quest to clarify knowledge and put knowledge on a reliable basis. As Hankinson observes, the Galenian scientific model has a circular structure: a true understanding of phenomena begins with the use of rational methods to correctly understand the data provided by experience, but the results of applying these methods to experience must ultimately be confirmed by experience (Hankinson 2008, 165).

Putting aside details about the complexity of the theory proposed by Galen,⁷ I will try to establish the points of contact between this theory and the model of scientific research

assumed by ar-Rāzī in his writings. I think Galen's influence is obvious in this regard, but at the same time ar-Rāzī is making an effort to distance himself from Galen and the alleged 'mistakes' that his model may have made. In this sense, ar-Rāzī considers his exegetical work as an effort to clarify and eliminate incorrect doctrines within the Galenian corpus. Mohaghegh points out that the term *šakk^{un}*, usually translated as 'doubt', corresponds to the Greek word *aporia*, i.e. a conceptual confusion, a theoretical impasse: "Thus al-Rāzī brings up certain 'doubts' or 'objections' to problematic points in which Galen has apparently entangled himself in his writings" (Mohaghegh 1991, 108).

First of all, ar-Rāzī's critique starts with noticing an incoherence within Galen's works. Ar-Rāzī notes that Galen's view seems to have moved from unequivocally supporting the thesis of the eternity of the world, in *On Demonstration* 4, to endorsing in his later works arguments in favour of the impossibility of proving whether the world is eternal or generated, such as *On My Own Opinions* (*Prop. Plac.* 2. 1) and in *The Art of Medicine*.⁸ Ar-Rāzī seems to think that, while in *On Demonstration* Galen defends the thesis of the eternity of the world starting from the premise that a reality that is not corrupt is also ungenerated (thus, because heavens seem to be incorruptible, the world is eternal), in his last works Galen adopts an agnostic position regarding the possibility of knowing whether the world is eternal or has a temporal beginning. What seems inexplicable to ar-Rāzī is Galen's abandonment of an argument whose premises, 'the universe is incorruptible' and 'that which is incorruptible is not generated', necessarily lead to the conclusion that 'the universe is not generated'. The problem is that ar-Rāzī seems to believe that Galen continued to consider the two premises valid while opting, towards the end, for an agnosticism that refutes the conclusion which must necessarily be drawn from those premises. This is probably the source of the contradiction that ar-Rāzī sees here.

Putting aside the fact that ar-Rāzī does not question whether Galen has truly adhered to the principle 'everything that is incorruptible is not generated', ar-Rāzī produces a historically distorted reading of this issue in Galen. As

Chiaradonna argues, Galen declares from the very beginning his agnosticism regarding the generation of the world, without denying the effects of providence that refer to a benevolent Demiurge and which manifests itself in natural phenomena. This dissociation of the recognition of providence from the problem of the temporality of the world makes Galen unique in the context of the Middle Platonism of the second century AD (Chiaradonna 2009b, 246). Therefore, Galen considers neither the cosmogonic model of *Timaeus*, the source of Ancient “creationism”, nor Aristotle's critique of this dialogue in *De caelo* 1, 10, 280a28-32 to be scientifically plausible. Galen explicitly denied the logical consistency of the principle ‘everything that is incorruptible is not generated’, because something generated, but by its nature corruptible, could be maintained in existence by the action of an external cause. For Galen, this cause may be a demiurge, and for this hypothesis he uses the model from *Timaeus* as an argument.

Therefore, showing that this principle is not manifestly true, Galen also rejects the Aristotelian principle that anything generated is eventually corrupted (*De caelo* 1, 10, 280a28-32), since the permanent action of a divine agent can grant eternal being to a generated universe, even if this incorruptibility is only accidental feature of the universe, and not an essential one. The textual evidence therefore confirms that Galen's constant position on this topic was agnosticism, and makes implausible Mohaghegh's proposal to see in ar-Rāzī the source of the myth that Galen is agnostic about the eternity of the world (Mohaghegh 1971). Ar-Rāzī is rather responsible for attributing an eternalist position to Galen, which the physician never claimed.

In fact, other scholars have noticed that ar-Rāzī applies an abusive interpretation to the object of his criticism, Galen, and consequently express reservations about al-Rāzī's intellectual honesty: “Il n'est pas sûr, cependant, que Rāzī ne force pas un peu le trait pour les besoins de sa critique” (Rashed 2007, 270). As textual evidence, Marwan Rashed points to a passage from Averroes's Commentary on *De caelo*, in which the Arab philosopher quotes al-Fārābī on Galen's real position on the question of the eternity of the world (Averroes 2003, 44-45).

Adamson raises in turn questions about the purpose of ar-Rāzī's critique: "In fact he is probably misrepresenting Galen's purposes here in *On Demonstration*. Galen's approach seems to have been highly dialectical, seeking to show flaws in the arguments of other thinkers that fell short of demonstrative status" (Adamson 2016, 90). After all, as Adamson points out, the reinterpretation of Galen's text in favor of his position is a strategy encountered at ar-Rāzī within the context of explaining Galen's position on the existence of vacuum (Adamson 2014).

Furthermore, ar-Rāzī finds in Galen's argument a deviation from the methodological requirements that the ancient philosopher himself proclaimed. As ar-Rāzī describes Galen's method, this would involve analyzing the premises used in inquiring into a specific issue so as to clarify those concepts that are necessary to understand the issue. Therefore, ar-Rāzī casts doubt on the premises on which Galen builds his argument in support of the eternity of the world. Ar-Rāzī argues that the concepts which Galen presupposes in order to validate the premises of his argument are not necessary:

Next, I note that he has violated the injunction that he always orders us to obey, namely, to be careful to use and acquire premises from the positions that are *necessarily* consequential to the object of investigation. The [premise] that the magnitudes of the planets and the earth and the measurement of the water in the oceans and of the rest of the parts of the universe always remain the same, does not entail the impossibility of the corruption of the world. The corruptibility of things is not just by way of deterioration and degeneration, but also such that something can corrupt when it is the most complete and perfect it can be, like a building erected on a support once the support is removed from under it, or a tree once it is uprooted, or a fire once it is doused, and so on. So, he should not have established his conclusion by means of [the premise] he used without explaining that the universe is one of the things that corrupt only by degrading. Not only did he not pay attention to this at all, he also added to this antecedent, that is, "If the universe were corruptible," this consequent, namely, "then the [celestial] bodies... would not persist in one and the same state," as though [the universe] could corrupt as a result of this only. This consequent would conclude necessarily for this antecedent only if one adds either a stipulation to it, such that it becomes, "If the universe were corruptible through deterioration [of its parts], then the [celestial] bodies... would not persist in one and the same state," or a premise to explain that

corruption does not happen to anything whatsoever by way of deterioration alone. That, however, is not a possibility [in this case], because things may “doff” their forms not just by simple disintegration but also such that the form in substances that disintegrate and dissipate very slowly will barely corrupt at all, except through their immediate degeneration when they are the most perfect and complete that they can be, like a glass vessel when smashed with a rock, or a cliff-top fortress when the ground below it gives way after a jolt. Similarly, then, the universe may corrupt in this way, even if its form stays in the same state right up to the moment of its corruption. It is in this manner that the world corrupts according to those religious scholars who maintain that it corrupts – I mean, by immediate degeneration, not by deterioration (McGinnis/Reisman 2007, 51-52).

The central point of Ar-Rāzī’s critique in this passage is the weak construction of Galen’s argument. According to the Philosopher, the antecedent and the consequent of the hypothetical argument formulated by Galen do not sufficiently explain the conditions of validity of the thesis of the eternity of the world. The argument would be valid if its premises were complemented by the certainty that the corruption of any reality takes place only through gradual degeneration, as we can see in the natural world. But this certainty is not possible, because we have the alternative – omitted by Galen – of a kind of immediate corruption of things, which does not gradually affect their form, and which happens suddenly, either by a violent action or once their substrate is separate from them.

Ar-Rāzī’s examples are suggestive: a glass can be destroyed in one swoop, a fortress shatters once the earth that supports it moves quickly, and so on. Therefore, nothing blocks the possibility of the universe being corrupted in a similar way. Moreover, ar-Rāzī recalls a consensus of some “religious scholars” or believers (*mutadayyinūna*) who understand the corruption of the universe through such kind of immediate destruction.

It is not clear who are these *mutadayyinūna* referred to by ar-Rāzī. It may be a generic term for followers of those religions that develop an eschatology in which this world is destroyed through divine will at the end of time. This category includes Jews, Muslims, Christians, and Zoroastrians, and it is not known whether ar-Rāzī had a specific group in mind. He

probably does not want to suggest sympathy for them by invoking them, since the purpose of the counter-argument he proposes is to show the inconsistency of Galen's argument in support of a supposed eternity of the world.

As Pauline Koetschet argues, the association that ar-Rāzī makes between Galen and the eternalist position is a deliberate one, because the philosopher's intention is to show that Galen's teleological model is based on eternalist assumptions (Koetschet 2015, 167). According to Galen, the present order of the world is the manifestation of divine providence, whether the world lasts for a finite amount of time or has existed since eternity. Galen's real position is to classify philosophical disputes over the eternity of the world as unnecessary, since they fall outside the legitimate sphere of concern of the physician and philosopher. For the physician, the guarantee of a providential order is sufficient for him to understand that this order is expressed by the fact that each organ has a function, while the philosopher can explain natural phenomena by the role of each in the world's ecosystem (Chiaradonna 2009b, 246). According to Koetschet, ar-Rāzī considered teleology the main limitation of Galen's philosophy, because through it Galen cannot explain the presence of evil and disorder in the universe: if the world is the manifestation of the goodness of a Demiurge, as Galen believed, then the existence of evil raises serious problems regarding the alleged power or intelligence of such a Demiurge.

Therefore, ar-Rāzī would consciously distance himself from any explanation of the universe that has eternalist assumptions and intends to offer primarily a theodicy, an explanation of the presence of evil in a world that is supposed to be the work of a good and omnipotent Demiurge (Koetschet 2015, 197-198). Ar-Rāzī's solution is to develop an alternative cosmogony, in which the negative aspect of creation is the responsibility of an inferior principle, the universal soul, while the positive aspects of the world fall under the influence of a creative principle, the Demiurge, and the rest of the necessary conditions for the emergence of a world are filled by the existence of an absolute time and space along a primordial matter.

Koetschet's hypothesis seems extremely plausible to me. Yet I believe that ar-Rāzī's cosmogony has its origins in an attitude that aims not only at Galenic teleology or the eternalist presuppositions of the cosmologies of ancient philosophers, but also at a more general refusal on ar-Rāzī's part to give a positive meaning to the world. In this sense, the cosmological theory developed by ar-Rāzī belongs to a long current of thought that rejects the more popular tradition in which the visible universe was considered a model of the divine order that man must imitate in order to fully realize his human nature.⁹

Important moments of this paradigm are also recorded in the Arabic philosophical tradition. One can mention the cosmological reflections, inspired by Greek sources, in al-Kindī's *On the Prostration of the Outermost Body*. Al-Kindī develops in this treatise the idea that the celestial sphere is a living and rational being that donates life and rationality to the sublunary world. The focus of al-Kindī's arguments is on emphasizing the thesis that the lunar region surpasses the entire human species in nobility (al-Kindī 1998, 191, ll. 11-15). Another argument is supplied that touches on the very issue of the importance of the human species in the universe. If humans were the only beings endowed with reason, that state of affairs would indicate drastic limitations on behalf of God's power. Compared to the celestial realm, human rationality is just one example on a much smaller scale of the rationality of celestial bodies (al-Kindī 1998, 193, ll. 18-22).¹⁰

It is plausible that the mentality behind this kind of arguments is opposed by ar-Rāzī's alternative cosmology, in which one of the main aspects is a diminution of the role of the world (by metonymy, the noblest part of the universe, the heavens, is the cosmos par excellence) in the economy of individual salvation. Therefore, it is consistent with ar-Rāzī's attitude that the donation of the intellect to the soul is in his cosmology the action of the Demiurge, and not a an initial feature of the world. In this regard, the presence of rationality in the universe is not a positive fact of the universe, but an attempt by the Demiurge to redeem the fall of the soul in this world. For ar-Rāzī, it is not the universe itself that is good, but only the intellect that allows the particular soul to detach itself

from the material world. Therefore, the emphasis is on highlighting the precarious and soul-damaging nature of the universe, while the traditional line of Arabic philosophy diminished these negative aspects in favor of a positive appreciation of the universal order. This is also the accusation of Maimonides, about which, in his *Kitābu l-ʿilmi l-ilāhī*, ar-Rāzī stated that there is more evil than good in the world (Stroumsa 2009, 142).

Abū Bakr ar-Rāzī wrote in a historical period during which several intellectual circles were formed, the common goal of which was rather continuity with the Ancient philosophical tradition than establishing a radical beginning. Ar-Rāzī took part in this effort to assimilate the legacy of Classical and Late Antiquity in a manner as unconstrained as possible by the predominant religious sensibilities in the host culture, i.e. in Islamic culture. From the studied passages of his works, ar-Rāzī's critical attitude towards any authority, whether religious or philosophical, stands out. Even in the case of Galen, whose work ar-Rāzī probably appreciates more than any other corpus of texts, the philosopher maintains his autonomy of thought. However, it is clear that in some cases ar-Rāzī distorts the meaning of Galen's arguments, as in the case of the debate over the eternity of the world. The historical distance between the two authors may explain ar-Rāzī's misinterpretations, but it is also possible that the critique of Galen is related to a fundamental attitude of ar-Rāzī's thought, according to which the visible universe ceases to be considered an expression of the divine order that man must imitate in order to fully realize his human nature. Such an attitude would also explain the philosophical values of the Platonic-inspired myth conveyed by ar-Rāzī, in which the soul is foreign to this world.

NOTES

¹ Gutas includes in this category of works critical towards classic texts ar-Rāzī's *Fī šukūki ʿalā Ġālīnūs* (Doubts on Galen), Ibn al-Hayṭam' *Aš šukūku ʿalā Baṭlamyūs* (Doubts on Ptolemy), but also Avicenna's *Al-Hikmatu l-mašriqīyyatu* (Eastern Wisdom). See Gutas 1999a, 153.

² The passage survives in Arabic as a lemma inside Averroes' Commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, which can be consulted in Averroes 1938.

³ One pertinent example is a passage from *Physics* 8, 3, 253b5, where the Arabic translator renders ὑπόθεσις with 'aṣl^{un}. See Aristotle 1965.

⁴ Alastair MacIntyre transposed the concept of paradigm from its original context in the historiography of science into philosophy, operating with a few modifications. MacIntyre nuances the thesis regarding the incommensurability of scientific theories, insisting on the necessity of a core of issues common to several theories by which we can judge the performance of the theories and assess their rate of success in explaining phenomena. MacIntyre introduces this revised notion of paradigm and uses it to evaluate the various ethical theories from Antiquity to the modern ages (MacIntyre 1984). In studying medieval philosophy, the utility of the paradigm as a methodological instrument to describe premodern philosophical theses was advocated by Baumgarten 2008. I do not want to adopt the concept of paradigmatic change as a real explanation of

⁵ The main argument for designating a fifth element as the substrate of the heavens is based on observing the difference between the movements of terrestrial and celestial bodies. The former have a rectilinear motion, while the latter are naturally endowed with a circular motion. According to Aristotle, the difference in motion must be given by their different composition. The argument appears in Aristotle, *De caelo* 1, 3, 270b20-26.

⁶ It should be noted, as Edward Grant points out, that the theory of the ether as the indestructible constituent element of the heavens is an Aristotelian invention, which also went against the scientific prejudices of its contemporaries. After all, until the introduction of the Aristotelian corpus of philosophy into the Latin world, the idea of a corruptible celestial realm was implicitly assumed almost unanimously (Grant, 1994, 191-192: "The introduction of Latin translations of Aristotle's works during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries radically altered this tradition. A vital ingredient of Aristotle's "new" cosmology was the belief in celestial incorruptibility"). The situation was different in the case of Arabic philosophy, given that there the impact of Aristotelian natural philosophy was earlier and arguably stronger.

⁷ Galenic epistemology becomes a subject intensely studied by the scholars of Ancient philosophy. I point here to the following contributions: Chiaradonna 2009a, Chiaradonna 2009b, Tieleman 2008, and Hankinson 2008.

⁸ *Kitābu ṣ-ṣināʿti ṭ-ṭibbiyyati*, also known as *Kitābu ṣ-ṣināʿti s-sağīrati*, is the Arabic translation of the Galenian treatise *The Medical Art* (*Techne iatrica*), but according to Pauline Koetschet, this work does not address the issue of the eternity of the world. It is therefore more plausible that ar-Rāzī refers in this context to another Galenian treatise, *On Medical Experience*, where the physician refers indeed to this issue (Koetschet 2015, 175).

⁹ The history of this tradition and the counter-currents it stimulated from Antiquity to the Modern Ages is dealt with by the French philosopher Rémi Brague in Brague 1999.

¹⁰ Curiously, Brague omits this last argument, although it is perhaps the most appropriate illustration of the degree to which the Platonic-Aristotelian cosmological model can value the superlunary above the human species, an aspect which the French philosopher deals with at great length in his work.

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Galen of Pergamum on the Limits of Practical Philosophy

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Abstract

This article provides an analysis of Galen’s attitude towards philosophy and philosophers as manifested in two of his moral writings, namely, the letter-essay entitled *Avoiding Distress (De indolentia)* and the treatise on *The Diagnosis and Treatment of the Affections and Errors Peculiar to Each Person’s Soul (De animi cuiuslibet affectuum et peccatorum dignotione et curatione)*. While Galen’s engagement with various philosophical schools of his time has been extensively explored in the literature of the past few decades, with an emphasis on his Platonic and Aristotelian affiliations, his critique of philosophy and philosophers has only occasionally been discussed. However, a closer look at the polemical intent of the works referred to above can help us not only to illuminate more fully their content and purposes but also to locate them more accurately within the cultural milieu in which they were written. Along with an attempt to understand the reasons underlying Galen’s criticism of philosophy and philosophers, and the sources of his critique, particular attention will be given to the self-image Galen projects in these two writings. As I intend to show, by critically reviewing some philosophical therapeutic techniques (mostly Stoic and Epicurean), Galen seeks not only to debunk the philosophers’ claim of being an authoritative voice in matters pertaining to practical ethics but also to cast himself in the role of a true *moral adviser* or physician of the soul, one that actually has expertise in treating moral distress, anguish or anxiety.

Keywords: Galen of Pergamum, ancient philosophy, psychotherapy, polemics, ancient medicine, practical philosophy

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In one of his autobiographical works, entitled *On My Own Books* (*De propriis libris*), Galen provides a comprehensive catalogue of his texts, organizing his massive and wide-ranging literary output into different categories of works, based on their content and purposes. In this catalogue, a number of twenty-three texts have been classified under the head of “moral philosophy” (ἠθικὴ φιλοσοφία), from which only two survived.¹ The first one is the treatise on *The Diagnosis and Treatment of the Affections and Errors Peculiar to Each Person’s Soul* (*De animi cuiuslibet affectuum et peccatorum dignotione et curatione*, commonly abbreviated as *Aff. Pecc. Dig.*), in two books, dealing, mainly, with various philosophical theories of emotions and their therapy.² The second work is the moral essay entitled *Avoiding Distress* (Περὶ ἀλυπίας or *De indolentia*), the Greek original of which has been thought for centuries to be definitively lost, until a French researcher, Antoine Pietrobelli, discovered it in a Byzantine manuscript preserved in the library of the Vlatadon Monastery in Thessaloniki, in 2005.³ *De indolentia* is of great importance for the study of Greco-Roman antiquity as it provides substantial information about Galen’s interest in collecting and editing literary and scientific books, the reign of Commodus, the holdings of Imperial libraries, and, especially, the great fire of 192 AD, which destroyed the Temple of Peace together with many other storehouses in the *Via Sacra*.⁴ Vivian Nutton, a leading figure in Galenic studies, is probably right in characterizing the discovery of this text as “one of the most spectacular finds ever of ancient literature” (Nutton 2010, 276). Both *Aff. Pecc. Dig.* and *De indolentia* betray a great influence of the Greek philosophical tradition, showing Galen’s deep engagement with various topics falling within the sphere of ethics or practical philosophy.⁵

Galen’s relationship with different ancient philosophical schools has been extensively discussed in the literature of the past few decades, with an emphasis on his public role as “moral adviser” and “physician of the soul” (Maróth 1993); (Gill 2013); (Gill 2019); (Kaufman 2014); (Xenophontos 2014); (White 2014); (Singer 2018). As expected, particular attention has been paid to the newly discovered *De indolentia*, a text that allowed scholars

to gain a deeper insight into Galen's relation to, and appraisal of the moral doctrines developed before him. Due to its focus on various therapeutic techniques, *De indolentia* has commonly been read as an "essay with moralising intent" (Xenophontos 2014, 588), aiming to provide a "therapy of emotions" (ibid. 589), as a piece of "practical moral instruction" (Curtis 2014, 51), as an exercise in "preventive psychological medicine" (Gill 2013, 339), or as a text designed to offer a "therapy of distress" (Kaufman 2014, 276).

In this paper, I intend to take a rather different approach and situate *Aff. Pecc. Dig.* and *De indolentia* in the context of ancient polemics against philosophy and philosophers. More exactly, I will try to highlight the polemical stance of Galen's engagement with philosophy throughout these texts, an aspect which, in my opinion, has not yet received its due attention. As we shall see, on various occasions, Galen develops a critique against different philosophical tenets and therapeutic strategies, which echoes the long "quarrel" between ancient medicine and philosophy in matters concerning bodily and spiritual health, well-being, and freedom from distress. As I intend to argue, Galen's critical appraisal of philosophy may be seen as part of an overall rhetorical strategy, by which he aims not only to delegitimize the competing therapeutic techniques recommended by the philosophers of his time, but also to establish himself as an authoritative voice in the field of practical ethics and psychotherapy.

Before delving into the analysis of Galen's engagement with philosophical themes and concepts in *Aff. Pecc. Dig.* and *De indolentia*, it may be useful to remind that "the therapy of emotions" constituted one of the major streams of ancient moral philosophy.⁶ This philosophical tradition goes back at least to the Vth century BC, when Antiphon the Sophist invented a method of curing distress (τέχνη ἀλυπίας) similar to that of the physicians who provide treatments for those who suffer from bodily illness.⁷ The same theme is found in Plato's dialogues, where philosophy is frequently conceived as a path leading to happiness (e.g., *Euthydemus*, 282A-D) or as an instrument in controlling τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν, that is, "the part of the soul which is the seat of the desires and affections", as the term is defined

in the LSJ dictionary (*cf. Rep.* 439E). Socrates himself is several times portrayed as a skilful physician, able to diagnose and treat the maladies of the soul (*e.g., Charmides*, 155B; *Gorg.* 521A; *Prot.* 340E). Taking up a similar approach, Aristotle states that only philosophy can secure the conditions of well-being and asserts that philosophers alone enjoy “the good life” (τὸ ζῆν εὐδαιμόνως) (see *Protr.* fr. 95-96 Düring).

In the Hellenistic and Roman period, philosophy took an even greater turn towards ethics. How to cope with suffering, injustice, disasters, and, in short, with “any turn of events” became a central theme in the writings of the philosophers of that period. To Epicurus, for example, the practice of philosophy (φιλοσοφεῖν) is a condition for the healthy state of the soul – πρὸς τὸ κατὰ ψυχὴν ὑγιαῖνον (see Diogenes Laertius, X, 122). The genre of writings devoted to the therapy of emotions probably owes much to Chrysippus’ Θεραπευτικόν, the fourth book of his treatise *On Passions* (Περὶ παθῶν), written in the third century BC, from which only fragments survived (Tieleman 2003, 140-197). Cicero is another author who conceives of philosophy as a “medicine of the soul” (*medicina animi – Tusc. Disp.*, III, 6)⁸, and as “the only help against the misfortunes of this life” (*contra miseriae huius vitae unicum auxilium – Hort.*, fr. 111 Grilli = Augustine, *Civ. Dei*, XXII, 22). Similarly, Seneca states that “one who studies with a philosopher should have some benefit to take home with him every day, either better health or a mind more open to healing” (*Ep.* 108, 4). To Musonius Rufus, a leading Roman Stoic of the first century AD, the philosopher is the only one who knows what leads to people’s happiness or unhappiness (εἰδέναι τί φέρει πρὸς ἀνθρώπου εὐδαιμονίαν ἢ κακοδαιμονίαν) (*Regi philosophandum esse*, ed. Lutz 1947, 60, 19-20). Musonius’ disciple Epictetus went even further and maintained that the philosopher’s school is like a hospital (ιατρεῖον), where people come when they are sick in their souls (*Discourses* III, 23, 30). A similar approach may also be found throughout the *Meditations* of the emperor Marcus Aurelius, to whom Galen served as personal physician.

To summarize, in Galen’s time, there was a long-established tradition of philosophy conceived as the most

important activity whereby people can attain happiness and achieve moral progress (Gill 1985), (Nussbaum 1994), (Sorabji 2000). As we have seen, various philosophers, including Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, Cicero, and others, claimed that no one could live uprightly and attain *eudaimonia* without having studied philosophy. As expected, such claims of authoritative knowledge in matters pertaining to happiness and the good life (τὸ εὖ ζῆν) gave rise to polemical exchanges between philosophers and exponents of other fields of knowledge, including rhetoric, sophistry, and medicine. It is against this competitive and polemical background that Galen's engagement with the philosophical tradition before him should be considered. The "quarrel" between medicine and philosophy which we referred to above goes back at least to the time of Plato, whose dialogues often show a critique against several tenets held by the Hippocratic authors (Van der Eijk 2005), (Levin 2014), (Mihai 2021). By the second century AD, when Galen made his way into the cultural arena and wrote his works, the polemical exchanges between philosophers and physicians were no less intense. As Singer (2014b, 11) has rightly stressed, Galen lived and wrote in a "social context where philosophy had – at least traditionally and at least in some people's eyes – a higher, more educated status than medicine" (Lloyd 2008), (Hankinson 2008). There was a vivid and competitive cultural milieu, which Galen was well familiar with.

At times, Galen's polemical attitude towards the philosophers and the philosophical schools partially echoes the long-lasting debate between medicine and philosophy. However, as I intend to demonstrate in the following, Galen's negative appraisal of contemporary philosophers is also nourished by his appeal to a tradition of criticism of philosophy, largely attested in non-medical texts from Greco-Roman antiquity. This can be demonstrated by paying close attention to some passages from both *De indolentia* and *Aff. Pecc. Dig.*, who share the same intent of providing a therapy of emotions and a program of moral self-improvement. Their practical outlook is closely interwoven with a critical assessment on the part of Galen of his contemporary philosophers, whose shortcomings and moral inconsistency are overtly criticized.

In an autobiographical section of his treatise on *The Diagnosis and Treatment of the Affections and Errors Peculiar to Each Person's Soul*, Galen provides an account of his intellectual formation, insisting on the philosophical lectures he attended in his youth. As he recounts, he studied philosophy with adherents of all major philosophical schools – Stoic, Platonic, Aristotelian, and Epicurean (*Aff. Dig.*, 28, 10-19 De Boer), but he was far from being satisfied with their arguments and methods of demonstration.⁹ He is eager to note that the philosophers often disagree with each other and even with themselves, maintaining various conflicting beliefs (ἀλλήλαις μαχομέναι δόξαι, *Pecc. Dig.*, 42, 19-20 De Boer), and making pointless quarrels between them (φιλονεικοῦντες ἀλλήλοις, *ibid.* 62, 23-24). Their unfounded arguments and contradictory answers on questions such as “How ought we to live?” or “What good and bad is?” clearly show that their moral teachings are far from the truth. As one can see, Galen here rehearses a central *topos* of the ancient polemic against philosophy, namely that of the disagreement (διαφωνία) between various philosophical schools, which hold different opinions on one the same matter. We find this *topos*, for example, in a fragment from the *Exhortations* written by Posidonius of Apamea (= Diogenes Laertius VII, 129)¹⁰, in Cicero's *Hortensius*, fr. 40 Grilli¹¹, as well as in many Christian authors, including Justin the Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and Augustine, who made appeal to this tradition of criticism towards philosophy in their debates with the adherents of the classical culture.¹²

This is not the only point Galen insists upon in his negative appraisal of contemporary philosophers. He also sharply criticizes those who make “rash declarations regarding matters of good and bad in human life”, condemning their “self-love (φιλαυτία), self-regard (ἀλαζονεία), conceitedness (δοξοσοφία), and love of esteem” (φιλοτιμία) (*Pecc. Dig.* 44, 13-14 De Boer, transl. Singer 2014a, 287). At *Pecc. Dig.*, 66, 1 – 68, 4, Galen stages an *agōn* between an architect and two philosophers, with the clear intent of mocking the latter two. The philosophers are ridiculed and criticized for boasting of their alleged ability (ἀλαζονεία) to offer scientific demonstration on matters that are far beyond human knowledge. As the

architect is made to say, the philosophers believe that they “know what happens beyond the cosmos – a subject which admits of conjecture, but on which there can be no scientific knowledge” (66, 16-18 De Boer, transl. by Singer 2014a, 311). Conversely, when it comes to matters of daily life, “which are sometimes known even by the man in the street”, they show themselves to be “completely ignorant” (ibid. 66, 18-19 De Boer). The philosophers are thus refuted as “devoid of understanding in matters which can be known and conceited (δοξόσοφοι) in those which cannot” (ibid. 66, 27 – 67, 1 De Boer, transl. by Singer 2014a, 312).¹³

At close examination, the critique developed here roughly echoes the discussion in Plato’s *Theaetetus*, 174A-B, where Thales of Miletus is said to have been mocked by a Thracian maidservant for having tumbled down a well while looking up to study the stars. Indeed, it was this inquiry into things that are beyond human knowledge that gave rise to such mocking and scornful attitudes towards philosophy and the philosophers. Interesting enough, we find the same topos in Aristophanes’ *Clouds*, 225-226, with reference to Socrates’ ἀλαζονεία, that made him investigate “the things in heaven and beneath the earth”. As one can notice, Galen’s disparaging attitude towards contemporary philosophers draws on a literary tradition of mockery and criticism towards philosophy and the philosophers, which he seems to have been well familiar with.

Let us turn now to the second text under discussion here, namely, *De indolentia*. This moral essay is written as a response to a request made by an anonymous friend of Galen who wants to know “what kind of training, what arguments or what doctrines”¹⁴ prepared him to react with equanimity in the face of the disaster produced by the great fire of 192, that destroyed, among other things, much of Galen’s professional equipment and library. The text can be divided into two main parts. In the first part (paragraphs 1-37), Galen provides substantial information about what exactly he lost in the fire, mentioning a great number of books written by himself, “valuable and hard to replace”, rare manuscripts of ancient authors, as well as a lot of medical recipes and instruments.

Despite the great loss, and against all odds, Galen repeatedly states that he felt no distress, showing an attitude that clearly distinguished himself from his fellow citizens.¹⁵ In the second half of *De indolentia* (§§ 38-84), Galen describes the therapeutic techniques and strategies that helped him avoiding distress. The discussion here focuses on topics such as grief, pain, peace of mind or magnanimity, frequently discussed in the Greco-Roman tradition of moral and practical philosophy.

At close examination, we find that, much like in *Aff. Pecc. Dig.*, Galen's overall attitude towards philosophy in *De indolentia* is not so much an attitude of acceptance or dialogue, but rather an attitude of reluctance, disapproval, and critique towards different philosophical schools. Particularly telling is that throughout the text Galen does not endorse, nor advocate, any particular philosophical doctrine¹⁶, and he is even less willing to praise philosophers before him for having developed arguments or techniques for controlling emotions and avoiding distress. In fact, he is much more prone to criticize them.

In trying to respond to his friend's request, Galen explains the mechanisms that enabled him to avoid distress, insisting on a special method of training (ἄσκησις), namely that of anticipating future evils. To explain this, he quotes some lines from a play by Euripides (fr. 964 Nauck) in which Theseus – one of the *dramatis personae* – says that he learned from a wise man (παρὰ σοφοῦ τινος) to imagine constantly misfortunes that might come in the future, so that if one were to occur, he might be better prepared to endure it. The text reads as follows: “As I once learned from a wise man, / I fell to considering disasters constantly, / Adding for myself exile from my native land, / Untimely deaths and other ways of misfortune, / So that, should I ever suffer any of what I was imagining, / It might not gnaw at my soul because it was a novel arrival” (*De indolentia*, 17, 4-9 BJP, transl. by Nutton, in Singer 2014a, 93).

According to Galen, “the wise man (ὁ σοφὸς ἀνὴρ) constantly reminds himself of everything that he might possibly suffer” (ibid. 93, 10-11 BJP), so that he could prepare in advance against any misfortune. This spiritual exercise

seems to have been of considerable importance to Galen since he quotes the same passage towards the end of his text, where he explicitly says that the practice of anticipating evils is the only training he finds “helpful against painful bad turns” (ibid. 23, 5-14 BJP).¹⁷ As pointed out by Tieleman (2019, 203), the technique of “dwelling in advance” was a well-known exercise in Stoic psychotherapy. In Cicero’s *Tusculanae disputationes*, III, 29, this spiritual technique is ascribed to the Cyrenaics, but a little further on, at III, 52, Cicero mentions that Chrysippus the Stoic advocated the same exercise. Plutarch, Seneca, and other moral philosophers also made extensive use of this topos in several of their writings.¹⁸ Galen himself, in his *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis*, 282, 11-14 (De Lacy 2005), attributes this technique to Posidonius of Apamea. For the present study, however, it is important to note that, in *De indolentia*, when mentioning the practice of *praemeditatio malorum*, Galen does not make any direct reference to the philosophers who recommended or practised it. It seems that he simply does not wish to recognize the philosophers before him as inventors of this spiritual exercise. As we have seen, in *De indolentia*, this therapeutic technique is ascribed not to a particular philosophical school, but simply to a poet, namely Euripides. While scholars have commonly neglected this point, I think that it deserves more attention, as it can provide a first evidence of Galen’s concern to delimitate himself from the philosophical therapies of emotions in use by his time. Additional evidence for such a reading can be found in the subsequent paragraphs of Galen’s text, where the polemical stance is further developed and more explicitly articulated.

Thus, at 18, 20 – 19, 1-10 BJP, Galen provides an autobiographical account, insisting on the influence that his father had on his moral and intellectual formation. As Galen says, “every time I remember him, I feel my soul improved (βελτιῶν). For there was no other man like him who honoured justice and self-control so much, indeed, they came naturally to him *without the need for philosophical arguments*. He did not consort with philosophers in his youth, being trained from childhood in virtue as well as in architecture by his father, my

grandfather, in both of which he was himself supreme.” (Transl. by Nutton, in Singer 2014a, 93-94; emphasis mine).¹⁹

As the passage above makes clear, to Galen, the memory of his father functions as an instrument that helps him improve his soul. Galen’s moral progress appears thus supported not by certain philosophical doctrines (δόγματα), but merely by the memory and the example offered by a man who, moreover, had not received any philosophical training. As one can notice, what Galen insists upon when portraying his father as an example of moral perfection and integrity is that virtues such as justice and self-control can well be attained without spending time with philosophers (οὐ γὰρ ὠμίλησε φιλοσόφους ἐν νεότητι – 19, 3 BJP). It thus seems that, by making appeal to the example of his father, Galen aims to challenge the philosophers’ claim that people can achieve moral progress only through philosophical instruction. In my opinion, Galen is dealing here with another *topos* used in ancient polemics against philosophy: to refute the claim that philosophy alone can offer moral instruction, one could provide the example of people who lived a life of virtue without practicing philosophy (as Galen’s father did). Support for this interpretation may be drawn from a surviving fragment of Cicero’s *Hortensius*, in which one of the critiques levelled against philosophy is based on the very same argument. Thus, in fr. 50 Grilli, we have the character Hortensius – an opponent and a critic of philosophy – saying: *vidi in dolore podagrae nihilo illum vel omnium maximum Stoicorum, Posidonium, quam Nicomachum Tyrium hospitem meum, fortiozem* (Nonius, 527, 30 M.) (“I saw that neither the famous Posidonius, the greatest of all the Stoics, in pain with gout was not a whit braver than my host, Nicomachus of Tyre.” (Transl. by Kidd 1999, 39-40, modified).²⁰ The meaning of the fragment is that the moral strength (*fortitudo animi*) is not necessary depending on moral instruction or philosophical arguments. The anonymous Nicomachus of Tyre, most probably a simple man without any philosophical instruction, was able to show the same attitude in the face of suffering as did “the famous Posidonius”, a teacher of moral virtue and an expert in the therapy of distress. Therefore, in Galen’s view, it is simply mistaken to suppose that in order to achieve virtue one should first become a skilful

moral philosopher: it is not necessary at all that everyone engage in a philosophical inquiry on how we should live.²¹

By using the example of his father, Galen aims to deny the necessary character of the practice of philosophy (φιλοσοφητέον), as well as its alleged cognitive and spiritual supremacy in controlling emotions and curing distress. In a manner similar to what we find in Cicero's *Hortensius*, Galen aims to show that philosophy is not entirely necessary for those striving to live a moral and virtuous life. Also worth noting is that throughout the text of *De indolentia* Galen does not make any reference to his philosophical instruction, nor does he advocate taking refuge in philosophical books, as other authors of consolatory treatises used to do.²² On the contrary, by maintaining the same polemical attitude, Galen launches into an open critique of some Stoic and Epicurean therapeutic techniques.

Thus, at *De Indolentia* 19, 19-22 BJP, he mentions that his father “never praised those who were simply satisfied with being free from pain or distress in their souls” (transl. Nutton, in Singer 2014a, 94) – which should be seen as a critical appraisal of the Epicurean ideal of ἀταραξία, which usually involved withdrawal from public affairs (Tieleman 2019, 209). As Galen further explains, “some people consider that remaining undisturbed is something good, although I know that neither I nor any other human being (...) supports this, for I see all of them wishing to be actively engaged in both mind and body.” (ibid. 21, 5-8 BJP, transl. by Nutton, in Singer 2014a, 95). The Epicurean method of keeping the soul free from emotions and distress is thus rejected in just a few words. For a more extensive discussion on this topic, Galen refers the reader to another one of his books, entitled Κατ’ Ἐπίκουρον – *Against* (or *On*) *Epicurus*, which, unfortunately, did not come down to us. (ibid. 21, 10 BJP).

Towards the end of his essay on *Avoiding Distress*, Galen returns to the Stoic discussion of emotions just to reaffirm his disapproval and give more weight to his previous critique. What he condemns here is the Stoic ideal of total impassivity (ἀπάθεια). Although he recommends the contempt of material possession and, in general, of all human affairs, as

another technique to fortify the soul (e.g. *De indol.* 19, 13-16; 20, 19-22 BJP), Galen sharply disapproves of the idea that people – be they philosophers or not – could become free of all emotions. He knows well that the human capacity of enduring misfortune, pain and other forms of distress is limited. This is why he does not boast himself of being prepared to endure any adversity, nor does he pray the gods to be tested by any possible misfortune (περίστασις), as the Stoic Musonius Rufus was said to have done (ibid. 22, 7-9 BJP). Likewise, he does not endorse the opinion that one can be happy even when he is roasted alive in the bull of Phalaris, as the Stoics and the Epicureans thought their sages would do (ibid. 21, 17 – 22, 2 BJP).²³ What he recommends instead is a daily training (ἄσκησις), by means of which one could fortify the soul, along with raising prayers to the gods for a healthy condition, both mental and physical (ibid. 22, 9 – 23, 5 BJP).

It is now time to ask why Galen depicted such a negative image of philosophy and of philosophers in *De indolentia* and *Aff. Pecc. Dig.* In my opinion, an adequate answer can be given if we read the two texts against the backdrop of the ancient quarrel between medicine and philosophy, evidence of which is to be found in the *Hippocratic Corpus*, as well as in Plato, Aristotle, and many other ancient writers from both Greek and Latin literature. In Plato's *Alcibiades I*, for instance, medicine is counted among the “sordid *technai*” (βάναυσοι αὐτὰ αἱ τέχναι, 131A-B), “unworthy of being pursued by a good man”, a point which Galen would hardly agree with. It is worth mentioning that Galen himself operates with a hierarchy of various *technai* in his *Protrepticus*, establishing two main classes: the first one is that of the arts (τέχναι) which are “rational” and “worthy of respect” (λογικαί τ' εἰσὶ καὶ σεμναί), while the second class is that of the “sordid arts”, which people commonly call “handicrafts” (ἄσ δὴ βάναύσοις τε καὶ χειρωνακτικῶς ὀνομάζουσι). In the first series, Galen includes medicine, rhetoric, music, geometry, arithmetic, dialectic, astronomy, grammar, and legislation. What is curious in this classification is that Galen refrains from explicitly mentioning philosophy in this group, although elsewhere in the *Protrepticus* he makes several direct references to it. What is more, in the last sentence that we have from the

Protrepticus, Galen portrays medicine as the *technē* most worth cultivating, stating thus overtly its superiority over all other *technai*, here included philosophy (ἀρίστη ... ἰατρικῆ) (14, 17-18, ed. Boudon 2000).²⁴

In classical antiquity, medicine and philosophy competed for cognitive and moral supremacy (cf. Van der Eijk, 2005), and the same was true in Galen's time, when philosophical currents such as Stoicism and Epicureanism enjoyed a large circulation and popularity. As *De indolentia* suggests, the example of the Stoic sage, embodied by public heroes like Musonius Rufus, was held in high esteem. It was against these philosophical movements and their methods of therapy that Galen developed his arguments in *De indolentia* and *Aff. Pecc. Dig.*, seeking to challenge and debunk the philosophers' claim of having a moral and intellectual authority in matters concerning psychotherapy, spiritual health, and happiness. The critique of, and the rivalry with other sources of moral instruction and therapy is a central theme of Galen's texts, that should not be overlooked when discussing their content and aims. As scholars have noted, there is much evidence that *De indolentia* and *Aff. Pecc. Dig.* were written with a large, non-specialist audience in mind (Xenophontos 2014, 588). Both texts can thus be seen as part of a wider literary project by which Galen sought to establish himself as a moral adviser and physician of the soul, at the expense of other competing moral authorities of his time (Kaufman 2014, 276-277).

The passages referred to above make it clear that, when writing on topics of moral philosophy, Galen pursued a polemical agenda, critically reviewing and refuting some major tenets of various philosophical schools. As I have tried to argue, Galen's negative appraisal of philosophy and philosophers can be better illuminated if we read it against the backdrop of the competitive and polemical context in which various *technai* disputed their cognitive authority in defining the conditions of the best way of living. Galen's polemical attitude might have been motivated by his desire to challenge philosophy's increasing authority in matters pertaining to mental and physical health, human happiness, and freedom from distress.

Both *De indolentia* and *Aff. Pecc. Dig.* provide substantial evidence not only of Galen's active engagement in the philosophical debates of his time, but also of his concern for gaining the public recognition as a therapist of emotions and physician of the soul.

NOTES

¹ *De Prop. Lib.*, 169, 13-20 – 170, 1-13, ed. Boudon-Millot (2007).

² The text was edited by De Boer (1937) in the series *Corpus Medicorum Graecorum*, V, 4, 1, 1, as two independent treatises: *De propriorum animi cuiuslibet affectuum dignotione et curatione* (*Aff. Dig.*), respectively, *De animi cuiuslibet peccatorum dignotione et curatione* (*Pecc. Dig.*). Passages quoted in translation throughout this paper are taken from Singer (2014a, 237-314).

³ For the Greek text of *De indolentia* I follow the French edition published by Boudon-Millot, Jacques Jouanna, and Antoine Pietrobelli (abbreviated BJP 2010). The Greek text is cited by page number and line number of that edition. English translations are by Vivian Nutton, in Singer (2014a, 77-99).

⁴ Scholarly consensus has established the first months of 193 as the most probable date of composition, shortly after the assassination of the emperor Commodus on the last day of 192. On this aspect, see BJP (2010, LVII-LXIII); Singer (2014a, 45); Nicholls (2019, 247). As expected, the text has generated a great deal of discussion and debate since its discovery, on several controversial issues. See the collective volumes by Manetti (2012), Rothschild & Thompson (2014), and Petit (2019).

⁵ As Singer (2018, 412) has stressed, the two texts “clearly belong, broadly speaking, within a well-established existing tradition of works of popular moral philosophy—works which one might also term ‘practical ethics’ or ‘self-improvement’, and which are exemplified in the surviving literature especially by Plutarch, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, and in Latin by Seneca.”

⁶ Cf. Gill (2013, 365): “[T]he philosophical therapy of the emotions constituted a well-established genre of writings, to which Galen himself contributed in two surviving essays.” See also Jouanna (2009, 190-191).

⁷ Plutarch, *Vitae decem oratorum*, 833C-D: „But while he [*scil.* Antiphon] was still busy with poetry, he invented a method of curing distress, just as physicians have a treatment for those who are ill; and, at Corinth, fitting up a room near the market-place, he wrote on the door that he could cure by words those who were in distress; and by asking questions and finding out the causes of their condition he consoled those in trouble.” (Transl. by Fowler 1960, 351).

⁸ Cf. *Tusc. Disp.*, IV, 84, and *Acad. Post.*, I, 11: *Nunc vero et fortunae gravissimo percussus vulnere et administratione reipublicae liberatus, doloris medicinam a philosophia peto, et otii oblectationem hanc, honestissimam iudico.*

⁹ Galen also provides a sketch of his philosophical pedigree in *Ord. Lib. Prop.* 99, 21-24 – 100, 1-4 Boudon-Millot 2007.

¹⁰ Diogenes Laertius, VII, 129: “Neither do they think [*scil.* the Stoics] that the divergence of opinion between philosophers is any reason for abandoning the study of philosophy, since at that rate we should have to give up life altogether, as Posidonius states in his *Exhortations*.” (Transl. by Hicks 1925, 233, slightly altered).

¹¹ Cicero, *Hort.*, fr. 40 Grilli: *quantum inter se homines studentes moribus omni vitae ratione different.*

¹² Justin the Martyr, *Apology*, I, 4, 8; II, 10, 2; Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos*, 3, 3; 25, 2; Athenagoras, *Legatio*, 7, 2; Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolyicum*, III, 3; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, I, 13, 57; Pseudo-Justin, *Cohortatio ad Graecos*, 4, 2; 6, 1; 7, 2; Lactantius, *Divinae institutiones*, V, 3, 1; Gregory Thaumaturgus, *Oratio panegyrica in Origenem*, 158-159.

¹³ See also the discussion by Singer (2014b, 14-15)

¹⁴ The Greek text reads as follows: [...] παρεκάλες μοι δηλώσαι σοι τίς ἄσκησις ἢ λόγοι τίνες ἢ δόγματα <τίνα> παρεσκεύασάν με μηδέποτε λυπεῖσθαι. (*De indol.*, 2, 4-5 BJP).

¹⁵ *De indolentia*, 10, 24-25 BJP: τούτων οὖν οὐδὲν ἠνίασέ με. Ibid. 11, 7: ἄλλ’ οὐδὲ ταῦτα ἐλύπησαν.

¹⁶ Cf. *Aff. Dig.*, 29, 14-15 and, especially, *Pecc. Dig.*, 51, 22-23 De Boer: “Among those who claim to practise philosophy there are many with whom I do not even consider it worth conversing.” (Transl. by Singer 2014a, 296). As pointed out by Singer (2014b, 9), on many occasions in his works, Galen “rejects the profession of philosophy, and sees himself as standing outside it”.

¹⁷ Cf. *De indolentia*, 17, 2 BJP, where Galen qualifies the words put in the mouth of Theseus to be “true above all else” (παντὸς μάλλον ἀληθές ἐστιν).

¹⁸ Seneca, *Marc.*, 9; *Helv.*, 5, 3; *Ep.* 91; 99, 32; *Tranq. An.*, 11, 6; Plutarch, *Coh. Ira*, 463D; *Tranq. An.*, 474E; Ps.-Plutarch, *Cons. Apoll.* 112D.

¹⁹ Cf. *Aff. Dig.*, 27-29 De Boer.

²⁰ See also the discussion by Grilli (2010, 175). Cf. Cicero, *De Fin.* III, 3, 11: *quos bonos viros, fortes, iustos, moderatos aut audivimus in re publica fuisse aut ipsi vidimus, qui sine ulla doctrina naturam ipsam secuti multa laudabilia fecerunt, eos melius a natura institutos fuisse, quam institui potuissent a philosophia.*

²¹ As noted by Lévy (2011, 207), Galen “s’inscrit dans une tradition de pensée hors les murs de la philosophie, qui exalte la sagesse naturelle de gens dépourvus de toute culture philosophique.”

²² See, e.g., Seneca, *Helv.*, 17, 3-5; Marcus Aurelius, I, 7.

²³ See Xenophontos (2014, 597), who points out to Galen's "general hostility to Stoic psychology". Cf. Boudon-Millot (2013, 143); Rosen (2014, 162), Tieleman (2019, 200-201).

²⁴ As Gill (2013, 347) has stressed, in Galen's view "medicine, and specifically regimen, is more effective at making people psychologically better than philosophical guidance".

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A Critique of Mimesis

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Abstract

Following an inspiration offered by Gebauer and Wulf's *Mimesis*, in this contribution we put forward the hypothesis that *mimesis* should be understood as an *intermediary device* and a *categorizing faculty* at play in all our functions and namely in our judging power. To argue this claim, we analyse the notion of *schema* in Kant's first *Critique* and find that, as product of *mimesis qua imagination*, *schemata* intermediate sensibility and intellect and allow reason to issue *good* judgements and steer clear from metaphysical self-referential ones. Showing what very special *theatrical* feature Kant's *Critique* shares with the Bible, we then analyse the function of *figura* in traditional Biblical hermeneutics and find that here again a product of imagination is needed as mediator to keep *mimesis* and self-referential *mechanisms* in check in order to prevent them from issuing *satanic* judgements. Playing along with the *metaphorical* setting that has come to the fore, we find in Plato's *Timaeus* a third case in which *mimesis* is set to play an intermediary role in a judicial account of categorization. By confronting and interweaving the insights gathered from these most relevant references, we claim that *mimesis* names a «technical procedure of schematization».

Keywords: Kant, Plato, Bible, schema, figura, judgement, demiurge

The most essential part of knowledge is the study of reasons. (Aristotle 1960, 93 [APo, I, XIV, 79a, 23])

1. Preliminary considerations on the problem of judgment

After the hermeneutical take on the matter disseminated the narrative turn, the idea that the human being is a sort of narrative animal has been revived in a number of different disciplines, most interestingly in the endeavor of Jordan B.

Peterson's *Maps of Meaning* (1999). At the crossing of neuropsychology, psychoanalysis, religious studies and philosophy, well at ease in a thoroughly Darwinist paradigm, Peterson offers a coherent anthropology of the human being centered on such fundamental claim: as a consequence of a number of evolutionary steps which we will not take into consideration, we are animals that have to answer questions such as *what do I do, now?* in narrative terms, in order to act. According to both Peterson and the hermeneutical tradition, it is by implicitly answering such questions that we categorize the environment, not the other way around: we categorize our environment not so much in terms of *real things displayed in a catalogue*, but in terms of *tools whose relevance to our aims makes them appear to us*. We inhabit stories more than we inhabit the world, let alone a world of objects. No surprise then, that stories help us make sense of the world.

The oldest stories we have, be it archaic mythology, such as the Sumerian creation myth, the Enuma Elish, or the Egyptian cosmology, be it the Christian myth or most of the fairy tales, resonates with us, archetypally, because they deal with the way we should orient ourselves. They don't tell us as much about the way the world is, as about how we should act and tell ourselves in it. Peterson's *grand récit* is coherent, both in terms of methodological inspiration and in terms of fundamental claims, not only with the most relevant heralds of the Hermeneutical *koiné*, but also with René Girard's Mimetic Theory: a set of interpretative tools taking literary and religious texts as seriously as it gets. If Peterson claims that religious texts tell us about the way we should orient ourselves in the world, about what we should do in general in order to face the constant pressure of Nature, survive and have a meaningful experience of our lives, Girard's main tenet is that religious texts tell us mostly about the way archaic communities dealt with a very specific situation, the so-called *crisis of undifferentiation* (Girard 1977), a peculiar situation in which the fundamental orienting differences of the community were shaken down and torn to pieces. When something as catastrophic as such happens, according to Girard, the *what do we do* question is preceded by a *what happened* question and

the most immediate way to investigate on what happened is to ask who's guilty. Most stories – especially those that really resonates with us and capture us – offer knowledge expressed in terms of investigations about culprits. Only later this will turn into investigation about causes, and then in what we now tend to call science. The transformation of guilt into cause had already begun way before he took office, yet it is Aristotle who marks the beginning of this long process: 'to know the reason of a thing is to know it through its cause' (Aristotle 1960, 61 [*APo.*, I, VI, 75a, 35ff]). Indeed, to have true knowledge of whatsoever, we need to be able to formulate a proposition in which we attribute a predicate to a subject, but the most fundamental way of achieving such an operation is to attribute a cause to an effect. We usually call the result of such an essential feature of ours, judging. To tell stories is the most archaic way of judging and thus it also is the most fundamental way of putting forward useful knowledge. Stories that teach us, or show us how to orient ourselves in the world are true in a different but no lesser way than what we now call science. In some sense, should we take into consideration the notion of the *Lindy effect* disseminated by Nicolas Nassim Taleb (2012, 318), since they have been around for a much longer time and they still are relevant to our endeavor, they are even *more* true.

If we consider then that Aristotle also stated that we 'have a natural disposition for the true, and at the same time [...] hit on the truth' (Aristotle 2007, 34 [*Rhet.*, I, I, 1355a, 15-16]), it would be a rather safe guess to say that human beings have a sufficient natural faculty to compose judgements in which we attribute predicates to subjects, a *δύναμις* which in Aristotelian Greek sounds as *κατηγορώ*: *categorising*. Should we play along the Aristotelian way of thinking, we might then indicate in this attitude the attribute that differentiates us from the rest of our fellow members of the genus *ζῶον*. Is the human being a *ζῶον λόγον ἔχον*? Is it not just as much a *predicating* or *categorising animal*?

When dealing with Aristotelian texts, the term 'category' usually is received as a neutral notion pertaining to the most abstract realm of knowledge, that meta-science which we now call *logic*. Yet, in common Greek, still nowadays, *κατηγορώ*

means something much more intriguing and rather disturbing: ‘I blame you’, and *κατηγορία* ‘accusation’. The common ground on which the two translations or meanings of such term stand is quite clear: in *κατηγορώ* we can distinguish the prefix *κατά* which might mean ‘about’, ‘on’, ‘at’ but also ‘*versus*’ and ‘against’ and *ἀγορεύω* which means ‘to speak (in public, in the *αγορά*)’, but also ‘to know’. So we get that categorising both means speaking about something and pleading for something, but also speaking *against* someone, accusing. When we judge, we attribute a predicate to a subject, S is P – or as Aristotle would put it, P pertains to S –, when we accuse someone, we do not do anything differently; indeed, we just play along the polysemy of the very ancient Greek notion of *αἴτια*, both cause and blame at the same time – giving αἴτιος as both the responsible and the culprit. C is responsible for E, be it in terms of cause or in terms of guilt. Following this line of reasoning, we found ourselves dealing with a much less flattering definition: we might be ‘animals having language’ (as Heidegger would render the already mentioned original Aristotelian definition), or ‘thought bearing animals’; we surely are ‘communal animals’, or ‘political animals’, but we might as well consider ourselves ‘accusing animals’. Thus, to put forward a synthesis of what has been said so far, one might say that we are ‘thought bearing animals who tell stories about accusations in order to orient themselves in a world made of events more than it is made of facts’. It is by telling stories that we first encountered the problem of truth, but do we really tend to get it right, instinctually, as Aristotle put it, and thus arrive at the truth?

The aim I am assigning myself in this paper is to sketch out a theoretical understanding of the notion of *mimesis* as a *categorizing faculty*, or, to put in other terms, to sketch out a *critique of mimesis* by showing that three fundamental texts of our tradition focused on the *pharmacological* role of *mimesis*, being it both a somehow technical – and not instinctual – device thanks to which we can grasp something like a *veritas*, and the most insidious obstacle to the formulation of true judgments. Indeed, the three texts I am willing to refer to, in a comparative way more than in an analytical one, share a common setting or a common set of references to one same semantic galaxy, a galaxy

that is figured mostly in literary terms even when philosophical in their genre: the galaxy of judgement. I will be able to face the daunting task taking into consideration Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, the Bible and Plato's *Timaeus* counting on the comforting convergence with Günter Gebauer and Cristoph Wulf's 1995 *opus*, which inspired this investigation by means of a number of intuitions on the role of mimesis in our culture, art and society.

2. The schema

2.1. Kant's first *Critique* deals with a number of problems but at its core we find an attempt to *judge* our power of judgement. Indeed, the central section of the *Critique* is not by chance introduced by a chapter whose title is 'On the Transcendental Power of Judgement in General'. What follows goes under the title 'On the Schematism of the Pure Concepts of the Understanding' (Kant 1998, 271-277 [A137-147/B176-187]) where Kant takes up the most obscure of his doctrines about the *art* 'hidden in the depths of the human soul' (Kant 1998, 273 [A141/B180-1]). To put it in the simplest possible way, by presenting the doctrine of the transcendental *schemata*, Kant is here answering to a vital question emerging from his work: his problem is that in order to issue a judgement, we need to apply a concept to an intuition, the two being *ontologically* heterogeneous (Kant 1998, 271 [A137-8/B176-7]). To do so, we need an intermediation:

There must be some third thing [*ein Drittes*], which must stand in homogeneity [*Gleichartigkeit*] with the category on the one hand and the appearance on the other, and make possible the application of the former to the latter. This mediating representation must be pure [...] and yet intellectual on the one hand and sensible on the other. Such a representation is the transcendental schema. (Kant 1998, 272 [A138/B177])

These intermediary *entes* allow the interconnection between the manifold of the intuition and the pure and simple ideas of the *Verstand*. According to the *Kritik*, the *schema* mediates between sensibility and intellect, *projecting* (Stiegler 2004, §58) pure *a priori* categories on the gathering of intuition and thus making *representations* possible. The schema is both a

device and a procedure with which reason can put the data received by sensibility into forms; it is the rule following which reason can subsume the particular of the intuition into the universal of the category; it is the means by which reason can *fill* the concept with the sensible.

2.2. *Schemata* allow reason to produce representations, which amount to issuing judgements, in other words to put experiences in their corresponding categories. This is a first, paramount, result of Kant's because it clears out that in order to produce good and sound judgements, we need to put together intuitions and ideas. As far as the origin of *schemata*, Kant attributes the schematizing activity to the productive imagination (Kant 1998, 274 [A142/B181]). Such indication leads to the following one, to be commented upon: Kant explicitly refers to schematism as an *Art, eine Kunst*.

In order to make a concept sensible, then, the imagination must rely on resources outside of theoretical knowledge. [...] The imagination's ability to make a concept sensible is just that, an ability (*Können*): it involves skills that outstrip our theoretical knowledge (*Wissen*). [W]e find that [imagination] relies on several skills. It must be able to *project* and *anticipate* how the various marks of the concept in sensible, holistic terms and, at least in the empirical case, to *adjust* and *readjust* our schematic representation of a concept on the basis of further sensible experience or increased knowledge. (Matherne 2014, 14; emphasis added)

Following Samantha Matherne, we can refer to Kant's third *Critique* in which he states that 'Art, as human skill, is distinguished also from *science* (as *ability* from *knowledge*), as a practical from a theoretical faculty, as technic from theory (as the art of surveying from geometry)'. (Kant 2007, 133 [KU §43, 303]). Therefore, the faculty of judgement *hosts* at its very core a sort of technical device resulting from the hidden (to the judging subject) artistic activity of the productive imagination, *projecting* and *anticipating*, adjusting and readjusting the various characters that would make a concept apparent in a unified sensible way.

2.3. Bernard Stiegler has commented upon these pages shedding light on the role of the technical supports – or *supplements* – in the genesis of schemata. In volume three of

his masterpiece, *Technics and Time* (2001), Stiegler confronts Kant's schematism arguing that in order to clear out such obscure doctrine, we might want to read Kant's presentation of the triple synthesis (of apprehension, of reproduction and of recognition) put forward in the first version of the *Transcendental Deduction* along with the phenomenological account of the experience of temporal objects. Stiegler shows us that the *impasse* in which Kant had probably found himself trapped was the same one that, according to Husserl, Brentano had fallen into. Neither of them had managed to move beyond the analytical distinction between apprehension and reproduction. When describing the synthesis of reproduction, Kant might well be referring to what Husserl labelled as "primary retention." In version A, he is eventually led to assert that "the synthesis of apprehension is therefore inseparably combined with the synthesis of reproduction" (Kant 1998, 230 [A102]). Keeping the two syntheses clearly separated, the former as primary retention, the latter as secondary retention, Stiegler can state – in line with the spirit of Kant if not the letter – that the synthesis of reproduction *accompanies* the synthesis of apprehension: which is to say that a memory always escorts, as a criterion of selection, every primary retention. The third synthesis, of recognition, assures, as protension, the coherence of consciousness with itself and the unity of consciousness as a stream. Tertiary retentions would then offer a fourth, technological synthesis, keeping everything together – against our intrinsic temporal *default*, or finiteness. Following this line of reasoning means to concede to imagination all the space Brentano, Husserl and Kant himself were reluctant to concede and accept that images, which is to say *differed* – as in not-directly-lived – experiences, do intervene in our process of categorization: as medial images, they actually offer the matrix of schematism. Schemes are medial images that offer an intermediation between the outer world and the inner one and thus *enable* us to issue judgements.

Considering that the word imagination, through Latin *imaginem* – which in Porfirius is *imitaginem* – shares its root with the Greek *μίμος*, 'mime' and the verb *μιμεομαι*, 'to imitate',

it will not be surprising to realise that such result resonates with Gebauer and Wulf's renown *opus* where they focus on the *intermediary* character of mimesis and its location in medial images, «which occupy the space between the inner and the outer worlds» (Gebauer and Wulf 1995, 1). Such *medial* and *intermediary* character of mimesis is the *punctum* of this contribution. Inasmuch as *mimesis* is tantamount to schematism and schemata are the connecting dash that enables us to produce representations, it is very clear why culture is nothing but an endless variation on the medial themes one is socialised in (Cappelletto 2019, 191); it always is about an endless variation on images and figures, literary or iconic, serving as schemata categorizing our aboutness to the everchanging world in view of the aims we are willing to achieve.

The first purpose of this analysis was to point out that in order to produce a judgement, a categorization, we need imagination to produce schemata, a process that is, thus, implicitly performed by taking into account the medial images in which we are socialised. Indeed, the *künstliche*, artistic nature of schematism was so evident to Kant that he deemed appropriate to consider the power of judgement as a very special, non-procedural, talent; the result of training and exercise, helped by convenient *examples* (Kant 1998, 267 [A 131, 26-28]). Here is where mimesis' adversary twin-brother shows up. We should in fact add that in order to judge we need to have preliminary taken inspiration from or, to put it bluntly, to have always already been imitating those around us who seem to be able to do it. Kant was clearly concerned by this implicit result because the stage he put up to discuss it is notoriously a *trial*: he put reason to test and tried it because he realised it often issues problematic, untrue, self-referential (which in this case is to say without sufficient evidence) judgements. The arguments he brings offer a sort of 'code of procedure' to verify whether we are in presence of true – as in good, or at least not patently bad – judgements: 'never let intellect part ways from intuition', being the fundamental rule. Yet, imagination as *mimesis* represents a risky mediator, because on the one hand it reduces the self-referentiality of a metaphysical and solipsistic attitude by bridging the gap

between intuitions and ideas and thus keeping them together, but at the very same time, it brings forward the risk of a different kind of self-referentiality, *i.e.* the one sparkled by multiple subjects imitating each-other, sharing *media* and parting ways from *reality*, and from time to time entering in the dreamy world of fake news, conspiracy theories, new mythologies and so forth, caught in shared imaginary concepts, but immune to the unreachable evidence of empirical facts. *Unfortunately*, Kant did not expand on this; we thus will have to look elsewhere.

3. The figura

3.1. Our ambitious list of texts presents us with an even more intimidating assignment. When reading the Bible through the interpretative lenses of the mimeticist René Girard, one cannot but realise that it shares with Kant's *Critique* a rather unnoticed common feature, which is the fact of representing a *trial*. When translated without reluctance, the main characters of the Holy Scriptures are clearly putting on stage a judicial action; we just need to understand what is the theme and who is playing which part. One thing is for sure, *Satan* is the prosecutor. In fact, the term *Satana*, "*ha-satan*", is derived from the Accadic *Sataran*, and in the Jews judicial environment was employed to denote the *accuser*, he who stands on the right of the *accused*, or *defendant*, and denounces his faults – or guilts, or sins. It could also mean 'adversary'. The very same word *devil* comes from the late Latin *diabolus*, again from Greek διάβολος, which literally means 'divider', but also stands for 'slanderer', 'defamer', 'opponent', 'accuser' or 'contradictor'. A *martyr*, from Greek μάρτυρος is notoriously a 'witness' (or a spectator). The Holy Spirit, in accordance with Girard's interpretation and investigation, is the 'advocate' (2001). In John (14:16), it is referred to as the παράκλητος: this word, which though being Greek is uncommon in non-Jewish text, is often used to denote "one called to help in a lawcourt", and "angels, prophets, and the just as advocates before God's court", or also "one who consoles" (Barton & Muddiman 2007, 987). We also have *victims*, countless victims, all of which are eventually

redeemed by the perfect one, Jesus Christ who shall later come back as the last, or ultimate *judge*.

When we read the Bible within the framework put forward by Girard, we are immediately set to interpret it as a list of judgements issued by a people who from the very beginning seems to have been aware of the risks implicated in the action of judging and in the notion of *guilt*. Was the victim guilty? Was he or she really deserving what eventually happened? This daunting question emerges, in Girard's perspective, as the true *fil rouge* of most of the vicissitudes of which the Bible is about. And it is precisely this question that differentiates the Bible from every – or from most of – other religious texts. It is not the events that are told, but the perspective from which they are told and the moral reflection that goes with them. If we compare two renown texts as the foundational myth of Rome and the episode of Cain and Abel, we are being told *à peu près* the same story, but in one case, the pagan myth, the victim is guilty and the persecutor is right; in the other one, everything is upside down: the victim is innocent and the perpetrator guilty. Along with this intuition, Girard put forward a *mimetic* theory whose fundamental tenet is that being *mimeticus*, the *animal* that we are tends to follow others in issuing his own judgements about causes and guilts – and therefore often goes *awry*. When everybody is imitating *with* each-other the *result* can be very far from *correct*, the judgement very far from *true*, the punishment very far from *deserved*. Girardians describe this kind of fundamental events, produced by the *victimage mechanism*, by referring to the notion of self-referentiality and automatism. The mechanism acts, indeed, somehow self-referentially and automatically, without actually referring to any fact, or evidence, or investigation, and seemingly without anything that can stop it. The result is a more or less implicit story that those who are living the crisis of undifferentiation tell themselves in mythical forms and with regard to which they join together in a victimage that they live and perform as justice; a killing with which everybody seems to agree even if nobody actually was sure about anything in the first place. It is a rather surprising correspondence with Kant's result, metaphysics being the result

of Reason failing to confront with intuitions – with evidences –, going self-referential and putting forward *dreams of spirit-seers*. Thus, mimesis schematises experiences by offering schemata through which reason can mediate sensory data and ideas, by referring to *mediators* – which in Girard's terms are those we take example from.

3.2. We have a further level of interest in the emerging matter. *Mimesis* is the problem which these two texts reflecting on the problem of judgement seem to be investigating, but in a very pharmacological way it has also been considered as a possible remedy. Indeed, the *figural* interpretation of the Bible seems to suggest a new level of correspondence with Kant's theory of judgement.

When confronting with Auerbach reading of the notion of *figura*, we fall on a promising path: the notion of *figura* translates into Latin the Greek notion of *schema*. If in etymological terms *figura* and *schema* are immediately connected, from a functional perspective they share a very interesting feature, that our analysis lets emerge as central. According to Auerbach, «figural interpretation establishes a connection between two events or persons, the first of which signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second encompasses or fulfils the first» (Auerbach 1957, 53): the fulfilment is, in general, defined '*veritas*', while the *figura* is the *umbra* or *imago*. The notion of *figura* is entirely understood when we realise that it shares with the Kantian *schema* a mediating function. Just as with Kantian *schema*, *figura* can operate such mediation because of its *ontological* specificity, being both *historical* and *ideal*; though mundane, it participates in the divine history: this is the feature that makes out of it a *link* between two vicissitudes that might look incompatible or even incommensurable, but that instead grant a full experience of truth precisely by virtue of the connection that unites them. Yet, this role is not to be confined to the intra-textual analysis: we do not need the figural interpretation only to better understand the connections between the Old and the New Testament. In general theological terms, we need the figural interpretation to be able to couple our ordinary, manifold and chaotic experience to the ideal and divine history of salvation.

In terms of judgement, which is our focus, we need the figural mediation to be able to connect our everyday –fatally exposed to *mimesis* – faculty of judgement with the *paracletus*, the advocate of the victim, in order to issue a *good*, sound and just judgement. We need the *figura*, just as we need the *schema*, in order to couple intuitions and categories; what in Kantian terms is the path to every judgement in general, in the Biblical reasoning is instead a much more defined case: a careful approach to an *accusation*. The manifold of intuition of which the reader of the Bible can find in the text the means to have a meaningful and true experience is not the Old Testament, but his own ordinary, historical, and real life. Reading the Bible, for the acolyte, is as reading a code of procedure to issue good judgements when accusations are coming along. English gives us a powerful chance: when we understand something, which means that we are able to put it in the right box, we *figure* it out. When reading the Bible, we can use *figuras* to mediate our own chaotic experience, our inexplicable everyday life and put it into the corresponding boxes; when we are about asking *why*, we can figure it out, find out the causes or the guilts, orienting our power of judgement by referring to sanctified (which in this case actually means both – and consequentially? – *sanctioned* and *made sanctus*) examples.

3.3. On a further and last level of analysis, we might find in this argument a sort of recursive proof of the soundness of the Stieglerian analysis of Kantian schematism. In its ultimate sense, the *figura* is indeed an example and a product of imagination, externalised in a literary text – or in multi- or crossmedial contents such as images, or memes, etc. – through which the acolyte can direct his judgement trying to stay on course, away from what Girard would call *internal mediation*, which is to say from the mimetic influence of peers, and its self-referential risks. In order to keep in check such risks of a self-referential runaway produced by the *mimetic* nature of our power of judgement, both Kant and the Bible seem to converge on a common, pharmacological use of mimesis itself as *imagination*. This resonates with Girard’s hermeneutics of the Bible because the Neo-Testament would come out as what Girard has somehow always said it was, the achievement of a

Critique of judgement; or, even better, the achievement of a *Kritik der Nachahmung*, a *Critique of mimesis*.

4. The Demiurge

The first philosophical author to have come to terms with *mimesis*, even if in its own peculiar way, and last to be commented upon in this paper is Plato (2008). Again, I do not intend to dig into such very complex issue in general; I will only focus on one particular aspect of the Platonic use of the notion of *mimesis*, starting once again from an etymological notation going along with our theatrical observations. This time, somehow not surprisingly considering the Girardian perspective, the stage is a foundational myth, the “likely story” (εἰκὼς μῦθος) or “plausible myth” told by Timaeus (Plato 2008, 18,19 [29d, 30b]). In this dialogue, Plato puts forward a theory on the origin and nature of everything that is. For the economy of this contribution, I will only focus on some of the many issues that emerge in this dialogue – mostly a long monologue – starting from the Platonic ontological dualism.

Timaeus begins by presenting the distinction between the perfect, simple and eternal world of ideas, which *are* in the fullest sense of being, and the physical world, which changes and perishes: the former is seized by reason (Plato 2008, 16 [28a]), the second is the object of opinion and sensation. The main character of the likely story is the mediator that couples the two distinct levels of being, the *demiurge*. This divine father and maker of the universe, a godly craftsman, using the eternal and perfect forms of ideas as prototypes, or templates, *mimetically* gives shape to the *chora* producing the existing world. The structural analogy with the rest of our already mentioned matter comes forward: the divine craftsman, a talented technician, takes the chaotic and manifold primal material of the *chora* and by virtue of a *mimesis* of eternal *ideas*, creates things. *Mimesis* is thus a measuring device that allows the demiurge to literally make things from scratch.

Such *demiurge* is a special character indeed, in fact, between many others, he has a very distinctive feature: he acts both as a member of the third class of the citizens of *Kallipolis*, in its capacity as craftsman, and as a member of the first one,

as the one who creates or actually makes the universal order appear. Even if it represents more of a function than an individual, he has the possibility, or so we are told, to operate in view of a τέλος exercising a βουλεσθαι (Plato 2008, 19 [30d, 1-3]), a sort of will, because: 1) it is ἀναυτιος – without cause (Plato 2008, 32 [42d, 3-4]) and irreducible to what there is (Chiurazzi 2021) –, 2) it acts εθελειν – voluntarily (Plato 2008, 31 [41a, 4]) –, and 3) its *thoughts* appears under the shape of προνοια – prevision (Plato 2008, 19 [30c, 1]). Thus, on the one hand the *demiurge* is a craftsman, practicing its τέχνη (which in Greek meant at one time ‘art’ and ‘technique’ and unsurprisingly we have just enumerated the features of the already mentioned Kantian commentary on *Kunst*), with prevision and in view of an end. Yet, it is somehow much more than this. Δημιουργος has some very intriguing meaning along – and in certain cases before – the most renown one of ‘maker’; it means ‘originator’, ‘generator’, which are certainly more abstract and general but do not offer any more insights than craftsman; but it also means – and in ancient Greece was more commonly used to denote – a ‘magistrate’, or a ‘judge’. As a matter of fact, a Δημιουργος was a very important magistrate, a coloniser, a founder of cities – and a master of the art of persuasion: he certainly was a member of the class of the philosopher-governors! According to Luc Brisson, the Δημιουργος is the representative of the juridical order of the world; its work matches that of the legislator of the *Laws*: the two having to “order a primitively disordered matter while keeping their eyes fixed on the world of intelligible forms” (Brisson 1974, 50ff). As a maker and as a judge, the Δημιουργος thus mimetically associate the disordered matter of the *chora* – which actually means country, land, territory, area, undefined space outside or *before* the polis –, with the corresponding categories of the ideal and eternal world. Once again, thus, we have a judicial setting in which a somehow technical entity, mimetic and imaginative at the same time, mediates between the unordered and the ordered, *categorizing*.

In conclusion, we then find that, according to three of the most relevant books of all time, even if not explicitly and programmatically dealing with it, to most of the implicit

knowledge embedded in our languages, *mimesis* names a somehow technical procedure – a by-product of interindividual (Girard, Lefort, Oughourlian 2003; Oughourlian 2016) processes of socio-cultural interaction (Portera 2019) and of associative learning (Heyes 2009; 2013) – that tends to *schematise* what it runs into – be it an action, an *ens*, a person – through time, in a dialectic of experiences (memory) and anticipations (imagination). The most ancient expression of such faculty gave place to stories whose figures has been concentrating all the knowledge we have been gathering for the last forty centuries or so, thanks to which we can categorize our own world and orient ourselves in it. So do, today, the stories, the memes, and any other crossmedial content we expose ourselves to. To critique mimesis and the vast amount of intermedial figures we daily deal with should mean to also keep in check the internal mediation to which mimesis recurs every now and then, by imitating others with the effect of judging all together, self-referentially.

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Should we desublimatize the Kantian sublime? Some remarks on Lyotard and Deleuze readers of the *Analytic of the Sublime*

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Abstract

This paper aims to desublimatize the Kantian sublime by tempering the enthusiasm with which some French philosophers have woven its praise. Contrary to what Lyotard and Deleuze argue in their works, in the *Analytic of the Sublime* Kant does not go beyond himself, nor it is hard to set up a philosophy of the subject after reading these pages. Sublime, for these two clever readers of Kant, is any excessive use of the faculties. But Kant is less interested in excess than in its regulation. Thus, while harmonising with other 80-90s French readings of the Kantian sublime, the faith placed by Lyotard and Deleuze in its potentialities seems unfounded. It is fuelled by a lack of consideration of what happens in the second stage of this complex feeling. Unlike the encounter with the moral law introduced as a 'Fact of Reason' in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, in the *Analytic of the Sublime* the presentation of the idea does not occur at the expense of the ego but in support of it. And the ego thus elevated is not only an ego 'super', but a (Freudian) Super-ego.

Keywords: sublime, Kant, Lyotard, Deleuze, fact of reason

Introduction

In this essay we would like to start what could be defined, with an icastic formula, 'the desublimation of the Kantian sublime': a vast and complex process articulated in three steps corresponding to the three operations necessary to bring it to completion. (1) The attenuation, by means of a return to the Kantian text, of the enthusiasm with which some of the most brilliant post-war French philosophers wove its praise; (2) The reconsideration of the 'negative' pleasure and of the subject that experiences, namely, of what occurs during the second

stage of this articulated feeling. Finally, (3) a reversal of course in the philosophical investigation of the sublime – a course which, according to Monk, is oriented towards Kant as towards an “unconscious goal” (Monk 1960, 10) – in favour of that anti-humanism conveyed by Burke’s *Inquiry* of 1757.¹ We have, therefore, *Burke after Kant* (Sertoli 1986), or the sublime as sensation (*Empfindung*) after the sublime as feeling-judgment (*Gefühl*)².

However, in what follows, it will already be a substantial step if we manage to show the necessity of a desublimation. For lack of space, we cannot fully develop our proposal here. We will rather concentrate on the first step of the desublimation; we will reserve the analysis of the subsequent steps to subsequent papers. We shall do so with particular regard to Lyotard and Deleuze’s reading of Kant’s *Analytic of the Sublime* because, as a feeling of the soul concerning only the ideas of reason, the Kantian sublime does not play the role that Lyotard and Deleuze assign to it in their own philosophies. Contrary to what both claim, Kant does not reach beyond himself by including the sublime in the examination of the aesthetic judgement³. And if it is not even hard to set up a subject-centred philosophy after meditating on the pages of the thrilling appendix to the *Theory of Taste* – Lyotard’s thesis – it is because, in dealing with the sublime, Kant is less interested in the crisis of the imagination – Deleuze’s point – than in its resolution, less in the encounter of thought with its ‘outside’ or ‘other’ than in the possibility of endowing the sensible subject with a supersensible armour.

According to both Lyotard and Deleuze, ‘sublime’ is any excessive use of faculties, but Kant is more attracted by their regulation than in their excess, more by what the soul (*Gemüt*) can glimpse in the mathematical sublime through the imagination’s suffering than by imagination’s suffering itself; more by the power of reason than in the omnipotence, which is only apparent after all, of dynamically sublime nature. Therefore, the faith placed by Lyotard and Deleuze in the ‘magnificent and progressive fates’ – to quote the famous verse of Leopardi’s *Broom* – of the Kantian sublime is unfounded, although it is in line with other French readings of it (Nancy’s,

Richir's, Lacoue-Labarthe's etc). The faith is unfounded because it is fuelled by a lack of consideration of the elevation of the soul that takes place in the second stage of the sublime. Kant, it is true, does not disregard the much celebrated vertigo which strikes the subject in the first stage, but he subsumes it within a movement that, in the end, reaffirms, and indeed exalts, the 'I' which is suddenly filled with dizziness.

Unlike what happens in the encounter with the moral law which, in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant introduces as a 'Fact of Reason', in the sublime, reason does not become sensible at the expense of the ego's narcissism but in support of it⁴. And the self-preservation that reason assures to the indigent sensible subject is "of quite another kind" (Kant 2000, *KDU* § 28; 5:261, 145) from the one provided by his condition as a natural entity. Facing an object that, surpassing human limits both in size and power, threatens to annihilate the subject, the Kantian ego reacts by returning to itself, but a self which is different from the one that tests its own limits, both cognitive and physical. According to Alenka Zupančič (Zupančič 2000, ch.7), the thus reassured Ego is not only a 'super' instance of the Ego but an authentic super-Ego (*über-Ich*): the instance that, in Freudian-Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, embodies a merely imaginary version of the law and conveys an aestheticisation of the self whose purpose is to legitimise the superiority of the Ego over the unconscious or, as it is in Kant's *Analytic of the Sublime*, of the human being over nature.

Sublime, for Kant, is not nature but humanity, humanity as far as its rationality and morality are concerned. Yet, the transcendence of reason and morality over nature is indistinguishable from tyranny. In the sublime, the subject only harmonises with a higher good through the violence that this good exerts on nature both within us and outside us. In fact, the soul assesses even the immensity of nature as small and judges even its most vigorous force as impotent, but only in relation to moral reason as a super-sensible faculty that stands out like a colossus against both the immeasurability of nature (the mathematical sublime) and its irresistible power (the dynamic sublime). Baldine Saint Girons, in this regard, rightly speaks of "sacrilège" (Saint-Girons 1993, 383). Why do Lyotard and

Deleuze not do likewise? How can this assessment not condition their, albeit shrewd, analyses of the Kantian sublime? And how can they use it to dethrone the ego-syntonic subject⁵ if the Kantian sublime is exactly what makes the subject, to quote Spinoza, an ‘imperium in imperio’?

For Kant, the sublime is the feeling through which our independence in relation to nature and our extraordinary destination can be grasped for an instant. Thus, insofar as it is “denatured” (Lyotard 1994, 53), the aesthetics of the sublime is also, radically, anti-ecological⁶. The sublime, to use the language of a certain philosophical anthropology, is the human being’s feeling of his exceptional nature: neither the mark of our ontological finitude (Lyotard’s claim), nor the emotion with which we cross the hinges of the empirical use of the faculties (Deleuze’s thesis), but the germ of a certain, insidious, cultural imperialism. How, then, could Lyotard and Deleuze resort to it to affirm, respectively, human transience and the anarchy of the faculties? How could the constant reference, almost a narrative⁷, that Kant makes of humans’ special destination as moral creatures go unnoticed in their investigations? Could it be that anthropocentrism lurks in the folds of two philosophies that promise to demolish it?

We will not be able to answer all these questions in the remainder of this work. We will limit ourselves to drawing attention to the often forgotten letter of the Kantian text⁸. A comparison between the latter and a brief exposition of Lyotard’s and Deleuze’s positions makes evident, in our eyes, the gap between their interpretation of the *Analytic of the Sublime* and Kant’s theorisation. The recourse to psychoanalytic conceptuality effectively highlights this gap, just as it effectively helps to remodel the old psychology of the faculties – an eighteenth-century arsenal strangely kept alive by both the twentieth-century French authors – in the more agile terms of the Freudian topic. This, we believe, is particularly useful in (1) illuminating the enunciation of certain decisive Kantian utterances without lapsing into psychologism; (2) clarifying the nature of reason that “recognises no other determinate measure, valid for everyone and inalterable, than the absolute whole” (Kant 2000, *KDU* § 27; 5: 257, 140); (3)

understanding why “the vertiginous concept of the *Erhabene*, in the *Critique of Judgement*, is nothing but the Burke’s sublime-terrible united with the attempt to exorcise it” (Tagliabue 1980, 172, our trans.).

1. Collective hangover

By rereading Kant’s *Analytic of the Sublime* today, one suspects that the protagonists of the ‘sublime renaissance’ did not read it in depth and that the cult they reserved for the Kantian sublime was the result, if not of actual ignorance – a blasphemous hypothesis even if only murmured – then at least of a misunderstanding or of a biased judgement. From Lyotard to Deleuze, from Lacoue-Labarthe to Nancy, via Escoubas, Richir and many others⁹, there is nothing but praise for the sublime. And, also if it is not only the Kantian sublime that is praised, the specificity of Kant’s critical-transcendental treatment of this complex feeling does not seem to have hindered the practices of its beatification (even in light of the French works, the best way to define sublime seems to be the divine tautology: ‘the sublime is sublime’). No one has discerned in the Kantian sublime a deviation or irregularity from the canon that the most brilliant minds of post-war France intended to establish, and only rarely has adequate attention been paid to the fact that the Kantian sublime is something very precise that can hardly be jumbled together with other things.

Meditating on these works, one is struck both by how such heterogeneous and acute philosophers have been uniformly hypnotised, almost bewitched, by the Kantian sublime – it is in this sense that we speak of a ‘hangover’¹⁰ – and by how the sublime itself has been able to function as the lowest common denominator of different fields of experience and philosophical positions that are generally incommensurable. In France, between the 1970s and the 1990s, ‘sublime’ became an umbrella term with which to explain a multiplicity of phenomena without worrying too much about maintaining their heterogeneity. Then, the famous ‘tout est dit’ with which La Bruyère begins his *Caractères* could be extended with full rights to the all of these works, because everything and its contrary is said about the sublime, even the Kantian one.

As the *Stimmung*, at the same time, of an irreducible otherness and sameness, and as the trademark, at the same time, of both the Heideggerian ontological difference and of the Deleuzian difference within the “being of the sensible” (Deleuze 1995, 75; 87; 161-163; 263; 295), the sublime was used in those years to demonstrate both the absolutely equivocal character of the real as well as its absolutely univocal character, the wondrous transcendence of being as well as its equally wondrous immanence. As the pure experience of the possible that inaugurates the subject and, at the same time, as the pure experience of the necessary that traumatises the subject by showing it the illusory nature of freedom, the sublime is said to both ‘open’ and ‘close’, to both liberate and constrain, to both ‘unveil’ and ‘veil’ the infinite. The givenness that characterises it has been described as both primary and secondary, because the sublime, it has been argued, is both an event and a state, both an act and a fact, both a cause and an effect¹¹. It is difficult, therefore, to orient oneself; it is impossible to distinguish between sublime’s right and left, or between the sublime’s high and low. The ambivalence of this feeling, already so ambivalent in itself given that, in the sublime, the soul is “is not merely attracted by the object, but is also always reciprocally repelled by it” (Kant 2000, *KDU* § 23; 5: 245, 129) – the same held for the ‘sacred’ addressed a few decades earlier by the College of Sociology – only increases.

Yet, there is one thesis that the protagonists of the renaissance share: the sublime unleashes the essence of the postmodern ethical, aesthetic and metaphysical attitude. With the consequence that what Kant reserved to the narrow place of an appendix in his *Critique of Judgement* could be used to designate every place in the contemporary world: the place of man in relation to God, of man among other men, of thought in relation to its other, of art in society, of art in art itself and, last but not least, of aesthetics in philosophy. For the most effervescent minds of post-war France, the sublime is the name of a question: that of sensible presentation. Therefore, if the sublime has been employed so easily to baptise so many other questions, it is to the extent that sensible presentation has been interpreted as equivalent to sensible existence *tout court* while

the latter has come to coincide with our frequentation of the world¹². “Nous ne revenons pas au sublime – goes the motto of the renaissance – nous en provenons” (Nancy, in Courtine 1988, 5). And although there are differences between the return to the sublime of Deleuze, Lyotard, Nancy, Richir etc., what strikes the attention of us postmodernists are, above all, the analogies.

Passion mixed with terror and astonishment, pain doubled in joy, vital force that pushes sensibility to its insensible limits are, in fact, just some of the shared expressions used in France to describe the moods associated with the sublime: a post- or hyper-modern feeling because of its criticality, conflict and disharmony¹³. To the naive and classical faith placed in the agreement between subject and nature, the sublime replaces the lucid awareness of their incompatible contrast. Its aesthetics is negative, paradoxical. No promise of any sort of happy ending is enshrined in it. The sublime does not rescue us; the transcendental kinesthesia that takes place in it is not eschatological. As a tragic feeling, it follows the Nietzschean revelation of God’s death in attacking the lethargic life of the Cartesian *ego cogito*. The superior receptivity that characterises it, and that Kant qualifies as a specific “receptivity to Ideas” (Kant 2000, *KDU* § 29; 5: 265, 148), is the condition of an intimate apocalypse that the ego does not survive. The sublime prefers fracture to continuity; dissimilarity and formlessness to form, chaos to order, indifference to complicity. Its power is effusive. Its force is violent, because if the sublime is an experience – its French admirers sing in chorus – it is the experience of the failure of experience.

2. Human limit

The limit, in the sublime, is its main protagonist: the limit of imagination and sensibility for Kant, but also the limit of the presentable, the figurable and the thinkable for his transalpine readers. In a word: the limit of the human being. But, there is no sublime, if the sublime exists, that does not overcome the limit. Tension, spasm, crisis are the terms that Lyotard and Deleuze most willingly associate with the sublime to emphasise that, by including this feeling in his last *Critique*,

Kant has, in some way, violated his own rules. Deleuze is enthusiastic about this transgression: the *Critique of Judgement* is the orgy of the faculties, the party that suspends the profane order imposed by the vile intellect on the wild imagination. Kant, maybe because he is close to death, allows himself the most unbridled freedom, which is, first and foremost, the freedom he himself granted to the *Einbildungskraft*.

Productive, in the 1990s, the imagination explodes. Genius expands its flames with its art and the sublime drags it to its utmost, to where, feeling everywhere surpassed, “the imagination surpasses itself” (Deleuze 2000a, 35, our trans.) with a leap into the supersensible unknown. The case of the faculty of the imagination in connection with the sublime, according to Deleuze, is the only case in which “Kant considers a faculty liberated from the form of a common sense and discovers for it a truly legitimate transcendent exercise” (Deleuze 1995, 168). Normally, criticism opts for the empirical use of faculties, but with the sublime,

the imagination is forced or constrained to confront its own limit, its *phantasteon*, its maximum which is equally the unimaginable, the unformed or the deformed in nature (*Critique of Judgment*, s. 26). Moreover, it transmits this constraint to thought itself, which in turn is forced to think the super-sensible as foundation of both nature and the faculty of thought: thought and imagination here enter into an essential discordance, a reciprocal violence which conditions a new type of accord (s. 27). As a result, in the case of the sublime, the recognition model and the form of common sense are found wanting in favour of a quite different conception of thought (s. 29) (*ibidem*).

For both Lyotard and Deleuze, the prize for the unrestrained exercise of the faculties is the supersensible: the “horizon of horizons” (Lyotard 1994, 215); the sea within which each faculty, as a single river of thought, spills out as soon as it makes an exorbitant use of itself. Indeed, in the critical system “the unconditioned of the conditions of thought in each of its capacities is always deferred” (Lyotard 1994, 214). In each of its domains, reflection cannot determine by its own resources the absolutes on which these same resources depend. “The unconditioned of knowledge cannot be known. The absolute law of the faculty of desire cannot be desired. The supersensible

principle that founds the demand for the universal communication of taste is not the object of an aesthetic pleasure” (*ibidem*).

No faculty can think its limit with its own means. Yet, the fact that each one can attempt to think it proves that the supersensible is within it. The effort of each faculty to transcend its limit is the *ratio cognoscendi* of the presence of the supersensible (Kant 2000, *KDU* § 57; 5: 339-341, 215-216) and the presence of the supersensible, in turn, is the *ratio essendi* of faculties’ effort to make it sensible. Like an ether, the supersensible is always present as the transcendental margin of the faculties that commutes every impasse into a passage. Deleuze argues that the supersensible is the soul itself: a plane of immanence (Deleuze 2000a, 46) like an absolute surface that cannot be glossed over at a sovereign distance. The supersensible is the limit of each limit-idea, and Kant, therefore, uses it to unify the faculties. But, the unification, for Deleuze, is not transcendent with respect to that which is unified. In their higher use, the faculties do not leave the world; instead they grasp “that in the world which concerns it exclusively and brings it into the world” (Deleuze 1995, 143).

Supersensible, then, is both the edge and the overflow: that which makes all modes of thinking compossible by the fact that they all think excessively. As soon as a faculty reaches its point of dyspnoea, namely its proper *hybris*, it is gripped by its own intrinsic inconsistency: an unthinkable threshold that every power of thought approaches in its effort to legitimise itself through the resolution of its own individual antinomy. Like a *kerigma* the supersensible compels sensibility to feel, imagination to imagine, memory to remember and thought to think, but to feel the insensible, to imagine the unimaginable, to remember the immemorial and to think the unthought. The supersensible or the ‘being of the sensible’, that which Deleuze thinks as an intensive ground (Deleuze 1995, 43; 68; 258-263), becomes sensible as an impossibility, but the impossible, for him as for Lyotard, is the point at which the impotence of each faculty reverses itself into its own idiosyncratic necessity and recognises itself for what it is.

Now, the transcendent use of faculties, for both Lyotard and Deleuze, is a sublime use, and sublime insofar as it is reflective. Sublime, in other words, is the very faculty or power of reflection: an exercise that commits each faculty to its specific boundary. As soon as said boundary is reached, each faculty ceases, at once, to be what it is in order to become, an instant later – in a momentary release following the accumulation of tension – precisely the power that it is. When this happens, each faculty enters into unison with the others thanks to the inconsistency which each one experiences ‘unlimiting’ itself. And this is the reason for which, ultimately, “one must think excessively, until the discordance” (Deleuze 2000a, 300, our trans.). Only at their limit do the faculties hear the voice of the ‘new type of accord’, the very one presupposed by common sense. At the point where they cannot go further, faculties become attuned because the limit is nothing but the very tendency of the limit to exhaust itself.

3. Divine Allegory

Thanks to the sublime, every faculty meets its limit and achieves its determination. At the extreme point of its immensity, each one falls prey to a violence that reveals its proper ‘passion’. This revelation is the very faculty or power of judgement (*Urteilkraft*) as a meta-capacity: the subjective condition of all judgements. Lyotard, however, is more cautious than Deleuze when it comes to evaluating it. He presents himself as a reader of the *Analytic of the Sublime* rather than a fan of it. Nevertheless, he shares with Deleuze the thesis that it is a struggle to set up a philosophy of the subject after reading Kantian *Analytic of the Sublime*. In the *Third Critique*, the subject is caught in *statu nascendi* and has, at most, the thickness of news bulletin: that which sensation conveys to thought regarding its state.

When it is connected to feeling, sensation is no longer a representation of an external *quid* (*Empfindung*), but a feeling (*Gefühl*): it concerns information about the subject regarding its own condition. Lyotard says that judgement-feeling is reflective insofar as it is *tautoegorical*¹⁴, because the pleasure or displeasure that it judges as feeling is, at one and the same

time, a felt state of the soul and the information the soul gathers, in the form of a judgement, about its state. Indeed, for reflective thought, to be informed of its state is to feel it, to be affected by it. And feeling, for this reason, is *sensus sui*: the sign of itself for itself. *Tautogory* means perfect coincidence of feeler and felt, active and passive, law and content. The state of pleasure or displeasure is the principle by which this same state is judged, but the circularity here is not vicious. It sheds light on a minimal, barely sketched subject: a euphonic (pleasurable) or cacophonic (displeasurable) note.

When reflective judgement is at stake, Lyotard observes, Kant rarely employs the noun ‘subject’. He prefers the adjective or adverb, the subject being ‘only’ a certain nuance – similar to musical note or tone – that affects thought while it is thinking something, and that affects it incessantly. Sensation is always present, although this does not mean that it is permanent in the same way as a substratum. Sensation is present in the sense that it accompanies thought in all its acts like a shadow or an echo, allowing it to orient itself on the scale of the different affective tints in which it finds itself. Lyotard, who does not distinguish sensation from feeling and who, besides, often uses the former term to describe the latter, proposes to look at feeling as the immediate judgement that thought has of itself: a domesticising judgement that synthesises the act that is being performed on the occurrence of an object with the affection that this same act procures.

Deprived of cognitive finality, sensation is the feeling of the soul, because the affection is no longer the action of the extrasensible object on sensibility, namely it is no longer hetero-affection as it was in the *Transcendental Aesthetics*, but self-affection: the inner repercussion of thought’s action on itself. Lyotard concludes from this that, in the singularity of its occurrence, “aesthetic feeling is pure subjective thinking or reflective judgment itself” (Lyotard 1994, 25) because, in the *Third Critique*, ‘aesthetic’ is what is judged as the state of thought, through an inner sensation. The recurrence of the latter in every instance of thought means that thought knows, in the sense that it feels, what its state is in each moment, and this even when it relates to the objects of that limitless field

that is the supersensible. Even the sublime, in fact, is a state registered by the subject: a state originally painful because it is concomitant with the checkmate of the imagination engaged in presenting the unrepresentable; in presenting, as Lyotard admirably puts it, “that there is something unrepresentable” (Lyotard 1997, 241).

However, what Kant finds sublime in the sublime is not the catastrophe of recognition on which Deleuze so insists (Deleuze 2004, 110 ff.). The sublime of the sublime, for Kant, is not the fact of coming “to present an object which cannot be presented” (Lyotard 1994, 141). Kant is less interested in the dissolution of schematism than in what it reveals, because the sublime, for him, is allegorical, not *tautoegorical*; or better: the sublime is the allegorical in every allegory, the metaphorical in every metaphor. The movement that characterises it coincides with the coming to an end of one experience and the ready beginning of another; but it is a shifting movement – hence its allegorical nature – thanks to which the subject lands elsewhere by skilfully displacing the sensible ‘now’ (sensibility, once again in *Anthropology*, is evil). Therefore, the last word of the Kantian sublime is neither ‘rupture’ nor ‘chaos’ nor ‘formlessness’. The last word of the Kantian sublime is *Bestimmung*, a term that could be translated as ‘determination’ but which all translators of the *Third Critique* unanimously render as ‘destination’¹⁵.

In this, they are faithful to Kant’s interest in this feeling, which is the same as that nurtured by reason for the potlatch of the sensible datum: “to make the sign of the good arise from the cinders of the beautiful” (Lyotard 1994, 188). For Kant, in other terms, destroying is always functional to constructing, as well as decomposing is always functional to recomposing. So, the festive time of the imagination is never a free time. The festive time is employed, and employed promptly. The *Einbildungskraft* is destined for work, or commitment, “the genuine property of human morality” (Kant 2000, *KDU* I, II; 5: 269, 151), from the very beginning of the *Analytic of the Sublime* and, to some extent, also of criticism. But what is this commitment?

4. Adequate inadequacy

By excluding the monstrous¹⁶ from the analysis of the sublime, Kant declares that he is already starting with the terrible rather than the terrifying, because one may have critique, even critique of judgement, only if the terrifying – in the triple form of the merely felt (*Critique of Pure Reason*), the blindly coveted (*Critique of Practical Reason*) and the chaotically imagined (*Critique of Judgement*) – is banished. There is critique, in short, only after domestication¹⁷ at a distance: the same distance that, in the dynamic sublime, is introduced as a necessary clause for the sublime to be experienced before the omnipotence of nature. Yet the examples of the mathematical sublime, of St Peter and of the Pyramids, also presuppose distance. Kant does not draw them from his own experience, because he has never visited them. Then, it will be necessary, Derrida urges, to come to terms with this. “Does not the distance required for the experience of the sublime open up perception to the space of narrative?” (Derrida 1987, 142).

For Kant, the sublime is a feeling of the soul that “cannot be contained in any sensible form, but concerns only ideas of reason, which, though no presentation adequate to them is possible, are provoked and called to mind precisely by this inadequacy, which does allow of sensible presentation” (Kant 2000, *KDU* § 23; 5: 245, 129). The sublime, in fact, consists in the inadequacy of nature in relation to the ideas of reason, and consequently it presupposes these ideas (Kant 2000, *KDU* § 28; 5: 264, 147). However, nature does not contribute to the sublime with its forms, but only when it allows greatness and strength to appear, only, one might translate, when it is phallic¹⁸. What awakens the Ideas is nature in its occasional infinity of magnitude and of power together with the finiteness experienced by the subject that encounters it, namely, nature as phenomenon: “the mere presentation of a nature in itself (which reason has in the idea)” (Kant 2000, *KDU* I, II; 5: 268, 151).

Kantian sublime is “a supersensible state of mind” (Clewis 2009, 68). In the mathematical sublime this state is reawakened by the encounter with “that which is absolutely

great” (Kant 2000, *KDU* § 25; 5: 248, 131). Yet, ‘absolutely great’ is a syntactically incorrect expression for what is properly unquantifiable. Kant calls ‘magnitude’ the absolutely great, that which is no longer quantity. But,

why can magnitude, which is not a quantity, and not a comparable quantity in the order of phenomena, let itself be represented under the category of quantity rather than some other category? What does it have in common or analogous with that category even when it is incomparable with it? In other words, why call magnitude or ‘absolutely large’ that which is no longer a quantity? [...] And why would the sublime be the absolutely large and not the absolutely small? Why would the absolute excess of dimension, or rather of quantity, be schematized on the side of largeness and not of smallness? Why this valorization of the large which thus still intervenes in a comparison between incomparables? To be sure, the absolutely large is not compared with anything, not with any phenomenal dimension in any case, but it is preferred to the absolutely small. In short, why is the sublime large and not small? Why is the large (absolutely) sublime and not the small (absolutely)? (Derrida 1987, 136)

The ‘more’ and the ‘less’ should no longer make any sense here since it is the absolute great, the great equal only to itself and devoid of comparisons, which is at stake in the sublime. However, Kant introduces them because evaluation, in reality, is a comparison. Moreover, it is a comparison that always points upward, because sublime is that “in comparison with which everything else is small” (Kant 2000, *KDU* § 25; 5: 250, 134), the very possibility to evaluate in this way. Therefore, no sensible presentation will ever be adequate to reason’s ideas, nor, after all, must it be. To the sublime, inadequacy is essential because “nature is thus sublime in those of its appearances the intuition of which brings with them the idea of its infinity. Now the latter cannot happen except through the inadequacy of even the greatest effort of our imagination in the estimation of the magnitude of an object” (Kant 2000, *KDU* § 26; 5: 255, 138).

In the mathematical sublime, inadequacy is the medium of the encounter with the supersensible, in the same way that impotence is so in the dynamic sublime. At the height of its effort to comprehend the infinite as given in the whole of intuition, i.e. to exhibit the idea of reason, the imagination

shows its limits but, at the same time, “its vocation for adequately realizing that idea as a law” (Kant 2000, *KDU* § 27; 5: 257, 141), i.e. the duty to transcend them. Then, if in the sublime inadequacy presents itself, it is not, as inadequacy, part of the natural sensible, nor of nature in general. Inadequacy belongs to the soul that strives, obeying the command of reason, to employ nature to feel an end independent of it.

For just as imagination and understanding produce subjective purposiveness of the powers of the mind in the judging of the beautiful through their unison, so do imagination and reason produce subjective purposiveness through their conflict: namely, a feeling that we have pure self-sufficient reason, or *a* a faculty for estimating magnitude, whose pre-eminence cannot be made intuitable through anything except the inadequacy of that faculty which is itself unbounded in the presentation of magnitudes (of sensible objects) (Kant 2000, *KDU* § 27; 5: 258, 142)

Yet, unlike the beautiful, the principle of the sublime is in us because,

The feeling of the sublime is thus a feeling of displeasure from the inadequacy of the imagination in the aesthetic estimation of magnitude for the estimation by means of reason, and a pleasure that is thereby aroused at the same time from the correspondence of this very judgment of the inadequacy of the greatest sensible faculty in comparison with ideas of reason, insofar as striving for them is nevertheless a law for us (Kant 2000, *KDU* § 27; 5: 257, 141).

Precisely because of the substitution that takes place there, the *Analytic of the Sublime* deserves, in Kant’s eyes, the place of an appendix. Whether mathematical or dynamic, the sublime is the effect of our projection onto nature, which in turn is the effect of our inadequacy, and the appendix “is the place of this inadequacy” (Derrida 1987, 132): an adequate inadequacy if, as Kant says in the *General Remarks on the Exposition of Aesthetic Reflective Judgements*

There need be no anxiety that the feeling of the sublime will lose anything through such an abstract presentation, which becomes entirely negative in regard to the sensible; for the imagination, although it certainly finds nothing beyond the sensible to which it can attach itself, nevertheless feels itself to be unbounded precisely because of this elimination of the limits of sensibility; and that separation is thus a presentation of the infinite, which for that very

reason can never be anything other than a merely negative presentation, which nevertheless expands the soul (Kant 2000, *KDU* I, II; 5:274, 156)

5. Legal sin

For Kant, what makes the sublime sublime is the fact that the limit touched by the imagination is the sign of that limitlessness whose “deaf desire” (Lyotard 1994, 55) permeates not only the pages of the *Analytic of the Sublime* but, one might say, the entire critical enterprise as a “diète de l’esprit” (Saint-Girons 1993, 277) undertaken out of the fear of seeing reason unduly fattened. Yet, we know from the Hegelian critique of criticism and the sublime¹⁹ that, in order to set a limit, one must already be beyond it, and from psychoanalysis that, in reality, one only fears what one desires. Even in the *Critique of Judgement*, reminders of what is or is not permissible to do abound and here too, as in the first and second *Critiques*, they are the symptoms of the fact that Kant wants to transgress²⁰. Then, the frenzy that characterises the sublime is not, in Deleuze’s good grace, the stigma of the traumatic encounter, traumatic in that it is structurally unforeseen, with the being of the sensible, i.e., the chaotic realm of intensities. The spasm that connotes the sublime is the marker, human too human, of the dialectic between law and transgression in which every neurotic life is imprisoned (Lacan 1986, ch. 2-8).

In the *Third Critique*, to put it in another way, Kant confirms the goodness of the memorandum that was placed in the *Preface* to the second edition of the *Critique of pure Reason*: the limits imposed on reason are functional to make room for faith (Kant 1998, *KRV* xxx), and faith is always faith in something that surpasses limits in the sense that it transcends them in magnitude and power; it is always, therefore, faith in something sublime. The exhibition, even if not cognitive, of the existence of this huge ‘something’ is the core of the feeling that so admirably extends the soul, because sublime, for Kant, is neither the experience of an interruption nor that of our finitude. From fainting the subject recovers almost immediately. The dispute that Lyotard would like to make the emblem of a new, post-modern reason²¹, is “hoped for” (Málaga

in Sejten, Rozzoni 2021, 76 ff., our transl.), orchestrated, and therefore, in a way, also already composed a priori.

Using the Aristotelian lexicon, we could say that the dispute is *poietic* rather than *praxic*; only apparently “contrapurposive” (Kant 2000, *KDU* § 23; 5: 245-246, 129), it is, in truth, subjectively purposive. Indeed, what Kant finds sublime is the extraction of a subjective purposiveness in the form of a sense absent in nature. All that is needed for sublime to be experienced is a brute quantity in an inverted purposive relation: the quantity is as purposive for reason as it is not for the imagination. The displeasure that the latter feels by extending itself to correspond to what is unlimited is subjectively “purposive for reason, as the source of ideas” (Kant 2000, *KDU* § 27; 5: 260, 143), and so it is also necessary. The tension of imagination towards the ideas of reason is experienced as a moral imperative emanating from “an unlimited capacity of the very same subject” (Kant 2000, *KDU* § 27; 5: 259; 142). Then, to the extent that the faculty of forms takes pleasure in finding that every unit of measurement of sensibility is inadequate for ideas (Kant 2000, *KDU* § 27; 5: 257, 141), one cannot say, as the ‘anti-oedipal’ Deleuze would have it²², that the excess and the crash brought about by the reflection of ideal nature in real nature are pleasurable in themselves. The excess and the crash are pleasurable only insofar as they solicit something else to come forward, the Lacanian great Other²³.

The Kantian sublime consists in the relation in which the sensible is judged as suitable for a possible supersensible use. But this use that the imagination makes of its intuitions about nature, Lyotard did not fail to note, is an abuse. “Surrection” (Kant 2000, *KDU* § 27; 5: 257, 141) is the name Kant reserves for it as the operation by which the finite comes to reflect the infinite. Not, however, a natural infinite. It is the moral infinite that exhibits itself, albeit negatively, “indirectly” says Kant (Kant 2000, *KDU* I, II; 5: 273, 155), *through* the punishment of imagination and *as* the punishment of imagination. In the friction provoked by the absolute of measurement, the absolute of causality appears as a “purposiveness that is entirely independent of nature” (Kant

2000, *KDU* § 23; 5: 246, 130), and this appearance, a fact too often overlooked by the French estimators of the sublime, is the whole sense of the sublime according to Kant. It is a movement, as one can see, that is quite different from the one – which can be neither anticipated nor made purposive – with which the consciousness of the moral law transports us into freedom according to the doctrine of the *factum rationis*. Surrection is the act that turns horror upside down into wonder-stimulation for an Idea and not the act by which freedom makes itself felt through the law and as law by squeezing the faculty of desire to the last drop of *Pathologisch*: in one case we have an experience that destines us by elevating our ego, in the other an experience that determines us by decapitating it.

In canon law, the term ‘surrection’ qualifies the act of obtaining a privilege or grace by dissimulating what is opposed to its attainment. And which is the privilege obtained by violating the imagination? “A glimpse of the Idea, the absolute of power, freedom” (Lyotard 1994, 70). That this is an abuse depends on the fact that thought has no right to see it, because there is no sensible intuition of the ideas of reason. Yet, by forcing the imagination to go beyond its limits, reason still manages to wrest a quasi-presentation from them in the presence of a formless natural magnitude or force. The abuse, almost a crime, consists therefore of a peek into the supersensible after forcing out that which would prevent it: the constitution of *Einbildungskraft* and the iconoclastic laws of criticism. So, if even the imagination sins in the sublime, it must be said that it sins, at most, of voyeurism. It is not alone, however, in its disobedience. The exhibitionism of reason is also a sin. By engaging the imagination to present its ideas, reason violates the critical prohibition against finding, in sensible presentation, objects corresponding to its concepts.

Yet, in the end, both infractions are legal because thought, for Kant, is destined for the absolute. If it were not so, it would not feel satisfaction, namely, that pleasure that, in contrast to the pleasure of the beautiful, is defined, with an implicit reference to Burke, as “negative” (Kant 2000, *KDU* § 23; 5: 245, 129; I, II 5: 269,151), as soon as the absolute is presented.

6. Sacrificial topics

Sublimity, for Kant, resides in the soul of the subject who stands like a colossus in relation to the sensible world in both its form – the imagination – and its content – sensation. In the sublime, both mathematical and dynamic, what is at stake is the recognition of a sovereignty and the ensuing contempt for everything that, for a very short time, makes us tremble²⁴. There is gain in the loss and in the dissolution: “The imagination organizes the theft (*Beraubung*) of its own freedom, it lets itself be commanded by a law other than that of the empirical use which determines it with a view to an end. But by this violent renunciation, it gains in extension (*Erweiterung*) and in power (*Macht*)” (Derrida 1987, 131). The logic of the sublime, in fact, is the logic of sacrifice; Lyotard sums it up as: “Give up favour, and you will find regard”, (Lyotard 1994, 189), that is, regard for the law. And if one does not consider the gain of the imagination, one does not only lose the voluntary character of its subjugation to the reason that enjoins it to actualise its ideas (the imagination, in the sublime, is finally submitted to its true master and not finally free as Deleuze dreams!).

If one does not consider the strange kind of pleasure the imagination takes in making itself an instrument of reason, one also loses the sense of the whole sublime economy which, in the end, is not only an economy of the worst. There is an interest in the *dépense* of the sensible datum and this interest does not only belong to reason. In the sublime, the imagination is violent as well as violated, and violent with respect to itself, says Kant, namely with respect to the inner sense²⁵. But even this violence “is judged as purposive for the whole vocation of the mind” (Kant 2000, *KDU* § 27; 5: 259, 142). Consequently, what remains to be clarified is (1) to what extent the imagination takes part in reason’s project; and (2) how far violence should be backdated, that is whether there is, and if so at what level, a fundamental violence of criticism.

Now, for Kant, sublime is a *maîtrise*, and a *maîtrise* is always the *maîtrise* of a non-*maîtrisable*: be it the rhapsodic multiplicity of the *Merkmale* in the *Anticipations of Perception*, the autistic character of one’s enjoyment in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, or the hysterical activity of the imagination

that, before being rebuked by the law, amused itself by flirting with the intellect in the *Analytic of the Beautiful*. However, given that criticism is a mix of measures which are taken to govern the ungovernable – “l’objet de la philosophie critique est précisément d’éviter le vacillement du sujet, en l’arrimant plus solidement dans la sphère du supersensible” (Saint-Girons 1993, 455) –, one can conclude that the sublime is the critical form itself; a form that Kant invents, as how in music one invents “la forme sonate” (Saint-Girons 1993, 280). Understanding the sublime, therefore, means understanding criticism and, in a way, understanding Kant, both as a philosopher and, as far as we can given the distance that separates us from him and marks the limit of our aesthetic evaluation, as a man²⁶. The economic lexicon, at this level, is not aberrant; likewise, nor is the psychoanalytic one. Lyotard has merit of having legalised both by showing how, in the interfaculty affair of the sublime, only their joint employment allows us to get our bearings.

Following a long tradition, Kant presents the sublime as a feeling composed of two almost simultaneous times. He departs from that tradition only insofar as (1) he makes the sublime reside in the witness; (2) he presents this latter as dual, double. And it matters little that the witness is a single soul that splits and that the sublime is the feeling of this soul. There is a psychic topic to be taken into account because it is from this topic that the monster retreats, although “the erasure of its figure from the horizon of critical philosophy seems to reserve for it a more threatening place, an exterior that [with critical tools – our addition] we cannot see, perhaps because we maintain a more fundamental relationship with it” (Lemos 2014, 196, our transl.). In other words, the Kantian psychology of faculties is no less incisive because of its articulations, than the Freudian topic. Like the latter, it states that the soul is one, but multiple within itself and that every instance has its specific enjoyment. For Lyotard faculties are banks or capital which, in order to invest, must have some interest that must be negotiated (Lyotard 1994, 174). In her monograph on Kantian and Lacanian ethics, instead, Zupančič goes even further: the

antagonism between imagination and reason is the same as that between the ego and the super-ego (Zupančič 2000, 172 ff.).

Combining both reflections, we believe it is possible to create a metapsychological (Freud 1991) description of the sublime. Kant, for his part, insists only on emphasising that pleasure is achieved derivatively as a result of an inhibition or arrest of vital forces. There is a momentary impediment, and then its resolution in the form of a stronger outpouring. Hertz, for this reason, speaks of a “psychic block” (Hertz 1985, ch. 3): first there is a vacillation of the ego, threatened with divestment and expropriation; then its re-establishment, a return to the self thanks to an impetus with which the ego regains possession of what it was about to lose. The scheme, Derrida points out, is that of a dam: “The sluice gate or floodgate interrupts a flow, the inhibition makes the waters swell, the accumulation presses on the limit. The maximum pressure lasts only an instant, the time it takes to blink an eye, during which the passage is strictly closed and the stricture absolute. Then the dam bursts and there is a flood” (Derrida 1987, 128).

7. Despotic culture

The oscillation between displeasure and pleasure, repulsion and attraction, terror and exaltation is decisive to understand the sublime, and it would be wrong to marginalise its importance in favour of the sublime’s negative presentation alone. The latter concerns only a moment of the sublime. And it is by insisting on the indirect figuration to the detriment of the pleasure nourished by it that one can make the Kantian sublime the bulwark of post-modern sensibility. Only by neglecting the specific amount of resolution, namely of the second moment, is it possible to forget that resolution is, for Kant, the true sublime performance. Sublime is less loss than gain, less despondency than euphoria, because, as it is consistent with a transecular etymology²⁷, even for Kant ‘sublime’ is the movement by which one reaches the summit by reversing gravity. Therefore, it is not detumescence, but erection, that is consubstantial to the sublime as the feeling of elevation with which the subject escapes the common misery of

the human condition in order to enjoy the privileges of individual superhuman tragedy (as the warrior praised by Kant in *KDU* § 28; 5: 262, 146).

Contrary to what should happen in analysis as a cure for neurosis according to Lacan (Lacan 2001, 551), in the sublime impotence is not elevated to impossibility, but to omnipotence, and it would be interesting to recalculate the results of Lyotard and Deleuze's analysis, attentive as they are to the reflective virtues of impossibility, beginning from the fact that, for Kant, impossibility is in Hegelian terms an inessential determination²⁸. Far more important is the feeling of grandeur with which one goes beyond it, since the elevation witnessed in the Kantian sublime is a phallic operation with which one secures an imaginary pleasure. The sign of the good that emerges from beautiful set ablaze is much more than a sign. Or, if it is only a sign, Kant interprets it by posing before nature like the prophets condemned by Spinoza²⁹. This should come as no surprise, although it should have alerted the ultra-Spinozian Deleuze: in the *Third Critique* it is against Spinoza that Kant unleashes an *ad hominem* argument contesting his immanentism, synonymous with dogmatism and determinism, and his individualism, synonymous with immorality.

In 1790, Spinoza is perceived as a threat insofar as he is an honest, free and good man albeit alone, that is, honest, free and good even without aesthetic-ethical imperatives guiding his action from the heights of *Kultur*. For the 'old' Kant, the *cogito* is always conjugated in the first person plural, and this is the case even though Bernard Dejudin had made easy game of demonstrating how, from thinking 'avec les autres' to thinking 'comme les autres', the step is a short one. Kant would accomplish this to the extent that, in the *Third Critique*, the break with nature facilitates the transformation of culture into cult, the cult of personality, and of natural teleology into moral theology ('sublime' is a name for God, but God is a "homme sublime" – Dejudin 2001, 312). Culture, Dejudin explains, « est une phénoménalisation effective des idées pures de la raison qui prennent corps grâce à l'autonomie d'une faculté de juger réfléchissante, donatrice de sense » (ibid., 16). But since the intellect is deposed – in the sublime, reason supplants the

ex-fiancé of the imagination – there is no barrier to be put up against the ideas' inherent yearning for totality and the ferocity with which they claim it³⁰.

Born of rape at worst, or of *coitus more ferarum* at best, the sublime is the child of the imagination, but “a child of its own and yet monstrous” (Deleuze 2000b, 14, our transl.). An air of respect comes to it from his father, but the *Erhabene* is not the *Erhebung*³¹. The sublime needs violence and courage, sacrifice and heroism, values that the moral law as Fact of Reason does not know what to do with. To respect, they are alien. *Die Achtung* is not measured by sacrifice: the moral law, in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, neither wants nor prescribes anything, least of all evil. The sublime, on the contrary, needs suffering because it must displease. For it to experience, the imagination must be violated because it is from its pain that the joy of seeing or quasi-seeing the law derives. Reason relies on the misery of imagination's favour to enforce the elevation of its law, and if presentation and presumption are necessary to it, it is only so that, in the presence of law, they manifest their nullity. Lyotard comments: “conversion (or perversion) in destination, which perhaps connotes the institution of the sacred. The latter requires the destruction or consumption of the given, of the present ‘wealth’, the *Stoff* of free natural form” (Lyotard 1994, 188).

8. Concerned Degreasing

The sublime is the child of the unhappy encounter between form and idea: a bastard child born of the lurch that nature takes for the law. Unhappy because “the law (the father) is so authoritarian, so unconditional, and the regard the law requires so exclusive that he, the father, will do nothing to obtain consent, even through a delicious rivalry with the imagination” (Lyotard 1994, 180). All that is sufficient for reason is an imagination “violated, exceeded, exhausted. She will die in living birth to the sublime. She will think she is dying” (*ibidem*) obeying a solemn ‘present me!’ Essential, in the Kantian sublime, is in fact the momentum that impels the soul to abandon sensibility in order to occupy itself with ideas that contain a nobler end. “That is sublime – says Kant – for which

even the ability to think of it demonstrates a faculty of the mind that surpasses every measure of the senses” (Kant 2000, *KDU* § 25; 5: 250, 134).

Therefore, as a subjective feeling that is immediately pleasurable because of its opposition to the senses, the Kantian sublime cannot be the key to the eco-sophy, or deep ecology elaborated by Deleuze’s great friend.³² The existence of nature, here, is indifferent. What matters are only the phallic values that we grasp in nature. For them sadistic reason gets crazy, because reason ever enjoys conflict and is aroused, says Kant, by the violence it exercises in proportion to the magnitude of the power it contrasts. The two definitions of the dynamically sublime prove this. The dynamically sublime is “nature considered in aesthetic judgment as a power that has no dominion over us” (Kant 2000, *KDU*, § 28; 5: 260, 143), namely a power – ours as rational beings – which is superior even to the “resistance of something that itself possesses power” (Kant 2000, *KDU* § 28, 111).

Now, note that for Kant, judging in this way is a duty: “it is a law (of reason) for us and part of our vocation to estimate everything great that nature contains as an object of the senses for us as small in comparison with ideas of reason; and whatever arouses the feeling of this supersensible vocation in us is in agreement with that law” (Kant 2000, *KDU* § 27; 5: 257, 141). Then, it is morally necessary to treat nature as the pattern of reason and to evaluate as insignificant, in comparison to the latter, that which, as the object of the senses, appears great and powerful to us. Which, after all, amounts to saying that we humans have a duty to rise above nature by freeing ourselves from its influences. “Thus sublimity is not contained in anything in nature, but only in our mind, insofar as we can become conscious of being superior to nature within us and thus also to nature outside us (insofar as it influences us)” (Kant 2000, *KDU*, § 28; 5: 264, 147).

Contrapurposive, therefore, the sublime is also against nature (like perversion?) because Kant thinks of it as “the disposition of the mind” (Kant 2000, *KDU*, § 26: 5:256, 139) with which the imagination is referred to reason, that is, the state of mind of the subject who relativises nature by forcing it

to be a mirror of the Idea. Sublime, says Lyotard, is nature divested, deflowered. And yet, if it is such, it seems to us to be so less because the “teleological machine explodes” (Lyotard 1994, 55), that is to say, less because the sublime “denies the imagination the power of forms, and denies nature the power to immediately affect thinking with forms” (*ibidem*), than because the sublimated nature is a nature without nature, and ‘without’ in a strong sense: that of a removal and of the substituting formation with which it is remedied.

The aesthetics of the sublime is an aesthetics *without nature* but *with morality*, thus, with a “second nature” (Kant 2002, *KPV*, 87, 112). The first stops speaking to us and “thinking enters a period of celibacy” (Lyotard 1994, 52). But celibacy, in Kant, does not occasion a meditation on the absence of relationship at the basis of every relationship, including the figurative one. This is what the protagonists of sublime’s renaissance desired and practiced, but not what Kant did. Similarly, in the religious sphere, Kantian celibacy is the condition of another marriage. Saint Girons is quite explicit in this respect: “on résiste à la nature parce que Dieu le veut” (Saint-Girons 1993, 379). Indeed, if the mother of the sublime is an artist, the father is a moralist. She reflects; he determines, and determines with such “obscene” (Žižek 2014, 115) rigour that the virgin finds herself fertilised without any regard for her pleasure. Reason demands regard only for itself, that is, only for the law and its realisation, and has no need of a beautiful nature.

In front of the law, the forms are torn apart and become distorted. But reason’s perverse interest in the failure of forms and the subjugation of imagination to a purpose that is not its own is shared by the imagination³³. Sacrificing itself on the altar of holy law, the imagination achieves a greater extension and strength than those it sacrifices. Deflowered, it feels that it flourishes again, and Kant says that it is precisely in the feeling of its spoliation that imagination feels, likewise, the cause to which it is subjected. Therefore, although it becomes celibate, Kantian thought does not, *ipso facto*, become an informal artist³⁴. In the sublime, the *Gemüt* does not make use of nature as abstract painters make use of matter. The position of

inferiority in which violence confines it is only momentary, and the magnitude felt as excess does not provoke an ‘inner experience’ (Bataille 2014) such as those aroused, for example, by Rothko’s canvases.

The rapture lasts an instant, because when reason supplants the intellect, it does so by inviting imagination to sign a long-lasting contract whose parties are both interested, and it is this interest that prevents Kant from being the father of abstract expressionism. For the colour-field painters, to make the sublime purposive, is a contradiction. ‘The sublime is now’, goes Newman’s famous motto (Newman 1990, 170–173; Carboni 2003, 96–113). But not so for Kant. It is not violence without comparisons that interests him. Kant,

uses the sublime to connect the subject to a rational, ideal, yet ‘objective’ sphere, untainted by the limitations of the senses. According to him, the experience of the sublime allows the subject to have access to this noumenal sphere by making it aware, upon reflection, of an inner rational strength, independent from and superior to the external reality that is mediated by the senses (Mathäs 2010, 23).

In the dynamic sublime, nature is reputed fearsome without inspiring fear, because, if its immensity and omnipotence threaten our sensibility, the sublime is the ability to evade this threat. The Kantian sublime, then, is ‘after’: the contrast is a diversion and the sublime is an elevation in the sense of a double, triple, avoidance: of the ‘external’ nature, of the ‘internal’ nature (Kant 2000, *KDU* § 28; 5: 264, 147) and of the faculty of our thought that is closest to both these natures: the imagination. The law commands that one decrease all material so that only the Idea can shine as a force in us “which is not part of nature” (Kant 2000, *KDU* § 28; 5: 262, 145). And it commands it by giving voice to the critical will “d’établir une police” (Saint-Girons 1993, 345).

9. Fatal distance

By asserting itself, the imagination enslaves nature in view of the exaltation of the law, but, like any sacrifice, this too is useless: the moral law does not allow itself to be bent by the consummation of forms. It only demands respect: a “white”

feeling (Lyotard 1994, 228), because it is beyond pleasure and displeasure. *Die Achtung* expresses a disinterested obedience that is not achieved by dint of maceration: an “immediate reverence” (Lyotard 1994, 189). The humiliation of the narcissistically affected ego is not a condition for respect, but a result of it, because respect is unconditional. Lyotard rightly says that it cannot be acquired “not even if one were to offer the price of all of nature” (Lyotard 1994, 190). The Fact of Reason is not to be bartered. Its economy is not that of less for more and, all things considered, neither is it an economy. The respect that makes the Fact of Reason a “felt fact” (Grenberg 2013, 45) depends on an ‘a-economy’, because there is no bargaining with the moral law. The consciousness of freedom, in 1788, is not the object of any negotiation, even if it were expiatory. The mediation between the sensible and the supersensible that Kant presents as the “sole Fact of Reason” (Kant 2002, *KPV* 31, 46) is an ‘impossible exchange’ (Baudrillard 2001) between the thing and the sign: the pure vertigo, or *tautegory*, of the Spinozist *causa sui*³⁵.

Yet, precisely the prodigious univocity of the *ratio sentiendi* can be unbearable; Kant as if to ease its burden, halfway through the chapter dedicated to the motives of practical reason of his *Second Critique*, abandons the register of sensible certainty in favour of that of sublime truth. Nevertheless, having not yet conceived his *Analytik des Erhabenen*, the sublime arises, here, as a perversion of respect, which, from a priori feeling, becomes an ordinary pathological motive as soon as the moral law takes on human words and features. In Lacanian terms, one can say that Kant fills the lack of the Other³⁶ – lack embodied by the lone signifying character of the categorical imperative (Campo 2020c, 446, n. 24) – with his gaze and voice. Both, Kant explains, make even the most daring evildoer tremble, but the reported tremor should not deceive; it is already a relief when compared to the anguish of respect. The humanised reason that towers above terrifies and excites the consciousness that suffers its constraint; and the sublime version of respect is precisely admiration (*Ehrfurcht*), an esteem combined with awe, that one feels in its presence. Kant defines it “consciousness of a free submission of the will to

the law” (Kant 2002, *KPV* 80, 104). Thus, it is not the sensation of this very subjection, but the exorcising reflection on it.

From being the immediate effect-affect of the moral law, respect becomes the feeling that accompanies its judgement. What provokes it now is the fact that the subject *sees* himself submitted to the law, *sees* himself humiliated. And the condition of possibility of this vision, as of every vision, is distance. Indeed, what is indispensable for the sublime to be experienced in the face of a phenomenon of nature, says Kant, is that the subject has taken refuge in a safe place (Kant 2000, *KDU* § 28; 5: 261, 144), be it a cell, the back of a window, or the top of a mountain. Sublime, indeed, is never the hurricane itself, but always only its spectacle. Thanks to the distance – here empirical, but perhaps also metaphysical – the subject can be simultaneously inside and outside the scene he contemplates; while he/she perceives his/her littleness or insignificance, something of him/her has already been evacuated and, thus, the voyeur can get the better of the one who lives and feels. The resolution of the anguish to which he/she proceeds in the passage from the first to the second moment of the sublime is, in this sense, a conversion of *zoé* into *bios*, which has the tenor of revenge: that of the soul over the body, of the noumenical realm of ends over the phenomenal realm of causes. The subject detaches him or herself, or he/she thinks so, from that part of him or herself that is connected to the whole of the universe, whose vision annihilates him/her, and begins to look at it as an extraneous part, belonging to another world.

The safe place, in other words, is safe because it guarantees the split between an I that grieves and one that rejoices, by reassuring the subject. However, contrary to what Kant believes, in doing so, the safe place vouches for the subject’s minority. In the sublime, it is true, the soul dominates itself. But the nature of the triumphant esteem it narcissistically feels³⁷ for the part of itself that has got away with it (*Selbstschatzung*) is not a feeling felt by the ego towards the unconscious, but by the Super-ego – within which the soul has taken refuge – towards the ego thus abandoned. According to Zupančič, in fact, the law that speaks and observes, arousing

the sublime version of respect, is the Super-ego's law, because the Super-ego is the instance that, by definition, observes everything and never stops talking, instituting one commandment after another; it is the Super-ego that imposes the tyranny of the ideal over the real, growing in direct proportion the more it is indulged; it is the Super-ego, finally, whose mere presence inhibits any kind of act (the sublime, for Kant, is contemplation, not action)³⁸. Resistance to nature is thus submission to the moral law, but only, we must now add, in its imaginary or psychological version, the one that sustains, reinforces and restores the full and sovereign subjectivity that the anti-humanism of Burke's investigation had dissolved (Sertoli 1995, 32).

Imaginary, after all, are also the two clauses of the Kantian sublime: totality (mathematical sublime) and security (dynamic sublime). The first lacks a perceptible counterpart, because it is a phallic idea of sadistic pure reason, and it is to the credit of Sacher Masoch's reader, Deleuze, to have noticed this (Deleuze 1991); the second is physical, empirical: an artifice heralding artifice, even if Kant disagrees, denouncing the naivety of the opinion of those who believe that the non-seriousness reality of exposure to danger undermines the serious reality of the feeling experienced.

This self-esteem is not diminished by the fact that we must see ourselves as safe in order to be sensible of this inspiring satisfaction, in which case (it might seem), because the danger is not serious, the sublimity of our spiritual capacity is also not to be taken seriously. For the satisfaction here concerns only the vocation of our capacity as it is revealed to us in such a case, just as the predisposition to it lies in our nature; while the development and exercise of it is left to us and remains our responsibility (Kant 2000, *KDU* § 28; 5: 262, 145-146).

As if to say that, since the sublime is a subjective feeling, it does not matter where one is when one experiences it: the feeling is a self-affection and what is 'hetero', consequently, does not matter. Kant presents this thesis as a truth, reserving the right to add that it is so, despite the fact that the soul may be conscious, "if it takes his reflection this far, of its present actual powerlessness" (*ibidem*). Yet not only the arguments

with which he defends this truth are suspect. In the light of the sublimity of criticism, there is good reason to suppose that the critically educated soul never reaches that far, namely never falls into the infamous darkness of sensation where barely an alteration (Kant 1998, *KRV* A 20-B34) is registered.

Conclusion

For this reason, the Kantian sublime is not, nor can it be, paradigmatic of the excessive exercise of faculties. In conclusion, we limit ourselves to listing the reasons for this schematically: (1) it is a feeling, and thus a judgement, while the encounter with the being of the sensible is a convulsive sensation that suspends it (Campo 2022); (2) the imagination experiences it in the presence of the omnipotence of reason and not by making degradation into the object of an affirmation (Deleuze 1995, 261; 267; 271); (3) what imagination glimpses is an idea, but the idea, for Kant, is a totalising totality and not, as the post-Kantian Deleuze states, an individuating differential, i.e. an intensity. This is why, on the other hand, (4) in the Kantian sublime one does not directly grasp the immanence of the supersensible, as required by the higher use of faculties, but, indirectly, its irremediable transcendence; and (5) one grasps it, albeit in a negative way, with the imagination, thus within the spatio-temporal boundaries of the schematism.

The latter, however, explodes when it encounters intensity, something that Deleuze himself, in his *Lectures on Kant* from 1968 to 1980 (Deleuze 2000a) and in his monograph on Francis Bacon (Deleuze 1981) clearly acknowledges. Moreover, as we have seen, (6) the Kantian sublime is the movement by which one escapes the violence of the hurricane, the cascade and the fall, thus from the kind of power necessary, according to a Nietzschean Deleuze (Deleuze 1995, 261), for the “sensory distortion” (Deleuze 1995, 264) that is the condition of the transcendent exercise. And, as Nietzsche intuited, this movement is an ascetic detachment from the natural world through the transfiguration into surreptitious power of the impotence we feel in contact with a power which is in truth stronger than we are. Exactly the opposite, then, of what the Spinozan and Nietzschean intensive ethics of descent suggests

we should do, namely, receive the lowest that meets us involuntarily, in the depths of transcendental subjectivity.

In addition to this, (7) from the perspective of Deleuze's transcendental empiricism, inspired by the radical empiricism of William James, Henri Bergson and Alfred N. Whitehead, the choice to assume a crisis and a limit for each faculty is very uneconomical. Deleuze suspends the maintenance of the psychology of faculties in order to rethink them in terms of powers. But, to be consistent with his own aims and those of his teachers, all dispassionately anti-Kantian, it is perhaps preferable to think of a single limit of the entire faculty, or power, of judgement³⁹. Otherwise, one risks to perpetuate the vivisection of psychic dynamism undertaken by Kant, and interrupted by Freud, who repeatedly warned against the risk of mistaking the topics for the energetic; but one also risks to perpetuate the schizophrenia that afflicts Deleuzian analyses of the sublime, which is ignored by the majority of commentators. When he speaks of the sublime, in fact, Deleuze forgets the law of intensity that Kant developed in the *Anticipations of perception* although he valorised it from *Difference and Repetition* onwards; when, instead, he illustrates this law, the sublime is out of the picture.

Now, were it not for the fact that sublime, for Deleuze, is always a catastrophe and that a catastrophe, according to him, is always the catastrophe of recognition that results from the encounter with the intensive ground of extensive representation, one might think that, for Deleuze, the encounter with intensity is not sublime. But Deleuze only finds sublime the dissolution of schematism at the hands of vibrant intensity, because one learns that "the truly experienced is the abstract" (Deleuze 2004, 83 our transl.), that is, the unrecognisable, only thanks to the violence with which the intensive 'outside' reduces representation to zero. Nevertheless, as long as one retains time, albeit ordinal, and imagination, albeit rebellious (Deleuze 2004), one remains within the realm of judgement, and thus of representation, whereas the *lex sensationis* is the law-principle of a synthesis that occupies but an instant (Kant 1998, *KRV* A 167-B 209) and in which the

imagination sinks into itself before the unimaginable, without any possibility of recovery nor margin of redemption. Here,

everything is like the flight of an eagle: overflight, suspension and descent. Everything goes from high to low, and by that movement affirms the lowest: asymmetrical synthesis. High and low, moreover, are only a manner of speaking. It is a question of depth, and of the lower depth which essentially belongs to it (Deleuze 1995, 261)

just as happens, one might say, in the unique, extraordinary, but *not sublime*, Fact of Reason.

NOTES

¹ This is what Sertoli suggests, with good reasons, in his introductions to Burke's *Inquiry* (Sertoli 1995, 32 ff.) and Monk's monograph (Sertoli 1991, XV e ss.).

² In these terms, we think it is possible to answer the call of Sertoli (1986). This does not mean, as it might seem, the dismissal of the transcendental, but rather the integration into Burke's analysis the proto-schematism that pertains to sensation as the origin of *realitas phaenomenon*: an impure, autonomous and radical transcendental; we cannot develop the point here. For such a reading of the Kantian *Empfindung*, and the supporting literature see Campo 2017; 2020b.

³ A separate discussion should be made for the genius and, more generally, for the *Third Critique* as a whole.

⁴ For the literature on the Fact of Reason and its interpretation in the terms mentioned here, see our Campo 2020a.

⁵ Despite their philosophical heterogeneity, which we cannot here report on, Lyotard and Deleuze agree on this point.

⁶ See. Málaga in Sejten, Rozzoni 2021, 74 ff. But it is also anti-ecological because to appreciate nature for what it is in itself, regardless of the use we may make of it and of what we may project onto it is quite different from appreciating it as an instrument of narcissistic idealisation. On the sublime relationship between man and nature see Bodei 2009.

⁷ If we look at its content it is a grand narrative, and then a modern rather than a post-modern kind of narrative (Lyotard 1984); if, on the other hand, we consider its form, it is a minimal narrative. The form, moreover, is taken from the modern tradition, which has always distinguished between two stages in the sublime. On this last point, see Most 1984.

⁸ On Kantian theory read *iuxta propria principia* and not misread see Pareyson 1984 and Crowter 1989.

⁹ See Deleuze 1984; Id. 2000; Id. 2004; Lyotard 1994; Id. 1997; Moreover, see the essays by Nancy, Lacoue-Labarthe and Rogozinski in Courtine 1988, respectively: 43-96; 123-188; 229-272. But also Richir 2010.

¹⁰ The French Kant is “dazed, perhaps diverted from his official project” (Carmagnola 2016, 86, our transl.).

¹¹ For reasons of space, we cannot render the conclusions of each work with due precision. We have, however, reported on them faithfully, albeit icastically. For an overview, see the essays in Courtine 1988.

¹² For these equivalences and their meaning, see the essays by Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe in Courtine 1988.

¹³ “The sublime shows a sensible free from the constraint of representation” (Carmagnola 2016, 92, our transl.). A separate discourse should be made for the classical reception of the sublime. We cannot do that here.

¹⁴ Lyotard borrows this term from Schelling, who in turn claims to have taken it from Coleridge’s *On the Prometheus of Aeschilus* (1834). In his *Philosophie der Mitologie* (1842-1854) Schelling defines the Oriental deities as tautohegorical in opposition to the Greek ones. The former are not something different nor mean something different, but only and exclusively what they are. In using this term to explain the Kantian feeling, Lyotard wants to emphasise the identity of being and meaning.

¹⁵ Even if the ultimate destination disclosed in the sublime can be understood as a new determination or definition of the subject. On this point see Brandt 2007, 413-421.

¹⁶ Monstrous or disgusting that, however, returns in the current debate. See e.g. Mazzocut-Mis 2015.

¹⁷ That the sublime is the domestication of the terrible is Nietzsche’s great thesis in *The Birth of Tragedy*.

¹⁸ Or ‘mastodontic’. See, e. g. Scolari 2009. Also for Mathäs “the merging of the self with higher universal principles could be regarded as a megalomaniacal idealization of the self” (Mathäs 2010, 21).

¹⁹ “Hegel reproaches Kant with setting out from cise and not from without-cise” (Derrida 1978, 138), i.e. from the limit rather than from the limitlessness to which limit makes a sign and of which it is the product as a limit.

²⁰ For reasons of space, we cannot illustrate here the similarities between the three *Critiques* with respect to this point.

²¹ To the postmodernity as thesis, dispute replaces (post)-modernity as problem. Cf. Lyotard 1988.

²² The reference is to the first volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* written together with Guattari: *The Anti-Edipus*. Note that Deleuze does not grasp, as Lyotard did, the oedipal-neurotic dynamic at the heart of the sublime. It is curious, given the attention he devotes elsewhere to this dynamic and to the patibular value of the law that grounds it.

²³ In Lacan’s structuralist theory, the great Other is the place of speech and language in which the subject comes into being as the symbolic subject of the unconscious. It is a treasure trove of signifiers in which we are immersed.

²⁴ “It is arguably a narcissistic aesthetization of the self that serves to confirm human superiority” (Mathäs 2010, 20).

²⁵ Rogozinski reflects on violence starting from the Heideggerian theses on imagination in Courtine 1988, 238e ff.

²⁶ For Derrida, only the body is the fundamental aesthetic measure. Yet, in the Kantian sublime there is only a “body of stone” (Derrida 1987, 141) which

is very different from the living one involved in the enjoyment of expressionist canvases (Bertolini in Sejten, Rozzoni 2021, 252).

²⁷ Among the studies devoted to the etymology of 'sublime' see Cohn & Miles 1977 and the more recent Baker 2004.

²⁸ We reserve the chance to do this in a future work.

²⁹ For Spinoza who interprets nature projects on it a meaning that nature does not have. See Deleuze 2011, 106 ff.

³⁰ It would be interesting to compare De Jardin's convincing and decisive analysis with those of Richir 1991.

³¹ On the morality of the sublime and its relation to respect see, e.g., Guyer 1982; Menegoni 1988; Crowther 1989; Meerbote 1990-1991; Goodreau 1998. On the role of the sublime in Kantian thought see Clewis 2015 and Feloj 2012.

³² The reference, of course, is to the concept developed by Felix Guattari in *The Three Ecologies* (1989).

³³ Is the reason-imagination ménage a sadomasochistic one? Sertoli seems to suggest it in 1995, 27-30.

³⁴ Zelle links the emergence of the sublime to an "Emotionalisierung der Kunsttheorie" (Zelle 1989, 58). But the emotion which is at stake in the Kantian sublime is not the one sought after by informal artists. On the connection between sublime, abstract expressionism and informal art, see Canadas Salvador and Bertolini in Sejten, Rozzoni 2021.

³⁵ Then, it seems to us that Pries' nice expression, 'Übergänge ohne Brücken' (Pries 1995), should be reserved for the *factum rationis*. We have sketched this point in Campo 2020a, but we reserve the chance to develop it better elsewhere.

³⁶ Since the 1970s, Lacan has argued that 'the Other does not exist' for the same reasons that brought Wittgenstein to say that there is no metalanguage. To believe the opposite, as neurotics do, is to bridge the structural inconsistency.

³⁷ "As in Lacan's mirror stage, the Kantian subject mentally transforms the unsatisfactory sensual impression into a feeling that reinstates the subject as an autonomous unity through the subreption mentioned above. [...] The feeling of the sublime lets the Kantian subject transcend its physical limitations and merge with the human species. This vacillation between megalomaniacal self-expansion and self-denial is also implicit in the narcissistic scenario [...] both the sublime and narcissism share the common trajectory toward self-expansion by merging with an ideal that is greater than the empirical self. Even though the experience of the sublime claims to be selfless, the question remains as to who experiences the sublime if not an expanded self. In short, one could view the sublime as a spiritualized form of narcissism in that it allows the subject to recognize its physical limitations and yet intuit its infinite spiritual capacity" (Mathäs 2010, 25).

³⁸ We developed Zupančič's proposal in more detail in Campo (forthcoming).

³⁹ This is what Lyotard, in almost all his works, attempted to do: think about the limit of representation. Yet, as mentioned above, Lyotard wrongly believed that Kantian sublime could be an ally in this endeavour.

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The orientation on absolute infinity and the openness of worldviews as the necessary foundation for models of developmental psychology

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Abstract

In many contemporary models of adult development an end state of self-development is assumed, which is related to a specific worldview and concept of the absolute. In the present text these development models and their worldviews are analyzed and contrasted with Karl Jaspers' psychology of worldviews and, what he described, the process of differentiation during development. In addition, findings from contemporary philosophy, mathematics and the natural sciences are given as examples to show how our world knowledge is constantly expanding and developing. Comparing these findings suggests that any unification or ultimate structure generates a limitation to the development of the self and new world knowledge and therefore can not be ultimate. Thus, it is shown that only an orientation towards absolute infinity as the horizon of unfinished and fluid worldviews, as described by Jaspers, can include newly acquired knowledge of the world, the self and its interdependence, which is not satisfied by any closed worldview with corresponding end state of development.

Keywords: psychology of worldviews; the absolute; self-development; self-transcendence; ontology and metaphysics

1. Introduction

Contemporary theories of ego-development (in psychology equivalent to 'self-development') that are build upon the Piagetian model (Piaget 1964) include the whole lifespan of human development into a spectrum of increasing complexity regarding the human meaning making of the surrounding world. Examples of these models are Loevinger's theory of nine stages (Hy and Loevinger 2014), Cook-Greuter's extension to ten stages (Susanne Regina Cook-Greuter 1999), Alexander's

studies on higher states of consciousness (Alexander, Boyer, and Alexander 1987), Kegan's model of six stages (Kegan 1982), but also Jung's studies on parallels between western psychology and eastern meditation practices and the body system of chakras (Jung 1999). The models are used in psychological therapy, counseling and coaching. All these stage theories have the idea in common that meaning making functions in a constructing way, not in the sense that the construct of reality is an artificial image of it, but that the construct is the extent of awareness of reality, i.d. that our notion of reality is the number of dimensions we take into account and that this number is variable. Robert Kegan describes the functioning of the single stages and the development throughout the whole life span as a process of separation and integration within a relation between the self as subject and the outside world as an object. Kegan indicated that the “deep structure of any principle of mental organization is the subject-object relationship” (Kegan 1994, 32). Whereby those things are considered as 'object' that people can “reflect on, handle, look at, be responsible for, relate to each other, take control of, internalize, assimilate, or otherwise operate on” (Kegan 1994, 32). The things that people are “identified with, tied to, fused with, or embedded in” (ibid., 32) are considered as 'subject'. They behave automatically in relation to these subject-parts and lack awareness of them. It is important to mention that the characteristic of these stage models is that the subject parts are in fact a form of identification. Though they are regarded as unconscious, there needs to be some kind of vague conceptual knowledge of them, otherwise identification with these parts would not be possible. Conceptual knowledge means in this regard that the cognitive formation of this concept is a composition of a coherent figure based on properties, because it is a concept that is used for identification, which would not be possible without properties (Mühlenbeck and Jacobsen 2020; Mühlenbeck et al. 2017). Hence, in this text the object-parts will be named as object-separation and the subject-parts will be named as object-identification, because the subject-parts of the background are also a formalized object-like condensation of properties in which the individual feels embedded. The object-

separation and object-identification starts with the beginning of the conceptual ability, i.e. with the first object-relation of the new born and his/her caregiver. The characteristics of the single stages are very similar in the different models. Kegan's stages, for example, correspond to the first six stages of Jane Loevinger's model (for an overview see: Kegan 1982, 86-87). In the beginning, the incorporating stage of the new born, the self is only subject. In the course of development the self separates incorporated aspects of his/herself (here starts the conceptual ability) and puts him/herself in relation to these aspects, which is the start of concept formation (Mühlenbeck and Jacobsen 2020; Mühlenbeck et al. 2017; Mühlenbeck et al. 2016). This means, an outside object is formed, to which the relation is established, whereby in the course of development the self is assumed to become smaller, according to these models. The outside object is assumed to become bigger or more complex. The question that arise in regard to these stage models are: where is the final point of development in the individual's relation to his/her environment? Which role does knowledge about the environment or the complexity of the world play in regard to the development? Any conscious being is confronted with a flood of information from its environment, where necessary and helpful information has to be filtered out. This filtering functions through the formation of concepts, which are becoming increasingly complex the more knowledge about the environment is processed. This applies not only to humans, but to all conscious species from the beginning of episodic and phenomenological memory (for an overview of the evolution of consciousness and concept formation see: Donald 1991, 2001). In addition, during cultural evolution humans were enabled to store information in material symbols (Donald 1991; Mühlenbeck and Jacobsen 2020; Mühlenbeck et al. 2017), i.e. to form higher-order concepts that take part in semantic memory and material symbols, and to transfer this knowledge to others and to future generations and, thus, to cumulate knowledge. This cumulated knowledge allowed worldviews and the idea of an absolute to emerge, because knowledge about the surrounding world and the functioning of the environment was collected, stored, refined and deepened, and structured in

knowledge systems, which function on the same conceptional basis as any symbolic knowledge. Therefore, the complexity of individual development and the complexity of one's worldview can be put in relation to each other, where the knowledge of the self and the world are interrelated. But, the question is, whether an end state of development can be assumed or whether any higher form of development is rather characterized by its openness due to the knowledge about the complexity of the world, which deletes any hierarchical stages and puts developmental growth in horizontal complexity, as Jaspers described in his *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (psychology of worldviews) (Jaspers 1919). Thus, in this text, on the one hand the assumed end state of the stage theories named above are analyzed in regard to the assumed end state of development and the assumed worldview that determines the background for and the direction of further development in these models. In contrast to this, on the other hand, Jaspers' psychology of worldviews and the process of differentiation during development is analyzed and it is shown that only the orientation on absolute infinity with an openness of worldviews, as described by him, can include newly acquired, contemporary knowledge of the world, the self and its interdependence, which is not satisfied by any closed worldview with corresponding ego end state.

2. The underlying end state in stage models of self-development

In stage models of self-development, mental growth is organized by a fixed sequence of stages (M.L. Commons, Richards, Francis A 1984; M.L. Commons, Trudeau, Edward, Richards, Francis 1994; M.L. Commons, Armon, Cheryl, Kohlberg, Lawrence 1989; Erikson 1982, 2007; Gebser 1985; Loevinger 1966; Piaget 1964, 2013), with the growing complexity in the relationship between an individual and his or her environment. While Loevinger never assumed an end state, Cook-Greuter, who explicitly analyzed this assumed end state (Susanne R Cook-Greuter 2000), describes that this sequence of stages can be divided into four levels. Her model is a continuation of Jane Loevinger's model. Loevinger's research

(Loevinger 1966), as well as that of most developmental psychologists like Kegan (Kegan 1982), Kohlberg (Kohlberg 1985), Erikson (Erikson 2007) etc., dealt with the first two or three levels. The first two – the preconventional and conventional level – mirror the mental development from childhood to early adulthood. Over 90% of the general population function within these first two levels (Susanne R Cook-Greuter 2000; Kegan 1982; Loevinger 1966). The developmental goal of the second level is the development of an identity considered permanent and independent but also separate from the outside world. At the third, postconventional level, the goal is the dissolution of these divisions and the identification with the world. In the stage models that have dealt with higher development, and an end state, after level three (e.g.: Alexander, Boyer, and Alexander 1987; Alexander and Langer 1990; Susanne Regina Cook-Greuter 1999; Susanne R Cook-Greuter 2000; Jung 1999), it is assumed that on an additional fourth level the ego transcends and unites with the absolute (consciousness), i.e. a unifying concept of an absolute is assumed. This level is considered the highest and final stage of self-development. Jean Gebser, a philosopher rather than a psychologist, saw the end state of the development of consciousness already on level three (Gebser 1985). Two examples of the psychological development theories that deal with the final stage of personal development on level four and that compare the psychology of human development in the Western tradition with two different Indian psychological traditions, are, first, Charles Alexander's comparison with Vedic psychology (Alexander, Boyer, and Alexander 1987) and, second, Carl Gustav Jung's comparison with the levels of awareness of Kundalini Yoga (Jung 1999), which partly goes back to Sikhism. To identify the end state of development and the underlying concept of the world and the absolute in these models, we can take these two texts as an example and extract the main ideas that mirror the underlying worldviews and find common aspects that both share. In the following table, the individual ideas extracted from the texts and the common aspects formed out of them, are listed.

	Ideas in Alexander's description (<u>Alexander, Boyer, and Alexander 1987</u>)	Ideas in Jung's description (<u>Jung 1999</u>)
1	Transcendental consciousness: wholeness – beyond the division of subject and object	6th state of Kundalini Yoga: ājñā: there is still the experience of the self that is apparently different from the object, God. the 7th and last state of Kundalini Yoga (Sahasrāra) in comparison to the 6th state: nonduality of union → it is not different and the next conclusion is that there is no object, no God, only brahman = it is one, it is without second
	unified field - self is unbounded unified field of pure consciousness at the basis of the individual psyche	brahman, an existing nonexisting oneness
2	transcendental, absolute being, unchanging pure consciousness	
	absolute being, that never changes	
3	state of perfect order: - matrix from which all the laws of nature emerge (compared to quantum field theories → these two traditions of knowledge ultimately identify the same unified field) - source of creative intelligence - unified field of consciousness underlies both objective and subjective existence	“This world in the beginning was brahman solely; since brahman was alone it was not unfolded. It knew itself only, and it realized: I am brahman. In this way it became the universe.” (p. 65)

4	unbounded self: the experiencer and the object of experience have both been brought to the same level of infinite value	The knower becomes brahman.
Common aspects: - wholeness, oneness, nonduality - static, unchanging - ultimate ground - experiencer / knower and object of experience become the same		

Table 1: Main ideas and common aspects extracted from the two analyzed texts by Charles Alexander (Alexander, Boyer, and Alexander 1987) and C.G. Jung (Jung 1999).

The common aspects are: oneness, ultimate ground, identification of experiencer and experienced object. In Alexander's comparison an additional attribute is specified, which is immutability. Though it is not explicitly described, this immutability is also implicated in Jung's description of the ultimate ground. The common picture of the absolute can thus be summarized as: (1) fixed or static positions of foreground and background, i.e. the world is defined by the in the background lying absolute, and not vice versa; (2) the ultimate ground is a wholeness and a closed object, which means that it is by itself not part of a higher object, but it is the last object; the inner parts are by themselves just parts of the higher absolute and not a closed object of further parts; (3) one unifying principle, structure or substance. The common aspects of Alexander's and Jung's investigations have the fundamental commonality that there is a concept of unity that underlies everything, both subject and object. In Jung's description this concept is called Brahman, in Alexander's it is called 'unified field', and it has, on the one hand, religious characteristics, but, on the other hand, also naturalistic characteristics in the comparison to quantum field theory. At the highest stage of development, it is assumed that all self-identifications and self-limitations are abandoned and the individual fully agrees with this absolute

consciousness, what is commonly known as 'enlightenment' from eastern religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism. Cook-Greuter describes this as: „In fact, they [eastern psychologies] consider our addiction to language-mediated, discursive thought as a major hurdle in realizing the true or divine Self, or union with the Ground.“ (Susanne R Cook-Greuter 2000, 230). When we relate this to Robert Kegan's developmental theory, it becomes apparent that there is still a final, all-defining object, with which the last identification can be fulfilled. Kegan's theory describes development as a process within a holding outside element that stays effective throughout life (Kegan 1982, 257). He claims that in every developmental stage we are held or borne by a concept we have of the outside world, and in each stage in a qualitatively new way. The situation of being held is not a characteristic of the child's condition only, but it is a situation which is characteristic of all developmental stages throughout life, where we are always integrated in something (Kegan 1982, 257). He describes a regularity of belonging and independence that alternately characterizes each stage. Both mechanisms, detachment and reintegration, always take place in relation to a defining background, from which one has to delineate or to which a new affiliation is recognized. Therefore, it is not surprising that even the supposed end state in Alexander's and Jung's descriptions still has a final object-like concept, into which the integration can be fulfilled.

Table 2 presents an overview of the different developmental levels, their developmental goals and the relation between self, world and absolute that is characteristic of the respective level. For a comparison, the development of consciousness and it's corresponding worldview described by Jean Gebser (Gebser 1985) is also presented.

Developmental levels	Level I preconventional - egocentric	Level II conventional - ethnocentric	Level III Post- conventional - worldcentric, transpersonal	Level IV ego- transcendence
Developmental goals of the different levels	Subject-object differentiation / forming the self rudimentary worldview	The self being involved in culture systemic worldview	Identification with / integration into the world (cosmos) pluralistic systemic worldview	Identification with the absolute concept of the absolute as a unifying field
Relation between self, world and absolute	affiliation between self and caregiver ↔ ego-object separation	affiliation between self and culture ↔ separation from the outside world no concept of the absolute	affiliation between self and world ↔ separation from the absolute individual concept of the absolute	affiliation between self, world and absolute individual concept of the absolute
Structures of consciousness and worldview according to Jean Gebser	archaic magic (animistic)	mythic mental	integral	

Table 2: Overview of the different levels in contemporary models: The developmental goals and their relationship to the world and the absolute are presented. Level I-IV are composed according to (Alexander, Boyer, and Alexander 1987; Susanne R Cook-Greuter 2000; Gebser 1985; Kegan 1982). The regularity of the developmental affiliation and separation, as described by Kegan, is fulfilled within

the levels. The developmental goals of the levels characterize the superior subject-background relationship, that is, the object-environment to which one refers to. The described worldviews of the different levels fit very much into the worldviews that Jean Gebser described in *The ever-present origin* (Gebser 1985, Part I., chap.3) for the structural development of consciousness, as listed in the last row.

As we can see, one worldview is assumed that develops correspondingly to the levels of overall cognitive development, as also Gebser supposed. The level of ego-transcendence (the last level with the assumed end state) has a unifying concept of the absolute, as described above as the 'true' or 'divine self' or 'the ultimate ground of being'. This unifying concept of the absolute, and the respective worldview, correspond to the *analogism* as named by Philippe Descola (Descola 2013) in his anthropological research on worldviews in different cultures, as we will see below. The concept of the absolute corresponds to an object-identification in the same way as it does in level one in relation to the caregiver, in level two in relation to the culture, and in level three in relation to the world. After each ego-object-separation follows an ego-object-identification (integration), as fulfilled in level four through the integration into the concept of the absolute, where the end state then shall arise from the fact that the object-separation and -identification become the same, i.e., the unconscious part of identification becomes conscious. Descola has created a widespread system of worldviews and their commonalities, from smaller groups of indigenous peoples to the great world religions, not only as a current inventory, but also in their historical course. He found out that all worldviews can be characterized according to two aspects, namely their physicality and their interiority, with interiority referring to the assumptions about mental life and physicality to the assumptions about the external substantial structure or condition. The assumptions are divided into distinctness and identity. Table 3 gives an overview of this anthropological system in comparison with philosophical results and the characteristics of contemporary development models.

Ontology Interiority - Physicality	Worldview / Religion	Idealism ⇒ everything is subordinate to the ideal Materialism ⇒ everything is subordinate to matter / fundamental particles Can be regarded as Monism and Dualism - Dualism is subordinate to Monism	Orientation (Fixation)	
Analogism distinct - distinct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Platonism (ideal forms) • Monotheism (Judaism, Christianity, Islam etc.) • Buddhism (alteration of substances) - common principle is Nirvana • Daoism • Hinduism • New Age • Naturalism (quantum field) 			main principle / common structure or substance
Totemism identical - identical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Totemism (identification between group and totem, but world consists of many totems → ancestry to dream-beings) 			
Naturalism distinct - identical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Naturalism (separation between nature and culture / mind and matter) • Monotheism (separation between world and God) • Platonism / mathematical universe (separation between ideal structure and 			

	particular instances → idealism) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantum field / elementary particles → materialism 			
Animism identical - distinct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hinduism (Atman inside, Brahman outside → same substance) • Shamanism • New Age • Naturalism (quantum field common in physicality and interiority) 			interiority: physicality is subordinate to interiority

Table 3: Column one and two are adapted from Philippe Descola's anthropological description and classification of worldviews in different cultural groups all over the world (Descola 2013), although the multiple mentions in column two have been adjusted by the author. For example, in Descola's description naturalism found a stricter classification and was not viewed with a different ontological focus.

The worldviews appear several times in the lines because they can be viewed with a different focus, i.e. they show aspects of more than one ontology. The three ontologies - totemism, naturalism, animism - are subordinate to analogism, because for the connection between self and world there is an identification or fixation in each that can be traced back to analogism. In analogism, outside and inside or macrocosm and microcosm (physicality and interiority) are equalized by a connecting principle, by a common order or substance. In naturalism and animism, the focus on this connection is only shifted outwards or inwards, but the connection remains. In the case of totemism, a direct identity between outside and inside is

assumed, which, however, has for all different totems an analog in the dream world and, thus, also represents a kind of Platonism. The personal fixation/orientation takes place on the connecting principle (analogism), identity (totemism), the outer world (naturalism), or the inner world (animism). But since in animism, naturalism and totemism there is a subordination to a connecting principle between outside and inside, all three ontologies are subordinate to analogism and the fixation lies ultimately, despite different emphases, on the connection between self and world. The main characteristics of the four types of ontologies can be summarized to materialism and/or idealism, which in turn can be viewed both dualistically and monistically. However, dualism can be regarded as a subordination to monism, since in dualism there is a hierarchy, a superordinate principle that determines everything, here namely the ideal or matter.

3. Jaspers' psychology of worldviews and the process of differentiation

Jaspers, in contrast to the above described stage models, describes development as a process of differentiation in different dimensions, but he also describes the subject-object separation as fundamental for the formation of the self and of worldviews: "[thus] the psychological view sees attitudes from the perspective of the subject and worldviews from the perspective of the object"¹ (Jaspers 1919, 122). In this regard worldviews are "the totality of the objective content that a person has"² (Jaspers 1919, 122). It must be noted that Jaspers' concept of 'separation' should be understood differently from that in contemporary development models. Since he uses the concept of differentiation, it means more a splitting off of new relationships rather than the separation between subjective identification and objective possession (object-identification and object-separation). The human being grows into an autonomous world of the general through which the worldview shows its objective quality:

"We see the human being, as the center, in a circumference. In the attitudes we see functions that take possession of the objective, the periphery (of the circular) is this world of the objective, in which the

human being is included in the subject-object separation. [...] we can call the worldview the shell in which the psychological life is partly captured, but which partly is able to create it itself and to expose it to the outside world."³ (Jaspers 1919, 122)

This shows the interdependence, the relationship between self and world. He goes on to explain that we always live in such a shell and involuntarily consider the outer horizon of our worldview to be an absolute one. During the development, however, a differentiation takes place in relation to this outer horizon and beyond. Jaspers distinguishes three types of worldviews, which in the human being are always existing together and pervading one another (Jaspers 1919, 126-127): (1) the experienced world, fused with the soul, which is not formulated or objectively known, but which is highly effective. It can be observed and described from the outside, but the experiencer does not know anything about it. (2) The objectified, known world, which is placed in front of the individual and about which information can be provided. This world can still fuse with our soul, but it is consciously perceived as being outside of us. Through an infinite process, a growing world emerges from this fusion in the outside and inside. As if on the edge of the known world there is an infinity, which, although unknown, shows its effect and allows the objectification process to continue. (3) The world which is known but not experienced, which is psychologically not effective. Thereby, worldviews are externally adopted without the soul being grown together with them. They are known but not experienced. These three types of worldviews always shape one another. That is, even if they exist simultaneously, they influence and change one another (Jaspers 1919, 128). According to Jaspers, this is what defines the development. He characterizes four different processes of differentiation, i.e. the ways in which development takes place. (1) The objectification from the inside, i.e. something that has been experienced is objectified. This progresses in an infinite process. (2) The expansion of the ability to comprehend and experience in a broader perspective, which means that new approaches arise. (3) The fluctuation between the development of a directed, ordered worldview and the chaotic flowing of new content which

is not directly incorporated into the system. Only through the synthesis the process of differentiation arises. (4) Perhaps the most important process of differentiation is that of the unfolding of the worldviews themselves, since it affects all worldviews. The first three processes describe the way in which the worldview develops. The fourth describes the series of worldviews that follow each other. Jaspers characterizes this series of worldviews as an unfolding "from the immediate horizon of the individually centered world to absolute infinity"⁴ (Jaspers 1919, 129). He also describes this as an order of worldviews, in which the starting point is the immediate, that lies before the subject-object-differentiation (S-O-differentiation) of self-awareness. Then the S-O-differentiation takes place and we are surrounded by the concrete, tangible world. The S-O-differentiation continues in a long series, in which further reference objects are formed in the course of development. During this series of S-O-differentiation, a first leap behind the concrete things takes place, in which times and possibilities are included, and then a second leap to the infinite, in which the worldview no longer has any limits in its expansion and the individual things themselves become limitless and infinite. In the end, the S-O-differentiation closes again, which he describes as a "function of the infinite moving mind"⁵ (Jaspers 1919, 129). With this S-O-closure, the absolute infinity in the expansion of the world and in the individual things is recognized. In the psychological observation there is no specific worldview found anymore, but the worldview becomes pointless, i.e. non-representational, and blurred in infinite possibilities (Jaspers 1919, 128-129). Since in Jaspers' description the absolute infinity is always in the background as a fundamental direction of orientation, which is always perceived either unconsciously or consciously, the S-O-differentiation must here be understood more as the establishment of new relationships than as a division between object-identification and object-separation (or object-possession). In the case of the latter, orientation is only directed towards these two objects, whereas in Jaspers' description, due to the absolute infinity in the background, there can be no

fixation on this S-O-separation, since the fundamental orientation is on absolute infinity.

Jaspers describes this infinity of the S-O-closure even more precisely: it is significant that it cannot be grasped "conceptually" (Jaspers 1919, 130). But, it is important to distinguish that conceptualization does not necessarily mean limitation, since we can also have concepts of openness or chaos. We can have a concept of absolute infinity by describing it as open, unstructured and without limitations in the quantity and nature of properties, for example. The conceptualization Jaspers is referring to is a structured, formalized one that leads to some form of limitation (in any way) and thereby creates a kind of object, as described above in relation to the object-identification, in which the individual identifies with properties of the background. That is why he deliberately chooses the expression of *absolute infinity*, as it has no formalization or structuring, since every infinity that is structured or put into a (formalized) concept has itself become finite as an object (Jaspers 1919, 130). This specific characteristic of absolute infinity is recognized in the last step. But the infinity itself does not become a worldview, it is rather recognized as a necessary presence of orientation, and "the worldview in infinity cannot be crystallized as a shell"⁶ (Jaspers 1919, 130). This means, worldviews are still there, but they are unfinished and fluid. The individual is aware that every concept of the self and the world is aligned with absolute infinity (Jaspers 1919, 129). This characterizes the S-O-closure.

When we now consider contemporary knowledge about the world from different areas of science, it turns out that only this openness of worldviews and the orientation towards absolute infinity in Jaspers' description can satisfy the addition of new knowledge, and that every development model that contains a closed worldview has to fail, because of new evolving worldviews and knowledge. Let us first consider the results from philosophy and mathematics. In contemporary ontology (for example: Badiou 2019; Gabriel 2015b, 2015a; Meillassoux 2010), the world is increasingly identified with infinity, and closed worldviews are repressed. These theoretical insights are found, for example, in the New Realism (Gabriel 2015b, 2015a)

or the Speculative Realism (Meillassoux 2010) and have shown that the concepts of the world and the absolute must be abandoned for a constitutively open infinity of substantial and systemic plurality, where also time and contingency are included. This core idea is not new. It can already be found in Spinoza's metaphysics, which is based on an absolutely infinite substance that consists of an infinite number of attributes, each with an eternal and infinite being (de Spinoza 1976, 4). Or, in Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* (Heidegger 2010, 1967) in the *ontological difference* between entities and their *being*, in which the *being* (we can say the constitutive background of each entity) determines entities as entities. At the basis of this argument lies the characteristic of any form of unity: a unity should embrace everything completely, but it does not include itself as an element (Badiou 2019; Gabriel 2015b; Meillassoux 2010). This argument can also be described mathematically, because it is a fundamental problem in set theory. It describes that the set of all sets (Cantor's theorem) can never be formed, since every set contains its elements, but not itself. Hence, ever larger sets are formed, which can be transferred even to infinite sets. This means that through exponentiation, infinitely many levels of differently powerful infinities can be created (for an overview see: Rucker 2005). There is no largest infinity. This is what Jaspers identified as structured infinities that are no real infinities (Jaspers 1919, 130). When we build systems of infinities of different cardinality, we create new objects that can be separated from a higher cardinality. Cantor has shown that every actual infinity or system of infinities, no matter how complex, necessarily requires a larger background to define it:

"In order to utilize a variable factor in a mathematical consideration, the 'area' of its variability must, strictly speaking, be known beforehand through a definition; this 'area' cannot itself be something changeable again, because otherwise there would be no fixed basis for consideration; so this 'area' is a certain actual infinite set of values."⁷ (Cantor 1932, 410-411)

That is why Jaspers purposely referred to absolute infinity and described any other infinity as not sufficient. In addition, Jaspers had described the series of S-O-differentiations as

interdependent. That is, every newly recognized feature to which an object relationship is established is part of its relationship to the background (Jaspers 1919, 128), as also Heidegger described the *ontological difference* as the necessary connection between every entity and its *being* (Heidegger 1975, 2010).

But, not only in philosophy and mathematics, also in cosmology, where the radius of our knowledge has been more and more extended in the last hundred years, the newly acquired knowledge resulted in seeing our cosmos as just one part of a larger 'multiverse', i.e. considering infinitely many possible world realizations, as well as seeing the natural constants as being variable (Barrow 2005; Barrow and Webb 2005; Guth 2000; Linde 1983, 1986; Vilenkin 2007).

The achievements of modern philosophy, set theory (e.g. Cantor's theorem) and the advances in the cosmological sciences are only examples of how the human mind has broadened its horizons in all areas of science and cultural development. They show that the newly obtained knowledge is becoming more and more complex and diverse. A development model that wants to endure over time must be open to new knowledge. Development models that contain a specific worldview are static and will be overtaken by changes. In addition, they imply another problem: as described in the introduction, they assume an identification with the integrating background. In Jaspers' description, on the other hand, the relationship to the background remains open. In his psychology, the individual always moves at the interface between inner experience and the surrounding, objective world. If an identification occurs with content (or images) of the unconscious, or later in the (supposed) end state with the conscious, structured concept of the absolute, as in the stage models assumed, it harbors the risk of ego inflation, as described by C.G. Jung (Jaffé 1983, 91; Jung 1999, 27-29). Altogether, an orientation towards the foreground, to the parts of object-separation, as well as towards the background, to the parts of object-identification, and also a fixation on the connecting principle between self and world, in which the goal is to pull the ego out of the world (to transcend the world and

the self) and at the same time to identify with an object-like concept of the absolute, cause an imbalance in the self. As Jung wrote: "That idea, that we can sublimate ourselves and become entirely spiritual and no hair left, is an inflation. I am sorry, that is impossible; it makes no sense. Therefore we must invent a new scheme, and we speak of the impersonal. Other times may invent other terms for the same thing." (Jung 1999, 29) As we have seen, instead, recognizing the orientation on absolute infinity as our natural alignment (with an openness of worldviews inside), as described by Jaspers, can on the one hand explain the unfolding of new knowledge, but it is on the other hand also a fundamental part of psychology: absolute infinity is not a final point in the development, it is the necessary component towards which development and the formation of the self are oriented (Jaspers 1919, 129), without limitations and, hence, identifications. Through the orientation towards absolute infinity, the self is thrown back to its own existence and *lives* the relationship between inner abilities and external requirements instead of identifying with it or one part of it.

NOTES

¹ Translation by the author. Quote in the original language: "[so] sieht die psychologische Betrachtung vom Subjekt her Einstellungen und vom Objekt her Weltbilder".

² Translation by the author. Quote in the original language: "die Gesamtheit der gegenständlichen Inhalte, die ein Mensch hat".

³ Translation by the author. Quote in the original language: "Den Menschen als das Zentrum sehen wir gleichsam in einer Kreisperipherie. Vom Menschen sehen wir in den Einstellungen Funktionen, die sich des Gegenständlichen bemächtigen, die Peripherie ist diese Welt des Gegenständlichen, in die der Mensch in der Subjekt-Objekt-Spaltung eingeschlossen ist. [...] wir können das Weltbild das Gehäuse nennen, in das das seelische Leben teils eingefangen ist, das es teils auch selbst aus sich zu schaffen und nach außen zu setzen vermag."

⁴ Translation by the author. Quote in the original language: "vom unmittelbaren Horizont individuell zentrierter Welt bis zur absoluten Unendlichkeit".

⁵ Translation by the author. Quote in the original language: "Funktion des unendlichen bewegten Geistes".

⁶ Translation by the author. Quote in the original language: "das Weltbild im Unendlichen ist als Gehäuse nicht kristallisierbar".

⁷ Translation by the author. Quote in the original language: „Damit eine [...] veränderliche Größe in einer mathematischen Betrachtung verwertbar sei, muss strenggenommen das ‚Gebiet‘ ihrer Veränderlichkeit durch eine Definition vorher bekannt sein; dieses ‚Gebiet‘ kann aber nicht selbst wieder etwas Veränderliches sein, da sonst jede feste Unterlage der Betrachtung fehlen würde; also ist dieses ‚Gebiet‘ eine bestimmte aktual unendliche Wertmenge.“

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Husserl's Account of Intersubjectivity as an Approach to the Other in Modern Medical Ethics

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Abstract

This work considers the problem of otherness in modern medical ethics through the prism of Husserl's phenomenology. The main goal of this investigation is to apply Husserl's notion of phenomenological intersubjectivity to the ethical relations between physicians and patients. To achieve this, the phenomenological method is used which takes the experience of the subject as a starting point. This provides an opportunity to overcome the purely scientific approach to medicine which alienates the participants in the clinical situation from each other. The phenomenological approach allows the Other to exist in the subject's world not only as a physical object but also as living body. This shift from a purely naturalistic approach to medicine to using the phenomenological method enhances the importance of the patient's experience of his own illness but also his social responsibility to the physician since they both belong to a world of common values and ideas.

Keywords: phenomenology, medical ethics, intersubjectivity, otherness, Husserl

Introduction

Irreconcilable social disagreements give rise to severe social crises. To address and resolve those, we, as a society, need to find answers to the following questions: how to speak a common language, how to build a common world, and how to reach the Other. Discovering common ground despite the numerous differences is a challenge facing all human activities including the attainment of knowledge, the achievement of social and political stability, and the building of harmonious personalities and interpersonal relations.

Finding a way to the Other is also a challenge for the science and practice of medicine. It must reconcile the respect for the individual person with the boundless scientific interest; the respect for autonomy with the common morality; the subjective acceptance of the body with the generally accepted standard of medical science. These issues are part of the field of medical ethics, which in turn is not independent and solely focused on the relationships within the medical profession. Medical ethics examines the specific ethical situation of the relationship between the suffering patient and the physician seeking a way to him. But relationships in medical ethics are part of the broader ethical relationships in society and are based on moral values and norms.

The rapid pace of development of scientific knowledge and the contradictions between the different philosophical and ethical concepts shift the focus from discussions of the causes of bioethical problems to discussions of their consequences instead. This leads to the standardization and formalization of the relationship between the physician and the patient, which consequently makes it less productive. Resolving ethical dilemmas thus limits itself to a form of "moral first aid", i.e., dealing with first-order concerns without looking for the root of the problem in a broader philosophical context (Clouser & Gert 2004, 121).

At the heart of medicine is always the attitude towards the Other, manifested in the correct diagnosis, the effective treatment, and the prevention of diseases. At its core, medical science is knowledge about the human, and physicians master this knowledge by developing additional skills in the ethical treatment of the patient. In this sense, the communication between medicine and phenomenology would be very useful for understanding the problematic relations in this profession, burdened with pain, suffering, denial, and sometimes misunderstanding and disrespect for the otherness. Opportunities for coexistence and full cooperation of the subject with the Other can be sought in the idea of intersubjectivity, developed by Husserl's phenomenology. The application of the phenomenological method can contribute to a greater understanding of the points of contact between the patient and

the physician in order to illuminate the way to an ethical relationship based on a common world with common goals and ideas.

The aim of this work is to draw on the phenomenological tradition of intersubjectivity and apply it in the context of modern medical ethics. In order to achieve this, the phenomenological method is used, which brings us closer to the concept of otherness, without presupposing an image constructed by the cognitive subject (the ego) and thus shows how the ego allows others into his subjective world.

The first part of the article explores the concept of the Other in Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* (1982), which is considered central to the discussion of intersubjectivity. Next, the concept of the Other is compared to the idea of intersubjectivity as discussed in *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1970). In the second part, the points of contact between Husserl's phenomenology and the ethical relations in modern medicine are identified and explored. Finally, this work derives a medical approach to otherness and outlines the opportunities for cooperation with the Other, whether a patient or a physician, provided by the phenomenology of modern medical ethics.

Husserl's phenomenology discusses issues related to the perception and understanding of the Other and is thus particularly applicable to the field of medical ethics. The question of whether it is possible to know the person opposite us by comparing him to ourselves and attributing our experience to him is the key to solving many ethical problems in the medical profession. This constitutes a central issue to the relations in the practice of medicine since the approach to the Other and the ability to understand him are at the heart of the process of healing and maintaining health. The point of view of the physician and the patient are sometimes so different and incompatible that it hinders the achievement of the set goal. Sometimes they are two completely different worlds that have no points of overlap.

1. The idea of Intersubjectivity as the constitution of the self and the other

The main question posed in the *Fifth Cartesian Meditation*, which has acquired an independent role in Husserl's philosophy, is how to overcome solipsism and how to reach the Other. It begins with the key question:

But what about other egos, who surely are not a mere intending and intended in me, merely synthetic unities of possible verification in me, but, according to their sense, precisely others? (Husserl 1982, 89)

It aims to resolve the questions about the transcendental consciousness and its access to the Other that have arisen in the previous meditations. The goal is to understand how the Other becomes a part of our world, as constituted by our consciousness, but without being fully burdened with our intentions and while continuing to be something completely different from us.

In the *Fifth Meditation*, Husserl's task is to exclude everything that belongs to the objective reality from the transcendental consciousness by applying phenomenological reduction. In the so-called "bracketing" of the objective reality, the subject must remain alone in his consciousness. This isolation in one's sphere of ownness is speculative and represents a "thought experiment" that should show the connection between the ego and the alter ego in the transcendental consciousness (McIntyre 2012, 64). In the *Fifth Meditation*, Husserl proves that there is something beyond the solipsistic attitude, something that goes beyond one's sphere of ownness. The Other, as a transcendental consciousness, is unattainable for our consciousness, but as a living presence in the world, it reveals itself to us as a body that performs actions similar to ours. The Other can be experienced only through analogical apperception from the transcendental consciousness of the ego. On this note, Husserl writes:

I must first explicate my own as such, in order to understand that, within my own, what is not my own likewise receives existential sense and does so as something appresented analogically. (Husserl 1982, 150)

At the level of consciousness, the Other remains independent of us. But from the point of view of our existence in a common world, they appear as living bodies that perform actions and express emotions, and thanks to this it is possible to combine these "monads", as Husserl calls them.

The immediate perception of the Other is not enough to enter his world. Sensory experience only gives us knowledge of him as a natural thing. The way to him is the body – not the body-object (Körper), but rather the living body (Leib). Since we have an experience of our own body as living and not as a physical object, we perceive the Other in this way too, because “Even the physical things of this world that are unknown to us are, to speak generally, known in respect of their type” (Husserl 1982, 111). When perceiving the living body of the Other we evoke our equivalent bodily experiences in order to relate to him. To know oneself means to perceive oneself as a psychophysical unity, and the knowledge based on this mental experience leads to the perception of the Other as a similar union of body and soul. According to Kern (2019, 25), “Husserl’s answer is that this association is made possible by the constitutive correspondence of every external distance and movement to one’s own “kinesthetic movements”. The movement that the other body performs is perceived by mine based on the association with the experience that my body has. Husserl draws the line between the ego and the Other by defining the sphere of the subject and the sphere of experience of the Other.

The association of one's own body with the Other's makes it possible to perceive the otherness, realized in the pairing of bodies. It represents the transfer of one's own experience to the Other, but also the influence of the Other's experience on the ego: “When I encounter another, my prior self-experience will serve as a reservoir of meaning that is transferred onto the other in a purely passive manner” (Zahavi 2012, 235). The lowest level of pairing is when the ego and the alter ego reside in the unity of consciousness at the first level of intersubjectivity - in the commonness of nature (Husserl 1982, 120). The foreign body that appears in our perceptual field and that is recognised by analogy with our own bodily experience is

not our double. In essence, it has its position "there", which complements my position "here", and as Carr (2019, 250) says, this is "the phenomenology of the first and second persons". For the classical philosophical theories preceding phenomenology, the cognitive subject and the object of his cognition are of interest, and in this sense, the otherness is reduced to being identical with the ego. Overcoming this attitude is possible with the idea of intersubjectivity, which opens the way to the ethical formulation of responsibility as a metaphysical situation that binds us permanently to the Other. In the course of his meditations on the perception of the Other as a body, Husserl lays the foundations of an ethical attitude – to put oneself in the place of the Other is to transition from the "here"-mode of one's own body to the "there"-mode of the Other.

The perception of the Other's body gives us information about his experiences, his thoughts. The body is mobile, it occupies a place in space, but also in the world. Therefore, the body provokes the ego with sounds expressing the emotions of the Other, and with words showing his point of view. In this sense, the initial existence of the ego and the Other as objects passes to the level of intersubjectivity, cemented by interbodyness. At the same time, the emergence of the otherness as a psychophysical unity may remain inaccessible due to the desire to assimilate the Other and turn him into our own. The initial perception of the external manifestations of corporeality is not the same as approaching it. Understanding it can erase it, even replace it. Husserl discusses the way in which the empathic connection takes place, without assimilating the otherness into something of our own. What does it mean to put yourself in the Other's position? This is first of all your own opportunity to change, to possess the mode of otherness in yourself as the Other's point of view, e.g., as what you do not see at the moment, but would be revealed to you from another angle. In this sense, the otherness is embedded in us as an unrealized potentiality.

The access to the foreign culture is achieved through the act of empathy. The relationship with the Other is not based on his perception as a physical object. It is transferred to the level of commonness of ideas and values. Community is based on

trust and common values: "Like shared goals and interests, shared values and feelings can be seen as a condition for the trust needed to belong to a community" (McIntyre 2012, 85).

Due to the ego's potentiality to exist for the Others, as well as theirs to exist for him, the individual monads combine in the transcendental intersubjectivity. The relation with the Other is realized on the basis of a common existence in the same world. Outside the field (sphere) of the ego's own consciousness are the objects that exist both for him and for the Other, i.e., they are present in the world horizon. The consciousness of the Other does not belong to the ego, it exists independently. The ego cannot tell what the Other feels or thinks solely relying on his own consciousness. At the same time, the ego's point of view with respect to the outside world is incomplete without the existence of the point of view of the Other, who sees what remains inaccessible. "Transcendence alone requires the explicit introduction of the sense of 'other subject' into the theme" (Hutcheson 1982, 269). The Other appears where a subject has distanced himself from everything else and has thus drawn the line between his sphere ownness and that of the Other. In this sense, in order to be aware of oneself, the Other is needed. The idea that the Other exists is present in the ego's consciousness, but the essence of otherness is unattainable for it. The presence of the idea of the Other in the ego's own consciousness supports the idea that the intersubjectivity is a path to achieving harmonious coexistence of individual subjects, capable of constituting a world from their own horizon.

With the writing of *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* in 1936, Husserl supplemented his concept of intersubjectivity with new ideas. At first, it is closely connected with the transcendental consciousness and its cognitive experience, but in his late philosophy, the ideas of historicity, sociality, and culture appear. With the introduction of the concept of life-world, the world ceases to be just a horizon of perception of the otherness but is instead perceived as a pre-theoretical fact and a condition for common existence. The idea of the world as a stage on which the intersubjective relations take place is replaced by a new one: the world is the pregiven

basis for our consciousness. It is the context without which we cannot produce any knowledge about ourselves, about reality, and the others. The emphasis is shifted from the transcendental consciousness of the self (ego), which "brackets" the world in order to subsequently constitute it to the life-world that serves as a pregiven basis for the existence of the ego and the Other. This also changes the idea of intersubjectivity that precedes the ego's transcendental experience. The Other is no longer taken out of the ego's consciousness but is an integral part of the life-world and thus coexists with the ego in an indivisible unity.

Thus, in whatever way we may be conscious of the world as universal horizon, as coherent universe of existing objects, we, each "I-the-man" and all of us together, belong to the world as living with one another in the world; and the world is our world, valid for our consciousness as existing precisely through this "living together". (Husserl 1970, 127)

The world is now seen as a unifier of our activities, in it we speak, create, and act. It is thanks to the fact that we exist in it that we-subjectivity is born, in which we can build a common reality. The isolation of science from the life-world cuts the thread that connects it to human nature. The generation of scientific knowledge based only on facts, in order to be more objective, leads to its dehumanization. Knowledge is knowledge about the life-world and the relations in it. The subject is the one who generates knowledge, but not in isolation from the world and the others. If in the *Cartesian Meditations* knowledge began with the transcendental subject, now in *The Crisis* knowledge is a product of the common mind. Caminada (2019, 275-276) analyses the connection of the common mind with the life-world. According to him, the common mind is not synonymous with the life-world, but is closely related to it, as it is its theoretical interpretation. The life-world is the basis, the practical orientation of the individuals residing in a pregiven unity. The common mind is the theoretical formulation of the humanities, studying the structure of the life-world. The life-world is the beginning of every scientific experience, but not in the sense of the object of that experience. Husserl seeks to set a new direction for knowledge that is not isolated from the

history and culture of mankind. It unites the subjects, as creators of common values, realized in the communication with one other.

Along with the purely phenomenological idea of consciousness and the objects it considers, we could also problematize the relationship with the Other as empathy, which goes beyond the epistemological sphere and enters the sphere of ethics.

2. The influence of the idea of Intersubjectivity on the ethical relations in medicine

The interest in the influence of phenomenology on medicine dates back to the end of the 20th century with the emergence of a new movement called "phenomenology of medicine" (Svenaeus, 2019). With the recognition of the Other's point of view as significant in this process, it provides new opportunities for diagnosis and treatment in modern medicine. Pellegrino points out the advantages of Husserl's methodology for medical ethics over other ethical theories:

First, phenomenology is primarily a method of philosophizing and not the whole content of a philosophical system applied from without, as is the case with the standard ethical theories today, like Kantian deontology, Millian utilitarianism, or Ross' prima facie principles as elaborated by Beauchamp and Childress. (Pellegrino 2004, 189)

Due to its lack of presuppositions, the phenomenological method is easily applicable to clinical situations in which the physician-patient contact is considered in the context of individual experiences and social relationships. If we are to use Husserl's terminology, we would say that each subject represents a monad that is open to the otherness, due to the world we live in. In this encounter, the Other's body is the starting point for empathy as a willingness to understand and accept the Other's position. The ego must assume that he could be in the position of the Other "there", and through this, he is able to carry out his own experience as joint with the experience of the Other. This reciprocity in the relationship presupposes an engagement of both parties with the process of diagnosis and treatment and stimulates taking responsibility

for the Other. Making a choice in this sense means assuming that there is another point of view that complements yours.

The phenomenological method frees us from the literal perception of others as objects given to our consciousness. As it was already established in the previous section, thanks to the body, we possess the idea of otherness. It is simultaneously our own and the Other's, it is perceiving and perceived. This is precisely the remarkable contribution of phenomenology: it allows the body to be perceived as alive, suffering, and not merely as an observed and described scientific object (Marcum 2008, 49). This idea, applied to the clinical situation in medicine, makes us think of the patient's body as moving and producing meanings that the physician must perceive and use in the process of diagnosis and treatment. At the same time, the physician should not be seen as a "conductor" of scientific knowledge. He also owns his body and expresses his world in an individual way. But this does not mean that their individual worlds do not intersect, because they are open to each other, and each one is incomplete in the dialogue with the other, each one constitutes himself and discovers himself through the experience of others. The position of the physician is charged with the responsibility of knowledge and duty. The patient's position is that of a support-seeking subject. The intersection of the two worlds is in the trust and respect of Other's experience, the commitment, proactiveness and empathy on both sides. "This healing is the "act" of medicine in which patient and physician come together" (Pellegrino 2004, 196). Pellegrino emphasizes this bilateral commitment of those involved in this process, basing it on moral responsibility to the Other. In this sense, regarding the patient solely as a physical object distances the physician from the dialogical attitude based on empathy. Using Husserl's terms, we would say that this approach is characteristic of the "objective sciences" and presupposes a type of knowledge to which all objects are equated. In this case, the physician presupposes objective knowledge, to which he "pulls" his object, i.e., the patient, and ignores his entire experience as a human being, composed of emotions, ideas, and values. In *The Crisis...*, Husserl states that:

The exclusiveness with which the total world-view of modern man, in the second half of the nineteenth century, let itself be determined by the positive sciences and be blinded by the "prosperity" they produced, meant an indifferent turning-away from the questions which are decisive for a genuine humanity. Merely fact-minded sciences make merely fact-minded people. (Husserl 1970, 18)

This applies to medicine, which should not be seen as a science composed of objective facts, but as knowledge in development, influenced by social attitudes and values. All knowledge must be derived from the life-world. This applies to medical knowledge, which must be knowledge of the human as a psychophysical unity, but also as a person.

The application of the phenomenological method to the ethical relations in medicine aids the establishment of the figure of the Other (not only as a patient but also as a medical professional). The figures of the ego and the Other are both independent and worthy of respect but at the same time are part of a common context. The lack of presuppositions of this method preserves the idea of independence of the otherness from the sphere of ownness of the subject but at the same time does not preclude the pairing of the two independent monads. The pairing is a combination of monads which can exist independently but are united by some community and thus their identities are enriched. This also applies to the relationship between the physician and the patient. The pairing is based on empathy, trust, the search for the best end result, not only in a purely pragmatic sense, but also in an emotional one. The physician's feeling of satisfaction with the achieved results and the patient's gratitude for the support and efforts of the physician are a result of this pairing, which Husserl discusses. In this sense, the idea of community precedes the communication. The collocutors are able to communicate precisely because they are part of a common world and because the idea of otherness exists in their individual consciousnesses. From the point of view of phenomenology, the subject does not exist independently from the experience of the Other. Enclosing him and limiting him to his sphere of ownness precludes us from knowing him and from being able to treat him ethically by putting ourselves in his position (be that of the patient or of the physician). Overcoming solipsism is crucial for finding a way to

the Other. The constitution of the Other as another subject is interrelated with one's own constitution. To perceive the Other sitting opposite you is to find meaning in his words and gestures, by transferring the sense from yourself to him (Smith 2014, 137). This "pairing" is enabled by the existence of my body and that of the Other in a common world. This is also how the reciprocity in the relation is realized – we are open to the others just as they are to us. We all perceive the objects around us but from our own unique point of view. It is thanks to this that the intersubjective connection with the Other is established in a social context. The "empathic apperception" according to McIntyre (2012, 70) is the perception of the Other by analogy. It is a continuous process of perceiving his vitality composed of movements and emotions as opposed to the fragmented perception of first his body and then him. In this sense, placing oneself in the Other's position is a transfer of one's own experiences to him, but also a self-experience through him.

Insofar as the Other is present in the horizon of my perception, I have a certain point of view, but I do not limit him only to it. The same applies to him - he looks at me from his horizon and perceives me in the context of many other factors. My own experience and that of the Other are bound by the common world that we exist and perceive in (Husserl 1970, 321). Assuming that the object is the disease, then the points of view of the physician and the patient must intersect due to their common interest in that object. Just as I can see a table frontally but am simultaneously aware that there is another point of view of the same table accessible to the Other, the disease is perceived in one way by the physician and in another by the patient. Carel (2011) sees the phenomenological method as an opportunity to improve the effectiveness of medical practice by taking into account the patient's personal experiences of the illness. She further suggests that by developing an apparatus for examining the patient's experiences of the illness from the first-person perspective, the distance separating the points of view of the patient and the physician would be diminished.

Limiting the patient or the physician solely to their respective spheres of ownness cannot lead to a good result for either one of them. The conflict between paternalism and autonomy is the result of the reluctance to overcome the monadological thinking. Both positions are based on a strong presence of the ego and on a refusal for the ego to open himself to the Other's experience. In this case, the physician, guided by the accumulated professional experience and knowledge, does not respect the patient's experience of the disease. On the other hand, the patient, absorbed by his experience of the disease, does not trust the judgment of the physician. According to phenomenology, one needs the Other to achieve his own identity. Thus, the physician and the patient are in a symbiotic relationship and united by a common goal.

The task of the phenomenological method is to locate this person and this doctor in the full structure of the complexity of the respective and shared worlds of life. It is at this crossroads of the worlds of life that the whole specialized activity of medicine is located. (Pellegrino 2004, 194)

Conclusion

With the introduction of the term intersubjectivity in the 19th century, the aim was initially to achieve epistemological results in scientific knowledge. Husserl's concept opened a discussion about the knowledge of other subjects, which continues today. The original metaphysical and epistemological aspect laid down by Husserl gradually gave way to the ethical one. If in *Cartesian Meditations* he introduced the term intersubjectivity to explain the presence of the idea of the Other in the subject's transcendental consciousness and to prevent the subject's metaphysical loneliness that stems from classical philosophical theories, in his last work, *The Crisis...*, Husserl linked intersubjectivity to social relations. With the help of the pre-positated potentiality for perceiving the otherness, the ego and the Other in their inseparable existence in the world now form we-subjectivity.

Husserl's philosophical experience with the concept of intersubjectivity aids the understanding of the attitude towards the patient and the disease. The conclusion we can draw is that

phenomenology, as a philosophical theory, and medicine have many points of contact, which develop in the following aspects:

1. The body is interpreted as an approach to otherness (one's own and the Other's), from which it follows that it is a living presence in a world in which our joint activities take place;
2. Phenomenology's rejection of the naturalistic treatment of the body merely as an object provides medicine with the opportunity to cooperate with other areas of human knowledge;
3. The idea of otherness, on the basis of which we form our identity, is always embedded in our own consciousness;
4. The Other and I exist in a common world of values and ideas, which makes us empathetic;
5. Assuming that the idea of otherness is embedded in our consciousness, we can never think of ourselves as alone and independent in our choices, which in turn leads to a rethinking of the idea of autonomy. Based on this, we can think of physicians and patients as part of a common world and belonging to a shared community of values.

The experience we have through our own body can determine empathy – to heal means to have experience of suffering. Putting yourself in the Other's position does not mean duplicating his experience, but rather developing the ability to acknowledge the Other's point of view.

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Is Marketing Moral?

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Abstract

This article focused on how moral values can be found in marketing. To some extent, we tried to see if the perspective of traditional ethics has changed in postmodernity and how we can still find moral values in today's life. In the first part, we considered how marketing is seen and perceived, both general and particular, with its moral dimensions. In the second part, we analyzed how ethics and explicit moral issues are found in Marketing. In the third part, we discussed the problem of immoral aspects in various marketing strategies. As we examined these aspects, we have concluded that postmodernity is relative in itself, but this does not mean that moral values are relative. Therefore, following this path, we concluded that marketing is moral as we try to observe it from a dynamic-postmodern perspective. From another perspective, if we appeal to fundamental moral values, we can say that there are moral shortcomings when reflecting on Marketing. We will discuss these perspectives in further detail.

Keywords: moral, marketing, ethics, postmodernity, needs, values, market-place

1. Moral values of Marketing

Kotler and Armstrong (2011) argue that Marketing can be found practically everywhere and it appears split into two categories: traditional marketing and modern marketing that tries to be "a part of you" by using a mobile phone, computer, etc. Today marketing's goal is not just to sell a product. It is about satisfying needs, desires, and demands. Technology has created a connection between the seller and the consumer because marketing research is much easier to collect (conduct). It relies on obtaining data from the consumer. Companies can adapt on the go to demand and offer. In this sense, they can sell not only a product, but also other services. Companies need to

maintain a close relationship with the customers because people can make emotional based choices. Also, failing to meet varying customer demands can cost a company as they might lose clients to the marketing tactics of competitors. Nowadays, this is an effective method, as a customer's information and interests are much more accessible than ever before. The previously mentioned facts are happening because these days, customers have easy access to information using the internet or social media. They can review others' opinions and, in some cases, use the product for a trial.

To provide the best customer service, Kotler describes five general concepts (the production, the product, the sales, the market, the social marketing). Those can be the basis of a marketing plan, applied in creating healthy relationships between the company and the customer. This method can result in a long-term value, satisfied customers and a high profit that remains constant for companies. Along these lines, the five dimensions of Marketing embrace an axiological vision.

At the same time, Baker and Hart (2008) state that everything is in a constant motion. The supply must vary because the needs are complex, and the demand is high. On the other hand, management is the one that supports the connection between technology and people and implicitly the axiological activity of companies.

An essential principle of marketing is to be consumer-orientated. Without considering that rule, there could be no space for the sale relationship itself. Putting the consumers first, satisfying their needs, and maintaining a strong relationship with them are the success factors for every marketing strategy. It is a time-consuming process, and the company must combine good quality products with a reasonably low production cost to ultimately make a profit. This practice, especially in social marketing, is about gathering axiological value and fair moral exchange between the parties, consumers, and companies (Donovan and Henley 2010).

Human values are much more significant in postmodernity. Marketing must embrace them and stop promoting perfection but consider that people are imperfect. Individuals are more than just consumers. In this dimension,

digital anthropology was born, helping companies find out the needs of people: social listening, human behavior analysis, and empathic research (Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan 2017). At the same time, we must not forget that advanced technology does not bring moral progress. This logic is often used to hide immoral or illegal intentions, pushing the boundaries / limits of the law. Technological progress, especially in anthropology and consumer behavior studies, can be used against human dignity. After all, as Kant pointed out, everything comes down to human dignity.

In the same line of thinking, the consumer society cannot exist if there are no moral precepts, if there is no axiological framework - which regulates, above all, the business world. It is a perspective - not only an axiological one, but also a pragmatic one. Without fundamental coherence, without appealing to moral values, economic activities could not occur, and social life could not exist. In these terms, moral values are essential. Although they are not palpable, they are not visible to the naked eye, they represent the cardinal points of our lives, the principles that govern social life.

Business ethics should also revolve around this formalism if ethics revolves around axiology. In other words, business ethics should be based on what Bellu (2012) would call 'elementary morality'. If human relations did not have a pillar of support, then business ethics would not be possible either. Business ethics normalizes, stages moral values, and brings them to light beyond the interests of the actors involved, thus forcing them to keep the business field intact. Moreover, business ethics, seen as an elementary morality, is necessary. In a world dominated by immoral, *barbaric* politics, (Colang, 2018), we need a moral framework, an honest game board not only for those directly involved in business, but also for those actively involved in social life, such as consumers, employees, social groups, and local communities. They all should be a base for setting the business ethics and the moral codes. Thus, in this keynote, the business ethics research field was born. In the literature – business ethics aims to regulate the rules and principles underlying economic activities. Some authors suggest that business ethics is a pure philosophical speculation on

economic principles. In contrast, others see it as an activity that considers the deontological framework of economic activities. What is certain is, in one form or another, any economic activity is reduced to the way the client is seduced. Here hermeneutics is essential to consumption and the phenomenology of the economic act – which involves deepening the practice in which any economic activity is carried out. In essence, the action takes place in the space of *appearance*, as we developed this topic in the article *A Hermeneutics of the Consumer* (Colang 2011). Hence, we will discuss how postmodern relativism can mislead us, so that we tend to postulate that there is no ethics in the economical sphere and, therefore, no axiological framework either.

2. Moral relativism

In opposition to the ancient period where moral values were linked to *goodwill* (Aristotle 2020, EEII67a), in postmodernity we have a moral relaxation in the sense that ethics is no longer absolute, but is relative. After all, starting from the Nietzschean relativism, postmodernity wants to emphasize subjectivism: “There are no moral phenomena at all, only a moral interpretation of phenomena.” (Nietzsche 2003, 96) Although it sounds contradictory, morality in marketing may or may not be ethical in this context. How is this possible? It is possible because postmodernity preserves the rigor of modernity, and implicitly, its values, will on the other hand, tends towards relativism. In other words, it is a moral game between Descartes' and Nietzsche's vision, in which life as a whole can be viewed in the most abstract sense, but to the same extent, it can be questioned at the level of social or moral norms.

For this reason, we have communication strategies that tend to seem ethical, but can still be moral. Following the same logic, there may be communication campaigns that may be immoral but viewed in a moral light. Moreover, we have many examples from business ethics, where we see different moral dimensions in immoral acts. It is all about retouching in marketing and communication.

Another relevant aspect of business ethics and how marketing can be considered moral, is a Kantian moral duty. Postmodernity instead, influences perspectives at the level of communication, but does not penetrate deeply into the moral dimensions. Simply put, Kantian moral duty is present in business, but it can be relativized from the perspective of John Stuart Mill's communication and utilitarianism. After all, R.M. Hare tried to achieve this, by bringing deontology into the space of utilitarianism. This means that business in today's world keeps a moral note, but is also pragmatic. Furthermore, we cannot say that society is profoundly immoral and relative. Instead, we have, as Bauman shows, a moral doubt and different perspectives on perceiving this cultural relativism, however this doesn't mean that we no longer have ethics, but rather a moral perspective (Bauman 2009).

Following this logic, we can state that relativism is rather cultural. Anything derived from this cultural relativism can only be relative. Therefore, we can firmly say that moral values are not relative, but their interpretation is. Thus, even in Nietzschean logic, perspectivism is the one that misleads us and makes us say that there are no ethics. After all, if we state that everything is relative, this statement is also relative. We refer inherently to specific values (epistemological, axiological and so on). Indeed, we cannot live without moral values, which means life has an axiological attribute.

Ontologically speaking, we are desperately looking for values without realizing that the paradigm of postmodernity means a lack of values. If everything is relative, as you hear at every corner, then there are no more moral norms, and if this is true anything is possible. You can love and cheat, you can steal and be honest, it doesn't matter. You can steal and be honest. Postmodernity allows you to violate the Manichaeism of the principle of non-contradiction, and that is a fact. You can do anything because it doesn't matter. It is enough to simply look on the street, where cultural relativism is already normalized. We do not say these things in a moralizing tone, but in a descriptive one because, in postmodernity, it no longer makes sense to talk about values if there are no more values or a meaning of those values. This is the current paradigm,

postmodernity, and the logic of *super-human*, when it comes to perfect ourselves, we will be completely devoid of feelings. Orwell's deep fear of not turning us into machinery will soon be attained. Now all that's left is a nano-technological discovery that puts us in God's place. And when we get there, we will realize that we are just human beings, but it will be too late. Religion gives you immortality in various forms. Politics tells you that everything can be at your fingertips, and science promises you in epistemic terms what religion promises in dogmatic terms. Ethics is the only field that promises nothing, it is not a profitable concept and that's why at times certain individuals choose to avoid it.

3. Immoral strategies of Marketing

Marketing is more than meets the eye. Over time two patterns have emerged. During the first, marketing is promoted aggressively, while the process of production and consumption camouflages the second. In the footsteps of Max Weber, Applbaum (2004) states that marketing has a special place in the economic and cultural development of capitalism.

Big companies want to have more benefits rather than take into account the needs of people. In such a way, the concept of marketing is unfortunately often omitted. The following problems arise: prices, brand name use, misleading consumer practices, aggressive ways of promotion, poor product quality, premature ageing of the product, and making a difference between social classes. In contrast, some companies promote the sustainability concept. This encourages the consumer to value what they already have and the moral values. Thus, they discourage consumerist thinking that can lead to the deprivation/erasure of the common good and affect society as a whole. Another immoral aspect is that through various less ethical marketing tactics, larger companies lead to the absorption of smaller companies, resulting in higher profits. (Kotler, Armstrong, and Harys 2020).

Evans and Moutinho (1999) show us that ethical decision-making occurs when a moral constituent is noticed within a problem. Ethical problems arise when companies think of their welfare: to make as much profit as possible and achieve

their goals even if it is not suitable for consumers. Issues also appear when they try to destroy other competitors. The most common problems are misleading advertising, manipulative and insistent sale channels, prices that insinuate to favor the consumer, etc.

On the other hand, imposture also appears because postmodernity takes place in the space of excessive relativism. Not only companies tend to evade things, but also people. It is a consumer society that is somehow reduced to a kind of relativism given by the market: "While he was impressed by the productivity of free markets, Adam Smith feared their moral hazards." (Gray 2008, 121) In this sense, if the society does not have a general axiological direction, i.e., directed toward moral norms, all the society's actors will tend to relativize the social game. Huizinga was telling us that even the game needs firm rules to exist and unfold, to be genuine, rigorous, and truthful. Therefore, the general tendency towards moral decline – is not an exclusive attribute of the pecuniary, of the economic zone but rather reflects the barbaric nature of man, his natural inclination to fake things and not to follow the rules. There is, however, to a degree a difference: one is when a person is immoral out of necessity and does not respect the moral rules, and another is when several companies aim to deceive customers. This is why it is evident that the negative impact on society is better seen when we consider the false practices of companies. In other words, we cannot speak of an axiological decline but instead a moral hazard, as Adam Smith asserted.

In a way, postmodernity must be understood in its renaissance key, or even better in a Dostoevskyian key with added Nietzschean fervor. This will give us the picture of modern life. In antiquity, the foundations were laid for what Christianity carried forward in the form of dogma. More precisely, the axiological skeleton of the world, its value foundation, was outlined. Whether there were gods, philosophers or priests, all in their specific language, were convening, that we cannot function without moral laws. This means that before religion, by law, some moral norms were outlined, which were then taken over by the conceptual frames (apparatus) and transformed into means for political, doctrinal,

religious, and legislative ideologies. And yet, for those who do not understand how we conduct our lives, there is a simple answer - beyond any legal or religious foundation - it is an axiological, moral fundament of life.

4. Conclusion

This article argued the idea that morality in postmodernity, although relative, does not mean relativizing moral values. Therefore, moral values remain known as society's goals. Despite the fact that postmodernity allows us to see all aspects of life, including the economic ones, subjectively, rules must exist in order to have a moral frame in the market. To draw an answer to the question that represents the title of this article, we can say that marketing is moral as long as it is not ethical. In what sense? In the sense of a *minimal morality* of our living day by day, but in the essence, it is clear that there are some ethical deficiencies. In a matter of speaking, postmodernity allows the principle of non-contradiction to be ignored, more precisely, to be or not to be moral simultaneously. Also, we can interpret this on a pragmatically level not just on an ontological one.

Drawing the line of this article, the discussion of ethics in Marketing is closely related to the fact that postmodernism takes place in the space of post-truth. While a strategy tends to become immoral, from an axiological point of view, also it can be interpreted - at the level of perception of the masses - as moral. Furthermore, this is possible because today's society is deeply relativized in a Nietzschean paradigm, where values are volatile. We are, somehow, in a dimension where anything is possible, but more than that, anything is allowed. At the same time, we live in a technological world, where information is present at every step. At the societal level, the tendency in this chain is to omit, to no longer perceive the axiological background without appealing to moral values. In a way, following Baumann's logic, postmodernity is relative, but the ethic cannot be relative. So, morality (mores) is relative at the level of projection of Marketing, but the ethic (ethos) can never be relative because that goes beyond any communication or promotion strategy.

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Desire and its Mirror Effects: The Girard-Lacan Encounter

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Abstract

In this paper, I intend to compare Lacan's and Girard's thoughts on the nature of desire, the structure of the unconscious, and the genesis of violence. I put forward the argument that despite the major differences between the ideas of these two thinkers, they both draw attention to the dangers of narcissism and its relationship with violence. They both also treat their work as a form of therapy, the objective of which is to develop a higher form of moral conscious, unfettered by mirror effects.

Keywords: desire, Girard, Lacan, mirror stage, narcissism, violence

If one were to point out the one thinker with whom René Girard most frequently conversed, the most obvious choice would be Sigmund Freud. As he observed, it was the father of psychoanalysis who came closest to discovering the mechanisms behind human desire and violence. Although Freud's description of the Oedipus complex has a clearly triangular structure, the Austrian psychologist seems not to notice it, pointing to the object, and not the mediator, as the source of desire. However, according to Girard, we should look for the structure of the most basic of human experiences in mimesis, and in the Oedipus complex. Desire is born as the subject experiences the absence of being which forms an inextricable part of his existence. By looking at the Other, he expects it to show him the objects worthy of desire. As he writes in *Violence and the Sacred*: "The subject thus looks to that other person to inform him of what he should desire in order to acquire that

being. If the model, who is apparently already endowed with superior being, desires some object, that object must surely be capable of conferring an even greater plenitude of being. It is not through words, therefore, but by the example of his own desire that the model conveys to the subject the supreme desirability of the object.” (Girard 1977, 146)

In contrast to Freud, Girard associates this pattern of desire not with the father, but simply with another person, someone who becomes a fascinating model worthy of admiration. He again diverges from Freud’s views in his belief that desire is not oriented towards the object, but is instead the desire to become the Other. The subject therefore desires not in order to have, and most assuredly not in order to possess the object of sexual desire, but in order to become the plenitude of being that in his eyes the Other already is.

At first glance, Girard’s reinterpretation of Freud may be similar to that of Jacques Lacan. Similarly to Lacan, when expounding on the key tenets of psychoanalysis, Girard balances on the edge of philosophical discourse, adapting multiple philosophical terms to use in his narrative and subjecting them to a thorough reinterpretation, and in some cases even challenging their original meanings. This proclivity to adopt a philosophising style of narrative is most likely the result of the “imprint” left by Kojève on the views of both Lacan and Girard. This common association was undoubtedly of consequence, although ultimately the positions of both these thinkers are quite distant from each other in many aspects, with a more detailed examination leading one to conclude that they in fact contradict each other. Eugene Webb states outright that although the Lacanian school of psychology is still the dominant trend in France, a strong competitor has emerged and is gaining increasing popularity – namely the school based on the psychological and anthropological theories of René Girard (Webb 1993, 1993a). The major differences between these schools, aside of course from being based on different categories of analysis, primarily involve the method of understanding the structure of subjectivity, as well as the nature of the subject’s relationship with the Other.

In this paper, I intend to compare Lacan's and Girard's thoughts on the nature of desire, the structure of the unconscious, and the genesis of violence. I put forward the argument that despite the major differences between the ideas of these two thinkers, they both draw attention to the dangers of narcissism and its relationship with violence. They both also treat their work as a form of therapy, the objective of which is to develop a higher form of moral conscious, unfettered by mirror effects.

1. Language or lynching: The structure of the unconscious

Before we start describing the essential differences, it is worth first showing some striking analogies between the theories put forward by Girard and Lacan. The idea of the subject as a "negativity" is the starting point taken by both philosophers. By our very nature, we are a "lack of being", as evidenced by the desire that forms a constitutive part of our way of existence. One could also say that for both thinkers, desire is an expression of an absence of self-sufficiency in the subject, the weak and fragile ego, deprived of its own identity, the internal sense of plenitude of being. It is interesting that Lacan, whose psychoanalysis is decidedly anti-naturalistic or anti-biologistic, identifies this absence of self-sufficiency with a specific biological fact: prenatalism. Man is a premature being, born too soon, who came into the world not yet "adapted" to functioning independently. From the very moment of our birth, we are fully dependent on others; we all are subjects in this specific meaning referred to by the French word *sujet*, a disciple "condemned" to be subjugated by others. If I am doomed to be subjugated to another from the moment of being "thrown" into the world and in reality will never be able to escape this dependence, this means that I do not exist as an "I", but will merely exist as illusions and mirages of an individual self (*moi*).

By depicting the essential lack of self-sufficiency of human existence, Girard refers to the mimetic proclivities innate to every human being, which can be observed as facts described by natural science. Knowledge offered by the neurosciences is also of key importance in comprehending

Girard's concepts. Jean-Michel Oughourlian notes that "so-called mirror neurons, which were discovered first in monkeys but which have been identified and localised in the human brain, are anatomically part of both the rational and the emotional brains, but the relations that they make it possible to establish with the brains of other human beings have such importance and such psychological reality that this mimetic interdividuality (...) deserves (...) to be labelled as the *mimetic brain* or *third brain*" (Oughourlian 2016, xviii-xix). By their very nature human beings are mimetic and interdependent, while individuality and autonomy are merely artificial constructs of modern culture.

In the traditional dispute over whether or not the individual precedes a relation, both Girard and Lacan stand on the side of relationism versus individualism (Kowalska 2015, 167; Airaksinen 2019, 93). From the very start, a human being is a relational being. Relationality is a constitutive part of human existence, a synonym for "humanity". However, each of the thinkers has a different definition of relationality. For Lacan, man is a social being, as he cannot be what he is because of being born prematurely, he becomes or is as part of social relations. Subjectivity therefore arises when the biological human being enters into social relations, which in turn are made possible only by linguistic structures and the system of symbolic references. As Lacan writes, "it is inasmuch as he is committed to the play, to a symbolic world, that man is a decentred subject" (Lacan 1988, 47). This means that the condition for the existence of the dynamic subject – "dynamic" meaning that it is neither the individual substance of Boethius (*individua substantia*), nor Descartes' *ego cogito*, nor a sovereign individual as championed by existentialists – is being anchored within the symbolic system. In short, it is the subject who is the epiphenomenon of language structures, and not the other way round.

Similarly to Lacan, who believed that "the 'nature' of man is its relationship to man" (Lacan 2005), so did Girard in his characteristic manner refer to the "extreme openness" of the subject to the Other (Girard & Williams 1996, 64). That is why he claimed that the "individual", in the strict sense of the word,

did not exist. What we usually refer to as “individuality” is the consequence of the more primal “interdividuality”, the mimetic relationship. Whereas Lacan claims that the relationality of the subject together with its desire is structured by the symbolic order, Girard’s primary thesis posits that man’s behaviour is driven by the more fundamental dynamisms of *mimesis*. In the basic structure of mimetic desire, the Other – as the one who causes the subject’s desire – communicates the nature of its desire not through speech or language, but through the act of desiring itself. Although Girard in no way challenges the significant role of language and symbolic forms in the constitution of the subject, he believes that their role is secondary to that of the primary *mimesis*¹.

Given the above, Girard’s criticism of the Lacanian system will be of no surprise. For him, Lacan’s work is a regression when compared to Freud’s writings and constitutes a significant departure from the basic intuitions of the father of psychoanalysis, who was a step away from discovering “things hidden since the foundation of the world”. Even if Lacan was right to point out the relational nature of the subject, he ultimately committed a grave error by tying this relationality to language structures, and therefore with the symbolic order. In fact, this error prevented him from successfully tackling the issue of violence, which lies at the heart of both Freudian and mimetic theory. Leaving Lacanian structuralism behind, Girard claims that only by returning to Freud and his most important conclusions made in *Totem and Taboo* (and therefore by taking note of the critical role of violence at the threshold of hominisation) will we be able to explain the constant presence of violence and transgression in human culture. As Lacan advocates for the absolute separation of the symbolic order from mimicry, his system remains completely static, devoid of any temporal dimension that would enable painting the full picture of the dynamics of the conflict between the subject and the Other (Girard, Oughourlian, & Lefort 1987, 402).

In order to underline his opposition to Lacan, Girard quotes Freud’s description of the *fort/da* play, which in his opinion is one of the most important passages in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (Freud 1961, 10). The passage relates to

Freud's observation of a child playing by throwing away any toy that was in their possession. This was accompanied by a drawn-out sound "o-o-o-o" made by the child, which the mother said meant "*fort*" ("gone"). Sometime later, the same child previously observed by Freud played with a reel with a string attached, throwing it 'away' while producing the same sound as before, only to retrieve the reel by pulling the string and enthusiastically shouting "*da*" (there). In Freud's opinion, through playing this *fort/da* game the child imitated the appearance and disappearance of his mother.

When quoting the passage from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Lacan expressed his confidence that the scene mimicked by the child was the first attempt to introduce the child into culture through observing symbolic differences. According to his interpretation, after observing the difference between the presence and absence of their mother, the child started to experience this difference as one that enables every human being to become part of a symbolic system of binary opposites, constituting the order of our ideas (Lacan 2005, 262-63).

Girard, however, disagrees with this interpretation. In his opinion, Lacan distorted Freud's original intentions. The basic insight of the Austrian psychiatrist is much more discerning than its structuralist reformulation. According to Girard, Freud presents the *fort/da* game from both the mimetic and the sacrificial perspective, which he even states outright. To substantiate his hypothesis, Girard quotes several passages which do, in fact, carry an incredibly strong mimetic and sacrificial overtone. Some of these passages include: "Throwing away the object so that it was 'gone' might satisfy an impulse of the child's, which was suppressed in his actual life, to revenge himself on his mother for going away from him." (Freud 1961, 10). "We know of other children who liked to express similar hostile impulses by throwing away objects instead of persons." (Freud 1961, 10). "It is clear that in their play children repeat everything that has made a great impression on them in real life, and that in doing so they abreact the strength of the impression and, as one might put it, make themselves master of the situation. But on the other hand it is obvious that all their

play is influenced by a wish that dominates them the whole time the wish to be grown-up and to be able to do what grown-up people do.” (Freud 1961, 10-11)

According to Girard, it is obvious at first glance that Freud believes the flinging away of the reel to be a veritable sacrificial expulsion, a form of revenge taken on the absent mother (Girard, Oughourlian, & Lefort 1987, 404). In contrast to Lacan, who considers the *fort/da* to be merely a cold logic game, Girard concurs with Freud in that he sees the child’s behaviour as an expression of their desire for revenge, and the object he or she flings far away, in the corner or under the bed, as the first sacrificial substitute (Girard, Oughourlian, & Lefort 1987, 404). Just as the *fort/da* game became the prototype of all ritual release of trauma for Freud, so Girard uses it as the matrix of all ritual forms of sacrificial substitution².

Lacan makes no suggestions that would come close to discovering sacrificial mechanisms, not least because his “return to Freud” was in fact – as Girard suggests – a departure, a denial of Freud’s major claims and their replacement with “the all-powerful principle of a differential structural order” (Girard, Oughourlian, & Lefort 1987, 408). According to the perspective adopted by Lacan, man becomes part of culture by accepting the order of language. In other words, his existence within culture is mediated through language, which constitutes not only a tool of self-expression (human being is capable of saying “I”), but a structure which precedes the existence of a subject. Lacan’s famous quote that “the unconscious is structured like a language” (Lacan 1977) assumes the existence of a system of symbolic references that is more primal than the conscious.

Girard’s approach is in opposition to structuralism, according to which – as aptly stated by Phillippe Sollers in his paraphrase of Lacan – “the unconscious is structured like a lynching” (Sollers 1986, 192). One might add: like a “founding lynching”, as the key to comprehending the primary qualities of human nature. Based on an a priori system of language categories, as devised by de Saussure (or Jakobson), Lacan challenges Freud’s most significant discoveries. Despite his negative attitude towards Lacanian psychoanalysis, Girard

does not dismiss it completely. Moreover, to a certain extent his criticism of Freudianism aligns with the critique expressed by Lacan. Both thinkers speak in negative terms of the neo-Freudian concept of *ego*, which in their opinion was the product of individualistic fanaticism, incompatible with the basic truth of the relational “nature” of human existence. According to Lacan, the cause for the representation of *ego* as the autonomous “I” – a “windowless monad” egocentrically orientated towards the self – particularly dominant in modern culture – is a narcissistic illusion constituted as part of the order most removed from reality in which the human *psyche* operates, i.e. the “imaginary order”.

2. Narcissism, mirror effects and violence

In his first book *Deceit, Desire and the Novel*, Girard describes the individual’s ideas of the uniqueness and singularity of their own existence as a romantic lie, the most popular myth of modernity (Girard 1965). By contesting the beliefs of those who put their trust in the myths of individualism and romanticism, together with Lacan, going against the ubiquitous trend for individualism, they demonstrate that in today’s world, the “mirror effects” multiply with such intensity that they, paradoxically, almost go unnoticed.

For both Lacan and Girard, the category of the “mirror” is a response to the hypertrophy of egocentrism, which was the mainstay of post-revolutionary Europe. There are of course considerable differences between these concepts, even on the most general level. First of all, Lacan refers to the “mirror stage”, a certain phase in human development, whereas Girard uses the concept of the “mirror effect” to describe a certain point in the rivalry between two individuals. The effect occurs when the two opponents become mimetic doubles by mimicking their mutual hostility. It is worth mentioning that in terms of selected concepts and issues, the analogies between these two concepts are particularly interesting, and they even complement each other.

In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the “mirror stage” is a revolutionary event in a child’s development, to which the

author of *Seminars* ascribed an important role in the shaping of the subjectivity of the *ego*. This event takes place in early childhood, when the child experiences itself as a fragmented body (*le corps morcélé*), an assortment of various body parts that create no coherent whole but merely exist as a chaotic net of scattered objects. During the stage, the child does not experience itself as a being that is whole and formed around some sense of “self”, it has no sense of its distinctness. Only when it catches a glimpse of its reflection in a mirror does it become capable of perceiving its body as a coherent whole. It is then able to recognise that its mirror reflection is both the child itself and somebody else (its own representation that Lacan refers to as the “little other”).

Based on this experience, which we might call primal identification, the child creates a mental image of itself. Fascinated with its own perfect image (the imagined other), completely different to the earlier experience of “fragmentation”, it becomes narcissistic. It frequently observes its own reflection in the mirror and cements an idealised image in its *psyche*, which initially seemed to be completely external towards it, but gradually became synonymous with it. Identification with the mirror image is therefore an infatuation: the child subject becomes entangled in the fascination with its own reflection to such an extent that the other it perceives in the mirror will from now become its own “I”, whilst the original “subjectivity” becomes alienated. This is the most primal form of illusion, which drives the individual to become locked inside the immanence of their own imagination, “forgetting” that in reality the individual is a structurally “torn” being, or even, as Lacan puts it, “absolutely nothing” (Lacan 2005, 708).

When analysing the mirror stage, Lacan pointed to the dangers of narcissism and its association with violence, which is caused by viewing others as a potential threat to the integrated self. The subject is fascinated by itself as the object it perceives in the mirror and sees other subjects as rivals in the sense that it believes them to be subjects that objectify it in a way that the subject cannot control. That is why the relation between subjects fascinated by their own objectivity takes on the form of a “permanent ‘it’s you or me’ war in which the existence of one

or the other of the two notaries in each of the subjects is at stake” (Lacan 2005, 356). This struggle resembles Hegel’s struggle for recognition, except that its ultimate goal is to impose the idealised image of my own “I” on other subjects. As Lacan puts it, “man’s desire finds its meaning in the other’s desire, not so much because the other holds the keys to the desired object, as because his first object(ive) is to be recognized by the other” (Lacan 2005, 222).

According to Girard, this type of division between the imagined “I” and the true structure of human subjectivity is primarily reflected in the *psyche* of the romantic. The romantic maintains the illusion of a “subjectivity almost divine in its autonomy” (Girard 1965, 28). In order for this illusion to continue, the romantic must focus everything in his “I” and perceive the other as the enemy who constantly threatens their imagined image. Competition is therefore inevitable. He must struggle to maintain his sense of autonomy, though it will never succeed, and that is why it “always suffers from a ‘flight’ toward the Other through which the substance of his being flows away” (Girard 1965, 64).

However, both thinkers ascribe a different meaning to the concept of “rivalry” itself. For Lacan, rivalry is synonymous with the struggle for recognition, a variant of Hegel’s dialectics, the purpose of which is to ensure that other subjects recognise in the “I” this special image that I have of myself. Ultimately, this rivalry takes place in the order of images and ties in with the theory of narcissism, that is of desire that constantly seeks its perfect reflection. Girard meanwhile believes that mirror effects multiply where two competing desires intersect, and the rivalry that arises as a result of their collision constitutes an actual struggle for the subject.

Given the above differences, the notion of the “Other” is also defined differently by Lacan and Girard. According to Lacan, the other (written with a lowercase letter) is created when a subject (child) fascinated by its mirror reflection perceives its image, which initially appears to it as something external, this “other”. The capitalised “Other”, meanwhile, is something indefinite and unnameable, something which the human being lacks. It therefore does not constitute another

person, but a correlate of “the lack of being”, irreconcilable with anything else (Kowalska 2015, 177). For Girard, the Other is equivalent to another person, a mediator of desire, someone who awakens desire in the subject through their own desire, whilst simultaneously inducing them to mimic and engage in a struggle for the subject. The other person becomes the Other when the subject’s desire transforms them into an example to be followed, a model that the subject wishes to imitate.

The two separate concepts of the mirror image discussed above, despite their many differences, are closely related to the vision of antagonistic relations between people, the development of narcissism and the genesis of violence. However, both Girard and Lacan were apparently certain that uncovering this aspect of human nature that makes us ‘mirror images’ can in fact have beneficial consequences.

According to Małgorzata Kowalska, “the positive outcome of psychoanalytic therapy – is the liberation of the subject from its defensive and reflexive self-enclosure. a liberation, which opens the subject to the infinity of interpersonal communication and to the infinity of desire. (...) On the one hand, Lacan insists on authenticity understood in terms of a non-reflexive embracing of desire for the Other. On the other hand, he believes that it is important that we do not reify others, that we do not treat them as our mirrors or slaves, and that we recognize their desire, which is the same as that which constitutes ourselves” (Kowalska 2015, 170-71).

It would appear that these objectives coincide with Girard’s. The idea is that a person should not close themselves off in their vanity and self-love, but learn to understand the forces of mimesis that control them and suppress the urge for wrongdoing stemming from their desire so that they never again pose a danger to themselves and their fellow people. In both cases, however, this requires the application of certain hermeneutics of the subject, aimed at uncovering the structure of subjectivity hidden under a layer of cultural and symbolic constructs.

It is therefore not without reason that both theories have been and still are applied in psychology and psychiatry. They are a particular method of therapy, defined as a way of transforming or converting human existence. One might also mention that both Lacanian psychoanalysis and mimetic anthropology offer a certain proposition towards the development of a higher moral consciousness, unfettered by mirror effects that turn us into opponents who struggle against each other and rejecting the objectification of the Other as a rival for our narcissism.

NOTES

¹ This has consequences in the theory of the origin of language. For Lacan, and for many structuralists, grand theories which search for the genesis are baseless, as all attempts to describe the genesis of language take place within the framework of that language.

² Martha J. Reineke notes the analogies between Julia Kristeva's and Girard's criticisms of the Lacanian interpretation of the *fort/da* game (Reineke 1997, 74-76).

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Critical Review

La philosophie morale de Malebranche, entre raison et sentiment intérieur

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“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iasi

Muceni, Elena, *Malebranche et les équilibres de la Morale*.
Classiques Garnier : Paris, 2020, 337 p.

Title: Malebranche's moral philosophy, between reason and inner sensation

Keywords: Malebranche, ethics, reason, inner sensation, occasionalism

Si la morale de Nicolas Malebranche a joui d'une « attention marginale » de la part de l'exégèse traditionnelle, comme l'écrit Elena Muceni dans l'*Introduction* de ce livre paru en 2020, cette situation offrait une occasion dont quelqu'un aurait dû en profiter pour combler ce vide, d'autant plus que Denis Moreau avait déjà signalé, dans une note marginale de son *Malebranche* (paru en 2004) que la morale malebranchiste méritait des développements plus amples. Cette juste observation n'est pas entrée dans l'oreille d'un sourd...

Voici donc Elena Muceni, lectrice de longue date du projet malebranchiste concernant la morale (signalons l'article de 2014 intitulé *The search after moral Certainty. The origins of Malebranche's project of a science of ethics and its development in his Treatise on Ethics*, paru dans la revue *Society and Politics* 8 (1) qui laissait déjà deviner une recherche

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plus ample) arriver à terme de son projet et livrer un ouvrage qui n'a rien à envier aux classiques du domaine.

Certes, la morale de Malebranche avait déjà fait l'objet de quelques livres, mais la bibliographie est plutôt exiguë et datée : à part le classique ouvrage de Montcheuil de 1946 (*Malebranche et le quiétisme*), on dénombre uniquement deux ouvrages français (Michel Adam, *Malebranche et le problème moral*, en 1995 et Jean-Christophe Bardout, *La Vertu de la philosophie : essai sur la morale de Malebranche*, en 2000), un ouvrage anglais (Craig Walton, *De la recherché du bien. A study of Malebranche's science of Ethics*, en 1972) et un ouvrage italien (Leonardo Verga, *La filosofia morale di Malebranche*, en 1964). Il en est de même pour les articles et les études consacrés à la morale de Malebranche, clairement outrepassés par les articles qui privilégient la métaphysique ou l'épistémologie de l'oratorien.

C'est pour cette raison qu'un livre qui s'attaque à la morale malebranchiste mérite d'être salué, d'autant plus qu'il est construit selon une approche méthodologique qui a pour but de placer les textes et les idées de Malebranche dans leur écosystème (p. 18). Fidèle à une démarche conforme au paradigme de l'« histoire historique de la philosophie » (expression reprise d'Eugenio Garin, *via* Henri Gouhier) que d'autres avaient désignée comme « perspectivisme historique » (Mogens Lærke), Elena Muceni lit la morale malebranchiste en suivant, simultanément, deux ordres : d'une part, l'ordre « interne » de l'œuvre, afin de saisir l'importance de l'éthique dans le système malebranchiste (p. 19) et, d'autre part, l'ordre « externe », qui prend en compte les forces « exogènes » qui se sont exercées sur l'œuvre (p. 18), à savoir les débats et les controverses auxquels Malebranche a pris part de son vivant.

Le chapitre intitulé (*Prémisse. La place de la morale dans la philosophie*) annonce les intentions de l'auteure, à savoir la remise en question de l'interprétation commune à l'exégèse classique qui relègue la morale sur une position marginale dans le système malebranchiste (p. 21). En effet, renverser cette interprétation l'oblige à reprendre la hiérarchie malebranchiste des savoir et à redessiner, suivant les indications éparses de Malebranche lui-même, son arbre des savoirs. Ainsi

refait Elena Muceni le chemin qui mène de la *Recherche de la vérité* au *Traité de la morale* pour recueillir, avec la patience d'un détectif, toutes les indices qui prouvent que pour l'oratorien la morale est, contrairement au *topos* de l'historiographie, une science placée *au sommet* de l'arbre des savoirs : « c'est en vue de la morale qu'il faut éclairer les vérités de la métaphysique, car les critères indispensables à la définition du devoir de l'homme relèvent du domaine de l'esprit et non de la matière pure » (p. 24). Même si cette thèse peut avoir été marginalement soutenue par certains auteurs antérieurs, elle n'a jamais été prise au sérieux au point d'étudier la morale comme *un but à part entière du système malebranchiste*, comme le fait Elena Muceni dans ce livre : « dans un système où la morale est identifiée comme le but ultime de la connaissance, les sciences mathématiques et la géométrie s'avèrent appréciables dans la mesure où elles entraînent l'esprit au travail de la recherche des vérités abstraites » (p. 24). Pour l'auteure, il y a bien des « hésitations » de Malebranche à propos de la hiérarchie des savoirs, mais ces hésitations sont résolues entre la quatrième et la cinquième édition de la *Recherche*, plus précisément dans les *Entretiens sur la métaphysique et la religion* (1688), où les règles de la morale sont clairement placées au-dessus des « études inutiles », comme les autres sciences (surtout les mathématiques et la géométrie).

Les trois chapitres suivants analysent la conception malebranchiste de la volonté dans la première partie de la *Recherche*, le problème de l'amour-propre et de l'amour de soi et la spécificité de la morale malebranchienne par rapport à celle de Descartes. Ces trois chapitres constituent la partie du livre qui veut faire ressortir l'ordre « interne » du système et la place qui revient à la morale. Prenant comme point de départ l'analyse du fonctionnement de la volonté, Elena Muceni prouve que Malebranche ne partage pas la vision port-royaliste (p. 43) et que, « malgré les développements sur le rôle du plaisir... Malebranche a maintenu au fond une conception intellectualiste de la volonté tout au long de sa carrière de philosophe » (p. 53). Cette thèse permet à l'auteure d'envisager la spécificité de la réflexion malebranchiste sur la volonté, qui

ne se trouve pas irrémédiablement corrompue (comme elle l'est pour les jansénistes), mais peut se mouvoir et aimer pour soi, indépendamment de l'union avec le corps (p. 73). Malebranche développe ainsi une doctrine de la volonté considérée du point de vue de la nature originaire (*integra*) de l'homme. Les trois « inclinations » primitives de la volonté (pour le bien en général, pour la conservation de son être et pour les autres créatures) prouvent que Malebranche regarde la volonté comme si son fonctionnement relevait encore du caractère pré-lapsaire (p. 75) et indépendamment de son union avec le corps. Si l'inquiétude « naturelle » de la volonté peut être tenue pour une alliée de la recherche du vrai bien (p. 78), cette même inquiétude permettrait de comprendre que le « mauvais usage » n'est pas le signe d'une *corruption*, mais d'un *mauvais choix* des biens auxquelles la volonté se rapporte : au lieu de s'orienter vers le bien *suprême*, la volonté s'oriente vers les biens *sensibles*. Cette spécificité de la volonté malebranchiste qui entretient un double rapport avec la morale cartésienne (« fidélité à la méthode, infidélité à la théorie », p. 99) que Jean-Christophe Bardout avait déjà remarquée (parlant d'une « réception sans adhésion »), permet à l'oratorien de concevoir un projet de morale indépendant et original, qui devrait investir un territoire ressemblant à « un champs laissé en jachère » (p. 101).

Ainsi, en 1683, Malebranche rédige le *Traité de morale* sur la base d'une « stratégie épistémologique » qui devrait « élever cette discipline au rang d'une science » (p. 104). Elena Muceni montre que la stratégie malebranchienne requiert le recours à une thèse déjà établie dans la *Recherche*, à savoir l'existence des principes de la morale en Dieu, ce qui fournit une « garantie inattaquable de la possibilité de la morale comme science déductive » (p. 105).

C'est dans le chapitre consacré au *Traité de morale* (pp. 119-165), véritable noyau dur du livre, que l'auteure fait voir avec clarté la cohérence et la structure argumentative propre de cet ouvrage souvent négligé, où l'oratorien se propose de montrer que l'éthique peut avoir le caractère d'une « science ». Le lecteur appréciera la démarche qui rattache le *Traité* aux *principes gnoséologiques* déjà posés dans les *Conversations Chrétiennes*, les *Eclaircissements* et les *Méditations*

Chrétiennes. Il y va donc d'un lien argumentatif étroit entre la connaissance et la morale, entre les *idées nécessaires* et les *vérités morales* (p. 123).

S'il fallait donc choisir un terme pour décrire le système malebranchiste, Elena Muceni pencherait pour « mysticisme rationnel » (p. 126), terme qui ne suggère en rien l'abandon de la raison, mais qui décrit plutôt un « effort de concentration, attention en engagement actif de la volonté » (p. 126). Le lecteur tant soit peu familier des écrits de l'oratorien saura admirer la reprise et la réhabilitation de ce terme si souvent utilisé à propos du système malebranchiste, mais dont l'auteure justifie l'usage par l'ancrage des vérités morales dans la Raison (pp. 123-129). Dès lors, c'est l'Ordre qui joue le rôle de pierre angulaire de la morale, ayant *l'amour de l'Ordre* (avec ses trois conditions analysées à la page p. 134) comme vecteur qui permet la définition « scientifique » de la vertu, à savoir la transformation de l'amour de l'Ordre, qui est *naturel* et *inné* dans l'homme, en amour « habituel » et « dominant » (p. 143).

Lorsqu'on se pose la question « Peut-on devenir vertueux ? » (p. 142), on vise ni plus ni moins que le processus d'acquisition de l'amour de l'Ordre, qui a deux composants, chez Malebranche : intellectuel et affectif (p. 144). Pour l'oratorien, explique l'auteure, la vertu peut s'acquérir par la voie rationnelle (*i.e.* par la *lumière*), mais aussi par les voies plus courtes (Malebranche dira : abrégées) de la *foi* et du *sentiment intérieur*, mais cette dernière voie est périlleuse, à cause du péché qui a introduit dans l'homme la concupiscence. Dès lors, il faudra trouver une manière de renverser et de rendre utiles (puisque'on ne peut pas éliminer complètement) les effets que la concupiscence a produit dans l'âme. Ainsi opère Malebranche la distinction entre *l'amour-propre* et *l'amour de soi*.

La deuxième partie du livre est consacrée à la réception du *Traité de la morale* (une quarantaine de pages qui retracent l'histoire éditoriale du *Traité* dans la presse savante de l'époque et dans les lettres des contemporains, pour arriver à la condamnation théologique par le Saint Office) et aux polémiques entourant la réception du *Traité de morale*. C'est ici qu'Elena Muceni s'inscrit de plein droit dans ce courant moderne de l'exégèse qui considère que l'on ne peut pas comprendre

l'architectonique générale du système malebranchiste et l'agencement des arguments dans un ouvrage particulier sans prendre en compte les polémiques menées par Malebranche de son vivant. Tout comme pour les questions de gnoséologie relatives au statut de l'idée et à l'interprétation « correcte » de la dimension *objective* de l'idée cartésienne, pour comprendre la conception du plaisir et sur l'amour de Dieu (p. 194) il faut prendre en compte la controverse avec Arnauld et avec Lamy.

La première section de la deuxième partie du livre (on regrette, en passant, que les chapitres et les sous-chapitres ne sont pas numérotés par l'éditeur, ce qui complique le renvoi) reprend le fil du débat passionnant sur le statut du plaisir et du *topos* « Malebranche épicurien » (dont le responsable est l'adversaire de longue date Antoine Arnauld) sans toutefois oublier l'intervention de Pierre Bayle dans ce débat. S'appuyant sur la thèse d'Elodie Argaud soutenue en 2015 et publiée en 2019 chez Honoré Champion (*Epicurisme et augustinisme dans la pensée de Pierre Bayle*), Elena Muceni considère que le 23^{ème} chapitre du livre *Des vraies et fausses idées* peut être vu comme une critique de la prémisse épistémologique malebranchiste qui consiste à accorder au plaisir un rôle dans la détermination morale (pp. 200-201).

Si Malebranche soutient que le *sentiment intérieur* peut jouer le rôle de boussole qui indique, à l'homme déchu, comment bien juger et agir, c'est parce qu'il a obstrué la route, en aval, vers une *connaissance claire* de soi-même que l'âme pourrait avoir. Obscure à elle-même, l'âme n'a d'autre accès vers elle-même que par la voie du *sentiment intérieur*, orienté par le *plaisir* dans ses évaluations morale.

On ne retracera pas toutes les étapes de la polémique avec Arnauld et de l'intervention de Pierre Bayle, clairement présentée dans une trentaine de pages (pp. 193-220), mais il faut toutefois souligner l'originalité de l'analyse d'Elena Muceni, qui a bien observé la dimension *atypique* de cette polémique avec Arnauld (à la différence de celle consacrée au statut de l'idée, bien plus connue) : Malebranche s'est efforcé de se tenir totalement à l'écart des controverses sur le statut du plaisir entre 1683 et 1687 (une période où il défendait farouchement sa noétique); il est de même dans la

correspondance avec Bayle, où il n'y a, selon l'auteure, *aucune* référence à la conception du plaisir (pp. 230-233). On comprend aisément que Malebranche a cherché à éviter à tout prix l'étiquette d'*épicurisme*. Mais est-ce que Malebranche méritait qu'on le considérât *épicurien* ?

Elena Muceni analyse ce problème dans la seconde section de la deuxième partie du livre, qui traite de la « radicalisation des thèses malebranchiennes sur le plaisir et l'amour propre » dans le *Traité de l'amour de Dieu* et se place d'emblée à rebours de la thèse soutenue par André Robinet, selon lequel il y aurait une « révision patente » entre la définition de la volonté comme « amour du bien en général » (dans la *Recherche*) et la définition donnée dans le *Traité de l'amour de Dieu*, comme « désir d'être heureux ». Pour Elena Muceni, il s'agit plutôt d'une *coexistence* de deux définitions et d'un « déplacement de perspective » (p. 241) entre les deux ouvrages, du bien conçu « absolument » au bonheur « par rapport au sujet » (p. 241). Malebranche abandonnerait donc le point de vue strictement ontologique, soutient Elena Muceni (p. 242) en replaçant à l'honneur une observation faite par Ginette Dreyfus en 1958. Mais l'auteure va plus loin, cherche une raison de ce déplacement de perspective et avance l'hypothèse (appuyée textuellement) d'une influence exercée sur la conception du bien, à partir des années 1670, par la notion d'efficacité (qui prend le dessus sur celle de perfection intrinsèque de l'objet). Sur ce point, elle rencontre les observations de Jean-Christophe Bardout, avancées dans *La Vertu de la philosophie*. Il y a bien donc « deux définitions successives du bien et de la volonté » (p. 242), mais qui ne sont pas opposées. Elles seraient plutôt les conséquences des controverses sur le statut du plaisir au cours desquelles l'adversaire Arnauld a essayé (et réussi...) d'accoler au nom de Malebranche l'étiquette (non méritée) d'*épicurien*.

Les chapitres qui analysent la position de Malebranche dans la querelle de l'amour pur et dans la controverse avec Lamy occasionnent de riches et originales réflexions sur la légitimation morale de l'amour-propre par Malebranche (pp. 268 *sq*), grâce à la distinction entre l'*amour de soi* et l'*amour-propre*. C'est à travers les écrits de Lamy (*Les Eclaircissements*

au *De la connaissance de soi-même*) que l'on peut surprendre « *in vivo* un phénomène crucial : celui de la transformation de l'une des notions centrales de la pensée morale de l'époque, celle de l'amour propre » (p. 271). Il faudrait donc placer Malebranche à l'épicentre de ces transformations qui, avant d'avoir un impact en morale, eurent lieu dans la littérature philosophique (p. 272). Si le siècle des Lumières (Helvétius en spécial) a réhabilité de concept d'amour propre, les racines de ce processus doivent être trouvées chez Malebranche, qui a sonné le coup de début de cette longue transformation, grâce au « dédoublement du concept d'amour-propre », encore hésitant en 1684 (p. 274), mais laissant prévoir l'apparition d'un « amour-propre éclairé ». On lira avec profit les pages 278-288 pour comprendre que c'est bien Lamy et non Malebranche qui, rejetant la distinction entre un *amour-propre* et un *amour de soi* et, campant sur la vieille distinction augustinienne entre l'amour-propre et l'amour de Dieu (cupidité *vs* charité), s'avérait incapable de dépasser une vision port-royaliste essentiellement pessimiste de la nature de la volonté et du rapport de l'homme à soi-même. Toutefois, la controverse avec Lamy permettrait à Malebranche de mener à terme une démarche de « réhabilitation de l'amour-propre qui se profilait de manière implicite dans la *Recherche de la vérité*, et dont l'acte central est représenté par le *Traité de morale*, où Malebranche relève que l'amour-propre et l'amour de l'Ordre ne sont pas incompatibles » (p. 292).

Pour Elena Muceni, le *Traité de morale*, placé dans son contexte polémique, montre le « développement » plutôt que le *reniement* ou la *rupture* par rapport aux positions antérieures (p. 293). Cependant, les variations dans les définitions malebranchistes du plaisir et de l'amour-propre ne doivent pas faire croire que l'oratorien a abandonné la conception rationaliste de la vertu (p. 295) : il n'a fait que puiser ses thèses dans la version « lumineuse » de l'augustinisme (p. 296) qui autorisait une interprétation plus optimiste et moins « port-royaliste » du syntagme *omnes beati essent volunt*.

C'est cette dimension « optimiste » qui a assuré le succès ultérieur de certaines thèses éthiques malebranchistes (le rôle du plaisir dans la détermination morale et le caractère *positif*

de l'amour-propre) à l'époque des Lumières. S'il faut reconnaître la *radicalisation* de certaines thèses de jeunesse, il faut aussi concéder que cette radicalisation fut plutôt lexicale et que derrière le changement d'accent, il y a toujours une « unité » et une « cohérence essentielle » dans la conception morale de l'oratorien.

Le livre d'Elena Muceni nous offre l'occasion d'être plus attentif aux *permanences* qui demeurent souvent tranquilles sous les vagues agitées des changements manifestée à la surface des textes (polémiques) d'un auteur.

Le *Traité de morale* de Malebranche en est l'exemple le plus heureux.

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Conversation with Nancy Fraser

“The Perfect Storm”: A Conversation with Nancy Fraser about Capitalism, Feminism and the Pandemic¹

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Abstract

In this contribution we present to the readers of “Meta” the slightly edited transcription of an online conversation with Nancy Fraser that took place in April 2021. The text includes introductory sections by Stefano Marino, questions by Anna Preti, Francesca Todeschini, Rolando Vitali and Alessandro Volpi, and replies by Nancy Fraser. The interview is based on a reading of the book *Feminism for the 99 Percent: A Manifesto* (Verso, London 2019), written by Cinzia Arruzza, Tithi Bhattacharya and Nancy Fraser, but is also focused, more in general, on questions concerning capitalism, social crises, populism, feminism, critical theory and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Nancy Fraser, critical theory, feminism, capitalism, pandemic

Stefano Marino:

Dear Nancy, first of all, thank you for your generous willingness to meet us online for this conversation and devote some time to answering the questions that a few young scholars who collaborate with my research activities (Anna Preti, Francesca Todeschini, Rolando Vitali, Alessandro Volpi) have prepared for you. Let me say that I am very happy to see you again, although unfortunately “only” on Zoom and not *in situ*, so to speak. It has been almost two years now since the book launch of *Feminism for the 99%* that we had organized in a bookstore in Bologna (see Arruzza, Bhattacharya & Fraser 2019). I hope that you can come back soon to Italy, we all have wonderful memories of that event and the time spent with you in Bologna².

Nancy Fraser:

Yes, for me too, I would love to come back, I really would. I hope it can happen. We will see.

Stefano Marino:

So, I think that we might start with Francesca's and Alessandro's questions, that are perhaps the ones that mostly resonate with the work you have been doing since the *Manifesto*.

Francesca Todeschini:

I would like to begin by asking a question related to the ninth Thesis of the *Manifesto*: "Fighting to reverse capital's destruction of the earth, feminism for the 99% is eco-socialist". In this section you affirm that the capitalist mode of production systematically provokes ecological crises that, likewise, undermine its own conditions of possibility. Those who are directly affected by these disasters are mostly women: it is estimated that 80% of climate refugees are women, who, in the global South, also represent the vast majority of the rural workforce, even if they also bear responsibility for the largest part of social reproductive labor. For these reasons, documented in your book, women have taken the reins of struggles against the growing ecological catastrophe. In their claims they don't separate ecological issues from those of social reproduction. To me this seems like a really interesting point that can be linked with what we have just lived all over the world with the Covid-19 pandemic. As the UN has explained, epidemic zoonoses crop up due to the crescent imbalance in the ecosystems and other factors related to it. Covid-19 is just another symptom of the capitalistic destruction of the earth and its manifestation has highlighted one more time our co-dependency to nature and to each other. Quarantine obliged us to a new style of life based on mutual support networks. The health crisis forced capital to focus on life and life-making work such as healthcare, social care, food production and distribution. My question to you is: what kind of practices experimented during this period do you think we should preserve in our near future, in order to fight capitalism's constitutive division between productive and

reproductive labor, and so to release women and nature from the charge of a second one?

Nancy Fraser:

This is a wonderful question. Thank you. You are absolutely right. We do try to give an analysis in the *Manifesto* that shows how capitalism's tendency to generate social reproductive crises, crises of care, is deeply entangled with several other crisis tendencies of capitalism, including the tendency of the system to generate ecological crises. And interestingly it's that exact entanglement that I have spent at least part of the last year during the pandemic trying to work on, so this was another reason I was eager to address this question in particular. First of all, I would say there is a sort of general structure, or grammar maybe, of capitalist crises, which has to do with the way the system's official economy is organized for the sake of generating profit or surplus value, the way that official economy relates to various background conditions that make it possible. And these background conditions are defined by the capitalist mindset and institutional order as non-economic, but they are absolutely essential to the official economy. So, the *Manifesto* really is especially focused on care and social reproduction as one of those background conditions, the way in which the official economy absolutely relies on this work of care-giving in order to provide the system with the human personnel, the actors, the wage laborers and others that it needs. And we argue that the way that the system sets up this relation between the production foreground – which is monetized and elaborated through the logic of exchange value and maximizing profits – and social reproduction – which is largely, although not entirely, unmonetized and unwaged – is a contradictory relation, because the system incentivizes those who are dedicated above all to profit maximizing. They are incentivized to free ride on care work, to help themselves to as much of it as possible, for the sake of keeping their costs down, and yet at the same time they are depleting it, stressing it and causing it to be the subject of tremendous stress and depletion. So, they need it, but they are also always driven to try and undermine it as

much as possible. That, in my view, and in the view of the *Manifesto*, is the sort of grammar of capitalist crises in general, because something like the exact same grammar of needing, taking and also depleting and not replenishing, that is the same story that the capitalist economy, you know, plays out in relation to non-human nature. It needs it for raw materials, it needs it for energy, it needs it as a sink to dispose of waste. You know, non-human nature, the natural processes that assure those inputs, are essential, and yet there is a drive, a relentless drive, to maximize profit making, and to do that as quickly as possible. To minimize reproduction costs of nature, to minimize repair, replacement, to free ride on all of that, that is also a formula for stressing, depleting and, in the end, just trashing nature. You can see that there is a sort of similar logic at work in these two things, but here is the kicker: these processes do not just operate in parallel side by side, they are totally entangled with each other. The tendency to produce crises of care and the tendency to produce ecological crises are not separated and side by side. I think that part of what we have to do in analyzing either of them is to really spell out, elaborate and trace these entanglements, because these entanglements are also exacerbations, they each make the other worse, so to speak. Well, actually, I could give you a case in where they are sometimes traded off, but that is maybe a technical point and let me leave that aside for now. For an example, let me give you some examples of what I think of as the entanglements. First of all, care work is itself already a part of the reproduction of human beings, not just as social and enculturated beings, but as physical, biological beings. So, it is already sitting at the interface of biology and sociality. Right, when we care, when we give birth to and gestate and care for children, we are as much concerned with their biological survival and well-being and health as we are with their socialization, education and acculturation. So, we are already at a border line between society and nature, and you can see that playing out when people and human communities are living in habitats that are also simultaneously natural and social. The way they live in material space, the way they shape the space, the meanings they give to it, the resources they draw from it: all of this, I

think, undermines any very sharp separation between social reproduction and natural reproduction. I mean, they are part of the same fabric of relationships. And I think this is why crises of care and crises of nature often go together; for example, when you have environmental stresses that immediately translates into stresses on social reproduction, and sometimes vice-versa. The examples that I want to give you have to do with a point that might have already been implicit in your question; I'd like to make it more explicit. That is, I would say that when capital expropriates chunks of nature for its own purposes and just trashes them, leaves garbage behind, it is almost always the case that they are at the same time expropriating the living space, the habitat of human's communities. There may be a few outlying cases where there is no human presence, but overwhelmingly they are taking the nature that is the means of livelihood, the place of living, the place of material basis of social reproduction of some human community. Overwhelmingly, the communities that capital targets for these expropriations are communities that are not in a position to defend themselves, that lack state protection, that lack actionable rights and disproportionately, if not universally, these are communities of color. These are communities that have been pushed onto the wrong side of the global color line. These are communities whose wealth can be expropriated and whose lives can be endangered. So, again, the ecological crises, the crises of care, are deeply entangled with questions of empire, of differential access to state protection and actionable rights, and of diminished rights and political protections available to communities of color, even within the global North. So, again, I think all of this has to do with the deeply enmeshed character of social reproduction in capitalism, with racial imperial expropriation and oppression, and with ecological crises. I come finally to the last point (I am going on for a long time, but because you brought it all together so beautifully in your question!): I think we could see the Covid-19 pandemic as the perfect storm of capitalist irrationality and capitalist injustice, as the hinge point where all of these crises' tendencies, all of these irrationalities and forms of oppression converge. So, as you already suggested in your question, it's not

hard to trace the appearance, the outbreak of the virus itself, right away to capitalist ecological predation. Because we have known for a very long time that the virus that causes Covid-19, which is SARS-CoV-2, has been harbored by bats in remote places since long ago. The question is: how did it get from the bats to us? We know that there has been a whole string of viral epidemics that are passed from bats to humans by way of an intermediate species. We got MERS by camels, but there are more examples; in each case it is a different intermediary species. We don't know for sure yet how Covid-19 got to us, but one hypothesis is that it is this strange animal that we probably never even heard of before, called pangolins. But whatever it is, what brought the pangolins into contact with the bats and what brought them then into contact with us, the answer is very clear: global warming, one; tropical deforestation, two. Yet these are processes that have been triggered through these kind of capitalist attempts to access, what Jason Moore calls "cheap nature", right? So the tropical deforestation is, you know, the Amazonian land grabs and the other rainforest land grabs aimed at getting new places for cattle ranching, and other deleterious practices that endanger biodiversity, and the carbon sequestration capabilities of the planet. Of course, we know the long story of fossil capital spewing out greenhouse gas emissions for at least 200 years. So, I believe (and I am not the only one who thinks this) that we can trace a direct link from the appearance of the virus and its infection of humans to these horrendously destructive processes of capitalist's expropriation of nature in just that dynamic of non-replenishment and non-repair. And that is point one. The second point is this would have been horrible in any case, getting this virus to infect human beings, but it was made incalculably worse by another strand of capitalist crises, and I mean the tendency (also discussed in the *Manifesto*) of this system to hollow out public powers and political capacities. The very things we needed to get a handle on the pandemic to minimize its lethal quality and extent of infection and so on, have been also trashed, especially over the last 40 years of neoliberal governance and financialization. We could single out, I think, the one sterling case in the world that might represent an exception to this is:

Cuba, the only country in the world that did not destroy its medical capacities, but actually built them up with an amazing model of medical internationalism that they developed. Instead, almost every other State has been disinvesting in public health infrastructure, and even worse, has been turning over medical health infrastructure to private profit-making firms who now control the lion's share of the world's health care related labor forces, of the intellectual property in pharmaceuticals. In the manufacturing capacities, both for medicinal treatment and obviously including vaccine production and development and PPE, we have turned that over to profit-making firms whose interest is not the interest of protecting humanity as a whole, but quite the opposite. So, we have sort of put ourselves into this position of depleting the very capacities to organize concerted action on behalf of humanity. That made things very worse. Then, there is the care depletion crises which has also fed into all of this and now leads the crunch, as you said. All of the ways in which the lockdowns and other mitigations measures have vastly increased the care load as public care institutions, schooling, childcare, elder care – all of that got dumped onto private households, especially onto women who still have the lion's share of responsibility for this. Therefore you have this kind of crazed multitasking of women, trying to organize their children's remote schooling, to care for children; some of them are now working remotely at their own jobs while they are trying to do this. We are seeing all these crazy pictures, probably in the Spanish and Italian press as well as in the American press, of women holding meetings with their co-workers in the bathrooms with the children pounding on the door "Mummy, I can't figure out how to do this algebra problem", or in their cars to find a quiet place. So, there is all that going on, as well as those being laid off, working in industries that simply shut down, and those who are working in very dangerous frontline jobs, who can't afford to be laid off or to quit, and have somehow to juggle all of this. This care problem has become massively intensified, and the capacities that people have in order to perform care work were anyway depleted by neoliberalization even before the pandemic, through the assault on unions. We saw the creation of the low

wage service sector, and what that meant was that every household – as we argue in the *Manifesto* – had to suddenly invest many more hours into paid labor to make ends meet, leaving less available for unpaid care work. Then, you throw the pandemic on top of that. It is another case in which the system took away the very capacities we might have used in order to at least handle all of this better. I could go on and on about the class and racial dimensions of this process, because it involves what is a so-called essential labor, a frontline essential work, which is the work that made it possible for us (including myself), who are more privileged, to be able to work from home, still having an income stream, and so on. You know, what made that possible for us is that there were other people out there working in the slaughterhouses, in the meat packing plants, migrant farm workers harvesting the food we eat, UPS drivers, Amazon pickers, grocery shoppers and deliverers and Instacart, or whatever the equivalent of that is there, you know, bringing the stuff we needed. If you leave aside the medical professionals, this category of essential workers is basically low-waged, non-unionized, precarious service work, disproportionately done by women and people of color, often migrants, with or without documentation. So, there is another sense in which the class dynamics of the society and the racial ethnic status dynamics play out, and so we have heard a lot, even in the mainstream press (certainly in the United States) about the disparate impact of Covid-19 on people of color and on the less privileged sectors of the working class. But I think what we haven't heard enough about is what is the social system that generates these divisions, these fault lines and these disparities, and that is capitalism. Therefore, for me, as I said before, Covid-19 is the perfect storm where all of these crises' tendencies, these irrationalities and forms of injustice, converge. This, to me, only underlines the largest point that we tried to make in the *Manifesto*, and that is that gender, asymmetric gender injustice, crises of care, none of these quintessentially feminist issues can be satisfactorily analyzed, addressed or redressed in political action, which does not have a much larger frame, a much larger lens, that takes into account their intersections and entanglements with all the other

dimensions of this huge hot mess that we are living through, which is a major general crises of capitalist society.

Stefano Marino:

Thanks a lot, Nancy, for this long and very rich and detailed answer. Actually, something that characterized all of the questions from my young collaborators that I collected for this interview is the emergence of various connections between different problems. That was something that emerged in the their questions and that was powerfully emphasized by your answer. I also think that some passages in your answer to Francesca's question somehow guide us in a natural way towards Alessandro's question, which is perhaps the most political one: it is a question on feminism that, at the same time, connects feminism to a broader political framework and thus to other problems.

Alessandro Volpi:

Yes, my main question is: how do we connect many different struggles, within one only political struggle, at the political level. And I've tried to think about populism, in the form of left-wing populism, as the right political form of that struggle. One of the most interesting aspects of your book is the connection that it establishes between feminist issues and other questions (ecological, anti-racist, LGBTQ+, anti-imperialist, etc.) based on a common anti-capitalist view. This implies two elements: (1) the capacity to connect – or, using a concept that is rich in theoretical implications, to “articulate” – different demands; (2) the need to have a strategy that goes beyond the dimension of claims for single-issue struggles and that is equipped with a transformative power at a political level. The answer that emerges from the book, and in particular from the last chapter (*The Politics of Feminism for the 99%*), seems to refer, for both aspects, to a spontaneous union and connection (from the bottom) between the different struggles that arise on a practical ground. In this context, it identifies the feminist strike as an instrument that is able to reveal the link between the claims of waged work and those of reproductive work, which therefore acquires a fully anti-capitalist dimension. However,

the “leap” between the socioeconomic dimension of the strike and the strictly political dimension of the anti-capitalist struggle does not emerge immediately, it does not seem to structure itself autonomously, and hence it may never occur. The same holds also in the case of the individual claims of environmentalist, anti-racist, LGBTQ+, anti-imperialist movements etc., whose connection in a unitary political project cannot be taken for granted. From this point of view, you have argued (declaring your affinity to Ernesto Laclau’s work) that a struggle for emancipation that includes and articulates in itself the different struggles can also take the form of a left-wing populism, at least in a transitional form towards the emergence of a democratic socialism (see Llaguno 2017). In this context, we must obviously remind the reader also of Chantal Mouffe’s work (2019). Finally, I would like to refer here to the work of the Argentinean feminist philosopher Luciana Cadhaia (2019), who, starting from Latin-American political experiences, suggests a direct connection between feminism and populism: that is, a populist feminism. As she writes: “[we must] ask ourselves if it is possible to derive antagonism from feminism, on the one hand, and if it is possible to discover a form of care within populism, on the other hand. I think that a feminism that ‘sutures’ the antagonism (and its negativity) and a populism that denies the role of the care are responsible for this missed connection (*desencuentro*) [between populism and feminism]”. Starting from these references and observations, I would like to ask you what you think about this potential connection. Do you think that a left-wing populism could be the political form for this articulation of different struggles, including the feminist one, in which a common anti-capitalist background might function as articulating factor? Do you think that something like a feminist populism is actually conceivable, or do you see a total opposition between them?

Nancy Fraser:

Well, thank you, Alessandro. It is a great question and I like the way it follows from the previous discussion, because I laid out an analysis about how you can’t adequately understand any of these struggles apart from the way the system generates

multiple fault lines and multiple contradictions that are entangled. And now we come to the question of what kind of politics and political response follows from this, so it's a very good segue. OK, first of all, let me say that I very much like the way you frame the question initially in terms of how to connect struggles, how to articulate struggles, and then specifically ask about left-wing populism. Let me start with the *Manifesto*: there I was arguing for a kind of "union" (if this is exactly the right word) for the building of a coalition, or coordination from below, of social movements that either already are self-consciously anti-capitalist or could, without too much difficulty, start to understand themselves as anti-capitalist. I would be curious as to what Tithi and Cinzia, co-authors of the *Manifesto*, would say about this, but for what concerns myself, I never understood us to be saying that we expected that to be spontaneous. I think what is spontaneous are social struggles. I think that people form movements and protest where they are in life, where they encounter deep impasses, things that they can't put up with. We could cite "Black Lives Matter" in the United States, for example. To say that is spontaneous, by the way, doesn't in any way deny all the organizing and hard work that goes into it, but nevertheless it is a new kind of movement that has emerged in a specific context. I think that the feminist strikes fall into that category as well. Again, I don't know what Cinzia and Tithi would say. Cinzia, I think, is much more in touch than I am, and even Tithi is in the Southern European context, and so on. I would put the feminist strikes and "Black Lives Matter" in the same category. These were our conjunctural responses. How long they persist with the level of energy and mobilization capacity is not clear and how they develop isn't clear either. We saw the feminist strikes developing and we decided to intervene in this conjecture. To give this movement a name, we opted for "Feminism for the 99%", trying to give an analysis of what understandings it might have already had and how it could be systematized a bit further. So, the assumption was that this worldview wasn't spontaneous, and we actually were trying to articulate it. And I suspect that activists or activists' intellectuals affiliated with "Black Lives Matter" are doing the same thing, or should be

doing the same thing, or at least something analogous. So, for me, this wasn't about spontaneity exactly. It was about the work of articulation. I think the *Manifesto* itself was a labor of articulation. It was one, though, that was addressed to people who already thought of themselves as feminists. It wasn't trying exactly to convince people to become feminists. It was saying that feminism is at a crossroad. We started writing in the fairly immediate aftermath of the Trump victory over Hilary Clinton. We thought that liberal feminism was in a hegemonic crisis as was neoliberalism in general, and that this was an important moment, and that the strikes showed an alternative center of energy to this kind of, what we call, "feminism for the 1%", or professional managerial feminism. So, yes, we wanted to articulate a feminism that, if it were to develop and become hegemonic as feminism, would be well positioned to coordinate with other social movements. And I always thought that we also needed for parallel processes to develop in other social movements, that we needed an "anti-racism for the 99%", an "environmentalism for the 99%", and so on and so forth. These would be the sort of partners that a "feminism for the 99%" would have an easy time – so, a couple of points – articulating with. We deliberately decided to use a "populist" language even in the title of the *Manifesto*. "99% versus 1%" is a sort of classical populist trope. It sort of developed in our times through "Occupy" in the United States, and also by Bernie Sanders, who would talk the billionaire class versus the 99%. This is not a sociologically sophisticated class analysis, it is a "populist" one. Even though we use this language rhetorically as a mobilizing device in the *Manifesto*, there is plenty of class analysis in the *Manifesto* that is much more sophisticated than simply "99% and 1%". We are sort of playing a double game, you could say rhetorically, we are borrowing the mobilizing power of some "populist" tropes but we are trying to infuse into that, we are trying to educate people in a way that helps them understand what a capitalist class is, what a working class is, how the working class is not just the factory proletariat, the fact that it is not just those who earn wages, etc. So, we are doing something that I think goes well beyond populism in any strict sense, and from my point of

view that is a good thing. Now, I do want to come to my dear departed friend Ernesto and my dear friend Chantal. I want to say that I love their analysis of hegemony and the whole process of hegemonic articulation, but hegemony is not society, and that, for me, is a mistake that they made in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, thinking that an account of hegemonic articulation could replace the need for a critical societal structural analysis (Laclau & Mouffe 1985). Such analysis would include class analysis and so on, and should not be done in a reductive way. I mean, the whole problem of the relation between these levels, structural analysis and hegemonical analysis, remains an issue. But I believe in that two-level analysis and so, in that sense, I am not a Laclauian or a Mouffeian; I am more like a Gramscian, but one who has what I call an expanded view of what capitalist structure is, that takes into consideration the ecological dimension and the social reproductive work, and even sees the political dimension a little differently than Gramsci. In this regard, I wouldn't myself try to connect feminism and populism by looking for antagonism within feminism and care within populism. That sounds like an interesting idea, but it sounds a little forced to me. That is not how I would go about it. I would say that populist movements have arisen, they are going to continue to arise, because there remains a very legitimate disgust and anger with the obscene levels of inequality. I mean, just today the "New York Times" has a front page story about the mega, mega, mega profits of the big 5 tech firms (I am talking about Amazon, Apple, Google, Facebook and Microsoft). Even within the capitalist class there are these huge winners, as well as some relative losers. Anyway, we are going to have populist movements for sure. The question is, for me, which of these movements are potentially emancipatory and can potentially develop into democratic eco-feminist social movements. And I hate liberal anti-populism, the way that liberals want to invalidate all populisms, tar them all with the same brush, an irrational mob, demagoguery, etc. There are real differences between left-wing and right-wing populisms, and these have to do with whether their idea is a sort of a dualistic structure of "the 1% versus the 99%" defined inclusively, or whether it is a tripartite structure with the

virtuous people caught in the middle between the 1% and the despised underclass. And the other main difference is whether the enemy – even the 1%, let’s say – is defined in concrete particulars to cultural terms or in functional terms. And I am not saying that one can’t slide into the other; it can. It’s not like there is a hard and fast line, but it really matters whether you define the enemy functionally, in terms of a role it plays, like the capitalist class or the financial segment of the capitalist class, versus an ethnic group or a national group, a racial grouping. That makes a big difference and is another important difference between left-wing and right-wing populisms. So, I become infuriated with these liberal posturing people who think they have the monopoly on rationality and the others are just deluded, irrational and dangerous. But what matters, I think, is precisely how you coordinate forces that are differently situated but can potentially come to see themselves as sharing the common enemy of capitalism, and more specifically the capitalist class, not “the 1%”. “The 1%” is a good starting point for thinking about this, but you want people to be able to learn something about how their society works and how to get a more precise understanding of what is going on, because that is an understanding of what must be changed and how it might be changed. So, I am tempted to say that left populism – and this means using an old Trotsky formulation – might be a transitional socialist formation, but my true belief (and, again, this goes beyond anything we have said in the *Manifesto*) is that, in the end, populist sociology is too crude to give people the tools that they need in the course of a struggle to ultimately develop a real counter-hegemonic project that has a chance of winning and of bringing about the forms of deep social transformation that are needed. So, I do want to give the *Manifesto* a little bit of credit for trying to bring in a kind of neo-feminist Marxian analysis within the sort of attention grabbed by the mobilizing title *Feminism for the 99%*.

Stefano Marino:

Thanks, Nancy, for this rich and detailed reply. While you were talking, some of the things that you said quite naturally reminded me of certain aspects that were present in

other questions written by my young collaborators, such as the question concerning the role of spontaneity, or the one concerning the work of articulation, etc. This especially reminded me of some elements that are present in Anna's question, so at this point I would like to invite Anna to jump in (so to speak) and read her question, so that she can take part in our fruitful dialogue with you.

Anna Preti:

OK, thank you so much, Stefano, and thank you Professor Fraser for your observations. *Feminism for the 99%*, a work that truly gives expression to the politics of the strike of our time, was published during a year that has incarnated many of the book's theses. 2019, in fact, has witnessed another vast wave of international strikes – this time driven by what was about to become the new global movement for climate justice. The events of the last years have been very significant: climate justice – thanks to the explosion of the new Environmental Global Strike movement and its annexed manifestations – started to become a reliable paradigm for gathering movements fighting against a general crisis of life on the ground of social reproduction. Climate Justice – in Italy, but not only – has nonetheless experienced a path of development. If, in a first phase, a more “individualistic” approach focused on lifestyles prevailed, a significant shift occurred at the time of the third strike for climate (September 27, 2019) where, taking the example of Italy, a fruitful ground for confrontation with basic unions was opened up; consequently, during the second national assembly (October 5), a very advanced report on political ecology was produced. In just 5 months the new paradigm of climate justice evolved from having blurred ideas on identity politics and personal responsibilities in a semi-structured feminist, anti-racist, anti-imperialist, and anti-capitalist global critique against the neoliberal assault on the reproduction of life. The Coronavirus pandemic further strengthened the latest political frame of climate justice, underling the importance of the links between the struggles against environmental devastation and those against social inequalities, and reinvigorating our awareness

about the variety of everyday struggles – or the capacity to “stay with the trouble”, quoting Donna Haraway. While “capitalism is raising the stakes of every social struggle”, many movements that follow the anti-capitalist path are also raising the stakes of their demands, uniting under the comprehensive concepts of “climate justice” and “social justice”, seemingly preparing the ground for “a new, unprecedented phase of class struggle”. The hybridizations and collaborations between these groups are increasing due to their common terrain of action: the safeguard of the reproduction of life against its neoliberal assault (health care, housing, pensions etc.). But beside this spectacular capacity of cooperation, what also seems peculiar of our historical moment is the awareness concerning differences and peculiarities of each other’s identities and struggles. If contemporary feminist practice has played a key role in democratizing strikes, “expanding their scope” by “broadening the very idea of labour” and by opening up the horizon on what social reproduction really means for the survival of the planet, it has also brought a new attention to identity politics. With the formulation of the concept of “intersectionality” 1970s’ black feminism had greatly considered the differences occurring in individual experiences, based on different sets of intersecting systems of oppression. Today’s movements for social and climate justice, i.e. the movements “for the 99%”, seem to be pretty aware of these processes. The fact that “there is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives” (Lorde 2007, 138) seems to characterize the widespread sensibility of today’s movements in comparison to the ones from the 1970s. *Feminism for the 99%* ends up with a remark according to which the new class movement for social and climate justice we are trying to build should be based on a universalism mindful of each other’s differences. However, as we can learn from the history of feminism, if it is true that identity politics can often lead to the trap of individualistic divisions (or, even worse, to co-option by liberal rhetoric), the latter is also something necessary and precious for the freedom of everyone. And if the concept of “class”, in needs of revisions to match today’s working class, can sometimes conceal singularities, it is the final glue that can bring together all

these movements. Do you think that the history of feminist thought, and the experience of the Women's International Strike movement, can teach to the other movements "for the 99%" (like the new global environmental movement) which path to follow in order to keep the two visions of identity politics and class politics together? How do you envision this match in your feminism "for the 99%", a movement that shouldn't fall into extreme fragmentation, separation or co-option, while at the same time should be able to build – in the words of Rosa Luxemburg – a "class feeling"?

Nancy Fraser:

That is a great question, Anna. I am very struck by your observation that we do have this sort of eruption of mobilization of movements, even in the pandemic. For sure, all the ones that you mentioned are very aware of intersectionality. I think that is an absolutely right observation and a very fruitful one, because it is something new. It is something distinctive about this conjuncture. I think I want to just throw in, before following your line further, the somewhat less happy observation that, in this spirit of intense mobilization, we also have huge and powerful right-wing movements. Intersectionality is not their strong suit, we should say. So, we are talking about one side of the spectrum here. You know, I might have a slightly less rosy or optimistic view of this than you do, and that might be because I am situated in the United States and I am finding that what you beautifully called this attentiveness to difference and identity in politics, I am finding that it sometimes takes forms that worry me. Namely, a kind of intense focus on micro-aggression and an intense focus on calling out people who use a bad phrasing of something or shaming, canceling, etc. Now, I don't want to be misunderstood in what I have just said. This is also used as a viscous anti-left wing trope by the right wing; Fox News, for example, is always going on about cancel culture. What I am saying is not that, but what I am saying is that I think these movements are still struggling with how to embody the interest in intersectionality and the attentiveness to identity and difference in ways that are politically generative and in the work of promoting

connection, coordination and coalition. So, that is one thing. I am also really happy that, on the other side, you see a real desire to challenge questions of class. Again, in the United States I see a lot of desire for that, which manifests itself in sort of rhetorical strategies that always throw the word “class” in, when you talk about race, gender, disability, sexuality, and so on and so forth. I see less actual real class focus and analysis of a serious kind. Now, we have just had this heartbreaking defeat of the Alabama Amazon workers, and this is really something. You know, the whole left universe in the United States was thinking that all Amazon’s workers were going to unionize themselves. So, there is a whole other story, and it’s not just that Amazon played hardball in its anti-union organizing, it also has to do with the fact that they pay 15 dollars an hour and give full benefits to workers in Alabama, and so it is one of the best jobs you could possibly get in Alabama. So, you know there are the contradictions of what it really means to seriously think about class questions. I don’t know about feminism teaching other movements. Certainly, the concept of intersectionality came out of black feminism which was already intersectional, and I think it is fair to say that feminists ran with this idea earlier than other movements, so maybe that paved the way for its widespread acceptance. Again, I wish that all three of us [*scil.* Arruzza, Bhattacharya, Fraser] as authors of the *Manifesto* were all here doing this interview together, because it is also possible that we disagree to some degree. I would formulate the standpoint of the *Manifesto* slightly differently: that is, I do not see the problem as trying to bring together class politics with identity politics, or whatever that means. I see the problem as sort of deeply transforming what we mean by class politics in such a way that the issues that get raised in politics of identity or difference are now sort of reinterpreted and rethought in the frame of a class politics. Let me say one last point on this, as I think it also relates to what I was trying to say in the previous exchange that we just had with Alessandro. This is just a thought, and it is not in the *Manifesto* and is strictly mine, and I have no idea what Tithi and Cinzia would think about it, but it has to do with what it means to bring together, if left populism might not be the ideal way of

doing it. This is the thought I had about, and it really does put the class question at the center. It is a thought that I had last year, when I was teaching W.B. Du Bois' *Black Reconstruction*, and I don't know how widely it is read in Italy or Spain, but it is a kind of towering masterpiece of Marxists historiography, on a par, I would say, with Trotsky's history of the Russian Revolution. Du Bois starts that book by talking about the fact that the United States, in the time of the struggle to abolish slavery in the Civil War and in the reconstruction period after the Civil War, actually was a country in which there were two labor movements developing. There was the official labor movement of the new trade unions in formation, and the new attempts to build labor parties and socialism coming to the United States after 1848. That was the labor movement of the free white exploited wage workers. But abolition was also a labor movement. It was a struggle to deal with the other face of labor within capitalism (expropriated, unfree, dependent labor, racialized labor, and slave labor). And the tragedy of the outcome of this huge convulsive period in American history was that these two labor movements were unable to recognize one another as the two wings of the two faces of labor in capitalism that needed to unite in a common struggle against the system that generated two kinds of labor and relied necessarily on two kinds of labor. As I read this with my feminist hat on, I said, "Yes, yes, but there is also a third labor movement", and that is the care work. There is a sense in which feminism is also a labor movement. In none of these cases are we talking about reducing literally every question in some reductionist way to just labor, but all the forms of violence and subordination, as we tried to show in the *Manifesto*, can in some way relate back to the way that the system provides productive and reproductive labor in a gendered way. And I am not sure if there might even be a fourth or fifth labor movement, other struggles that we could interpret in this way, but, in any case, it just struck me how rather different struggles share a common matrix and how there might be idioms for translating them. It is the idea of thinking about a system that splits different forms of labor off from one another, divides them, relies on all of them, cannibalizes each of them, but, in different ways, feeds

off of them. I am in the process of trying to write something about this now, this is another possible language, conception or framework for thinking about the problem that all of you have been raising, which I think is, in a way, the problem of the *Manifesto* about how to understand conceptually connections and how to promote forms of political engagement that are mindful of connections and that are committed to building them.

Stefano Marino:

Thank you very much for these inspiring observations. I will now give the floor to Rolando.

Rolando Vitali:

I will change almost completely my question, which was somehow very technical³. First of all, just to see if I understood correctly or if this could be another point of view, it seems to me that we should use the concept of labor not as a reductionist instrument, so to speak, in order to reduce all struggles to one, but as the mediation which connects movements with structural reproduction of society in such ways that the movements become structural, insofar as they tackle and, so to speak, attack labor relationships. To be precise, this is not due to a primacy of labor itself, but to the fact that labor is the way in which we get together and reproduce our society. So, this was just the preamble. I see one big problem which underlies all our struggling in order to create political identities, and to me the problem is to recall Marx's words "The weight of the dead on the living", so to speak. Social reproduction is a problem for the capitalist system but, at the same time, the capitalist system is also the way in which life is reproduced. The problem seems to me that people are somehow conscious that something is rigged and doesn't really work, but at the same time they have to respond to the system. So, my question is: how could we escape this cage, this entanglement between capitalist accumulation and social reproduction?

Nancy Fraser:

Right, great. That's a great question, Rolando, great question. Let me say what I don't think is a good answer. It is harder to say what a good answer is, than to say what is not a good answer. One would sort of totalize the system dimension, so that you would end up with something like some of the Frankfurt School thinkers had, like the totally administered society, as if there was no room to have anything that wasn't completely sort of functionalized for the system. That is a bad answer. Equally bad answer is the idea that there are these virgin spaces that you can retreat to. I mean what Samir Amin would have called "delinking": a space where you could go and build a solidarity economy that is somehow not caught up in the tentacles of the world system. That is impossible. That is why I don't like some of the feminist works that have many powerful, interesting ideas, but that end up wanting to validate subsistence living, as if this was some pure outside to the system. So, somehow, we need to find the sweet spot between these two extremes, and again I am telling you what I think, and this is not in the *Manifesto* but it is in some of my other works on capitalism. My idea is that capitalism has all these institutional splittings and divisions: it divides production from reproduction, it divides society from nature, it divides economics from politics, it divides exploitation from expropriation. So, it sets up to us, or presents to us, the separate zones or spheres, and in each of them it gives us, or encourages us to adopt, certain normative perspectives. So, when we are functioning in the official economy, we are supposed to act based on the interest and equal exchange and arm's length transactions, don't get too involved, have competitive relations. When we are in the sphere of care, we are supposed to be altruistic, and we are supposed to be involved in mutual reciprocity, and so on and so forth. In the political sphere, we are supposed to think to some degree about a common interest and think of ourselves as equal participants, and so on. Yet, the thing is, we have a lot of normative resources in the society. None of them is the way they are set up when they are used in the right sphere, they are functional for the system, more or less; but we are complicated beings that

live in many different spheres, and we don't segment our lives as perfectly as we are supposed to, and then, when we get into intense impasse situations or crisis situations, all the rules go out the window, we start using the wrong norms and the wrong spheres, so we have a lot of possibility for critique, because we don't need pure outside ideas. This is again part of the Gramscian picture. The contradictions are there, including normative contradictions that we can put to critical work. I think that this may not be a full answer to your question, but the system has its own internal complexity and contradictions: they have what Axel Honneth would call "a normative surplus built into them", they can be used otherwise. So, that's the best I can do on that. I think that is what we actually do, because *contra* to Horkheimer's or Marcuse's "one dimensional man" idea, we criticize all the time. Under normal circumstances the criticism is just grumbling here and there, but in times of crisis, where we get this kind of counter anti-systemic movements, we are mobilizing some of these resources for a criticism that can be genuinely transgressive and counter-hegemonic.

Rolando Vitali:

Thank you very much. Let me just say that I have studied Adorno for a long time and I do agree with some of your outlined problems.

Nancy Fraser:

Yes, I don't mean to trash all of Adorno (laughs).

Stefano Marino:

Well, actually, I am an Adorno scholar and I have two new books on Adorno⁴ that are currently in print... so, I would also suggest not to trash all of Adorno... (laughs).

Nancy Fraser:

Careful what I say, oh... (laughs).

Stefano Marino:

No, of course I was just joking (laughs)... Anyway, I would like to talk for another hour with you, Nancy, about

critical theory and feminism⁵, but I know that it is late and it is not possible to do it now. So, this means that the next time you come to Bologna we will organize a conference or an event on critical theory, and we may have time to talk about this! Thank you, Nancy: it was a pleasure and honor for us, and we really look forwards to meeting you again in Italy.

NOTES

¹ The present text is a slightly edited version of an online Zoom conversation with Nancy Fraser occurred on April 30, 2021. The participants at that online conversation included the authors of the present contribution: Stefano Marino, Anna Preti, Francesca Todeschini, Rolando Vitali and Alessandro Volpi. The transcription of the oral conversation with Nancy Fraser was made by the language school and translation agency Inlingua Imola, with the financial support of Stefano Marino's research funds at the University of Bologna, Department for Life Quality Studies. As the readers will easily see, our conversation with Nancy Fraser was characterized, among other things, by a friendly atmosphere and great spontaneity, generosity, enthusiasm and kindness. In making the editing of the text, with the aim to publish it on a philosophical journal, we decided to opt for a light intervention of editing rather than a more substantial one, thus limiting ourselves to small corrections, in order to try to preserve the abovementioned spontaneous, enthusiastic and sometimes even funny atmosphere that had characterized our Zoom conversation. As the title of the present contributions clearly shows, one of the topics at the center of our interview with Nancy Fraser is the Covid-19 pandemic and some of its sociopolitical consequences and problems. As we said, the online conversation took place in April 2021, namely in a period in which, in Italy and in many other countries, most people were still living in particularly difficult conditions, like lockdown, "state of emergency", etc. We hope that our readers, beside the strictly and rigorously philosophical contents of this work, may also appreciate what we called the friendly spirit that, even in such a difficult period, animated our online dialogue with Nancy Fraser and that we would like to consider as an evidence for the strength of the *philia* that all philosophy is made of, which is always able to persevere against the general tendencies of the historical moment.

² We refer here to a book launch of *Feminism for the 99%: A Manifesto* that we organized in May 2019 with two colleagues of the University of Bologna, Prof. Annarita Angelini and Prof. Paola Rudan. We would like to use this occasion to also thank Olimpia Malatesta for her precious help in the organization of that event in 2019 and also for her support in the preparation of the present interview with Nancy Fraser, although it was unfortunately not possible for Olimpia to effectively participate to the Zoom conversation that day.

³ We refer here to the fact that, originally, Rolando Vitali had prepared a slightly different question for Nancy Fraser, but the spontaneous

development of the conversation on Zoom led him to ask the question that has been included in the present text and that readers can thus read here.

⁴ We make reference here to the authored book *Verità e non verità del popolare. Saggio su Adorno, dimensione estetica e critica della società* and the co-edited book *The “Aging” of Adorno’s Aesthetic Theory: Fifty Years Later* that Stefano Marino was working at in April 2021, when the present Zoom conversation with Nancy Fraser took place.

⁵ It is important to note that, meanwhile, some relevant contributions on the relation between critical theory and feminism have appeared. Limiting ourselves to just one example, we would like to remind the readers of the recent edited book by Stögner & Colligs (2022).

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