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Edited by

the Center for Hermeneutics, Phenomenology, and Practical Philosophy,
Department of Philosophy and Social and Political Sciences,
Al.I. Cuza University of Iasi, Romania.

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Tel.: (+) 40 232 314947; Fax: (+) 40 232 314947
Email: editura@uaic.ro; Web: www.editura.uaic.ro
Contact person: Dana Lungu

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Contact

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

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Research Articles

At the Threshold of Memory: Collective Memory between Personal Experience and Political Identity

Jeffrey Andrew Barash
Université de Picardie Jules Verne, Amiens

Abstract

Collective memory is thought to be something “more” than a conglomeration of personal memories which compose it. Yet, each of us, each individual in every society, remembers from a personal point of view. And if there is memory beyond personal experience through which collective identities are configured, in what “place” might one legitimately situate it? In addressing this question, this article examines the political significance of the distinction between two levels of what are often lumped together under the term of “collective memory”: memories that are retained through the direct experience of groups or associations of a limited size and those that are rarely the object of direct experience constituting the events marking the identities of mass societies.

Keywords: collective memory, public memory, political thought, public sphere, symbolic form

The past decades have witnessed an intensive preoccupation with the theme of memory, not only in the immediate sphere of personal life but, above all, as it is broadened to encompass collective experience. The extension of memory to the collective sphere, or to collective remembrance, signifies in its rudimentary sense a focus on shared experience as it is retained and transmitted by a group. We readily recognize such shared experience to be a source of self-awareness in a plural context and, as such, a fundamental principle of social identity and group cohesion.

Beyond this rudimentary sense, however, the concept of collective remembrance exhibits a seemingly infinite complexity

in relation to the level at which it is analyzed. At the primordial level, memory necessarily refers to the original sphere of experience in the intimacy of personal life; in any strict sense of the word, therefore, collectivities never “remember”. On another level, when we focus on group experience in which personal life is interwoven, memory appears in a very different perspective in relation to a small group, such as a family or professional association, or to a more extended collectivity, such as the public sphere of national identity and of national commemoration. When seen in terms of such heterogeneity at the different levels of its expression, we may wonder according to what principle it may be identified, or in what “place” it might be located.

Even before entering into the discussion concerning the place of collective memory, the complexity of this problem of situating memory is already apparent on the level of personal identity. An influential current of modern reflection on memory, stemming from the 17th century empiricist philosophy of John Locke, has sought in memory – the experience I have of myself over time – the unique source of personal identity. Personal identity, from this perspective, arises from the possibility for each intelligent being, as Locke wrote in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, “to consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing in different times and places”. Therefore, “[...] as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of the person” (Locke 1997, 302). Yet, subsequent reflection on the theme of personal identity has revealed how unsatisfactory this conclusion turns out to be. All remembrance, on a personal or collective level, depends upon a selection from a vast and, indeed, infinitely extendable number of events that might serve as topics of recall. This circumstance led critics of Locke, such as the 18th century philosopher David Hume, to point out that only a small number of events I have experienced in the past are still available to my recollection. If I try to reconstruct in memory all that I did in the recent past, for example, on the same day or in the same week one year ago, my recollections are at best confused and vague. Aside from momentous events that may permanently mark my life, most of the myriad

episodes of personal experience are no longer subject to recall and, in many cases, have faded into oblivion. On the basis of conscious retrieval of past experience, memory would thus seem to be far too weak to constitute the identity of the person. From the standpoint of present awareness therefore, according to the telling phrase of Hume in *A Treatise of Human Nature*, "Memory does not so much produce as discover personal identity"¹ (Hume 1969, 309-310). And, given the fact that our experience of ourselves in the past has so often receded into oblivion, the logical conclusion for Hume was that rather than a tangible entity, the personal identity we discover turns out to be a fictive creation of the imagination.

We need not accept the radicalism of Hume's skeptical conclusion concerning personal identity to appreciate the deep dilemma his philosophy placed in evidence. And if, indeed, in contemporary perspective, we extend the question of identity from the personal to the collective sphere, the problem concerning the "place" of plural remembrance in its relation to group identity reveals a far greater complexity: what status are we to accord not only to past experiences that groups explicitly remember, but to those which are omitted or forgotten? If, in the individual sphere, a chasm separates us from those innumerable events in our lives which we can no longer call to mind, the depth of this chasm in the sphere of plural remembrance may lead us to question any possibility of identifying the place of collective remembrance. Let us pursue this question concerning the "place" of collective memory, focusing at this initial stage on the status of omitted or forgotten aspects of the *personal* past and then work forward from there to encompass the collective sphere.

I.

Our contemporary conceptions of the role of the forgotten past in the constitution of personal identity are generally of two kinds. The first is based on moral considerations and was also formulated in relation to Locke's theories, above all by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz: the mere fact that we no longer remember what we have done does not

dispense us from moral responsibility for our acts. Experiences and acts continue to constitute our moral identity even after we have forgotten them. Leibniz's subtle formulation of this idea is found in his *Nouveaux essais sur l'entendement humain*: "Yes even if I had forgotten all of the past", as he wrote,

"so that I had forgotten everything, even my name, and even had to relearn to read and to write, even then might I learn of my past life in my earlier state from others, as I would retain, in the same way, my rights, without requiring that I divide myself into two persons to inherit what I bequeath to myself. All of this suffices to maintain moral identity, in which personal identity consists."² (Leibniz 1978, 219)

The second response to the question concerning the role of the forgotten past, which became a principal topic of investigation in the 20th century, places particular emphasis on the *latency* of recollections which, although no longer present, continue to influence personal identity. Marcel Proust was particularly attentive to these long forgotten recollections which, at unexpected moments, may make their *involuntary* return. In eloquent terms, Marcel Proust described this "*mémoire involontaire*" in *A la recherche du temps perdu*:

"We are only what we possess, we only possess what is really present, and so many of our remembrances, of our moods, of our ideas embark on voyages far away from us, and we lose sight of them! We are unable to account for them in that totality making up our being. But they find their secret paths to return within us."³ (Proust 1954, 488)

Pursuing an analogous assumption, the psychoanalytic theory of unconscious memory has led us to recognize how important forgotten or repressed experiences are in the constitution of identity. And it is the work of the theoretician to retrieve and reelaborate memory that has been repressed in this manner.

Such reflections indicate ways in which memory may be constitutive of identity even where it is virtual and no longer explicitly brought to mind. In each of these fields, the juridico-moral and the psychological, we recognize the limits of individual consciousness, nourished by memory, as a source of personal identity. In each case both the psychologist and the moral philosopher insist on the decisive role of the *other* in permitting us to resuscitate the past. For the intervention of

the *other*, as a witness or a therapist, aims toward the restoration of what has been lost. And this brings us to the decisive point: when virtual experience depends on the capacity of the other to bring it back from oblivion, does this not uncover an implicit “place” of experience, an extra-individual and supra-personal dimension of our being from which, to use Proust's metaphor, recollections “find their secret paths to return within us”, permitting us to delineate the hidden contours of personal identity? When in a penetrating essay on Baudelaire Walter Benjamin highlighted the importance Proust's notion of “*mémoire involontaire*”, he was not simply concerned with the return of forgotten personal memories, but above all with the cohesion of “certain contents of the individual past with those of the collective past”⁴ (Benjamin 1980, 189). Where group identities are confirmed through personal experience and the memories that nourish them, this collective dimension of experience can never be reduced to a mere assemblage of personal perspectives. For this reason, shared memory is never simply communicated in terms of a personal perspective, but personal memory and personal identity manifest a collective dimension in their very roots.

In our contemporary world, however, it is not only the topic of memory and forgetting which highlights the problematic status of a theory of personal identity founded on experience; of equal importance is the question concerning the sources of identity in a past experience distorted by fantasy and illusion. After all, what guarantee do we have that what we take to be long forgotten recollections are in fact remembrances of past experience instead of mere fantasies? Here we encounter a dilemma which, if it is of clear importance for personal experience, poses a far more complex problem on the level of group memory. For here, in addition to personal psychological or moral considerations, we encounter group motivations which may lead to the manipulation of fanciful wishes or obsessive fears. Above all in relation to vast collectivities in which ideological distortions may directly seek to manipulate remembrance of the past, what is taken to be “memory” may lose all bearing in the factual reality of past experience as such.

When faced with this difficulty, one might well be tempted to concur with the skepticism voiced by Reinhart Koselleck, when questioned about the idea of collective memory:

“My personal position [...] is strictly against collective memory, given that I have been submitted to the collective memory of the Nazi years during twelve years of my life. Any kind of collective memory displeases me because I know that true memory is independent from the so-called collective memory, and my position in regards to this is that my memory depends on my experience and nothing else. No matter what else people might say, I know my own personal experiences and I will not forgo any of them. I have the right to keep my personal experiences just as I have memorized them, and the events kept in my memory constitute my personal identity.” (Fuentes and Sebastián 2006, 113)

In view of Koselleck’s own experience as an adolescent in Nazi Germany and as young *Wehrmacht* combatant in the Soviet Union during World War II, his vigorous skepticism concerning the very concept of collective memory is perhaps understandable. But, in spite of Koselleck’s reservations, there are reasons that lead us to affirm the existence of collective memory and of the collective identities it nourishes. Indeed, where experience and, with it, remembering and forgetting, is shared by a group, the interpretation of this extra-personal aspect of experience makes it possible for us to ascribe a certain autonomy to collective identities, which cohere in the midst of the singularity and of the innumerable differences of the individuals who compose them.

To locate this extra-personal aspect of experience upon which collective memory draws, we first need to insist upon a more nuanced conception of the *imagination* which memory deploys at the different levels of its articulation. As a creation of the productive imagination, fantasy extends well beyond the recollections of past experience and, in certain situations, is able to work back on them and distort their contents. Here the psychologist is quick to point out the tacit work of fantasy in everyday perception, which may intervene in any attempt to resuscitate past experience. The moral philosopher readily identifies illusions or grandiose wishes which may shape everyday interests and become sources of bias in the perception of the past and intervene in its revivification. Clearly the distinction between memory of the past and fantasy is not

always easy to maintain, as is above all evident on a collective level where political mythologies and their fantastic reelaborations of the past become an integral part of political ideologies. However, the production of fantasy indicates only one of the operations of the faculty of imagination. At the level of the immediate interpretation of experience itself, imagination may be taken in a different and, indeed, more fundamental sense. As has often been noted since Aristotle, acts of remembrance themselves, in their revivification of images, involve an imaginative capacity. I would like to insist on the multiplicity of functions of the imagination, involving not only the retrieval of images from the past but also – what is of more primary significance for our discussion – the fundamental capacity to embody experience in the form of symbols. At the level of the collective communicability of experience, imagination governs the transformation of brute experiential impressions – through language and gesture – into symbolic configurations which may be imparted to groups. Here the work of the imagination is not to be equated with the flights of fantasy, but is an integral moment in the symbolic embodiment of experience through which something like collective awareness becomes possible. Certainly, as the psychoanalyst will point out, symbols are essential components of fantasy and thus of delusion and collective manipulation, but I would like to insist at the same time on their function as the media of embodiment of experience itself without which what we call “factual reality” could not be possible. Here imaginative reconstruction aims to revivify the experience of direct perception, which others can corroborate or refute.

Without necessarily endorsing his overall model of consciousness, we may refer here to Ernst Cassirer's theory of symbolic forms which provides important insight into the general concept of the imagination, above all where he focuses on imagination not only as a source of fantasy, but also a “necessary element of true recollection”⁵ (Cassirer 1992, 52). For Ernst Cassirer symbols are necessary preconditions for all experience, beginning with the awareness of space, time and number. Without discussing the particulars of the epistemology he proposes in the short space of the present argument, I will limit

my use of the symbol to the imaginative transposition of experience into a collectively communicable medium, or what I term “symbolically embodied experience”.⁶ According to this conception, memory is continually in flux between two poles: between immediate personal experience, on one hand, that may well take the form of fleeting images and associations and, on the other hand, symbolically embodied, communicable experience. Memory always gravitates between flowing impressions, on one hand, and, on the other hand, symbolic expressions through which experience may be imparted to others. To situate the “place” of collective memory, we must therefore distinguish between the multitude of perspectives retained by personal recollection of a collectively experienced event and the symbolic embodiment of memory, constituting a collectively identifiable locus for past experience. Collective memory can be reduced neither to one nor to the other of these moments, but gravitates between them as modes of recall of the remembered past. At one extremity lies the singularity of perspective which roots all collectively significant experience in the web of personal remembrance; at the other extremity symbolic embodiment raises remembrance beyond personal experience to confer upon it significance and communicability in the collective sphere. At one end, it is possible to limit remembrance so completely to the realm of personal experience that its collective significance is blurred; at the other end, even after all personal living recollection of the event has vanished, its symbolic embodiment in a specific event may be recalled and reenacted to lend significance to later collective experience. Moreover, group experience which is sedimented in collective memory may be endowed with a significance which need not be explicitly acknowledged or even made a topic of clearly defined group awareness; it may well maintain a surreptitious perdurability in acute collective traumas or in long-standing repressed group aspirations and, in such cases, it may be deformed in terms of group fantasies. Here in the sphere of implicit experience, we begin to discern the contours of a collective identity, and of a collective memory that is qualitatively different from all remembrance limited to the personal sphere. Far from emerging in the isolation of fleeting impressions which belong to the

intimacy of the pre-symbolic sphere, collective memory expresses a symbolically interpretable experience that is immediately invested with interpersonal significance.

As we indicated at the beginning of our investigation, the difficulty in identifying the “place” of collective memory stems in important measure from the different levels of its articulation, extending from the intimacy of small groups to the public sphere constituted by vast nations. Often the term “collective memory” indifferently refers to small groups such as families or professional associations and to vast collectivities such as political nations. Maurice Halbwachs' discussion of collective memory in works such as *La mémoire collective* or *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* has underlined the role of smaller groups such as families and school associations in the articulation of collective memory. However, the unique status of collective memory as it functions at the level of vast collectivities requires clearer delineation. Here we run the risk of obscuring the “place” of collective memory where we do not account for differences in its spheres of articulation and, above all, for its *public* scope. Under the heading of “public memory” I understand significant events which members of a society experience and recall. It is the place delineated by broadly diffused reminiscences which, long after living members of a society recall them, may become the object of mass commemoration and of historical representation. The locus of “public memory”, however, must be carefully distinguished both from traditions of mass commemoration and from historical representation which it nourishes.⁷

If, as we have stipulated, memory originally refers to personal experience, which is then interwoven in the collective reminiscences of smaller groups, public memory, in the vast sphere of its articulation, constitutes a fundamental place of mnemonic expression: in its long temporal perdurability it serves as a matrix of symbolic incarnation and transmission which nourishes and sustains the ephemeral existence of both persons and smaller groups. In such cases collective recollection recalls events that have been witnessed and which, as source of political transformations, symbolically configure the public sphere. Certainly this significance is always fragmented and

open to different kinds of appreciation and interpretation. Different groups in a same nation, whether minority or majority groups, will symbolically interpret the same event in different manners and will communicate this interpretation in very different ways.⁸ Nonetheless, in each case, it is in the thickness of its many stratifications that symbolic embodiment confers on collective memory a perdurability extending well beyond the lives of those who directly experience a moment in its ongoing and changing articulation. And this perdurability indicates a dimension of symbolic embodiment of language and bodily gesture that constitutes a meta-personal fount of personal and interpersonal interaction.

II.

By the concept of “public memory” I understand publicly meaningful events which have been experienced by the members of a given society and which are a topic of recollection. In such cases, collective memory recalls events that have been witnessed and which, as sources of political change, often have a paradigmatic influence on the constitution of the public sphere. An eloquent portrayal of this conception of politically meaningful remembrance in the public sphere is found in Immanuel Kant's designation of the French Revolution:

“[...] This event is too great and too closely interwoven with the interest of Humanity, and its influence on the world in all of its parts is too extensive, that it should not, in whatever favorable circumstances, be recalled to memory (in Erinnerung gebracht) and awaken new quests to repeat attempts of this kind” (Kant 1983, 361).

As great as they may be, however, and as significant as they may prove for the elaboration of public memory and political identities, such historical events are only rarely an object of *direct* experience. It is in virtue of its mostly indirect and diffuse quality that collective memory occupies a distinctive “place” in the public sphere. It is not recalled in the same way as direct remembrance of personal events or those that are experienced by small groups. Public memory, as “experienced”, and mediated through the national, religious, or other symbols

that configure collective identification, is not only fragmentary, it is also largely indirect.⁹

I myself lived in the United States during the difficult period of the Vietnam war, but my “experience” of that trying event was essentially limited to a viewing of war films diffused by the media and to conversations I had with war veterans. But even where we are dealing with a soldier who participated directly in the combat, to what extent might we claim that his remembrances, gravitating between the particularity of personal impressions and the viewpoint of his immediate peer group, corresponded to politically significant “experience”? To a certain extent, as in the case of direct testimony relating a publicly significant event, diffuse public memory may depend on the recall of personal experience and, when in such cases it is forgotten, it may, as in Leibniz's example, be re-evoked by the testimony of other witnesses. Yet, in spite of this possibility, there remains an irreducible difference between public memory and all other kinds of memory: actions and events in the public sphere are of such a complexity that their significance can hardly be accounted for on the basis of simple personal recollections of individuals, or even of given groups. Here we arrive at the decisive point, for we apprehend that, in the public sphere, the symbolic sense of events depends less on the direct experience of contemporaries than on the elaboration of events – their configuration as “information” – by the mass media. We thus discover a deeper source of the distinction between remembrance in the public sphere and that of smaller groups such as families or other associations: while memories of a smaller group most often arise from direct perception, or may be related to such perception, publicly significant collective memory derives almost exclusively from diffuse, indirect experience, in which imaginative reconstruction and transfer plays a preponderant role. And it is here that the function of imagination in the crystallization of a symbolically embodied meaning may be appreciated in its full scope. This symbolizing function may, indeed, incorporate in certain circumstances both direct experience and individual and group fantasies; without this function, however, no experience or fantasy could attain to a perdurable *public* significance. On this basis, collective

memory provides content both for political commemoration and for historical representation.

For the members of a political community, the absence of direct perception signals the unique role of imagination in the constitution of public memory, whereby significance is collectively conferred upon reported events. In referring to personal memory and to the recollection of small groups, we noted the role of the other, of the direct witness or therapist, the reconstitution of obliterated experience, and the identification of those aspects of memory which are products of illusion or mere fantasy. In the public sphere, however, where group recollection can rarely rely on direct perception, the regulatory role of the other is far more problematic. Here ideological claims of a national group may easily contest the recollections of the limited number of eye witnesses to an event, especially where the media pass them over in silence. This is why correctives to fantasies and illusions in the public sphere are particularly hard to identify and to apply.

Does this, however, signify that there are no correctives to the rule of collective fantasy and illusion, above all in situations where they are reinforced by the representations of the media? Is there no “other” in the public sphere, who might permit us to distinguish between imaginative reconstruction and the distortions of fantasy? Are not direct experience and eyewitness reports of decisive importance in the public sphere? Of course, even in the public sphere the role of the “other” can be fulfilled by the confrontation of conflicting testimonies and original traces in the hope of attaining a comprehensive representation of events. But the analogy between the public sphere and more limited spheres of personal and collective memory should not be exaggerated. The very complexity and diffuseness of the levels of experience in the public sphere and the fragmentary character of its symbolic configuration, render the status of testimony and report highly problematic. If the public significance of acts and events ultimately depends less on a series of personal or even group recollections than on the way in which recounted events are symbolically configured, then the most important corrective to distortion lies in the *coherence* of the larger web of recounted events from which

remembered experience draws its specifically public scope.¹⁰ In this sense, the role of the “other” in restituting the forgotten or misrepresented past depends on an essentially political intention in which the symbolic function of distortions in the web of recalled events is decoded. This is by no means to contest the claim that massacres which are passed over in silence, and which leave behind only a motley group of mute survivors, are collective symptoms of psychopathological aberrations or legally punishable criminal acts; it is to interpret their significance predominantly in terms of the political symbolism of particular ideologies or of given politico-theological aims as the fundamental source of their public intelligibility. And here the role of the “other” as witness or therapist must be supplemented by the judgment of a political theorist whose methods are adapted to the public sphere.¹¹

It has often been emphasized, and justly so, that the originality of the contemporary mass media lies in their capacity to disseminate information in a context of virtual absence of personal contact between communicators and spectators. As Niklas Luhmann has suggested, the novel quality of the mass media lies in the situation of anonymity that they create by technical means (Luhmann 1996, 11). This notion of general anonymity, however, should not obscure the unique symbolic power that, already on the level of language itself, mass information wields. This unique capacity of the contemporary mass media accounts for the profound difficulty that all attempts at political deciphering of information faces – above all in cases where it is not simply a question of interpreting information disseminated by our own media but by those belonging to political collectivities radically different from our own. According to the context of interpretation, words like “freedom fighter”, “occupation”, “colonization” may deploy a radically divergent, albeit powerful symbolic force. And this underlines the essential paradox that characterizes our contemporary situation: the emergence of a thoroughly mediatized world in which, for the first time in human history, the possibility exists of simultaneously referring to radically different and even contradictory information systems.

This identification of the qualitatively unique place of public memory leads us, in conclusion, to insist on the wholly paradoxical role that collective memory has assumed in the public sphere in our present era. In our contemporary world, despite the immediacy of media coverage, the chasm between personal experience and the public realm has tended to increasingly widen. With the multiplication of political agents in our mass societies, as Alexis de Tocqueville already anticipated in *Democracy in America*,¹² the centers of political action become increasingly diffuse, creating an ever wider chasm between political events and those who seek to recall and explain them. On one hand, public remembrance serves as a primary vehicle for political identification; on the other hand, the events on which remembrance focuses become ever more elusive as concrete contents of representation. It is perhaps this paradox which accounts for the ever growing proliferation of monuments and archives seeking to collect and to preserve traces of public memory. They provide tangible symbolic images to reinforce the precarious ties between personal experience and the public sphere of political action which has become opaque.

This quest has its own inherent dangers. Where memory is assigned a task it cannot hope to fulfill, that of bridging the abyss between personal identity and a mass public, this may lead in extreme forms to a denial of the reality of events which recollection cannot hope to fathom. Where the many-layered complexity of the public sphere is forgotten, fragmented recollections may all too readily be manipulated to promote the illusion that they are direct “experiences”, capable of symbolically configuring the coherence of events as a whole. The essential difference between a deliberative or symbolic imagination which permits us to situate and reconstitute the episodes of the past is confused with collective fantasies which radically distort its factual texture. The abyss between memory and political reality is all too readily filled by fictional representation of public identity in the guise of political myths which have become an all too familiar facet of our contemporary political world.

NOTES

¹ “Who can tell me”, as Hume eloquently wrote in *A Treatise of Human Nature*, “what were his thoughts and actions on the 1st of January 1715, the 11th of March 1719, and the 3rd of August 1733? [...] Memory does not so much produce as discover personal identity” (Hume 1969, 309-310).

² « Et si je venois à oublier toutes les choses passées et serois obligé de me laisser enseigner de nouveau jusqu'à mon nom et jusqu'à lire et écrire, je pourrois tousjours apprendre des autres ma vie passée dans mon precedent estat, comme j'ay gardé mes droits, sans qu'il soit nécessaire de me partager en deux personnes, et de me faire heretier de moy même. Et tout cela suffit pour maintenir l'identité morale qui fait la même personne. » (Leibniz 1978, 219). Unless otherwise stated all translations are my own.

³ « On n'est que par ce qu'on possède, on ne possède que ce qui vous est réellement présent, et tant de nos souvenirs, de nos humeurs, de nos idées partent faire des voyages loin de nous-même, où nous les perdons de vue! Alors nous ne pouvons plus les faire entrer en ligne de compte dans ce total qui est notre être. Mais ils ont des chemins secrets pour rentrer en nous... » (Proust 1954, 488).

⁴ „Wo Erfahrung im strikten Sinn obwaltet, treten im Gedächtnis gewisse Inhalte der individuellen Vergangenheit mit solchen der kollektiven in Konjunktion.“ (Benjamin 1980, 189).

⁵ Cassirer characterized the imagination in referring to Goethe's notion of “fantasy”, which serves not only as a source of fictional images, but also as an indispensable prerequisite for comprehending reality itself; in Goethe's words a “fantasy for the truth of the real” („Phantasie für die Wahrheit des Realen”) (Eckermann 1987, 154; Cassirer 1992, 204-6). On this extended role of the imagination see also my article “Why Remember the Historical Past? Reflections on Historical Skepticism in our Times” (Barash 2008, 79-91).

⁶ For a more full discussion of the symbolic embodiment of memory see my essay “Analyzing Collective Memory” (Barash 2007, 101-116).

⁷ The sphere of public memory seems to me to be obscured when it is conflated with tradition, as in the writings of Pierre Nora. At the beginning of his introduction to the first volume of the multivolume work *Les lieux de mémoire*, « Entre mémoire et histoire », Nora refers to the death of the past, to the « arrachement de ce qui a été vécu dans la chaleur de la tradition » and finishes the paragraph with the sentence: « On ne parle tant de mémoire que parce qu'il n'y en a plus » (Nora 1984). Indeed, as Aleida Assmann has pointed out in evoking the work of contemporary social scientists, one might perhaps more readily draw the opposite conclusion, given the particularly important role collective memory has assumed in our times (Assmann 1999, 15). Since Nora can hardly take literally this assertion that we no longer collectively remember, the exact meaning of such sentences remains unclear, unless by the loss of “memory” he means to signify the disappearance of tradition. This interpretation is supported by Nora's introduction to the third volume of *Les lieux de mémoire* where we learn that “Une tradition, c'est une mémoire

devenue historiquement consciente d'elle-même". Against this monolithic and nostalgic view of collective memory, we are insisting on a much sharper distinction between the fragmentary and fluid character of public memory, through which a variety of conflicting experiences may seek expression, and the codification of memory in the form of tradition or historical representation.

⁸ I borrow the concept of "fragmented memory" from the illuminating work of Doron Mendels, *Memory in Jewish, Pagan and Christian Societies of the Graeco-Roman World* (Mendels 2004, 30-47). For a particularly vivid illustration of the fragmented character of collective memory, see the recent debate concerning the status of minority collective memory elicited by the legislation introduced by the French deputy of Guyana, Christiane Taubira, which declared the centuries-long practice of enslavement of black Africans to be a crime against humanity and encouraged the teaching of black and colonial history in the French public schools. When, in an article published in *Le Monde* on October 10th 2008, entitled "Liberté pour l'histoire!", Pierre Nora publicly protested against this legislation for its prescriptions concerning the teaching of history, Christiane Taubira responded with a biting critique (Taubira 2008, 23), not only of Nora's article, but of the multi-volume work he directed, *Les Lieux de mémoire*, which she rebuked for its near silence in regard to centuries of slavery and of French colonial history.

⁹ In *La mémoire collective*, Maurice Halbwachs helps us situate this diffuse and symbolic character of the recollections of vast collectivities in his description of it through the apt conception of "borrowed memory", which is most often taken from others' representations and reconstituted as memory by means of the imagination. Halbwachs writes: « Dans le cours de ma vie, le groupe national dont je faisais partie a été le théâtre d'un certain nombre d'événements dont je dis que je me souviens, mais que je n'ai connus que par les journaux ou par les témoignages de ceux qui y furent directement mêlés. Ils occupent une place dans la mémoire de la nation. Mais je n'y ai pas assisté moi-même. Quand je les évoque, je suis obligé de m'en remettre entièrement à la mémoire des autres, qui ne vient pas ici compléter ou fortifier la mienne, mais qui est la source unique de ce que j'en veux répéter. Je ne les connais souvent pas mieux ni autrement que les événements anciens, qui se sont produits avant ma naissance. Je porte avec moi un bagage de souvenirs historiques, que je peux augmenter par la conversation ou par la lecture. Mais c'est là une mémoire empruntée et qui n'est pas la mienne. Dans la pensée nationale, ces événements ont laissé une trace profonde, non seulement parce que les institutions en ont été modifiées, mais parce que la tradition en subsiste très vivante dans telle ou telle région du groupe, parti politique, province, classe professionnelle ou même dans telle ou telle famille et chez certains hommes qui en ont connu personnellement les témoins. Pour moi, ce sont des notions, des symboles ; il se représentent à moi sous une forme plus ou moins populaire ; je peux les imaginer ; il m'est bien impossible d'en souvenir » (Halbwachs 1997, 98-9).

¹⁰ Hannah Arendt stresses the point that the web of interrelated facts ultimately stands beyond the reach of ideological interests that attempt to manipulate them: "That facts are not secure in the hands of power is obvious,

but the point here is that power, by its very nature, can never produce a substitute for the secure stability of factual reality, which, because it is past, has grown into a dimension beyond our reach. Facts assert themselves by being stubborn, and their fragility is oddly combined with great resiliency – the same irreversibility that is the hallmark of all human action” (Arendt 1987, 258-9).

¹¹ On the basis of this reflection, I have questioned the interpretation of collective memory by Paul Ricoeur (2000) in my article « Qu’est-ce que la mémoire collective ? Réflexions sur l’interprétation de la mémoire chez Paul Ricoeur » (Barash 2006, 185-195).

¹² See in this regard the remarkable reflection of Alexis de Tocqueville: « Je suis très convaincu que, chez les nations démocratiques elles-mêmes, le génie, les vices ou les vertus de certains individus retardent ou précipitent le cours naturel de la destinée du peuple ; mais ces sortes de causes fortuites et secondaires sont infiniment plus variées, plus cachées, plus compliquées, moins puissantes, et par conséquent plus difficiles à démêler et à suivre dans des temps d’égalité que dans des siècles d’aristocratie, où il ne s’agit que d’analyser, au milieu des faits généraux, l’action particulière d’un seul homme ou de quelques-uns. L’historien se fatigue bientôt d’un pareil travail ; son esprit se perd au milieu de ce labyrinthe, et, ne pouvant parvenir à apercevoir clairement et à mettre suffisamment en lumière les influences individuelles, il les nie. Il préfère nous parler du naturel des races, de la constitution physique du pays, ou de l’esprit de la civilisation. Cela abrège son travail, et, à moins de frais, satisfait mieux le lecteur » (Tocqueville 1961, 122).

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Jeffrey Andrew Barash is professor at the Université de Picardie Jules Verne, Amiens (France), Ph.D. at the University of Chicago (1982); areas of research and teaching: political philosophy, historicism, German thought since the Enlightenment, hermeneutics, collective memory in philosophical perspective, theory of political mythology. He is author of the books: *Martin Heidegger and the Problem of Historical Meaning* (1988; German translation 1999; French translation 2006); *Heidegger et son siècle. Temps de l'Être, temps de l'histoire* (1995); *Politiques de l'histoire. L'historicisme comme promesse et comme mythe* (2004).

Address:

Jeffrey Andrew BARASH
Département de Philosophie
Université de Picardie Jules Verne
Campus, Chemin du Thil
80025 Amiens Cedex 1, France
E-mail: jeffrey.barash@u-picardie.fr

La rationalité aux limites et les limites de la rationalité : la question de l'intégrité et de l'existence de l'espèce humaine

Paul-Antoine Miquel
Université de Nice

Pour Frédéric, avec toute mon affection

Abstract

Rationality at the Limits and the Limits of Rationality: The Question of the Integrity and Existence of the Human Species

The purpose of this article is to address the question of our responsibility as human beings, by taking into consideration the intersection between ethics and science. I intend to prove that the issues raised by the existence and the integrity of the human species is a new and curious form of power founded on what I call "the principle of non-reciprocity" that unites the humanity of today with the future generations. The question that I address is the following: how to act on the future of humanity so that this action can not be regarded as unfair?

Keywords: responsibility, the principle of non-reciprocity, biopouvoir, ethics, rationality, integrity

Introduction

Il est question aujourd'hui de l'intégrité de l'espèce humaine, ou de son existence. Il en est question, non comme un débat spéculatif, mais de manière juridique. La loi de 1994 (16-4) relative au corps humain énonce que « nul ne peut porter atteinte à l'intégrité de l'espèce humaine ». En 2004 « les crimes contre l'espèce humaine » font leur apparition dans le Code

pénal français (Loi no. 2004-800 du 6 août 2004 relative à la bioéthique). Ils condamnent l'eugénisme et le clonage reproductif.¹

Le Crime contre l'espèce humaine, n'est pas un crime contre l'humanité, même si des travaux de M. Delmas Marty ont pu permettre de les mettre en relation, et sont sans doute au moins partiellement à l'origine de cette seconde appellation (Delmas-Marty 1996). De quoi s'agit-il exactement ? Dans la loi française, on entend par pratiques eugéniques, celles qui tendent « à l'organisation de la sélection des personnes », en précisant qu'il est question du caractère « systématique » de la sélection, et non d'une sélection fondée sur des choix propres à des couples « confrontés à l'annonce d'une maladie d'une particulière gravité ». On rejette le clonage reproductif considéré comme un crime, en tant qu'il porte atteinte au caractère sexué de la reproduction humaine, ainsi qu'à la diversité biologique de cette espèce. Encore une fois, on se réfère ici à une pratique « systématique », qu'il faut donc dissocier de l'existence de vrais et faux jumeaux humains dans la nature. Au contraire, le clonage thérapeutique n'est considéré que comme un simple délit, quoiqu'il reste cependant interdit en France.

Il n'y a pas de Crime contre l'existence de l'espèce humaine. Mais le principe de Précaution est entré dans la Constitution française depuis février 2005 : « lorsque la réalisation d'un dommage, bien qu'incertaine en l'état des connaissances scientifiques, pourrait affecter de manière grave et irréversible l'environnement, les autorités publiques veilleront, par application du principe de précaution, et dans leurs domaines d'attribution, à la mise en œuvre de procédures d'évaluation des risques et à l'adoption de mesures provisoires et proportionnées afin de parer à la réalisation du dommage » (Constitution de la République française 2011, Charte de l'environnement de 2004, Article 5, 44). Quoique les mots « homme » ou « humain » ne soient pas cités, il est bien question, d'abord, de l'espèce humaine, puisque le principe de précaution intervient quand l'environnement est mis en danger. Les critères qui permettent de définir le concept d'environnement sont écologiques. Ils ne sont pas simplement biologiques. Ensuite il

est question de l'espèce humaine concernant un problème lié à la définition du concept de « risque ». Il existe différentes formes d'estimation des risques en termes de probabilité objective ou subjective qu'un événement aléatoire se produise associées à la valeur de dangerosité de l'événement concerné. Mais les expressions utilisées dans ce texte marquent bien que « les risques potentiels » dont il s'agit sont susceptibles de se produire, alors que l'on ne peut pas aisément dire quelle est la probabilité que de tels événements se produisent. Nous avons besoin là d'une clarification de la distinction entre les notions de possible, de probable d'un côté, d'aléatoire et de plausible de l'autre.

Enfin j'ajouterais une troisième remarque préalable : non seulement le risque en question pose un problème technique et scientifique d'évaluation concernant un événement futur, mais il s'agit en plus d'un événement catastrophique, au sens d'une catastrophe majeure. Je voudrais insister tout de suite sur ce point à l'intérieur même du langage. Ce sont des énoncés à caractère autoréférentiel qui rendent possible la formulation même de ce risque : « l'humanité est devenue capable de se détruire » (Dupuy 2002, 17). Nous sommes engagés dans une situation de « retournement » (Dupuy 2002, 23). Ce n'est pas simplement que l'univers scientifique qui entoure ces problèmes peut être dit à juste titre « controversé » du fait de la complexité de l'objet étudié. La complexité ne vient pas seulement de là. Elle vient de notre responsabilité par rapport au risque. *Ce risque engage notre responsabilité d'êtres humains, dans l'entrecroisement entre l'éthique et le scientifique.*

Non seulement la rationalité scientifique butte ici sur ces limites, en ce qui concerne le risque de catastrophe, ou peut-être faudrait-il dire, de cataclysme. Elle marque ses limites pour des raisons théoriques. Il apparaît de plus en plus clairement aujourd'hui que la rationalité scientifique doit renoncer en effet au projet de trouver des fondements assurés à l'intérieur même de la science qui garantirait que nous puissions caractériser ce qu'est l'explication scientifique, mais aussi ce qu'est l'équation traditionnelle selon laquelle, lorsque nous savons expliquer, nous pouvons automatiquement aussi prévoir.

Mais elle marque également ses limites en un second sens. Comme Dominique Janicaud l'a indiqué, il y a un rationnel de la science, de la techno-science comme « puissance », au sens où la techno-science se définit aussi par ce qu'elle fait à l'humanité (Janicaud 1979). Mais ce rationnel ambigu pose un problème conceptuel majeur.

La science produit des effets, au sens où elle instrumentalise et « artificialise » l'espèce humaine. Elle nous empêche de continuer de définir l'espèce humaine *en termes de contraintes strictement naturelles et biologiques*. Par les effets qu'elle produit, comme l'ont remarqué plusieurs auteurs récents, *elle déplace les frontières entre le naturel et l'artificiel* (Descola 2008 ; Schaeffer 2008). En déplaçant ces frontières, elle engage aussi notre responsabilité : ce que sera l'humanité de demain dépend des décisions que nous allons prendre, et de la manière dont nous discuterons la valeur de ces décisions. *Elle fait ainsi de l'existence et de l'intégrité de l'espèce humaine, des normes éthiques ou politiques et non plus de simples faits ou normes biologiques*. A ce sujet, le rationnel, cette forme intervenante de rationnel que porte la techno-science est ambiguë, au sens où elle pourrait nous laisser croire, que la méthode, les concepts et les pratiques de la science suffisent à définir en quoi consiste cette responsabilité et comment il faut se préoccuper de l'intégrité et de l'existence de l'espèce humaine, *comme si la rationalité scientifique, par une sorte de fluide magique et miraculeux, pouvait ipso facto se convertir en rationalité pratique*.

Nous défendrons, dans cet article, une double position. Nous allons d'abord rejeter ce que J.M. Scheffer nomme « la Thèse ». L'humain dont il s'agit dans « le principe de précaution », ou dans la notion de « crime contre l'espèce humaine », ne doit pas être interprété dans le sens de ce qui ferait de l'être humain une exception ontologique dans la nature. Il n'y a pas pour nous de différence d'être entre l'homme et l'animal, et il n'y a pas non plus de prévalence cognitive de la pensée humaine, au sens où nous pourrions savoir immédiatement en regardant en nous, en quoi consiste notre nature éthique d'homme et comment il faut la préserver. Il y a donc en effet une mauvaise manière d'interpréter les notions de

« précaution » et de « crime contre l'espèce humaine » de laquelle nous nous garderons.

Mais nous allons également rejeter ce que nous nommerons ici la « Contre Thèse ». La contre thèse, c'est d'abord l'idée que, puisque la techno-science a un pouvoir d'explication et de prévision des événements naturels, mais aussi de construction rationnelle d'artefacts, elle nous permet ipso facto par ses méthodes et ses concepts de pouvoir mesurer et définir en quoi consiste notre responsabilité sur les effets que la production de ces artefacts sont susceptibles d'avoir sur l'avenir de l'espèce humaine. Il y aurait ainsi un traitement technique et scientifique de cet entrelacs entre l'éthique et le scientifique que nous voyons surgir dans l'évolution industrielle et technologique, concernant la question de l'existence et de l'intégrité de l'espèce humaine.

Nous allons montrer que cette idée est une illusion pernicieuse qui occulte ce que la techno-science comme potentiel de rationalisation porte en elle : la possibilité, la plausibilité permanente qu'elle puisse tomber dans l'irrationnel, qu'elle puisse, comme effet de sa surpuissance, faire de l'avenir de l'humanité quelque chose qui annulera complètement sa puissance.

Nous allons tenter de montrer que ce qui se joue à travers ces deux problèmes de l'existence et de l'intégrité de l'espèce humaine, c'est une curieuse et nouvelle forme de relation de pouvoir fondée sur ce que je nommerai un principe de non réciprocité qui lie l'humanité d'aujourd'hui aux générations futures.

Nous sommes en mesure d'agir aujourd'hui de manière systématique, collective et concertée sur l'action, voire sur l'existence même des générations futures, *et non l'inverse*. Au lieu d'agir, dès lors, *comme si* ce qu'il y a d'humain dans l'espèce humaine pouvait être réduit à une série de problèmes biologiques, écologiques, voire économiques et sociologiques, *il est en notre pouvoir d'agir, comme ci* l'humanité de l'espèce humaine devait constamment et *d'abord être un problème éthique et politique*, dont nous sommes responsables, par ce que nous allons faire et décider aujourd'hui.

Par ce second « comme si », nous nous constituons alors comme « les représentants » des générations futures, au sein d'une relation de pouvoir démocratique et ouverte, au sein d'une structure politique institutionnelle et communicationnelle qu'il est urgent pour nous de mieux décrire et de mieux analyser. Nous allons essayer de montrer ce que cela implique et quel type de solution nous pouvons trouver dans l'éthique, en ce qui concerne l'intrication entre l'éthique et le technoscientifique.

1. Au sujet des biopouvoirs

Je voudrais partir ici d'une première analyse, qui trouvera sa source dans l'usage foucauldien du concept de biopouvoir. Foucault a d'abord prédit la fin de l'homme, dans *Les mots et les choses*. Ce qui me frappe également à la lecture de ses livres des années 70, c'est la mise en évidence du concept « d'assujettissement ». Nous sommes constitués comme sujets à travers des dispositifs disciplinaires, comme le dispositif de sexualité, en intériorisant un certain nombre de normes. C'est ainsi seulement que notre âme devient « la prison de notre corps ». Cela signifie bien sûr que chacun d'entre nous participe activement à la constitution de ces processus de subjectivation. La relation de pouvoir apparaît alors comme normative. A ce titre, elle est effective : elle agit sur notre action. Mais elle est aussi immanente. Nous nous constituons comme assujettis à des normes. Enfin et surtout, *la description de la relation de pouvoir n'est jamais la relation de pouvoir*. Dans l'Etat Moderne, le pouvoir est décrit en termes de Souveraineté, de loi, de sujet de droit, et non en termes de norme et de normativité. Cette description du pouvoir- d'une certaine manière pour Foucault- est sa symbolique, en tant qu'il faudrait opposer son visage symbolique et son visage réel. C'est le réseau de micropouvoirs des dispositifs carcéral, pénitentiaires et de sexualité qui constituent le pouvoir réel. Dans l'Etat Moderne, la symbolique du pouvoir n'est pas le pouvoir. C'est un théâtre dans lequel le pouvoir représenté et mis en scène n'est qu'un décor qui sert à masquer et peut être aussi à marquer l'existence sous-jacente et immanente des normes réellement agissantes. La symbolique du pouvoir n'est pas le pouvoir lui-même. C'est un piège, un trompe-l'œil, une

superstructure. Il s'ensuit évidemment une dévalorisation du modèle de la Souveraineté qui sert à exprimer la tension, peut-être dans une certaine mesure la contradiction entre les formes institutionnelles de l'Etat et les normes sociales effectives.

Cette tension se réduit bien sûr, avec les dispositifs sexuels et pénitentiaires. Il est frappant de voir à cet égard, à quel point l'image du Panoptique renverse celle de l'exécution publique. L'exécution intègre en excluant. Elle marque le droit de mort du souverain. Elle est par excellence la symbolique transcendante. Elle construit l'ordre social en mettant dans l'ombre toutes les formes de déviation de cet ordre dont la société féodale et monarchique se nourrit. Le panoptique est au contraire la mise en visibilité de la transgression à la loi contrôlée par le dispositif pénitentiaire. Ce qui était à l'ombre passe à présent en pleine lumière, dans la transparence d'un être humain dont le corps est liquéfié, cristallisé, et dématérialisé dans et à travers la fiction d'une personne juridique qui constitue à présent pleinement son être, jusque dans l'espace à l'intérieur duquel, il se meut, la manière dont il se nourrit, s'habille, mange et se masturbe. Ce masque rendu vivant de la personne, est alors pris dans des techniques, des dispositifs de dressage, de contrôle, de tests d'apprentissage, qui déjà le normalisent. Mais la vraie figure de la normalisation apparaît avec le sexe. Stephane Legrand l'a bien montré. L'inversion la plus importante n'est pas celle entre le Souverain exécuteur et le Panoptique. C'est celle entre le droit du Sang et le droit du Sexe. C'est à travers cette inversion seulement, nous semble-t-il, *que la symbolique du pouvoir change de fonction et perd sa dimension de superstructure*. Et c'est là qu'apparaît aussi le problème du biopouvoir. La normativité n'est pas la « normalisation ».

Le pouvoir cesse de plus en plus d'apparaître autrement qu'il n'est. Il a de moins en moins besoin de cet artifice théâtral et étatique dans lequel il était d'abord représenté. C'est sous la pression du libéralisme économique que se fait la transition, pour Foucault. Le libéralisme économique ne conduit pas simplement en effet à la doctrine de la liberté des échanges et de la libre concurrence qui nous engage dans la voie d'un désengagement graduel de l'Etat et vers la mise en valeur des

droits de l'individu au détriment et même à l'encontre de toute forme de politique publique. Il se métamorphose (d'une manière très bien éclairée par S. Legrand) au cours du XIXe Siècle en mettant en valeur, non plus simplement la normalisation des échanges par le profit, mais la normalisation du profit par le contrôle des naissances, de la santé et de la vie (Legrand 2007). C'est le capital humain qui fait ainsi irruption au centre du capital financier, comme la norme parmi les normes, comme ce qu'il faut valoriser et sacraliser par-dessus tout. Au centre des droits de l'individu et du Capital humain, la consommation, le plaisir, les émotions auto-biodégradables. Au centre de cette dynamique des plaisirs, le dispositif de sexualité qui n'est pas le simple sexe, mais plutôt ce qui achève de nous individualiser, de nous décollectiviser, ce qui achève de nous réduire à un être à l'écoute de ses seules émotions, de ses seules impressions, au détriment et au mépris même de celles des autres. Au centre du dispositif de sexualité, ce processus collectif et statistique de contrôle des naissances, de la santé, de la sexualité que l'on peut commencer à nommer le biopouvoir et par lequel le Souverain, qui n'est plus du tout le Représentant des citoyens, mais bien au contraire le médecin, le démographe, le biologiste et le pharmacien n'a plus aucun droit sur notre mort, mais plutôt un droit de gestion et de modelage, un droit sur la vie. Et pourtant ce biopouvoir, va paradoxalement prendre la forme de ce que Foucault va nommer : « une réflexion du biologique dans le politique ». Le philosophe français ne développe pas ce point, accaparé comme il l'est par la tâche de décrire le processus de normalisation et ses différentes figures : le processus de normalisation, comme un réseau de pouvoirs, dont la Stratégie n'est construite par aucun Stratège et qui n'est justement nulle part, « puisqu'il vient de partout », *un réseau de micropouvoirs à la troisième personne*, un « Nous » froid et personnel, une « main d'immanence » qui vient du fond même de ce qu'à présent nous sommes ! *La réflexion du biologique dans le politique n'est pourtant pas la réduction du politique dans le biologique !* « Pour la première fois, sans doute dans l'histoire, le biologique se réfléchit dans le politique » (Foucault 1979, 187).

Cette réflexion engage l'ouverture d'une question bien nouvelle, que cette image d'un cercle dont le centre est partout

ne permet pas de voir, si nous n'ajoutons pas tout de suite que sa circonférence n'est nulle part ! Je voudrais maintenant analyser de plus près ce problème dans une seconde partie, en revenant sur un vieux piège classique de la philosophie pratique : le sophisme naturaliste.

2. Qu'est-ce qui est descriptif, qu'est-ce qui est normatif ? De la difficulté à établir les critères

On se souvient que chez D. Hume, les problèmes philosophiques naissent souvent dans et avec le langage naturel. Ce n'est pas parce que nous percevons bien la sensation du rouge comme existante, que nous percevons la sensation d'existence. L'adjectif ne peut pas sans précaution être transformé en substantif. Concernant la question des passions, le philosophe écossais trouve une nouvelle distinction. Les peines et les plaisirs sont à la source de toutes les passions et de toutes les vertus. Il n'y a pas de devoir qui puisse être accompli sans plaisir, contrairement à ce qu'affirmera le rigoriste luthérien, E. Kant. Mais il ne faudrait pas en induire pour autant que la vertu soit réductible au plaisir, induction fallacieuse.

Le plaisir est le motif, au sens où le motif engage l'action. Mais cela ne signifie pas que notre action se résume à un simple comportement que l'on pourrait fonctionnellement réduire et décrire à une « arithmétique des plaisirs » doublée d'une thérapie antidouleur. Il y a une dynamique des passions chez Hume qui ne se ramène pas à cette arithmétique et qui engage le problème moral de la vertu, ainsi que le problème politique de la justice. Pour comprendre cette arithmétique, cependant, il faut comprendre que la vertu est liée à « la contemplation de nos droits moraux et de nos obligations ». Je ne vais pas m'essayer ici à une définition de ces termes. Il me suffit de conclure que pour parvenir à une telle contemplation, il faut éviter ce que l'on peut bien nommer depuis Hume, le sophisme naturaliste. Celui-ci peut prendre plusieurs formes.

La plus triviale consiste à ne pas voir la différence entre un énoncé qui porte sur un fait et un énoncé normatif. C'est à elle que Hume se réfère, dans *le Traité de la Nature humaine*. « Je te demande de ranger ton cartable », ou « je ne dois pas

mentir » n'ont rien de commun avec « la table est bleue ». Un ordre n'est pas une assertion, dont Hume note qu'elle est seule susceptible de vérité et d'erreur. Un ordre ou une obligation, du type de celles qu'il faut contempler pour être vertueux, ne trouvent pas leur source dans la Raison, la faculté de discerner le vrai du faux, mais bien dans les sentiments, au sens de ce qui est rapporté à nous-mêmes et ce qui nous constitue donc comme sujets humains à travers diverses situations.

Mais il y a une variante bien plus pernicieuse de ce sophisme. Il y a une illusion bien plus tenace et dangereuse. Je l'appellerai volontiers le sophisme de la Troisième personne. Le sophisme de la Troisième personne, ou si vous préférez, « du complément de sujet », n'est autre que l'illusion que l'on trouve précisément chez Foucault et dans l'usage qu'il fait du concept de normalisation, *que l'on peut traiter des normes, puis du processus de normalisation lui-même en simple physicien, ou en anatomiste*. Cette illusion est bien naturelle et en un sens elle n'est pas qu'illusoire. Il est vrai qu'un énoncé à la première ou à la seconde personne, peut aisément être transformé en énoncé impersonnel : « il s'est donné comme obligation de ne pas mentir ». Il est donc vrai que les normes, et les processus de normalisation eux-mêmes sont susceptibles d'être objectivés et peut-être naturalisés. On peut toujours en faire des faits d'évolution. Nous n'échappons pas aux contraintes biologiques.

Revenons pourtant sur l'énoncé que l'on trouve chez Hans Jonas, qui s'inspire du concept heideggérien de *Gestell*, et selon lequel les technologies engendrent des valeurs mélioristes. Elles engagent la mise en place d'un dispositif normatif qui contrôle et modèle l'espèce humaine d'une manière d'abord médicale, puis biologique, voire génétique, de telle sorte que « plus » soit toujours « mieux », ou encore que « ce qui peut être fait le sera ». Comme marque de ce dispositif sur lequel nous allons revenir, on peut mentionner le passage actuel de l'eugénisme d'Etat à l'eugénisme libéral. L'eugénisme d'Etat pratiqué par les nazis, mais également par les démocraties occidentales, était un dispositif visant à établir une discrimination systématique contre une certaine classe de population : par exemple par la stérilisation des malades mentaux. Mais il n'en est pas de même de la fécondation *in vitro* accompagné du diagnostic anténatal, ou encore de l'avortement

thérapeutique après diagnostic prénatal par amniocentèse et avec consentement des personnes. Nous avons bien affaire ici à un « je » transformé en un « il ». Comme nous constatons qu'il pleut, nous pouvons aussi constater qu'on avorte, ou qu'on constatera peut-être un jour qu'on accouche d'un enfant dont on a préalablement choisi positivement ou négativement les gènes.

Il pourrait en être de même en ce qui concerne le clonage thérapeutique. Il peut-être avantageux de disposer facilement d'un stock de cellules souches ou d'un organe compatible, en cas d'insuffisance cardiaque ou rénale. Il n'est pas facile non plus de définir exactement quelles raisons nous pourrions avoir de nous opposer au clonage reproductif. Le bouturage (comme on le dit en usant ainsi souvent d'une analogie complaisante) n'est-il pas couramment pratiqué dans nos jardins et dans nos champs ? Et les jumeaux homozygotes qui ont partagé le même œuf et donc la même identité génétique et épigénétique ne sont-ils pas des copies conformes bien plus précises que l'organisme issu du transfert d'un noyau de cellule somatique dans un ovule ? Et puis, il y a le projet parental des parents stériles, qui ont bien le droit, eux aussi d'avoir un jour une progéniture ! Le 27 février 1997 Dolly est née. A quand le premier bébé humain ? Il ne s'agit plus ici, comme le proposait Bateson en 1912 et comme le reformulera le socialiste Huxley entre les deux guerres, « de modeler ou de purifier une population », sans avoir à s'occuper de « l'action tyrannique et capricieuse d'une majorité parlementaire mal informée » (Kevles 1995, 151). Bien au contraire, aujourd'hui, la population se modèlent toute seule. Il suffit de la laisser faire. Le processus de normalisation est en place, et les enfants mongoliens vont disparaître comme les vilaines prunes ou les pommes qui pourrissaient trop vite. Qu'y a-t-il de mal à cela ? Y avait-il quelque chose de mal à sauver des milliers de vie grâce aux vaccins, aux antiseptiques, puis grâce aux antibiotiques ?

Où est donc le sophisme là-dedans ? Illitch (que je reprends ici de Dupuy) nous a avertis il y a longtemps : il n'y a pas nécessairement harmonie entre les modes de production autonomes et hétéronomes. Il ne faut pas perdre de vue au détour de l'hétéronomie technologique que la fin est l'autonomie, car autrement l'hétéronomie peut devenir « contreproductive ». Ecouler des stocks de sang non chauffés, des farines animales qui

permettent de nourrir les bovins à moindre prix, dégager du CO₂ dans l'atmosphère pour permettre à tout le monde de se déplacer facilement et de se chauffer peut devenir terriblement contreproductif. Les phénomènes météorologiques, c'est bien connu, ne sont pas simplement stochastiques. Ils sont dynamiques. Entre une augmentation de la température de la terre de deux degrés ou de sept degrés, il y a un monde : celui qui sépare une vie humaine acceptable du cataclysme général. Je ne rappelle pas cette distinction dans le but de défendre une philosophie de la décroissance. Mon objectif est juste de dégager et de dénoncer le retour du même sophisme : *le « il » n'est pas toujours une fatalité*. Nous ne disons pas « qu'il pleut » de la même manière que nous dirions d'un enfant qu'il « se drogue ». *Ce n'est pas parce que nous pouvons traiter un processus de normalisation comme un fait, qu'il se réduit à un fait et que ne se pose jamais la question de savoir comment en évaluer la valeur*. L'eugénisme libéral est bien un processus de normalisation. Mais nous pouvons évidemment toujours en même temps en évaluer la valeur, au lieu de réduire celui-ci à un phénomène sociétal qu'il faut étudier sans perdre de temps à l'évaluer.

Précisons cette idée. Nous allons d'abord rejeter ce que nous appellerons « la Thèse ». Nous pouvons aisément retrouver celle-ci chez Habermas. Pour Habermas l'eugénisme engage un processus de dé-différenciation entre le naturel et l'artificiel. Alors qu'un enfant peut toujours revenir sur l'éducation qu'il a reçue de ses parents, un enfant dont le sexe est choisi par ses parents, ou dont les gènes sont identiques à ceux de sa mère, ne peut plus choisir ce qu'il est. Le projet à travers lequel il est ce qu'il est n'est plus son projet, mais celui de son père, de sa mère, et à travers eux, celui de ce réseau de pouvoirs et d'institutions qui le normalise. Contre la dé-différenciation, qui conduit à traiter les générations futures comme des moyens qui ne peuvent plus en même temps être des fins, il faudrait rétablir un accord « anté-personnel » avec nos embryons, accord en passe d'être violé par les pratiques eugénistes de nos sociétés contemporaines. Nous savons donc immédiatement « de nous-mêmes », pour Habermas, qu'il faudrait renoncer à l'eugénisme libéral, au moins dans sa forme positive. Et nous retrouvons bien derrière cette position l'esprit des textes juridiques des lois

françaises qui parlent de « l'intégrité de l'espèce humaine », et qui associent cette intégrité à la sauvegarde de notre patrimoine génétique. La thèse n'a plus la même forme ici, que chez Descartes ou chez Husserl. Mais elle nous engage dans la même direction : *nous pourrions de nous-mêmes, dans une sphère de pure immanence, savoir ce qu'est la limite entre naturel et artificiel et savoir réciproquement quand nous violons cette limite*, quand nous ne respectons plus cette sorte de contrat communicationnel implicite que nous passons toujours déjà avec nos embryons, même si ceux-ci ne sont pas encore des personnes avec lesquelles nous pouvons discuter et échanger des arguments. Cette idée n'a pour nous aucun sens. Elle repose sur des postulats intenable. Notre argument initial est bien au contraire, que ce processus de dé-différenciation *est ce qui caractérise l'humanité dont il est question*, quand nous tentons de définir les crimes contre l'espèce humaine, ou contre les menaces qui pèsent sur son existence.

Le processus médico-légal et social d'objectivation de l'espèce humaine est celui-là même qui définit notre mode de relation actuel avec les générations futures. Il ne s'agit plus de chercher une quelconque purification en deçà de celui-ci, comme si nous pouvions arrêter de vacciner les êtres humains, ou de les guérir. Il révèle au contraire à l'homme une nouvelle dimension de ce que, faute de mieux, nous nommerons « sa nature », au sens où sa nature ne peut plus être son essence, mais bien au contraire un effet de sa production. Il n'est donc pas question de renoncer à se chauffer, à se soigner, et à modifier les organismes vivants qui nous entourent dans le but de nous nourrir. Il est frappant à cet égard de constater que les arguments que l'on oppose à cette idée touchent toujours directement l'homme. On se préoccupe moins de savoir ce que nous faisons à nos vaches, nos pommes et nos kiwis que pourtant nous mangeons. Qui sait aujourd'hui par exemple que les américains sont en train à nouveau d'exporter de la viande de bœuf nourrie aux farines animales vers des pays d'extrême orient, comme la Corée ? Il fait donc partie aujourd'hui de la nature de l'homme à travers ce qu'il est, ce qu'il respire et ce qu'il mange que cette nature soit en même temps possibilisée,

qu'elle soit le résultat d'un projet ou de multiples projets biotechnologiques.

Mais cela ne signifie pas pour autant que ce résultat doit être simplement décrit ou expliqué et non pas évalué. Nous opposerons au contraire ici à ce que nous avons nommé la Thèse ce que nous nommerons à présent la Contre Thèse.

a) *C'est un sophisme de tirer de la puissance de la techno-science, l'idée qu'elle tire automatiquement de ses outils techniques et de sa scientificité le contrôle sur sa puissance.* Nous ne pouvons questionner la puissance de la techno-science et ses effets sur l'humain en simples termes de vrai et de faux. En effet, et c'est ce qui est au cœur de l'argument que nous défendons, en produisant des effets sur les générations futures, la techno-science fait bien de l'existence et de la préservation de l'espèce humaine, non pas un simple fait qui aura lieu ou non, mais un problème dont elle a aujourd'hui, *en tant que communauté politique mondiale la responsabilité collective.* La question, le problème, n'est pas : comme décrire objectivement ce processus de normalisation ? Elle est plutôt, vers quelle nouvelle forme de responsabilité collective ce processus nous entraîne ? Ce n'est pas un problème de vérité et d'erreur. C'est un problème de justice que la techno-science n'est pas à même de traiter seule. Elle n'a, à titre de techno-science, *aucune prévalence cognitive concernant ce problème.*

b) La question n'est pas non plus : comment estimer l'efficacité des actions que nous menons aujourd'hui en ce qui concerne les effets qu'elles vont avoir sur les générations futures ? Mais plutôt comment en estimer l'efficacité de telle sorte, que nous puissions *en même temps et d'abord en faire l'objet d'une responsabilité collective ?* Il ne s'agit plus d'opposer, comme le font encore Habermas ou Rawls, un discours sur la justice et la responsabilité, à un discours sur les calculs coût-bénéfice et les conséquences. *Il faut bien plutôt considérer le discours sur les calculs coût-bénéfice en tant qu'il engage un problème de justice et d'équité dont nous sommes en même temps collectivement responsables.* Et nous sommes ainsi conduits progressivement vers notre second point : pas plus que nous ne pouvons donner la réponse à cette question, du point de vue des critères et des contraintes propres à celles qui sont étudiées en

biologie de l'évolution, *nous ne pouvons non plus trouver une réponse satisfaisante sur le seul terrain des sciences humaines et sociales, réduites ou non à des sous parties des sciences de la vie.* Cela ne signifie pas bien entendu que nous écartons ces sciences. *La grille des descriptions et des analyses proposées par les sciences humaines et sociales va au contraire s'avérer un indispensable outil, pourvu que nous comprenions que cette grille doit être ouverte à un problème politique et éthique de responsabilité collective, et non rester une structure fermée et objective à l'usage de quelques experts. Le problème que nous posons n'est rien d'autre qu'un problème de communication.* La question de la puissance de la science en termes d'effets produits sur l'humanité de demain et des risques afférents qu'elle engage sur son existence ou sur son intégrité, *ne peut être traitée simplement en termes descriptifs ou explicatifs. On ne peut se contenter d'une réponse à la troisième personne du singulier.*

3. Une relation de pouvoir ouverte

Dans *La théorie de l'agir communicationnel*, Habermas oppose ce qu'il appelle la sphère des vécus intersubjectifs, et les Média de l'argent et du pouvoir (Habermas 1981). Certes, cette sphère de l'horizon intersubjectif n'est pas aussi séparée de ces Média qu'elle en a l'air, mais il nous semble que ce processus participe de la même erreur générale que celle que nous venons de critiquer *supra* : traiter l'humanité de demain comme une fin en soi, et non comme un simple moyen. Créer un espace de sens et d'autonomie vierge de toute relation de pouvoir. Cette idée ne nous permet en rien d'avancer, s'agissant de l'avenir de l'espèce humaine. *Par le déplacement des frontières entre le naturel et l'artificiel, nous sommes toujours déjà engagés dans une situation d'instrumentalisation.* Comme le saisit si bien Sloterdijk sur le vif : « lorsque Dolly bêle, l'esprit n'est pas chez soi comme dans une patrie » (Sloterdijk 2000, 79).

La vraie question n'est donc pas, comment éviter cette relation de pouvoir, mais plutôt, comment agir sur l'action de l'humanité de demain d'une manière qui puisse ne pas être injuste. Comment reconsidérer le problème de la justice qui est

ici posé dans le cadre de la relation asymétrique qui nous lie en tant que citoyens à l'humanité de demain ? Je voudrais tenter d'engager une réponse finalement et paradoxalement assez inspirée de Kant, mais en un sens réflexif et constructif et non pas en un sens transcendantal. L'espace de cette réponse est ouvert, si nous regardons certains textes du philosophe de Königsberg. Kant en effet ne dit pas, dans *les Fondements* qu'il faut agir de telle sorte qu'à travers notre personne et celle des autres, il faille traiter l'humanité seulement comme fin. Il écrit qu'il faut la traiter non seulement comme un moyen mais aussi comme une fin. Dans une de ses dernières conférences, J. Derrida s'était interrogé sur la signification de ce « *als ob* » qui rendait la Raison pratique réflexive. Il y a contradiction apparente à vouloir traiter l'humanité comme moyen et en même temps d'affirmer qu'il faut considérer l'humanité à travers ma personne et celle de tous les autres, comme pure fin en soi, comme il y a contradiction apparente à donner à la norme morale une matière alors même qu'on voulait la réduire à sa pure forme universalisable.

A moins d'ajouter que nous ne pouvons pas nous passer d'instrumentaliser l'humanité et que c'est cela qui vient en premier, et non l'exigence d'universalisation. Il est clair que ce constat a un sens bien plus fort si nous considérons aujourd'hui l'avenir de l'espèce humaine en tant qu'elle est modelée par la main de l'homme. Reposons la question pourtant : comment instrumentaliser l'humanité de demain, de telle sorte que cette instrumentalisation exprime la responsabilité collective que nous avons le devoir d'assumer à son égard aujourd'hui ? Cette instrumentalisation passe par les effets techniques et industriels de la techno-science, comme à travers l'étude par les sciences humaines des formes pratiques et techniques de cette instrumentalisation elle-même, en sociologie, en économie, en psychologie cognitive, etc. Cette réponse est réflexive. Elle ne peut être donnée avant ou indépendamment de ce processus d'instrumentalisation, mais au contraire pendant. Pendant ce processus elle peut produire des effets d'anticipation projective et des effets d'éclairage rétrospectif qui agissent sur le réel. Nous allons essayer d'indiquer ici que ce « comme si » doit prendre la forme d'un irréel du présent, d'une espèce

particulière de contrefactuel. Nous rejoindrons ainsi une idée déjà exprimée par Jean-Pierre Dupuy. Dupuy insiste sur la formule : « prévoir l'avenir pour le changer » afin de montrer à quel point le problème de l'avenir de l'humanité, *ne saurait relever de la simple prévision*. La prévision a ici évidemment un sens performatif. L'acte de prévoir suffit déjà à modifier l'avenir prévu par l'acte. En un sens il faudrait donc presque inverser la formule :

- (1) « agir de telle sorte que (*als ob*) ce que nous faisons et ce que nous décidons *aurait pu être fait ou décidé* par ceux que nous représentons ».

C'est ainsi que cette relation de pouvoir apparaît comme une relation de représentation dont l'exigence centrale n'est rien d'autre que celle d'une démocratisation de la techno-science. Plutôt que d'énoncer un simple devoir, ou de prétendre prévoir le futur à partir du présent, il faut d'une certaine manière concevoir ce devoir à partir du présent, comme une projection du futur dans le présent.

Nous n'allons pas simplement énoncer ce que nous devons faire. Ce n'est pas ce que nous devons faire qui vient en premier, mais le processus de développement industriel et technologique. Face au développement de ce processus, l'impératif réflexif nous engage à agir, de telle sorte que le devoir que nous nous donnons aurait pu être dit constituer celui-là même que ce seraient donnés ceux que nous représentons, alors même que cette condition est forcément irréaliste, puisqu'ils n'existent pas encore. C'est ce réquisit de démocratisation de la techno-science que nous avons nommé *le principe de constructibilité de l'humanité* (Miquel et Habbard 2003). Non pas : que l'humanité soit, mais que l'humanité de demain puisse être envisagée par nous comme constructible. *Nous avons la responsabilité de faire en sorte que l'humanité de demain puisse être envisagée à travers nos décisions comme constructible.*

a) Ce nouvel impératif-responsabilité engage plusieurs exigences. La première est la reconnaissance *critique* des limites de la raison scientifique. Nous voudrions en préciser rapidement

le sens. *La forme de la raison théorique scientifique, Heidegger l'avait déjà compris n'est pas immédiatement rationnelle.* Mais nous voudrions préciser ici qu'elle n'est pas immédiatement rationnelle, non pas pour des raisons descriptives, mais pour des raisons normatives. *Il nous faut admettre* que la forme de la raison scientifique n'est pas immédiatement rationnelle et que l'identité de la science, des sciences formelles, des sciences de la nature et des sciences de l'homme n'est en rien synonyme d'unité. C'est pour de multiples raisons de droit que nous avançons ce premier argument.

- L'objet de la raison scientifique théorique n'est pas immédiatement théorique et scientifique, les événements, les procédures rationnelles, ou les phénomènes sociaux que la science analyse, sont découpés dans un monde, qui n'est pas cet objet lui-même, posant ainsi en philosophie des sciences le difficile problème de la référence.

- La forme de la raison scientifique théorique n'est plus statique, elle n'est plus simplement descriptible en termes d'invariants fondateurs. Elle est plutôt dynamique : *la puissance de l'explication scientifique n'est pas toujours définie par la description initiale des éléments qui la composent.* C'est la faillite du modèle hypothético-déductif au profit d'un modèle constructif. Nous en avons une illustration immédiate avec le problème de la prévision. Si nous regardons l'énoncé que nous avons proposé du principe de précaution, il semble contradictoire. Si la réalisation d'un dommage est incertaine, il semble bien difficile de dire en qu'elle pourrait affecter l'environnement de manière grave et irréversible et qu'à ce titre elle appelle à une réaction immédiate des pouvoirs publics. La réaction ne risque-t-elle pas d'être pire que le mal ? A quoi sert de diminuer la consommation de CO₂, si cela nous engage en même temps à ruiner l'économie mondiale ? Mais en réalité, cet énoncé n'est pas contradictoire : la plausibilité d'un risque n'est pas sa probabilité. Les systèmes dynamiques et les simulations impliquées dans les prévisions météorologiques nous fournissent des quantités d'exemples du divorce contemporain entre explication et prévision dans les sciences de la complexité : *nous savons comment et pourquoi dans certaines conditions, il est impossible de prévoir.* Il ne s'agit pas là d'une ignorance, mais d'une impuissance structurelle.

- La forme expérimentale et omniprésente de la raison scientifique en médecine et en biologie moléculaire induit la production d'énoncés qualitatifs à valeur heuristique, mais non aisément démontrables puisque non formellement constructibles, du type : les gènes déterminent la synthèse des protéines, ou encore la nature sélectionne les organismes les mieux adaptés. Un exemple particulièrement frappant des risques liés à ces énoncés facilement renversables est la Crise de la vache folle. Les articles qui ont commencé à paraître en 1994, concernant la possibilité qu'un groupe de phénotypes puisse être hérité par la seule action d'une protéine mal conformée (*protein only*) n'ont pas été aisément acceptés dans la communauté scientifique puisqu'ils violent le sacro-saint dogme central de la biologie moléculaire énoncé par Crick en 1958, plaçant ainsi la communauté politique dans une embarrassante situation « d'environnement scientifique controversé » (Wickner 1994).

b) La seconde est le rejet de l'idée que l'amélioration de l'humanité puisse être entièrement laissée sous la responsabilité des médecins et des biologistes, comme si la forme de la rationalité biologique pouvait en même temps constituer une norme d'évolution pour définir ce que doit être l'avenir de l'espèce humaine. Nous avons là un critère précis pour rejeter toute volonté systématique d'amélioration de l'espèce humaine par le contrôle de ses gènes et au nom de critères biologiques. Toute initiative concernant le contrôle et l'amélioration de notre espèce, ne peut précisément pas être d'ordre biologique : là est le sophisme que nous exposons tout à l'heure. Elle est technologique. Ce qui est fait ainsi *pourrait tout aussi bien ne pas l'être et tombe directement sous le coup de la question politique que nous posons tout à l'heure*. Ce qui est fait, ce que nous sommes en train de faire, est-ce que nous pouvons conclure que cela est fait, de telle sorte que les générations futures qui en ressentiront les effets *auraient pu tout aussi bien le faire à notre place ?* L'exigence fondamentale, n'est pas ainsi le rejet de l'eugénisme, de toute initiative d'amélioration de l'espèce, mais bien plutôt le rejet absolu de la position qui consisterait à vouloir *naturaliser l'eugénisme*, à vouloir traiter celui-ci comme un problème scientifique qu'il faut poser à travers des contraintes sélectives d'ordre biologique.

c) La troisième est celle qui consiste à penser que le traitement du problème de l'existence future de l'humanité pourrait être un traitement effectué et accompli par et à travers les sciences humaines. Nous retrouvons encore là le fantasme de la naturalisation, de la réduction de l'espèce humaine à une nature humaine que les sociologues, économistes et psychologues pourraient expliquer et analyser. Au nom du principe que nous venons d'établir, nous proposons un tout autre usage des sciences humaines : ni strictement structuraliste, ni non plus strictement naturaliste. Nous nous proposons de les envisager comme des grilles de lectures ouvertes sur un problème politique auquel elles ouvrent, sans qu'en rien elles puissent être elles-mêmes là pour le résoudre. Nous allons en donner deux exemples, pour finir.

Le premier concerne la discussion que le droit rend possible sur les différents usages du principe de précaution. Nous pouvons comprendre ou concevoir celui-ci comme Hermitte ou comme Dupuy, en mettant l'accent sur la prophétie du malheur (Hermitte 1988 ; Dupuy 2002). Nous n'insisterons pas alors sur la plausibilité du risque. Nous sentons bien qu'il est possible de se le permettre dans certaines circonstances : cela ne coûte pas si cher de chauffer le sang et de mener des enquêtes épidémiologiques pour vérifier la nature réelle de la maladie et des risques d'épidémie associés au virus du Sida, même si nous sommes typiquement en situation d'univers scientifique controversé. Nous pouvons appliquer la précaution sans ruiner l'économie.

Pour le second, plus proche de la doctrine institutionnelle française, les outils de la simulation par recoupement de modèles, le calcul de la croissance des émanations de dioxyde de carbone, les phénomènes climatiques observés du type « *el nino* », ou encore la fonte de la calotte glaciaire au pôle Nord font croître la plausibilité du risque exigeant des mesures appropriées, même au prix de ralentir la croissance. Mieux vaut se hâter lentement.

L'attitude des sociologues n'est pas normative (Callon et al. 2001). Elle ouvre des grilles de lecture pour une normativité politique qui ne peut s'installer que par la mise en place d'un certain nombre de procédures institutionnelles, les comités

d'éthique, la mise en place d'un dispositif juridique plus approprié contre la délinquance technologique, l'existence des associations, etc.

Le second est la reconnaissance du fait que le problème lié au principe de précaution est bien un problème de justice et de démocratie, en tant que la démocratie n'est justement pas réductible aux formes de normalisation et de régulation dans une économie de marché et de libre concurrence. Il n'est pas question en particulier d'en rester, en ce qui concerne la précaution, au principe libéral du pollueur payeur, qui a un sens pour la régulation de dommages privés, mais aucun sens en situation de grande incertitude concernant des choix fondamentaux qui engagent le long terme. Une politique publique est alors nécessaire. Il nous semble encore une fois que la position d'Amartya Sen (1999) est exemplaire à ce sujet, puisqu'elle révèle le principe d'une économie véritablement politique, pour laquelle la démocratie plus que l'utilité est la valeur économique par excellence, de telle sorte, que le débat public, les politiques de santé, de recherche et d'éducation publique, l'exigence d'institutions de type « associations » dans la société civile, sont en eux-mêmes des vecteurs de développement économique.

L'acte fondamental qui apparaît ici alors est la possibilité, ouverte par les sciences humaines, que les décisions concernant l'avenir de l'espèce humaine ne soient pas simplement rapportées à des experts qui en sont responsables, plus que d'autres citoyens. Ils le sont, sans coup férir, mais là n'est pas le point important. Il aurait fallu au contraire que les décisions ouvertes et rendues possibles par les experts, *aient pourtant pu être rapportées à la communauté politique et éthique des êtres humains eux-mêmes*. Cela exigerait bien sûr la mise en place de procédures de globalisation des décisions forcément interétatiques que nous ne développerons pas ici, puisque le point conceptuel important est atteint. Voici comment agir de telle sorte que nous nous placions comme les représentants des générations futures, au sens où nous pouvons penser que nous agissons sur leur action, comme elles auraient pu souhaiter elles-mêmes que nous le fassions : agir de telle sorte que les décisions ouvertes par l'expertise, puissent être

par le jeu des institutions installées dans la société mondiale, le mieux et le plus possible celles de la communauté politique des êtres humains de la terre entière.

NOTES

¹ Voir « Loi no. 2004-800 du 6 août 2004 relative à la bioéthique », Chapitre IV : Dispositions pénales visant la modification du titre Ier du livre II du code pénal. Ce titre est réintitulé « Des crimes contre l'humanité et contre l'espèce humaine », en raison de l'insertion du Sous-titre Ier: « Des crimes contre l'humanité » et du Sous-titre II: « Des crimes contre l'espèce humaine ». Concernant les crimes d'eugénisme et de clonage reproductif, le Chapitre Ier du Sous-titre II prévoit: « Art. 214-1. - Le fait de mettre en oeuvre une pratique eugénique tendant à l'organisation de la sélection des personnes est puni de trente ans de réclusion criminelle et de 7 500 000 EUR d'amende. « Art. 214-2. Le fait de procéder à une intervention ayant pour but de faire naître un enfant génétiquement identique à une autre personne vivante ou décédée est puni de trente ans de réclusion criminelle et de 7500000 EUR d'amende » (Loi no. 2004-800 du 6 août 2004 relative à la bioéthique).

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Paul-Antoine Miquel est maître de conférences à l'Université de Nice. Ancien co-président (2007 à 2010) du réseau européen de philosophie politique OFFRES. HDR Philosophie des sciences (2006), membre du Comité scientifique international des *Annales bergsoniennes* aux Presses Universitaires de France (depuis 2002). Ses recherches portent sur Bergson, sur l'épistémologie des sciences humaines et sur le vivant.

Address:

Paul-Antoine MIQUEL
Département de Philosophie
UFR Lettres, Arts et Sciences Humaines
Université de Nice Sophia Antipolis
98, boulevard Édouard Herriot
06204 Nice Cedex 3, France
E-mail: Paul-Antoine.MIQUEL@unice.fr

Anerkennung und Arbeitslosigkeit

Gottfried Schweiger
Paris-Lodron Universität Salzburg

Abstract

Recognition and Unemployment

This paper aims to explore the case of unemployment from the perspective of recognition theory as it was conceived by Axel Honneth. In the first part I present a shortened form of recognition theory and afterwards, in the second part, its take on work and labor in modern societies. Finally, the third part elaborates how unemployment can be understood and evaluated from this viewpoint. I argue that unemployment itself is not a form of misrecognition and therefore not moral evil. But what has to be criticized are the negative effects of unemployment and the degrading treatment of unemployed people.

Keywords: unemployment, work, recognition, social philosophy, Honneth

„Und die Gesellschaften arbeiteten an ihrem eigenen Verderben und wußten es nicht. Die Felder waren voller Früchte, und über die Straßen zogen hungernde Menschen. Die Kornkammern waren voll, und die Kinder der Armen waren rachitisch, und auf ihren Rippen schwellen Aussatzgeschwüre an. Die großen Gesellschaften wußten nicht, daß es von Hunger zu Empörung nur ein kurzer Schritt ist. Und das Geld, das für die Löhne hätte verwendet werden können, wurde für Gas, für Gewehre, für Agenten und Spitzel, für schwarze Listen, fürs Exerzieren ausgegeben. Über die Straßen krochen gleich Ameisen die Menschen und suchten nach Arbeit, nach Essen. Und die Empörung begann zu gären.“ (Steinbeck 1986, 336f)

Die Veränderungen der Arbeitswelt und des Arbeitsmarktes ebenso wie das Phänomen der Arbeitslosigkeit haben in den letzten Jahren, angetrieben auch durch die Auswirkungen der jüngsten Finanz- und Wirtschaftskrise, den gesellschaftlichen

und politischen Diskurs (mit)bestimmt. Sie stellen den Einzelnen, die Kommunen und Regionen, die Politik auf allen Entscheidungsebenen wie auch die Gesellschaft in ihrer Gesamtheit vor tiefgreifende Probleme und Herausforderungen, die zunehmend schwieriger zu bewältigen sind. Die Auswirkungen auf die Betroffenen sind oftmals psychische und physische Erkrankungen und Beschädigungen, materielle Einschnitte und Entbehrungen, soziale Isolation und Abkoppelung, der (drohende) Verlust von Status und Anerkennung sowie weitreichende und tiefgreifende Verunsicherung (Legnaro und Birenheide 2008; Hollederer und Brand 2006; Hollederer 2011; Huster, Boeckh und Mogge-Grotjahn 2008; McKee-Ryan u. a. 2005; Castel und Dörre 2009). Die Risse im sozialen Gefüge sind auch von genuin sozialphilosophischem und -ethischem Interesse, da es Aufgabe dieser Disziplinen ist, die herrschenden Verhältnisse zu erfassen, zu analysieren, zu bewerten und auch (mit)zu helfen Lösungsansätze zu entwickeln.

Hier nun soll versucht werden sich dem Phänomen der Arbeitslosigkeit aus Perspektive einer anerkennungstheoretischen Sozialphilosophie zu nähern – eine Erörterung desselben kann sogar als eine der Kernaufgaben einer solchen Sozialphilosophie verstanden werden, die wesentlich als Kritik der herrschenden Verhältnisse konzipiert ist. Kritik ist sie dabei nicht schon alleine deshalb, weil dies Teil ihrer Entstehung und Geschichte, also gewissermaßen Teil ihrer Erbschaft ist (Brink und Owen 2007), sondern, weil sie glaubhaft zu machen versucht, dass in ihrem Mittelpunkt die Fragen nach einer besseren Gesellschaft und nach einem besseren Leben für alle Menschen stehen. Axel Honneth, der die wichtigsten Arbeiten der jüngsten Zeit für eine anerkennungstheoretische Sozialphilosophie geleistet hat (Deranty 2009; Fraser und Honneth 2003; Honneth 1994a; Iser 2008), hält richtig fest, dass es die vordringlichste Aufgabe der Sozialphilosophie ist, „soziale Entwicklungsprozesse zu diagnostizieren, die als Beeinträchtigung der Möglichkeiten ‚guten Lebens‘ unter den Gesellschaftsmitgliedern verstanden werden müssen“ (Honneth 2000a, 13).

In diesem Beitrag wird nun das Verhältnis von Anerkennung und Arbeitslosigkeit näher betrachtet, wie es aus Sicht einer solchen Anerkennungstheorie zu konzipieren ist. Bisher wurden diese Fragen nicht ausreichend thematisiert, obwohl doch das Verständnis moderner Gesellschaften als Arbeitsgesellschaften tief im theoretischen Gefüge der Anerkennungstheorie verwurzelt ist (Honneth 2008). Dafür wird im ersten Teil ein Überblick über die Anerkennungstheorie gegeben, um den Boden zu bereiten. Im zweiten Teil wird dann kurz das Verständnis von Arbeit aus anerkennungstheoretischer Sicht dargestellt, um schließlich im dritten Teil zu diskutieren, wie Arbeitslosigkeit aus dieser Perspektive zu verstehen ist. Das Ergebnis wird lauten, dass Arbeitslosigkeit selbst nicht moralisch verwerflich ist, da es keine Form der ungerechtfertigten Missachtung oder Nichtanerkennung darstellt.

1. Anerkennungstheoretische Sozialphilosophie

Der Ausgangspunkt ist die Frage, was denn die Aufgabe einer Sozialphilosophie überhaupt sein kann. Dies kann hinsichtlich ihrer zwei wesentlichen Betätigungsfelder umrissen werden, die einmal die Analyse und somit theoretische Erfassung gesellschaftlicher Verhältnisse und ihrer Entwicklung ist, auf der anderen Seite ihre kritische Funktion. In diesem Sinne ist Sozialphilosophie vor allem auch Sozialethik, selbst wenn dieser allgemeine Begriff oft nur für eine ihrer bestimmten, namentlich katholischen, Version verwendet wird (Heimbach-Steins 2004). Die bloße Beschreibung der gesellschaftlichen Verhältnisse alleine ist der Sozialphilosophie nicht genug und sie versucht vielmehr einen normativen Horizont zu zeichnen, von dem aus gesellschaftliche Kritik möglich und rechtfertigbar ist. Dabei nimmt sie sich jenen Problemen an, die sich, wie Martin Saar formuliert, „beim Aufeinandertreffen von sozialer oder politischer Ordnung und individuellem Subjekt ergeben.“ (Saar 2009, 567) Sozialphilosophie beschäftigt sich somit mit gesellschaftlichen Problemen aus einer normativen Perspektive.

„Ihre [= Sozialphilosophie] Perspektive ist von Beginn an eine der Bilanzierung von Verlusten und Kosten, die aus dem – erst unter den Bedingungen des modernen Selbstverständnisses artikulierbaren –

Nichtzusammenfallen von Gesellschaftlichkeit und Individualität entstehen. Die sozialphilosophische Reflexionsform widmet sich genau dieser Negativität oder Differenz; gerade darin hat sie aber konstitutiv ‚eine kritische Intention‘.“ (Saar 2009, 569)

Für die Diagnose solcher gesellschaftlicher Probleme hat Honneth den Begriff der sozialen Pathologie geprägt (Honneth 1994b; Honneth 2000a; Sedmak 2009). Eine Sozialpathologie kann dabei als Störung des sozialen Zusammenlebens bestimmt werden, die es einzelnen Mitgliedern oder Gruppen im Rahmen einer Gesellschaft systematisch unmöglich macht, ein gutes Leben zu führen, bzw. als Störung, die es der Gesellschaft als solcher nicht ermöglicht, langfristig zu bestehen. Ein soziales System ist krank, wenn es nicht überlebensfähig ist bzw. wenn es systematisch ihr Mitglieder um die Lebensfähigkeit bringt. Hierbei steht die Sozialphilosophie in einem bedürftigen Verhältnis gegenüber den an sie grenzenden Sozialwissenschaften. Bedürftig nicht deshalb, weil die Sozialphilosophie eine halbierte Sozialwissenschaft ist, sondern weil ihr Zug auf die Welt als genuin philosophische Disziplin ohne Kontakt zu den Sozialwissenschaften stets beschränkt bleibt. Sozialphilosophie ist im besten Sinne interdisziplinär, im schlechtesten bloß ideelle Verdopplung der Wirklichkeit.

Eine anerkennungstheoretische Sozialphilosophie erblickt nun in den von ihr ausdifferenzierten Formen und Verhältnissen von Anerkennung die intersubjektiven Bedingungen der Ausbildung und Erhaltung von gelungener menschlicher Identität und Subjektivität. Der Mensch ist ein der Anerkennung durch Andere bedürftiges Wesen. Es sind dabei, der Terminologie Honneths folgend, drei wesentliche Weisen der Anerkennung, welche sich im Laufe der Geschichte weiter ausdifferenziert haben: emotionale Zuwendung, kognitive Achtung und soziale Wertschätzung.

„Demzufolge sind es die drei Anerkennungsformen der Liebe, des Rechts und der Wertschätzung, die erst zusammengenommen die sozialen Bedingungen schaffen, unter denen menschliche Subjekte zu einer positiven Einstellung gegenüber sich selbst gelangen können; denn nur dank des kumulativen Erwerbs von Selbstvertrauen, Selbstachtung und Selbstschätzung, wie ihn nacheinander die Erfahrung von jenen drei Formen der Anerkennung garantiert, vermag eine Person sich uneingeschränkt als ein sowohl autonomes wie auch individuiertes Wesen zu

begreifen und mit ihren Zielen und Wünschen zu identifizieren.“ (Honneth 1994a, 271)

Verweist emotionale Zuwendung auf die Bedürfnis- und Affektnatur des Menschen und stellt somit die basalste und grundlegendste Form der Anerkennung dar, bezieht sich kognitive Achtung auf die Vernunftnatur des Menschen als moralisch zurechnungsfähiges Wesen, welches gleiche Rechte einfordert. Soziale Wertschätzung bezeichnet dann jene Anerkennungsweise, welche auf die Besonderheiten, die individuellen Eigenschaften, Fähigkeiten und Leistungen, die der Einzelne in einen gemeinschaftlichen Zusammenhang einbringt, Bezug nimmt. Sie fungiert dahingehend differenzierend, in dem sie für Besonderes gegeben wird, gleichzeitig aber auch integrierend, als sie den Einzelnen dadurch in eine Gemeinschaft einbindet und soziale Wertschätzung auch nur im Rahmen eines solchen Wertehorizontes gegeben und erhalten werden kann. Diese drei Anerkennungsweisen setzen sich dabei in je spezifische Formen, welche erst zusammen den Rahmen für eine gelungene Ausbildung und Erhaltung von Identität abgeben und einen positiven Selbstbezug als Selbstvertrauen, Selbstachtung und Selbstschätzung ermöglichen. Emotionale Zuwendung in Form der Liebe, kognitive Achtung in Form von gleichen Rechten und soziale Wertschätzung in Form von Solidarität oder einer Wertegemeinschaft.

„In this model, the subject depends on relations of recognition for its formation; the self is a form of self-relating informed by the interaction with others. Three basic structures of self-relationship can be identified as fundamental conditions of subjective identity: an intimate self-relationship which grants the self the physical and affective self-assurance necessary to face the natural and social worlds; a self-relationship in which the subject sees itself as equally worth of respect, as a morally responsible subject; finally, a more substantive self-relationship which grants the subject the self-confidence that is necessary to claim its place in the social community as a valid contributor.“ (Deranty 2004, 300)

Zusammengenommen bilden diese Anerkennungsverhältnisse ein formales Konzept des Guten, bei Honneth ein „formales Konzept der Sittlichkeit“ (Honneth 1994a, 274; Zurn 2000), welches als normativer Zielpunkt und Maßstab gesellschaftlicher

Verhältnisse und Entwicklungen fungieren kann. Sie stellen die Bedingungen der Möglichkeit eines gelingenden Lebens dar, weil sie die intersubjektiven Bedingungen individueller Selbstverwirklichung in Gemeinschaft sind (Honneth 1994a, 279; Kauppinen 2002).

Doch geht es Honneth nicht nur um die Freilegung des Zusammenhangs von Identitätsentwicklung und gesellschaftlichem Zusammenhang, sondern auch darum die innere Logik sozialer Konflikte aufzudecken, also diese als moralisch motiviert zu verstehen. Hierfür ist es zuerst notwendig die Forderungen und Erfahrungen von Anerkennung in Bezug zu setzen mit den ihnen korrespondierenden Formen der Missachtung (Honneth 1994a, 212-226). An erster Stelle steht hier die körperliche Misshandlung, welche das Subjekt um die freie Verfügung über seinen Körper beraubt und von Honneth in den Formen der Folter und Vergewaltigung exemplarisch sieht. Diese Formen der Missachtung stehen in direktem Gegenteil zu der durch die Liebe erfahrenen Unabhängigkeit und Bestimmung über das eigene Selbst. Es wird das elementare Selbstvertrauen zerstört. Die Missachtung der moralischen Zurechnungsfähigkeit und die Verweigerung der kognitiven Anerkennung wiederum drücken sich den Formen der Entrechtung und Ausschließung aus. Da Rechte selbst historisch gewachsen und veränderbar sind, sind diese Formen der Missachtung anders als jene der Folter und Vergewaltigung auch nur jeweils auf eine bestimmte Gesellschaft bezogen und von ihr her verständlich. Der strukturelle Ausschluss und die Vorenthaltung von Rechten wird nur dann als Missachtung wirksam, wenn diese Rechte anderen Gesellschaftsmitgliedern zugestanden werden bzw. wenn diese Rechte allgemein anerkannt sind. Hierdurch kommt es zum Verlust der Selbstachtung, also des Selbstverständnisses ein gleichberechtigtes Mitglied der Gesellschaft zu sein. Die dritte Form der Missachtung schließlich stellt die Entwürdigung oder Beleidigung dar, welche sich direkt auf bestimmte individuelle oder kollektive Werte, Leistungen, Eigenschaften oder Lebensweisen bezieht. Die solcherart missachteten Subjekte können sich nicht mehr als in ihren individuellen Eigenschaften und Fähigkeiten anerkannt verstehen und verlieren somit ihre Selbstschätzung. Auch hier ist es so, dass sich Beleidigung und

Entwürdigung auf einen jeweils bestimmten Wertehorizont beziehen, also wandelbar sind.

Entgegen dem Konzept von Honneth, welches nur zwischen Anerkennung und Missachtung unterscheidet, soll aber auch eine dritte Kategorie aufgenommen werden, welche von Stephan Voswinkel eingeführt wurde (Voswinkel 2001, 42-50). Er unterscheidet von einer aktiven Negation der Anerkennungsforderung, die Honneth als Missachtung versteht, das bloß passive Ignorieren von Anerkennungsforderungen und bezeichnet diese Formen als simple Nichtanerkennung. Damit lassen sich gesellschaftliche Verhältnisse und Entwicklungen differenzierter bewerten und einordnen als mit dem bloß zweiteiligen Schema von Honneth.

„Die Unterscheidung [von aktiver und passiver Nichtanerkennung] ist deshalb bedeutsam, weil die Reaktion der Betroffenen eine andere sein wird, je nachdem sie passiv oder aktiv nicht-erkannt werden. Im Falle der bloßen Nichtanerkennung werden sie zwar enttäuscht sein, weil etwas Beanspruchtes oder Erhofftes ausbleibt, aber sie können diese Tatsache zumindest zeitweise selbst durch Ignorieren gewissermaßen ‚nichtanerkennen‘, nicht zur Kenntnis nehmen. [...] Anders bei aktiver Missachtung: Hier wird das Subjekt als minderwertig betrachtet. Es liegt unter dem Durchschnitt, ihm wird die übliche Achtung als Subjekt vorenthalten. Da es sich hier um eine demonstrative Erniedrigung handelt, die das Subjekt abwertet, kann es diese Tatsache allenfalls unter Aufbietung großer psychischer Energie ignorieren. Wahrscheinlicher ist, dass es mit Scham oder aber mit Wut und Empörung hierauf reagiert.“ (Voswinkel 2001, 43)

2. Arbeit und Anerkennung

Damit ist der Grundriss gegeben, der eine kritische Beschreibung und Bewertung gesellschaftlicher Verhältnisse und Entwicklungen erlaubt. Im Mittelpunkt steht dabei ein Verständnis der modernen Gesellschaft als Arbeitsgesellschaft (Honneth 2008; Kambartel 1997; Krebs 2001). Sicherlich ist diese Zuschreibung eine perspektivische Verengung und eine anerkennungstheoretische Sozialphilosophie könnte sich ihrem Gegenstand auch über andere Zugänge nähern, doch sind die gesellschaftlichen Verhältnisse maßgeblich durch Arbeit bestimmt.

„Schon ein kurzer Blick in Untersuchungen, die die psychischen Folgen von Arbeitslosigkeit behandeln, führt unmissverständlich vor Augen, dass der Erfahrung von Arbeit in dem sich abzeichnenden Konzept eine zentrale Stellung zukommen muß; denn mit der Chance, einer ökonomisch entlohnten und somit sozial geregelten Arbeit nachzugehen, ist auch heute noch der Erwerb jener Form von Anerkennung verknüpft, die ich als soziale Wertschätzung genannt habe.“ (Honneth 2000b, 104; Schmidt am Busch 2009)

Zum einen stellt Arbeit in einem basalen, anthropologischen Sinne die notwendige Tätigkeit zur Reproduktion menschlichen Lebens dar und damit einen wesentlichen Teil des menschlichen, individuellen wie gesellschaftlichen, Lebens, selbst wenn das Verständnis von Arbeit im Laufe der geschichtlichen Entwicklung keineswegs unverändert geblieben ist (Füllsack 2009; Kocka und Offe 2000). Zum anderen erfüllt Arbeit, genauer Erwerbsarbeit, in der modernen Gesellschaft vier wichtige Funktionen für den Einzelnen, die Gesellschaft und den Staat: sie ist bedeutende Einkommensquelle, vermittelt Status und Anerkennung, gewährleistet bürgerschaftliche Integration, und garantiert soziale Absicherung mithin finanziert sie den Wohlfahrtsstaat (Senghaas-Knobloch 1999; Mückenberger 1990; Schmid 2006). Erwerbsarbeit inkludiert, wohingegen Erwerbsarbeitslosigkeit ausschließt. Das Verhältnis von Erwerbsarbeit und Erwerbsarbeitslosigkeit, also auch die Zuschreibung dessen, was als Arbeit anerkannt wird, sowie auch die Organisation von Erwerbsarbeit und Erwerbsarbeitslosigkeit sind durchzogen von Anerkennungsverhältnissen und -formen. Dies betrifft vor allem die Anerkennungsweise der sozialen Wertschätzung, welche innerhalb der Arbeitsgesellschaft maßgeblich an Erwerbsarbeit gebunden ist, wohingegen Erwerbsarbeitslose und Sozialhilfeempfänger als „Sozialschmarotzer“ stigmatisiert und missachtet werden.

„Wer nicht erwerbstätig ist, der ist ein Nichts. Das gilt für Arbeitslose ebenso wie für diejenigen, die sich aufgrund familiärer Bindungen oder aus gesundheitlichen Gründen nicht mehr am Erwerbsleben beteiligen können. Auch die soziale Statusalternative der Hausfrau oder Mutter hat heute abgewirtschaftet. Selbst den Frauen bringt die Kindererziehung mittlerweile keine soziale Anerkennung mehr ein. Von den Männern ganz zu schweigen. Ein hauptamtlicher Hausmann oder Vater ist in den Augen der

Öffentlichkeit ein armer Tropf. Alle schönen Reden von den neuen Männern und geteilter Elternverantwortung sind in den Zeiten der totalen Erwerbsarbeitsfixierung nichts als hohle Phrasen. Ein Mann, der nicht zur Erwerbsarbeit geht, ist kein Mann. Weder in den Augen seiner erwerbstätigen Geschlechtsgenossen noch in den Augen der Frauen. Die dauerhafte Erwerbsarbeit ist auf allen Ebenen des gesellschaftlichen Zusammenlebens die zentrale Anerkennungs- und Integrationsmaschine.“ (Vogel 2009, 156)

Aber auch emotionale Zuwendung und kognitive Achtung sind für Arbeit durchaus von Bedeutung. Erwerbsarbeit ist in der modernen Gesellschaft stark verrechtlicht und gewisse soziale Rechte, etwa Arbeitslosen- und Pensionsversicherung sind an Erwerbsarbeit gebunden (Bercusson 2009; Schmid 2006). Schließlich wirken auch in der Arbeit affektive Beziehungen und Bindungen, emotionale Fähigkeiten werden zum Teil verstärkt gefordert, andere Arbeiten sind von vorne herein emotional durchzogen etwa im Bereich der überaus wichtigen Pflege- und Fürsorgearbeit, welche nur wenig Anerkennung genießen (Boddy, Cameron und Moss 2006; Cameron und Moss 2007; Krebs 2001).

Angesichts der Fixierung und hohen Bewertung von Erwerbsarbeit in modernen Gesellschaften ist es nicht verwunderlich, dass Arbeitslosigkeit hauptsächlich negative Auswirkungen hat und auch in der individuellen und gesellschaftlichen Wahrnehmung negativ konzipiert und verstanden wird. Nicht nur könnte dies anders sein – schließlich eröffnet Arbeitslosigkeit auch Freiräume und verschafft mehr Zeit – sondern erscheint es gerade angesichts der vielen negativen Entwicklungen und Folgen von Erwerbsarbeit – Stress, körperliche Anstrengung, monotone Tätigkeiten oder geringe Bezahlung – verwunderlich, warum es Arbeitslosen noch schlechter geht als Menschen, die arbeiten müssen. Die Forschung zeigt ganz eindeutig, dass Verarmungs- und Exklusionstendenzen maßgeblich an Erwerbsarbeitslosigkeit gekoppelt sind, vielleicht gerade auch weil sich in den letzten Jahren zunehmend innerhalb der Erwerbsarbeit weitläufige Veränderungen vollziehen, die als Prekarisierung gefasst werden können (Brinkmann u. a. 2006; Eberling u. a. 2004; Castel und Dörre 2009; Keller und Seifert 2007).

Eine anerkennungstheoretische Sozialphilosophie wird sich vor allem als Kritik eben diesen Verhältnissen und

Entwicklungen zuwenden, die einem guten Leben entgegenstehen, also versuchen diese als Formen der passiven oder aktiven Nichtanerkennung zu verstehen und damit negativ auf ihren normativen Zielpunkt, die intersubjektiven Voraussetzungen und Bedingungen gelungener Ausbildung und Erhaltung von Identität zu beziehen. Die Pathologien des Sozialen werden als fehlende Anerkennung und Missachtung sicht- und kritisierbar. Dafür bedarf es sowohl einer näheren Systematisierung der Anerkennungs- und Nichtanerkennungsverhältnisse sowie einer Spezifikation des formalen Konzeptes des guten Lebens, der Sittlichkeit, welches den Maßstab der Kritik abgeben kann. Beide müssen hinsichtlich ihrer Anwendung auf das Thema der Arbeit verdichtet werden. Dafür gibt es bereits Ansatzpunkte: Einerseits hat sich in den letzten Jahren eine anerkennungstheoretische Soziologie der Arbeit etabliert, welche aus Sicht der Beschäftigten, Anerkennungsformen in und von der Erwerbsarbeit untersucht hat (Holtgrewe, Voswinkel und Wagner 2001; Voswinkel 2001; Voswinkel 2005; Wimbauer, Henninger und Gottwald 2007; Wagner 2004). Auf der anderen Seite liegt mit dem Konzept der menschenwürdigen Arbeit („decent work“), von der Internationalen Arbeitsorganisation (IAO) ausgearbeitet, ein Konzept vor, welches durchaus mit wichtigen Bausteinen eines normativen Zielpunktes, im Sinne eines hinsichtlich der Arbeit spezifizierten Konzepts des guten Lebens, dienen kann (Bagusat, Keenan und Sedmak 2011; Becke u. a. 2010; Ghai 2006; Leschke und Watt 2008; Böhler u. a. 2009).

Denn es müssen jeweils zwei Perspektiven eingeholt werden: Jene der Betroffenen selbst, die Aufschluss über Unrechtserfahrungen gibt, und eine ethisch-normative, vor deren Hintergrund diese Unrechtserfahrungen und ethischen Verletzungen als nicht bloß subjektive Empfindungen, sondern vielmehr wirklich substantielle Störungen des Sozialen ausgezeichnet werden können. Vor diesem Hintergrund erst kann sich eine anerkennungstheoretische Sozialphilosophie den Zusammenhängen und Entwicklungen von Arbeit, Erwerbsarbeit und Erwerbsarbeitslosigkeit zuwenden.

3. Arbeitslosigkeit und Anerkennung

Ausgangspunkt für eine anerkennungstheoretische Beurteilung von Arbeitslosigkeit sollen nun zwei Thesen sein, die in jüngerer Vergangenheit im Umfeld der Anerkennungstheorie aufgestellt wurden.

(1) Clemens Sedmak hat in seinen Überlegungen zum Begriff einer menschenwürdigen Arbeitslosigkeit, die „Grundthese“ aufgestellt, „dass der Ausschluss von Menschen aus dem Arbeitsplatzkontext gegen ihren Willen zu struktureller Erniedrigung führt – und dass diese Erniedrigung, wenn sie in größerem Umfang erfolgt, mit erheblichen moralischen und ökonomischen Kosten verbunden ist.“ (Sedmak 2009, 133)

(2) Angelika Krebs wiederum hat in zwei Schritten eine „überzeugende, anerkennungstheoretische Begründung des Rechts auf Arbeit“ (Krebs 2001, 200) vorgelegt, welche uneingeschränkt für Arbeitsgesellschaften gelten soll. Da soziale Anerkennung notwendiger Bestandteil eines menschenwürdigen Lebens ist und dieses weiters in einer Arbeitsgesellschaft an Arbeit gebunden ist, folgt daraus, dass es ein Menschenrecht auf Arbeit gibt.

Beide Thesen stützen sich wesentlich auf die negativen Auswirkungen von Arbeitslosigkeit für die Betroffenen. Betrachtet man nun eben diese, so ist offensichtlich, dass den Betroffenen zumindest jene Anerkennung, welche mit Erwerbsarbeit verbunden ist, vorenthalten wird. Doch stellt dies vordergründig noch kein ethisches Problem dar, da sie ja eben gerade nicht erwerbstätig sind. Die Frage ist vielmehr eine zweifache. Sind die mit Erwerbsarbeit verbundenen Formen der Anerkennung legitimerweise auf diese beschränkt, also werden diese damit auch legitimerweise Arbeitslosen vorenthalten? Und zum Zweiten, was folgt daraus für den Umgang mit Arbeitslosen? Hinter diesen beiden Fragen steht dabei eine Dritte: Ist der Zugang zu Erwerbsarbeit etwas, das Arbeitslosen illegitimerweise vorenthalten wird, oder stellt Erwerbsarbeit vielmehr ein knappes Gut dar, worauf kein Anspruch besteht? Ja, stellt der Zustand der Arbeitslosigkeit in sich schon eine Form der verweigerten Anerkennung oder strukturellen Erniedrigung dar?

Diese Fragen sind durchaus nicht so einfach zu

beantworten, weshalb hier nur kurze Skizzen zu ihrer Lösung vorgestellt werden können. Die hohe gesellschaftliche Bewertung zusammen mit den psychosozialen und materiellen Funktionen von Erwerbsarbeit, also dasjenige, was an Anerkennung über sie vermittelt wird, stärkt den Eindruck als ob Erwerbsarbeit etwas sei, was prinzipiell Bestandteil eines guten Lebens ist und somit auch niemandem vorenthalten werden dürfte. Dies meint im Grunde die Argumentation von Krebs wie auch Sedmak. Doch ist die Sachlage nicht so einfach. Zum einen lassen sich Gründe dafür vorbringen, dass nicht Erwerbsarbeit das wichtigste Inklusionsmedium in modernen Gesellschaften, also gerade auch Arbeitsgesellschaften, darstellt, sondern vielmehr Geld. So haben etwa Christoph Deutschmann und Ulrich Beck argumentiert.

„Das Medium Geld vermittelt nicht nur Zugang zu materiellen Gütern, sondern auch die Chance Freunde einzuladen, Restaurants, Kultur- und Bildungsveranstaltungen zu besuchen, politisch aktiv zu sein usw. Es wäre willkürlich, hier zwischen ‚ökonomischer‘, ‚sozialer‘, ‚politischer‘, ‚kultureller‘ Teilhabe unterscheiden zu wollen: Geld gewährleistet zwar nicht schon per se die anderen Formen der Teilhabe, ist aber immer die notwendige Voraussetzung. [...] Geld ist weit mehr als ein bloß ‚ökonomisches‘ Medium. Es vermittelt nicht bloß materielle Zugriffsrechte sondern individuelle Chancen gesellschaftlicher Teilhabe. In diesem Sinne stellt es kein funktional spezialisiertes, sondern ein universales Medium dar.“ (Deutschmann 2009, 226, 231)

„Eine nicht so abwegige Erkenntnis ist, daß nicht Arbeitslosigkeit, sondern Geldlosigkeit das eigentlich Problem ist. Da dies aber nicht offen ausgesprochen werden darf, sind alle dazu gezwungen, einen Heißhunger auf oft sinnlose Arbeit zu bekunden, um das eigentliche Schicksal der Geldlosigkeit abzuwenden.“ (Beck 2000, 33)

Das hieße, dass das Recht auf Zugehörigkeit kein Recht auf Erwerbsarbeit (Gürtler 2000; Schlothfeldt 2000; Steinvorth 1996), sondern vielmehr ein Recht auf Geld darstellt, mithin ein bedingungsloses Grundeinkommen (Raventós 2007; Blaschke, Otto und Schepers 2010; Vanderborght und van Parijs 2005). Zum Zweiten lässt sich argumentieren, dass Erwerbsarbeit ein durchaus knappes Gut ist, welches nicht beliebig hergestellt und verteilt werden kann, sondern über die Marktmechanismen von Angebot und Nachfrage reguliert wird, ja sogar reguliert werden muss, um die spezifischen mit Erwerbsarbeit verbundenen Anerkennungsformen überhaupt geben zu können. Vermittelt

sich doch die soziale Wertschätzung, die an Erwerbsarbeit gebunden ist, gerade über ihren differenzierenden wie einschließenden Charakter der Anerkennung für Leistung, die eben nicht von jedem erbracht wird.

„In der Moderne gründet sich die Wertschätzung der Subjekte besonders auf ihren Leistungsbeitrag in der Arbeit. Leistung aber bezieht sich zum einen auf einen gemeinsamen Wert: Dasjenige nämlich, was Gesellschaften oder soziale Gruppen als Leistung definieren. Dabei sind Bewertungen dessen, was als Leistung gilt und welche Bedeutung einer bestimmten Leistung jeweils beigemessen wird, historisch veränderlich. Zum anderen differenziert die Wertschätzung für Leistung, indem sie gerade Unterschiedlichkeit von Leistung voraussetzt und honoriert. Wertschätzung hat also einen Doppelcharakter: Sie verbindet und trennt, sie stiftet Solidarität und Konkurrenz, ja auch sozialen Hass. Nicht nur kann nicht jeder gleich wertgeschätzt werden, eine solche Wertschätzung verlöre sogar ihren Sinn, wäre bestenfalls eine Form der Höflichkeit.“ (Voswinkel 2005, 15; Dröge, Marrs und Menz 2008; Dröge und Somm 2005)

Es ist auch kein abwegiger Gedanke, dass in einer Gesellschaft, in der jedem Menschen Erwerbsarbeit zur Verfügung steht, dieser weitaus weniger an psycho-sozialer Bedeutung zukommen würde. Das Fehlen von Erwerbsarbeit erscheint dann als ein notwendiges Außen, um das Innen, also die Anerkennungsleistungen von Erwerbsarbeit, überhaupt produzieren und stützen zu können. Die Dichotomie von Erwerbsarbeit und Arbeitslosigkeit kann also als Differenzierung durch soziale Wertschätzung verstanden werden, nicht als Verletzung des Anspruchs auf eben diese. Des Weiteren stellt Erwerbsarbeitslosigkeit in den allermeisten Fällen keine Form der Missachtung im anerkennungstheoretischen Sinne dar, weil die Betroffenen ja nicht aktiv daran gehindert werden eine Erwerbsarbeit aufzunehmen, sondern vielmehr schlicht nicht genügend Arbeitsplätze zur Verfügung stehen. Es stellt dies aber noch keine moralische Verletzung in dem Sinne dar, dass Arbeitslose insgesamt in ihrer Subjektivität und Identität nicht anerkannt werden, weder aktiv noch passiv, sondern nur, dass ihnen ihre Arbeitskraft nicht abgekauft wird, also ein Teil ihrer Fähigkeiten und Bedürfnisse in einem, obzwar wichtigen, Teilsystem der gesellschaftlichen Ordnung, nämlich am Arbeitsmarkt, keine Berücksichtigung finden, mithin ignoriert werden.

Daraus kann geschlossen werden, dass Erwerbsarbeitslosigkeit für sich selbst gesehen aus anerkennungstheoretischer Perspektive noch kein ethisches Problem darstellt, so lange damit nicht weitere Einschränkungen, also Missachtungserfahrungen, einhergehen und andere Formen der Anerkennung verweigert werden. Dies ist nun aber durchaus der Fall. Arbeitslosigkeit meint mehr als das bloße Fehlen einer Erwerbsarbeit. Es geht hier also um die Anerkennungsformen, die Erwerbsarbeit in modernen Gesellschaften zugeschrieben werden. Und es geht auch um die Missachtung und Demütigung von Arbeitslosen, die diese durch die Gesellschaft, die Medien, das Arbeitsmarktservice und auch in ihrem näheren Umfeld erfahren. Ein Grundeinkommen kann in diesem Sinne nur bedingt wirken, da es alleine die prinzipielle Verknüpfung von Anerkennung und Erwerbsarbeit nicht wesentlich durchbricht. Doch ist diese Verknüpfung von Anerkennung und Erwerbsarbeit überhaupt legitim? Es geht hier also um den Wertehorizont moderner Gesellschaften vor dessen Hintergrund soziale Wertschätzung überhaupt erst möglich wird. Die Arbeitsgesellschaft hat, so lautet die abschließende These, Anerkennung und viele bestimmte Anerkennungsformen, die im Laufe der Geschichte hervorgebracht wurden, zu stark und unberechtigtweise an Erwerbsarbeit geknüpft. Das grundsätzliche Problem besteht also nicht darin, dass es Erwerbsarbeitslosigkeit gibt, sondern darin, dass Erwerbsarbeit systematisch und strukturell überbewertet ist. Diesem Problem ist auch nicht beizukommen, indem alle, oder zumindest möglichst viele, in die Erwerbsarbeit gedrängt werden, sei es über ein Recht auf Arbeit oder sonstige Aktivierungsmaßnahmen. Es bedarf vielmehr einer Neubewertung der Bedeutung, die Erwerbsarbeit zugeschrieben wird. Krebs hat diese Neubewertung als Utopie zwar nicht zurückgewiesen aber dafür argumentiert, sich lieber der ihrer Meinung nach, „realistischeren“ Lösung, dem Recht auf Arbeit, zuzuwenden. Doch gerade eben diese Lösung stellt aus anerkennungstheoretischer Perspektive keine dar, da hiermit der Sinn und Zweck von sozialer Wertschätzung missverstanden wird.

„Solange wir weder theoretisch noch praktisch über eine Alternative zur Arbeitsgesellschaft verfügen, begründet der Verweis auf die faktische, an Arbeit geknüpfte Anerkennungsstruktur unserer Gesellschaften ein Recht auf Arbeit. Unfreiwillig Arbeitslose sind nicht im Namen einer noch nicht einmal in ihren Grundzügen ausbuchstabierten ‚Schreibtischutopie‘ im Stich zu lassen.“ (Krebs 2001, 206)

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Gottfried Schweiger (PhD) is Senior Scientist at the Center for Ethics and Poverty Research of the Paris-Lodron University Salzburg. His current research interests are within moral and social philosophy, especially the relation between recognition and poverty and social exclusion. He published on the topics of labour dispute and social inclusion in the European Union, the effects and circumstances of atypical work and labour, and the concept of „decent work“.

Address:

Gottfried Schweiger
Center for Ethics and Poverty Research
Paris-Lodron University Salzburg
Moenchsberg 2a,
A-5020 Salzburg, Austria
Email: gottfried.schweiger@sbg.ac.at

Merleau-Ponty's Transcendental Project

Marcus Sacrini
University of São Paulo

Abstract

In this paper, I argue that Merleau-Ponty reformulates traditional transcendental philosophy in the sense of showing that the a priori conditions of experience cannot be separated from the concrete experiences. In the first section, I revisit Kant and Husserl, to show how these authors delimit the transcendental conditions as a formal domain independent from any concrete experience. Then I reconstruct the argumentative move through which Merleau-Ponty rejects this formal delimitation of the transcendental sphere and reintroduces it as inseparable from empirical domain, initially in *The Structure of Behavior* (section 2) and later in *Phenomenology of Perception* (section 3).

Keywords: phenomenology, transcendental philosophy, Merleau-Ponty, body, real world

Introduction

This paper contributes to the debate on Merleau-Ponty's affiliation with transcendental philosophy. It is a subject on which there is much divergence among the commentators. There are those who reject that Merleau-Ponty was affiliated with transcendental philosophy because of his inability to offer a complete transcendental reflection since he focused excessively on the concrete perceptual experience of the world.¹ Other authors argued that Merleau-Ponty explicitly did not want to affiliate himself with the transcendental tradition, and they attempt to show how his descriptions of perception and bodily intentionality are convergent with some contemporary scientific researches.² A third group of authors considers that at least in certain passages about perception and bodily

intentionality Merleau-Ponty does succeed in offering transcendental arguments, which are constructed *in the same way* that Husserl or Kant did.³ Finally, some authors, among whom I include myself, consider that Merleau-Ponty develops a transcendental approach to perception and bodily intentionality, which is, however, substantially modified compared to that of his great predecessors.⁴ The supporters of the latter position have an additional difficulty, namely, to elucidate what the structure of this new transcendental approach is. This is exactly the general problem that I am going to address in this text. Hence, I shall not only clarify why it is correct to ascribe a transcendental project to Merleau-Ponty, but also reconstruct its main theses.

1.

Any attempt at qualifying a philosophical project as “transcendental” must present some basic features that establish what is understood by this term. Merleau-Ponty himself offers a critical presentation of what he calls classic transcendental philosophies in his *Phenomenology of Perception* (published in 1945, hereafter PP; cf. Merleau-Ponty 2002, 70-1), namely, some of Kant (and the Neo-Kantians’) and Husserl’s positions. One will see at the end of this section what Merleau-Ponty’s main criticisms of these authors are. Before this, I would like to present with greater detail some of the main thesis of these authors interpreted by him.

Initially, let me consider some of the main aspects which constitute the very idea of transcendental philosophy, such as established by Kant. In this respect, I shall make use of a tripartite characterization of the Kantian transcendental set forth by Derk Pereboom (1990), which in my opinion is very useful. As suggested by Pereboom, three notions compound the sense of “transcendental” for Kant:

a) Kant associates the transcendental to the *subjective modes* through which one can obtain *a priori* knowledge (Kant 1998, B, 25). Thus, the transcendental investigation is not interested in the objects of knowledge, but in the subjective structures through which objects can be known *a priori* (and *a*

priori is a mark of that which is independent from and precedes particular factual experiences).

b) Kant maintains that these *a priori* modes are *conditions* of possibility that every knowledge of experience must satisfy in order to be established (Kant 2004, 125, note).

c) Kant associates the transcendental to a kind of reflection capable of tracing all representations to their *origins* in their corresponding cognitive faculties (Kant 1998, A 261 / B 317). The transcendental is, in this sense, associated with the capacity of referring the contents of representations to their *a priori* subjective sources.

Pereboom suggests that the transcendental, as a synthesis of these three aspects associated by Kant, constitutes a *special point of view* that allows for exploring the subjective cognitive faculties in their pure aspects (independent of their empirical use), so as to reveal the conditions through which all knowledge can be achieved, conditions that are also the *source* of cognitive representations. I agree with this conclusion, and I would like to extract from it a consequence related to the empirical sphere. This sphere can be defined by contrast with the transcendental: the empirical is related to the *exercise* of cognitive faculties, that is, to their presumption (successful or not) to know worldly objects, a presumption which is always subject not only to *a priori* conditions but to the factual conditions of the use of the cognitive apparatus in real situations. The empirical domain is thus marked by *contingent* aspects whose influence on cognitive situations implies neither necessity nor universality. Besides contingency, what also marks the empirical domain is the *incapacity* to reveal the very origin of cognitive activity. In the empirical use, cognitive faculties are turned toward worldly objects and do not reflect on their own functioning as a condition and source of knowledge. Here, it is obviously supposed that all relevant conditions of knowledge have been met, since empirical knowledge is many times established, but it is not clear, at this level, *how* it was possible that such knowledge came to be.

One arrives here at a quite significant dichotomy between the transcendental and the empirical: the transcendental designates a point of view from which the

cognitive subject is not limited to the common functioning of her faculties, a point of view that would enable her to know the very *a priori* origins of all knowledge, independently from the insertion of the cognitive capacities in concrete situations. The empirical, in turn, designates an activity that ignores its own origin and its general conditions; it is an unreflective involvement with particular things and situations, an involvement incapable of clarifying the conditions of its own objectivity when the latter is obtained.⁵

Let me now turn to the sense of the transcendental at least in the first phase of Husserl's philosophy, where there will be a contrast between the transcendental and the empirical even more radical than that inferred in the last paragraph from Kant's position. This phase is precisely that which Merleau-Ponty associates with traditional transcendental philosophy.⁶

Between 1906 and 1907, Husserl makes public his first version of the transcendental phenomenology in two courses, *Introduction to Logic and Theory of Knowledge* (1906-1907) and *The Idea of Phenomenology* (1907). It is impossible to reconstruct the main theses of these works here. I just want to underscore the most striking procedure of transcendental phenomenology herein developed, namely, the *phenomenological reduction* (Husserl 2008, §36), the method through which the validity of spontaneous beliefs in the *empirical existence* of the objects is suspended. Commonly, in what Husserl calls the natural orientation of thought, one believes that things and the world exist independently of subjectivity. When suspending this belief, one purifies empirical experience in order to reduce it to its intuitive core that is directly given to subjectivity. Based on this purified domain of consciousness, Husserl intends to show how the empirical objectivity is constituted through a stratified system of subjective acts. Thus, the phenomenological reduction opens the path to reveal the active role of the pure consciousness in the constitution of the meaning of any experience.

Indeed, not only are spontaneous beliefs suspended by the phenomenological reduction, but also the objective validity of all scientific knowledge in general. This is done so that it can be clarified *how* this knowledge is established on the basis of

the structures of purified consciousness. Transcendental phenomenology is thus a discipline that seeks to elucidate the *possibility* of knowledge and experience in general, and, in order to accomplish this task, the *validity* of all contact with the empirical domain is suspended, since what is at stake is exactly the way through which this domain can be known or at least experienced. This extremely succinct presentation of the transcendental phenomenology is enough to suggest that Husserl, in general, preserves those three aspects that, as Pereboom held in relation to Kant, would constitute the transcendental point of view: phenomenology entails a *suspension* of the empirical use of cognitive faculties (use in which one unreflectively judges that one has contact with worldly objects) in order to reveal, in their *a priori* purity, the subjective capacities through which the meaning of any experience is constituted. Moreover, Husserl argues that these subjective capacities are *a priori* conditions for the experience and knowledge of the world, in the sense that it is only when one investigates them that one understands how subjectivity can establish contact with what transcends it.⁷ In addition to this, Husserl asserts that it is through the disclosure of pure consciousness as the domain of apodictic evidence that one can shed light on the question of the genesis of the meaning of knowledge and experience in general (Husserl 2008, § 39, 231).

Husserl not only preserves the contrast between the transcendental and the empirical, but, in fact, he takes this contrast to the extreme. For Kant, the transcendental point of view allowed for clarifying the *a priori* conditions that delimit every possible *human* knowledge. In this case, it is a matter of investigating the epistemic conditions to which the whole human genre is subject. In turn, what phenomenology describes are the essences of acts of consciousness and the essences of possible phenomena. To describe an act of consciousness in its eidetic level means to describe the general and necessary features of such an act which are independent of any factual particularities, even of those aspects that refer to the totality of the humankind. In *Ideas I*, for instance, Husserl maintains that every physical being can only be grasped by a perceptual consciousness, by means of partial and mutable perspectives.

This thesis, Husserl adds, is valid “not just for human beings, but also for God – as the ideal representative of absolute cognition” (Husserl 1983, §150, 362). Hence, the transcendental domain revealed by phenomenology is not limited to the *a priori* modes of human knowledge, but is extended to the *a priori* modes of *knowledge in general*, whether it is exercised by humans, gods or extra-terrestrials.

Transcendental phenomenology describes *ideal possibilities* of acts of consciousness in correlation with pure phenomena. Not all of these possibilities appear in actual human experience; those that become concrete constitute the *empirical domain*. And the fact that one eidetic possibility is instantiated in human experience, and others are not, does not change anything within the transcendental sphere, which is precisely compounded by *pure* essences. In turn, empirical experiences are the contingent actualization of some ideal possibilities delimited by such essences, and, in order to know this eidetic level, *i.e.*, to make explicit the *a priori* universal structures that regulate concrete experience, it is necessary to move to a point of view independent of all factual particularities. In his famous inaugural lecture at Freiburg in 1917, Husserl clearly states this consequence: “pure phenomenology proposes to investigate the realm of pure consciousness and its phenomena not as it *de facto* exists but as pure possibilities with their pure laws” (Husserl 1986, 79). In other words, transcendental phenomenology does not study empirical facts, but only the pure essences of which facts are instances.

As one sees, the transcendental is presented as a domain completely separate from empirical experience, at least in one phase of the Husserlian phenomenology. And this is probably the most striking feature of classic transcendental philosophies, as presented by Merleau-Ponty:

This move from *naturata* to *naturans*, from constituted to constituting, (...) would leave nothing implicit or tacitly accepted in my knowledge. It would enable me to take complete possession of my experience, thus equating thinking and thought. Such is the ordinary perspective of a transcendental philosophy, and also, to all appearances at least, the programme of a transcendental phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 70).

The passage from empirical experience to a pure point of view, from which it would be possible to disclose the constitution of the meaning of this experience on the basis of ideal or formal possibilities, is the procedure that unites Kant and Husserl as protagonists of traditional transcendental philosophy. I tried to reconstruct in the first part of this section the main features of such philosophy; let me present Merleau-Ponty's assessment:

it is striking how transcendental philosophies of the classical type never question the possibility of effecting the complete disclosure which they always assume *done somewhere*. It is enough for them that it should be necessary, and in this way they judge what is by what ought to be, by what the idea of knowledge requires (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 71).

According to Merleau-Ponty, classic transcendental philosophies are content with the formulation of the necessary and universal conditions that would make possible any particular concrete experiences. The necessary and universal character of these conditions would entail its antecedence in relation to particular experiences, since each one of these experiences *must* precisely have satisfied such conditions to exist as such. But for Merleau-Ponty the appeal to this universal character is insufficient to answer two criticisms. The first one is already sketched in the quotation above: one should ask whether it is really possible to adopt a point of view that would have access to the pure essences or formal schemes responsible for the meaning of all experience. The passage to such a point of view presupposes purification from every tie with the empirical world in order to display the presumably formal or ideal components of any experience. Merleau-Ponty thinks that there is no way to achieve such a passage:

In fact, the thinking Ego can never abolish its inherence in an individual subject, which knows all things in a particular perspective. Reflection can never make me stop seeing the sun two hundred yards away on a misty day, or seeing it 'rise' and 'set', or thinking with the cultural apparatus with which my education, my previous efforts, my personal history, have provided me. I never actually collect together, or call up simultaneously, all the primary thoughts which contribute to my perception or to my present conviction (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 71).

Merleau-Ponty holds here that it is not possible for the reflexive subject to abandon completely its inherence to a body and its determined space-time situation. Human subjects are irremediably melded with factual situations, they are continuously thrown into empirical events by their bodies and this primordial insertion in the world entails that “the possibility of absence, the dimension of escape and freedom which reflection opens in the depths of our being, and which is called the transcendental Ego, are not initially given and are never absolutely acquired” (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 242). Thus, it is not possible to move to a subjective point of view purified from all empirical bonds because “every act of reflection, every voluntary taking up of a position is based on the ground (...) of a life of pre-personal consciousness” (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 242). For Merleau-Ponty, philosophical reflection never constitutes an *autonomous* transcendental domain, for it is continuously dependent upon the pre-reflexive life of the body. To defend that it is possible to adopt a point of view purified and independent of every factual or empirical feature is simply to be a victim of an intellectualist illusion.⁸

The second criticism is that the idea of a pure point of view obtained by reflection eludes the problem of the insertion of consciousness in sensible experience. This means that, even if one arrived at such a point of view, this would not help in explicating the concrete insertion of the real subject in empirical circumstances. Classic transcendental philosophies suggest that access to the pure transcendental sphere implies removing every tie with empirical experience, so that “we never have to wonder how the same subject comes to be a part of the world and at the same time its principle” (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 48). In this way, one ignores that the subject *is* inserted in the empirical events and that this pre-reflexive insertion *is the basis* for reflexive activity. According to Merleau-Ponty, the strategy of classic transcendental philosophies, particularly of Kantianism, is to duplicate the empirical operations of the subject by postulating a pure transcendental domain in which the formal principles and syntheses responsible for experience would be guaranteed. Nonetheless, “when I think something at the present moment, the guarantee of a non-temporal synthesis

is insufficient and even unnecessary as a basis of my thought” (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 149). An act of thought is completed by a subject who is currently engaged, through her perceptual-motor skills, in a concrete situation. It would be necessary, therefore, to investigate the *current experiences* of embodied subjectivity, and not simply to postulate transcendental principles that are mere *later duplications* of these operations. And it is precisely as an attempt to ascribe *transcendental value* to this current insertion of subjectivity in the world that Merleau-Ponty will establish his own philosophical project. I shall show next how this project is already sketched in *The structure of behavior* (hereafter, SB), his first book, published in 1942 (Merleau-Ponty 1983).

2.

The major task of SB is “to understand the relations of consciousness and nature” (Merleau-Ponty 1983, 3) outside the parameters established by two classic schools, namely, the linear causal thought and Neo-Kantianism. Generally speaking, according to the linear causal thought, consciousness is determined by a stimulus that came from the environment where it is inserted. In turn, according to Neo-Kantianism, nature is a set of phenomena constituted by *a priori* categories of consciousness. In order to avoid these two antagonistic solutions, Merleau-Ponty extracts some important philosophical consequences from *Gestalttheorie*, the psychological school whose main notion is that of *Gestalt* or form. A *Gestalt* is a global phenomenon the properties of which are not reducible to those of its isolated elements. A melody is a typical example of a *Gestalt*: even when a known tune is played in a different key, i.e., when its sequence of isolated notes is very or completely different from the original one, its *general form* can still be recognized. There is, in this case, a structure that endures even when its elementary components are changed (in an ordered way); in other words, there is a form that is not inexorably linked to discrete components.

This notion of *Gestalt* gives rise to an explanation of behavior that rejects the causal linearity between stimulus and

response. Many experiments done by the Gestaltists aim to prove that animals do not react automatically to isolated stimuli, since any stimuli receive their meaning in relation with a general form through which organisms grasp the lived situation, just as each note fulfills its function in relation to a melody as a whole (Merleau-Ponty 1983, 58). As Bimbenet observes, these *forms* or distribution patterns of perceptual stimuli express the biological *structures* through which the organisms delimit a meaningful environment for their survival (Bimbenet 2004, 53-5). For example, given that certain organisms have a preponderant auditory structure (e.g. rabbits, bats), certain stable auditory forms are privileged in their behavior. It is important to note that this delimitation of a meaningful environment according to organic structures is *prior* to the linear causal determination of behavior by objective stimuli: it is because the organisms exist by means of certain bodily structures (which define the amplitude of a phenomenal field) that some stimuli can be meaningfully grasped. So it is true that organisms *react* to environmental stimuli; however, such stimuli, in order to motivate some behavioral reaction, must be compatible with the structures through which the organisms are inserted in the world. Each actual reaction supposes a general delimitation of the range of meaningful situations. The relation between stimulation and general delimitation of meaning is, accordingly, not linear, but circular (Merleau-Ponty 1983, 130): on the one hand, stimulation activates the organism and, on the other hand, the structures that delimit any meaningful experience render the efficacy of such a specific stimulation possible.

Merleau-Ponty maintains that the linear causal thought and Neo-Kantianism ignore this circularity and, because of this, they offer insufficient explanations of behavior. It is important to give attention here to his criticism to Neo-Kantianism, since it was based in a contrast to this school that Merleau-Ponty assumes a new transcendental posture.

The general framework that Neo-Kantianism uses to understand the relation of the subject with nature is the constitution of the experience through cognitive syntheses of consciousness. However, this framework does not capture the

specificity of animal and human behavior. As Merleau-Ponty argues,

“[it] would anything be served by saying that behavior ‘is conscious’ and that it reveals to us, as its other side, a being for-itself hidden behind the visible body. The gestures of behavior (...) do not allow the showing through of a consciousness (...), but rather a certain manner of treating the world, of ‘being-in-the-world’” (Merleau-Ponty 1983, 125-6).

Behavior is not an expression of *a priori* subjective powers by means of which the meaning of lived particular experiences would be constituted, but it institutes a kind of “existential” relation to the world. Let me extract some consequences of this thesis.

According to Merleau-Ponty's interpretation of *Gestalttheorie*, behavior establishes a domain of perceived forms through which worldly events and things are grasped. The philosophical consideration of this domain suggests a new understanding of the relations between nature and consciousness. On the one hand, nature cannot be reduced to phenomena constituted by *a priori* cognitive powers, since it presents itself as *concrete stimuli* grasped by organisms in an *existential* and not cognitive general attitude. But, on the other hand, stimuli are united in meaningful forms that are rooted, in the end, in the structural potentialities of organisms, as long as nature should not be considered as completely independent of organisms. In truth, nature itself, and not some construction based on *a priori* capacities, is directly presented to organisms, but this presentation occurs by means of privileged perceptive shapes.⁹ There is here an original connection between organisms (which includes the human consciousness) and nature, a connection ignored by the linear causal thought and Neo-Kantianism, and which is explored in the third chapter of SB.

In this text, Merleau-Ponty proposes that the known universe is nothing but the integration of three orders of phenomena: physical, vital, and human. In turn, these orders can be understood as different *forms*, that is, as concrete structures ordered according to the way they appear to human consciousness.¹⁰ It is here that Merleau-Ponty explicitly adopts the “transcendental attitude”, that is, “a philosophy that deals

with any conceivable reality as an object of consciousness” (Merleau-Ponty 1983, 201). By treating the physical, vital and even human events as forms, Merleau-Ponty considers them, at least in what refers to its manifestation to humans, as phenomenal arrangements in correlation with consciousness. In this sense, “the idea of a transcendental philosophy, that is, the idea of consciousness as constituting the universe before it and grasping the objects themselves in an indubitable external experience, seems to us to be a definitive acquisition as the first phase of reflection” (Merleau-Ponty 1983, 215). Let us understand the scope of this acquisition.

If the universe is organized in terms of *Gestalt*, and if *Gestalt* always manifests itself to consciousness, then consciousness should be understood “as universal milieu” (Merleau-Ponty 1983, 184), that is, as the domain that structures the manifestation of any event. Merleau-Ponty seems here to affiliate himself with neo-Kantian transcendental philosophy, a position that presents the world as an “ensemble of objective relations borne by consciousness” (Merleau-Ponty 1983, 3). However, as he himself already anticipated, this theoretical move is only valid as a *first* phase of his reflection. As a general result, “our conclusion is not that of critical thought” (Merleau-Ponty 1983, vii), he says right away in the table of contents of SB. Thus, it is true that he adopts a transcendental attitude, but precisely an attitude that “stands in a relation of simple homonymy with a philosophy in the critical tradition” (Merleau-Ponty 1983, 206). This means that although his philosophical position and that of Neo-Kantians are called “transcendental”, the meaning of this term is considerably distinct in each case.

Merleau-Ponty completes this first phase of his reflection with the thesis that “the consciousness *for* which the Gestalt exists was not intellectual consciousness but perceptual experience” (Merleau-Ponty 1983, 210). It is perceptual consciousness that plays the role of universal milieu, but not as an *a priori* power of ordering contingent data. Merleau-Ponty considers that the meaning of perceptually grasped phenomena *is adherent* to the material events presented, and does not come from an *a priori* structure.¹¹ Thus, the perceived *Gestalten* are not only subjectively constituted units of meaning, but phenomenal

manifestations *that directly disclose worldly events*. In this sense, the notion of *Gestalt* unifies signification and existence: by means of the phenomenal arrangement, some meaning is manifested, meaning that cannot be reduced to a subjective construction since it is *intrinsic* to the perceived environment.¹² For Merleau-Ponty, Neo-Kantianism rejects this unification since this school conceives perceptual consciousness as a case of intellectual consciousness and denies that the latter has direct contact with concrete reality. Perceptual consciousness is, in this case, diluted in cognitive processes, so that “every form of consciousness presupposes its completed form: the dialectic of the epistemological subject and the scientific object” (Merleau-Ponty 1983, 201). It is, then, intellectual consciousness that plays the role of the universal milieu in Neo-Kantianism, and this consciousness is related only to subjective representations submitted to the *a priori* rules of thought, without directly being in contact with natural events as autonomously ordered in *Gestalten*.¹³ In turn, the specificity of perceptual consciousness consists, for Merleau-Ponty, in its direct contact with the physical, biological and human *Gestalten*, or, in other words, in its insertion in a spontaneously meaningful natural domain. The organization of experience in *Gestalten* is not an exercise of *a priori* intellectual capacities, but a manifestation of the sensible world. The phenomenal meaning presented by perception is, in this sense, a meaning included in the empirical arrangements with which organisms are in direct contact, and not only *a priori* forms of *possible* experiences.

Let me now try to delineate more precisely the general features of the transcendental philosophy extracted by Merleau-Ponty from the consideration of *Gestalten* as intertwinement between meaning and existence. I have said that taking the events of the universe as *Gestalten* entails considering them as phenomena *for* a consciousness that, by means of its structures, delimits the possibilities of manifestation of these events. Consciousness is then recognized as a universal milieu responsible for ordering the meaning of these events, and this argumentative move implies adopting the transcendental attitude. However, this attitude is adopted not with reference to an intellectual power purified from all contact with the empirical, but with reference to perceptual consciousness, which is in direct contact with the

material arrangements of the world.¹⁴ That is clearly a major transformation of transcendental philosophy. In the last section, I have said that classic transcendental philosophies seek to attain a point of view purified from all empirical interference, a point of view from which it would be possible to disclose the conditions of meaning of any concrete experience. In turn, Merleau-Ponty argues that the understanding of such conditions does not require any transition to a pure point of view, since they are constituted as perceptual activity directly linked to empirical situations. From this new perspective, the analysis of transcendental structures (or, in other words, of the gestaltic structures through which every event in the universe manifests itself to us) leads to a description of the actual patterns by which worldly events do exist for us, and this means that transcendental philosophy should not be limited to presenting formal constraints which are independent of any particular situation. And as a consequence of this argumentation, Merleau-Ponty suggests an entire reformulation of transcendental reflection: “it would be necessary to define transcendental philosophy anew in such a way as to integrate with it the very phenomenon of the real” (Merleau-Ponty 1983, 224).

Let me return to the example of the melody to try to elucidate this new formulation of the transcendental problem. The alleged point here is the *inseparability* between the transcendental character of the forms of phenomenal manifestation and the empirical material upon which this character acts. A melody is a form whose meaning cannot be reduced to the sum of the particular notes that compose it, given that such form can be maintained in different keys. A melody can be conceived as a *unit of signification* that assigns functions to the partial acoustical data that compose it, and, in this sense, it plays a “transcendental role” in the organization of a musical experience. But a melody does not consist of an abstract form that subsists independently from any real notes. Although a melody has properties that exceed those of particular notes, its general form presupposes that *there are notes* in a certain relation. Similarly, human perceptual-motor structures are not pure powers, but capacities *polarized by* worldly situations, so that the study of the transcendental capacities of the perceptual subject implies considering the *current insertion* of the latter in a tissue of

concrete phenomena. The subjective structures which are the condition and origin of the meaning of any possible experience are not pure categories or pure essences of acts of consciousness, but the perceptual activity itself as it grasps a gestaltic meaning inherent to worldly events.

Obviously, it is possible to abstract subjective capacities of their concrete exercise in different situations and treat them as general principles determinant of any possible experience. But this abstractive experience, which, according to Merleau-Ponty, characterizes classical transcendental philosophies, wrongly takes this late theorization about the origin of the experience as the true transcendental. However, if one considers subjective capacities in action (in particular situations), then it has to be admitted that the meaning of concrete experiences does not derive from the application of schemes that are absolutely independent from the situation in question, but stems continuously from the circularity between perceptual capacities (which delimit a domain of significant phenomena) and material arrangements with an indecomposable meaning that mobilize such capacities. It follows therefrom that the transcendental analysis sketched in SB does not shift to pure conditions of experience, but explores the particular experiences in which the parameters of perceptual data organization are exercised by a subject engaged in worldly situations. In the next section, I shall consider how this new transcendental analysis takes place in PP.

3.

Here is the way Merleau-Ponty presents his general goal in PP: “our constant aim is to elucidate the primary function whereby we bring into existence, for ourselves, or take hold upon, the space, the object or the instrument, and to describe the body as the place where this appropriation occurs” (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 178). It seems highly plausible to understand this goal as a transcendental one, according to those aspects enumerated by Pereboom. After all, Merleau-Ponty is proposing an investigation of the *subjective functions* that act as *condition* and *origin* of every relation with objects, instruments, etc. Nevertheless, I

wish to underscore here the considerable change in the range of what is taken as “subjective”. The transcendental agent is not a set of formal schemes or a pure consciousness, but the *concrete human body*. To be more exact, according to Merleau-Ponty the body is a pre-personal agent, its main functions and capacities act *anonymously*.¹⁵ Even so, I think it is correct to understand such functions as subjective, in a broader sense, since it is through them that one investigates the conditions that make possible the human contact with any objective entity. Just as Kant’s and Husserl’s philosophical investigation, Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological descriptions are not turned toward objects, but toward the modes of knowing them, modes which, in this sense, are subjective, even though they are part of the anonymous bodily apparatus.

It is important to note that when prioritizing the body as a transcendental agent, there is a noticeable change of emphasis in relation to SB. I tried to show that in this book perceptual consciousness assumed the role of “universal milieu”. But obviously, perceptual consciousness is an embodied consciousness, and Merleau-Ponty, in SB, already mentioned the experience of the body as *constituent of conscious activity* and not only as its possible object (Merleau-Ponty 1983, 208). However, there the transcendental emphasis was put on perceptual consciousness as a universal milieu. In turn, Merleau-Ponty explores in detail, in PP, the fact that perceptual consciousness *is always embodied* (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 61), which leads to privileging the body as transcendental agent: “our own body is in the world as the heart is in the organism: it keeps the visible spectacle constantly alive, it breathes life into it and sustains it inwardly, and with it forms a system” (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 235). Here Merleau-Ponty clearly suggests that the body, and not the perceptual consciousness considered *per se*, is responsible for sustaining the field of sensible experiences through which one has contact with the world.

And just as Merleau-Ponty established in SB that perceptual consciousness is inserted in the natural world (since it has direct contact with the material arrangements of which worldly events are constituted), he also presents the bodily

shaping of experience as enveloped by sensible data which are delimited by this shaping itself. It is true that stimuli can only appear to us if they make sense to the perceptual-motor forms with which the body grasps a given segment of the world. However, it is only through sensible stimulation that this apprehension can occur, as Merleau-Ponty exemplifies: “my attitude is never sufficient to make me really see blue or really touch a hard surface” (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 249). Without sensible data, the bodily activity works in the void, and what can happen is at most a hallucination. Hence, the body is the agent that delimits the meaningful amplitude of experience, but its capacities can only be considered to be healthily active when involved in factual situations. As Merleau-Ponty affirms,

we grasp the unity of our body only in that of the thing, and it is based on things that our hands, eyes and all our sense-organs appear to us as so many interchangeable instruments. The body by itself, the body at rest is merely an obscure mass, and we perceive it as a precise and identifiable being when it moves towards a thing, and in so far as it is intentionally projected outwards (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 375, transl. modified).

Accordingly, even in order to know which the bodily capacities that give shape to material stimuli are, one must consider the body as always tied to factual situations in which such capacities operate. This claim has deep implications for transcendental investigation. The subjective capacities that are taken as the condition and origin of experience must be recognized, in their original manifestation, as tied to the concrete situations in which they act. Merleau-Ponty expresses this consequence in a lapidary passage:

the true transcendental [...] is not the totality of constituting operations whereby a transparent world, free from obscurity and impenetrable solidity, is spread out before an impartial spectator, but that ambiguous life in which the forms of transcendence have their *Ursprung*, and which, through a fundamental contradiction, puts me in communication with them, and on this basis makes knowledge possible (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 425, transl. modified).

Here the philosopher makes clear that it is not the capacities of the body considered as general and abstract powers that must be considered as the true transcendental, but *their insertion in concrete situations*. It is only by means of this

insertion that it is possible to know what the subjective capacities and its range are, even if later it is possible to refer to them in a general and abstract mode. It is important to note that this insertion is ambiguous (or “contradictory”, in Merleau-Ponty’s words), for there is a circularity between the *delimitation* of the phenomenal domain by bodily capacities and the *activation* of these capacities by concrete situations. Given this circularity, the transcendental domain must not be considered as a purified realm separated from every empirical feature, but precisely as the very origin of empirical experiences through bodily contact with the world.¹⁶ In other words, as Kant and Husserl, Merleau-Ponty also intends to develop an investigation that unveils subjective capacities as conditions of any objective presentation of the world. However, this investigation no longer implies a passage to a point of view purified from the empirical; instead, it *denounces* this passage as a distortion of the truly transcendental sphere.¹⁷

The idea of a purified point of view overlooks human original insertion in the world. Kant and Husserl considered that transcendental conditions were restrictions not only to our current course of our experience, but to any possible experience. In this sense, our current world is taken as an instantiation of formal principles valid to all possible worlds. However, for Merleau-Ponty this conception that real experience is an instance of ideal possibilities is an illusion. According to him, the classic transcendental reflection “does not penetrate as far as this living nucleus of perception because it is looking for the conditions which make it *possible* or without which it would not exist, instead of uncovering the operation which brings it *into reality*, or whereby it is constituted” (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 44). Merleau-Ponty suggests here that establishing formal conditions of possibility is secondary compared to the analysis of the actual perceptual experience, since this latter is the source of meaningful events, here included the formulation of formal possibilities. Accordingly, such formal possibilities are not prior to reality, but obtained on the basis of the concrete experience. And, if, in transcendental reflection, it is a matter of investigating the ultimate conditions that make experience possible, then it is not enough to content oneself with formal

principles. As Merleau-Ponty affirms, “we are not *a priori* obliged to endow the world with the conditions in the absence of which it could not be thought of, for, in order to be thought of, it must, in the first place, not be ignored, it must exist for me, that is, be given” (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 255, transl. modified). Here the suggestion is that philosophical investigation must not limit itself to the search of formal conditions, but disclose the *primordial giving* of the world to the body, and this giving should be presented as the true transcendental. If one seeks the ultimate origin of the meaning of experience, then the main theme of transcendental philosophy *must be* the ambiguous life through which the body both delimits the cognizable domain of meaningfulness and is involved by concrete events.

Here Merleau-Ponty explicitly suggests that he is completing (and not only repeating¹⁸) something that Kant did not achieve. According to the French philosopher, Kant “has not followed out his programme, which was to define our cognitive powers in terms of our factual condition, and which necessarily compelled him to set every conceivable being against the background of this world” (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 256). Here it becomes clear that the transcendental analysis should not aim at presenting formal restrictions valid for every possible world, but to disclose the very origin of meaningfulness in the concrete insertion of the body in the world. The investigation of this insertion is the correct achievement of the kind of analysis initiated by Kant, but developed by him in a too abstract way. In this way, Merleau-Ponty intends not only to have renewed the very understanding of what transcendental philosophy is, but to accomplish its promise of taking subjective capacities as norms to understand any conceivable objectivity. For that, it was necessary, instead of insisting in a purified realm, to take concrete subjectivity as the true transcendental.

NOTES

¹ Gurwitsch (1957, 142) emphasizes that Merleau-Ponty “does not ask transcendental questions about the constitution [of the] pre-objective world”, which would be unjustifiedly accepted in its “ultimate facticity”. For Gurwitsch, a “radical” phenomenological reduction should search for the *transcendental conditions* of the perceived world, *i.e.*, should refer the concrete

experience of the world to the *pure noetic* system that orders it, and Merleau-Ponty does not do this.

² Dreyfus (1996, note 5) argues that Merleau-Ponty rejects that every intentional content is mental, and this rejection “underlies his rejection of Husserl’s transcendental reduction”. The author does not discuss more carefully whether Merleau-Ponty adopted a transcendental posture of his own. In other text (Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1999, 120), Dreyfus accentuates the convergence between Merleau-Ponty’s descriptions of perception and some researches in cognitive sciences, without mentioning the transcendental problem, or, rather, only repeating the same note from the paper quoted above.

³ Stern (1999, 3) affirms that “Merleau-Ponty’s discussions of the body-sense in his *Phenomenology of Perception*” provide examples of *transcendental arguments*, that is, arguments wherein “one thing (X) is a necessary condition for the possibility of something else (Y), so that (it is said) the latter cannot obtain without the former”. For Stern, “in suggesting that X is a condition for Y (...), this claim is supposed to be metaphysical and *a priori*, and not merely natural and *a posteriori*”. This means that transcendental arguments would present “metaphysical constraints” valid to “every *possible* world”, and by using this kind of argument Merleau-Ponty would also present such metaphysical constraints. In a similar way, Taylor (1995) holds that “the conception of the subject as embodied agency, which has developed out of modern phenomenology, as in the works of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, has been deployed and argued for in a way which is ultimately derived from the paradigm arguments of the first *Critique*” (Taylor 1995, 21-2). For Taylor, Merleau-Ponty would have shown that “our perception of the world as that of an embodied agent is not a contingent fact we might discover empirically” (Taylor 1995, 25), but a “claim about the *nature* of our experience and thought” (Taylor 1995, 22). Accordingly, for both authors, transcendental claims do not mix with empirical facts.

⁴ Here is a non-exhaustive list of well-argued interpretations about the subject: Geraets (1971), Baldwin (2004, 5-6, 18), Pietersma (2000, 178), Dillon (1997, xii-xiii), Priest (2003, 99). I will discuss some topics of these interpretations throughout the paper.

⁵ This consequence is implied, for instance, in the following passage from the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*: “the possibility of an experience in general and cognition of its objects rest on three subjective sources of cognition: *sense, imagination, and apperception*; each of these can be considered empirically, namely in application to given appearances, but they are also elements or foundations *a priori* that make this empirical use itself possible” (A 115). In the second edition, Kant still conceives the empirical activity as *founded by* pure principles: “the syntheses of apprehension, which are empirical, must necessarily be in agreement with the synthesis of apperception, which is intellectual and contained in the category entirely *a priori*” (Kant 1998, B, 162, note).

⁶ In PP, Merleau-Ponty presents a tripartite division of Husserl’s work. There is a first period marked by the “logicism” (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 320, note) of *Logical Investigations*, in which Merleau-Ponty is not much interested. The

last period is a kind of “existentialism” (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 320, note) and would have anticipated many of the theses defended by the French philosopher. Between these extremes, there is a period of idealist transcendental philosophy – “the period of the *Ideen*” (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 283, note) – which is severely criticized by Merleau-Ponty.

⁷ “Instead of judging about the being and not-being of the transcendent thing of the moment, we consider its content as it is immanently ‘intuitively’ given to us and supposed in the phenomenon in question. We can in this way obtain insight into the *essence of what is transcendent in general* or of a transcendent thing with this or that characteristic feature” (Husserl 2008, §38, 226).

⁸ With this argumentation Merleau-Ponty anticipated the answer to the authors who thought that he had not developed a full transcendental philosophy (Gurwitsch, for example). In fact, these authors obstinately insist on the assumption of a point of view that is precisely disqualified by Merleau-Ponty's argumentation. In this sense, not having affiliated himself to classic transcendental philosophy was clearly a positive result obtained by Merleau-Ponty and not a deficiency of his analysis.

⁹ This conception of nature will be preserved in the *Phenomenology of Perception*: “there is a nature, which is not that of the sciences, but the one which perception presents to me” (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 502).

¹⁰ That is why Merleau-Ponty affirms: “what we call nature is already consciousness of nature, what we call life is already consciousness of life and what we call mental is still an object vis-à-vis consciousness” (Merleau-Ponty 1983, 199).

¹¹ After considering the psychological thesis that language is perceived in a privileged way by babies (as compared to other noises), Merleau-Ponty concludes: “as soon as nascent consciousness is taken as the object of analysis one realizes that it is impossible to apply to it the celebrated distinction between *a priori* form and empirical content” (Merleau-Ponty 1983, 171). And, in a general way, Merleau-Ponty argues that at least in a certain level (prior to the projections of scientific knowledge on experience) perception offers “indecomposable structures” (Merleau-Ponty 1983, 171), that is, phenomenal sets with an adherent meaning, which is not attributed by formal principles external to sensible data.

¹² “What is profound in the notion of *Gestalt* from which we started is not the idea of signification but that of *structure*, the joining of an idea and an existence which are indiscernible, the contingent arrangement by which materials begin to have meaning in our presence, intelligibility in the nascent state” (Merleau-Ponty 1983, 206-7).

¹³ “Critical philosophy, having step by step repressed quality and existence – residues of its ideal analysis – to place them finally in a matter about which nothing can be thought and which is for us therefore as if it were not, deploys a homogeneous activity of the understanding from one end of knowledge to another” (Merleau-Ponty 1983, 208).

¹⁴ If our reconstruction of Merleau-Ponty's argument is correct, then it seems undeniable that his theory of perception was developed from a transcendental point of view (although reformulated). Hence, the approach of the authors (e.g. Dreyfus) who select some aspects of this theory that are more compatible

with cognitive sciences and minimize or not even mention its transcendental intention seems at least limited.

¹⁵ “Perception is always in the mode of the impersonal ‘One’. It is not a personal act enabling me to give a fresh significance to my life. The person who, in sensory exploration, gives a past to the present and directs it towards a future, is not myself as an autonomous subject, but myself in so far as I have a body and am able to ‘look’” (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 279).

¹⁶ Priest (2003, 34) and Baldwin (2004, 18) recognize that the bodily capacities assume the role of the transcendental subject in Merleau-Ponty’s works, but do not highlight the circular relation between them and concrete situations, a relation that marks the difference between the body and the transcendental subject of classic philosophies.

¹⁷ As Priest suggests, so there would be a minimal meaning of the transcendental that would unite Kant, Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, independently from the idea of a point of view purified from all sensible data (Priest 2003, 99).

¹⁸ As Stern and Taylor suggest.

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Marcus Sacrini is professor in the Philosophy Department of the University of São Paulo, Brazil. His field of studies is phenomenology, particularly the works of Merleau-Ponty and Husserl. He published two books in Brazil and articles in different countries.

Address:
Marcus SACRINI
Department of Philosophy
University of São Paulo
Av. Luciano Gualberto, 315, sala 1007
São Paulo – SP – Brazil
05508-900
E-mail: sacrini@usp.br

Politics and the Internet: A Phenomenological Critique

Gregory Cameron
Wilfrid Laurier University

Abstract

“Politics and the Internet”¹ is a critique of the political potential of the internet from the perspective of Husserl’s discussion of intersubjectivity and objectivity in *Cartesian Meditations* and *Origins of Geometry*. Unlike other critiques of the internet from a phenomenological perspective, this paper does not consider the limitations of internet communication from the perspective of the body. Here, rather, the prime concern is with the constitution of objectivity and the ways in which the internet limits this constitution. The paper builds towards a consideration of the essential role of objectivity as a condition of possibility for politics and community. Implicit in the argument is a defence of print and broadcast media.

Keywords: Politics, Phenomenology, Internet, Objectivity, Intersubjectivity

According to a complaint that has haunted broadcast media more or less from their inception users have no immediate means by which to reply to the messages transmitted and by extension no direct means to control the kind of information broadcast. Internet based communication technologies – computers, laptops, smart phones, cell phones, etc., henceforth referred to simply as the internet – resolve this issue by giving every user the immediate capacity to respond to messages received or to create their own messages, while undesirable messages can be blocked or filtered. The basic argument suggests that whereas broadcast media are hierarchical, the internet is democratic (Poster 1995; cf. Holmes 2005). As an extension of its being democratic, many have argued that the internet also has the potential to recreate the political dimension of democratic communication (Poster 2000). The

internet and in particular so-called “social media”, it is said, are recreating both a sense of community and revivifying the democratic public sphere.

After almost twenty years of the internet, as a common communication device, it is worth reflecting on the basis for these arguments. On one level, the arguments appear self-evident. Most of us will never make TV shows or respond to TV shows on TV shows. The internet does change this. I can respond to anything I read or watch or hear on the internet through the internet. I can join discussion groups, engage in social media or e-mail friends; I can set up a blog, which, at least in principle, everyone with a computer can have access to; the internet gives me more or less unlimited access to information and a more or less unlimited ability to respond. Nonetheless, the positive responses to the introduction of the internet are also somewhat surprising. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries left-wing and socialist political movements have almost invariably adopted a positive attitude towards the development of new technologies and have equally invariably been disappointed. The three stages of alarm, resistance, exhaustion mentioned by McLuhan as responses to new stresses on life, seem to produce quite different reactions in those committed to socialist struggles, but the end results have been the same (McLuhan 1994, 26). It is as if it were being claimed that while the new developments in communication technologies have each individually failed to produce the desired results, their integration will be different. Such a situation would appear to demand caution and at least some degree of scepticism and perhaps a gesture to those thinkers who have engaged in a critique of modern social and technological developments.

In the following, I intend to re-engage the basic argument concerning the distinction between broadcast technologies and internet based technologies and their respective political significance from a phenomenological perspective. In particular, I will consider the nature of internet communication from the perspective of Husserl’s theory of intersubjectivity. By and large, when phenomenologists have come to consider the internet they have proceeded from arguments generated by

Merleau-Ponty (Dreyfus 2001; Nagel 1998) and in particular arguments concerning the embodied nature of subjectivity. While some indication of this argument can already be found in Husserl's *Ideas II* and *Cartesian Meditations*, my intention is to focus more specifically on Husserl's notion of the intersubjective constitution of objectivity (Husserl 1999). The reason for this focus, it will be argued, is that it is through the constitution of objectivity that communication takes on a political dimension. The term objectivity here is not understood as a correlate for truth, but rather as the constitution of an object about which truth could in principle be achieved. Objectivity is not what actually exists in distinction from the subject, but the infinite task of an intersubjectively constituted community. Implicit in the notion of objectivity is the alter ego, others for whom the object is given whose experience of the object is at least potentially significantly different from my own. The object that is given need not be a physical object, it may also be an event, an idea, a theory or even a task. Moreover, the others who constitute the community are always necessarily others whose experiences can never become my experiences. This basic distinction – that the other's experiences are inaccessible to me – is the transcendental condition of possibility for both community and objectivity. There exists a necessary difference at the heart of any and all community and any and all object constitution. Moreover, the object is as much constituted through disagreement as it is through agreement. The object constitutes a tension at the heart of any and all "community development" and this precisely because the community only comes into being through the alterity of the other, a point that refers both to the other of the community and others within the community.

Many of the existing critiques of internet based communication are predicated on problems that can be encountered with more than one medium. This is especially true of the argument based on the disembodied nature of internet communication. Disembodied subjectivity is also a condition with print based communication and radio. The body of the person I read is also clearly absent. Moreover, since Derrida's deconstruction of the privileging of speech over

writing, we have known to be suspicious of the metaphysical implications of the idea of presence (Derrida 1973). And indeed, Husserl's analyses of intersubjectivity reveal a fundamental non-presence of the other ego. This fundamental non-presence of the other renders any discussion about the presence of the embodied other as constitutive of intersubjectivity problematic. The other is always already mediated. The presence of the other's body is not the presence of the other. We speak after all of the body of writing and textual embodiedness is just as much embodiedness as embodiedness thought in more biological ways. The other is only present in her absence, and this is the case whether we are speaking of the other beside me or the other that I read who has been dead for the past two thousand years. Which of course does not mean that there is not a difference. The fact of being disembodied in the normal sense is not an argument against intersubjectivity on the internet. The non-presence of the other is constitutive of the very condition of intersubjectivity and thus of the possibility of objectivity.²

According to the argument of the *Cartesian Meditations*, intersubjectivity is the condition of possibility for objectivity for the simple reason that without intersubjectivity determination of the object could only ever be subjective. But this also means that the other's experiences, as condition of possibility for objectivity, cannot be accessible to me in the original. If the other's experiences were accessible to me in the original, then they would be my experiences and the experience of the object would remain subjective. This would seem to suggest that the other, in order to indicate his or her intentions, would of necessity need to communicate with me. This however would be an oversimplification of the argument. Intersubjectivity is the condition of possibility for communication and not the other way around. Implicit in the very idea of communication is the experience of the otherness of the one with whom I communicate. This experience of otherness however itself implies that I have previously experienced the other as another ego, as someone or something that shares this (the ego) fundamental similarity with me. According to Husserl, this fundamental similarity is not something that needs to be deduced from experience, but is rather something experienced.

(I see someone or something engaged in an activity that I might at another time be engaged in.) Nonetheless, this fundamental similarity of having an ego is not something that I have direct access to, I do not directly experience the ego of the other, rather the ego is mediated by the “body” of the other. This body, however, need not be the body of another human being, it may be the cry of the other heard from a distance, or it may be another animal, or even perhaps a robot.³

The intersubjective character of the experience is the response to the experience that we make, a response that is always mediated, but is never necessarily mediated by another human being, nor by language. There is always a “body” involved in intersubjectivity, but this body is never necessarily the body of another human being.

The problem of the body, however, is not the whole story in considering the problem of intersubjectivity. We need to reintroduce the issue of objectivity before we can begin to re-engage with the question of intersubjectivity. According to Husserl, the very possibility of objectivity requires the sense “other ego”. Objectivity requires that the object I consider be capable of being considered by others. This idea of other egos is already contained in the notion of transcendent object. One of the characteristics of transcendent objects is that their experience is adumbrated. What this means is that subjectively I only ever perceive objects from a particular perspective. I never see the front back and sides of an object at the same time, but I do nonetheless experience the object and not merely one of its sides. The other sides are appresented. This idea of other sides appresented in my experience of objects already indicates the role played by other egos. The appresented backside of the building I am looking at contains an implicit appresented consciousness of that backside.

The appresentation of the other consciousness leads Husserl to remark that “even if a universal plague had left only me”, “such aloneness in no respect alters the natural world-sense, ‘experienceable by everyone’, which attaches to the naturally understood ego” (Husserl 1999, 93). Even in the absence of any other human being or even any other animate being whatsoever, in the natural attitude, the sense of the object as

that which can be experienced by anyone is not lost and remains a potential aspect of any consideration of the object. The same point as a corollary applies to internet communication concerning objects or even internet communications themselves. Even in the absence of the other we can always ask what an other would think of a given object or event. The objects that are constituted on the internet also have the sense “experienceable by everyone”. Objectivity is not predicated on the presence of any empirically determinable embodied being and definitely not on any empirically determined human being.

It would appear, then, that Husserl has already addressed the problem of intersubjectivity on the internet. It is true that intersubjectivity is constituted originally through embodied beings, but the absence of other embodied beings (in the normal sense of embodied, if there is a normal sense of embodied) at any given time does not preclude the possibility of objectivity (Husserl 1989, 333). This point was again stressed by Husserl in one of his later writings on the intersubjective character of knowledge and objectivity. In the “Origins of Geometry”, Husserl indicates the essential role played by writing in the constitution of ideality (Husserl 1970, 360 ff).

Given time, it would be necessary to work through Husserl’s “Origins of Geometry” in detail. The discussions of language and ideality, of the communal character of language, of the remarks on language and horizon, are each significant in the context of a fully worked out theory of communication on the internet. Here, remarks will have to be limited to the explicit discussion of writing. Husserl’s attention is turned to writing at the moment the intersubjective possibility of actively understanding the communication of objective ideal structures reaches the threshold of this community or this life. The ideal constructs of geometry are limited by the possible death of the individual geometer or by the disappearance of the community of geometers. Writing overcomes this empirical limitation and thus extends the ideality of sense beyond the limits of any empirically and naturally determined consciousness. Husserl writes:

The important function of written, documenting linguistic expression is that it makes communication possible without immediate or mediate personal address, it is, so to speak, communication become virtual. Through this, the communalization of man is lifted to a new level. Written signs are, when considered from a purely corporeal point of view, straightforwardly, sensibly experienceable; and it is always possible that they be intersubjectively experienceable in common. But as linguistic signs they awaken, as do linguistic sounds, their familiar significations. The awakening is something passive; the awakened signification is thus given passively, similarly to the way in which any other activity which has sunk into obscurity, once associatively awakened, emerges at first passively as a more or less clear memory. In the passivity in question here, as in the case of memory, what is passively awakened can be transformed back, so to speak, into the corresponding activity: this is the capacity for reactivation that belongs originally to every human being as speaking being. Accordingly, then, the writing-down effects a transformation of the original mode of being of the meaning-structure... It becomes sedimented, so to speak. But the reader can make it self-evident again, can reactivate the self-evidence. (Husserl 1970, 361).

One of the most striking things about this passage is that Husserl already indicates that the “communalization of man is lifted to a new level” in communication becoming virtual. It is as if Husserl is already indicating the revitalization of the public sphere that many have associated with the new internet based technologies. Moreover, since Husserl is speaking of writing and not the internet, the becoming virtual can indeed be understood as shifting in yet another way in the move from written or print documents to internet based communication. Despite its tone, and despite the general image that has been generated of Husserl, one can hear in this notion of “becoming virtual” indications of more recent discussions of media effects. Indeed, Husserl’s argument is not unlike that of McLuhan (Skocz 2009). To see this however we need to work through Husserl’s argument carefully.

On first read, it may appear that in the text just cited Husserl is making a distinction between writing and speech, and indeed, in a way he is. The more important distinction, however, is one to which both speech and writing are subject. The whole paragraph is highly ambiguous. Distinctions appear to be made and withdrawn in the same breath: at one moment speech and writing are distinguished and at another they are

equated, leaving the reader unclear what the distinction is. It seems to me, however, that Husserl is working with two distinctions, despite only making one explicit. The explicit distinction between speech and writing is that written documents allow for communication without “immediate or mediate personal address”. This distinction rests on the possible absence of the sender to the receiver and the possible continuation of communication in the absence of any determinate sender or receiver. This is what he means by communication becoming virtual. This absence is not just convenient it is essential. Without writing, geometry or science in general would run up against the limits of memory and mortality and against the limits of the mind’s reasoning capacities. Without writing, science would never be capable of advancing beyond the most rudimentary discoveries. In being written down, the individual or community’s thoughts, ideas and traditions can be preserved through the generations and beyond any determinate life. In being written down they can be added to and developed. But they also run the risk of sedimentation, preventing access to the original motivation behind the thoughts.

Nonetheless, Husserl does not say that the possibility of sedimentation is absent in the case of speaking or thinking. The second distinction Husserl makes is between communication in general and the “original mode of being of the meaning structure”. Contained in this idea is the entire phenomenological project and it will be necessary to limit comments to those which bear directly on considerations of internet communication. The original mode of being of the meaning structure refers us to the intersubjectively constituted objectivities that emerge through meditations on the problems inherent in the initial development of that about which meaning is sought. That the working through of these initial problems is intersubjective does not mean that the original working through involved specific communications, rather it points to the fact that the constitution of any ideal objectivity is already intersubjective. The working through of the problems of the development of the science necessitates the constitution of ideal objectivities which will become the source for further

development. But the further development requires that the ideal objectivities be communicated, which means that they themselves become objects about which others can reason. The reception of these communications, whether in speech or in writing, occurs passively and not actively as the original constitution occurred. It is necessary for the recipient of the communication to re-activate the original sense of what is passively received. This reactivation of sense allows for the possibility of the process being reversed. What emerges in such contexts is akin to an intersubjective activation of sense despite the fact that there is a necessary level of passivity involved in the back and forth of communication. This passivity is not absent in the case of the original sense constitution and Husserl is not suggesting that it is. Husserl's point is that in the original constitution of sense there is a component of activity in the unmediated constitution of the objectivity of the object that, while predicated on various passively accepted modes of givenness or sedimentation, does not passively receive the actively produced results, consciousness does not passively receive the results of its own constituting (Zahavi 2006). As interlocutors or correspondents come to both be in a state of active constitution the communication context comes to correspond to a state of intersubjective communication, but an actual state of intersubjective communication is impossible, communication is always mediated and as such always involves a level of passivity and of further object constitution. Put in other words, so as to develop Husserl's point about writing, with reference to the non-presence of the other ego, intersubjective communication is only ever virtual, an ideal limit that is never in fact achieved. This impossible possibility is part of the meaning of the alterity of the other, and thus part of the condition of the constitution of objectivity.

Nonetheless, the original motivations and meaning structures behind a science are only rarely reflected on as such, rather they come with time to be taken for granted and assumed. Meanings are only rarely returned to the life world out of which they emerge. In the case of face to face communication this presents relatively few problems. Difficulties emerge when our speech becomes abstracted from

the life world. Not surprisingly, in face to face contexts we tend to avoid encounters in which activation of meaning demands a great deal of preliminary work. We come to know with whom we are speaking, and avoid those whose sedimented meaning structures differ significantly from our own. This happens more or less without our thinking about it. Moreover, in face to face contexts certain clues are already provided by the embodied nature of the other. These clues work to determine in advance, as it were, whether or not and how we will engage with the other. All of this leads to some highly problematic social conditions, but the internet is not immune to these kinds of problems! Nonetheless, in face to face contexts it is difficult to avoid all alien sedimented meaning structures. Other people have a tendency to interfere with our own habitual modes of going on and our own pre-constituted and naturalized meaning structures. Indeed, one could say that a very high percentage of non-internet based communication is the equivalent of spam, without however the internet's sophisticated filtering systems. Moreover, it is not entirely clear that avoidance of this condition would be desirable, even if a great many people do in fact attempt, to the extent this is possible, to limit such encounters. World horizons are constantly being transformed by encounters with others and with objects that one has no conscious desire to encounter. These encounters disturb sedimented communities of sense making, opening them onto the other in a manner that can never be predetermined with respect to consequences and as such opening the social world onto other possibilities of communal being. (This is not to say that these other possibilities are always or even generally positive...)

In the case of writing, of communication become virtual, the potential absence of both immediate and mediate address distanciates the communication event from any determinate lifeworld giving the communication event a certain autonomy with respect to the meaning structures it elicits. Put another way, the writing itself becomes objective insofar as it can now be experienced by anyone and subject to analysis as an object in its own right. In becoming objective, however, the written document increases the potential for merely passive reception and for

sedimentation of its content. The autonomy of the newly created objectivity brings about conditions in which the written document rather than the meaning structures it conveys can become the focus of communal attention. The written document, in other words, is simultaneously the condition of possibility for and a threat to scientific inquiry. This radical ambivalence between condition of possibility and threat is equally present in the realm of politics. Political institutions, not to mention political texts, always run the risk of generating sedimented meaning structures to such an extent that the object of politics relinquishes some of its recalcitrance, ceasing to be the infinite task of the community, becoming the sedimented condition of future meaning structures and future institutional possibilities. The task of both politics and science is to remain constantly resistant to this process of sedimentation, but this vigilance is itself an infinite task and as such despite best intentions can never be thought of as having been successful. Indeed, what emerges here is one of the most profound paradoxes of Husserl's sedimentation thesis; success at eliminating sedimented meaning structures, if it were possible, would itself be the threat of a new process of sedimentation. Nonetheless, the fact of the objectivity of the written document means that it is always at least in principle accessible by anyone and this means that it perpetually remains open to the possibility of reactivation even after generations of sedimented and passively accepted interpretations.

One of the most significant problems with the de-sedimentation or reactivation thesis today is that Husserl assumes that it is in fact possible. Its impossibility seems more likely, and its impossibility seems most likely in consideration of social and political issues. Sedimentation seems more like an essential feature of object constitution than something that can be subordinated to the "original mode of being of the meaning structure". Indeed, the very idea of an original mode of being of the meaning structure remains highly enigmatic. Both its reactivation and its maintenance constitute or so it seems infinite tasks and infinite tasks precisely of the already intersubjectively constituted community. This in turn appears to render problematic the very idea of an infinite task. If the "original" is already a product of sedimentation, then the infinite task would

appear to be a product of illusion or wishful thinking. Moreover, the sedimentation thesis appears to preclude the possibility of radical originality in its very formulation. Existing meaning structures are themselves a product of sedimentation and cannot be understood as original; all meaning structures refer us back to an original that it is the task of the philosopher to reactivate and forward to an ideal that it is the responsibility of the community to preserve in its openness as an ideal. But both of these ideals insofar as they become sedimented or are the product of sedimentation run the risk of closing us off to unforeseen possibilities of meaning constitution. This would seem to begin to suggest another argument in favour of the internet. The internet opens us onto possibilities of meaning constitution that were previously impossible. Just as writing renders science possible, making possible what would have been previously inconceivable, so too does the internet. Problems clearly emerge here. While the argument seems to make a great deal of sense, it also leaves those who would like to understand the transition mute. If the new technological conditions are radically transforming the mode of being of the meaning structure then one clearly cannot resort to previously constituted meaning structures in order to understand the effects.

In making this argument however we appear to be moving in circles. Either we relinquish the desire to comprehend the meaning structures that are coming into being or we work continuously to reactivate the sense of what is in the process of being lost to potentially new processes of sense making. The paradox is that it is the latter that most attempts to understand the effects of new communications technologies are attempting to do. The discussion of the communal and political potentials of the internet are perhaps as much attempts to preserve previously sedimented meaning structures as they are attempts to understand the internet. The problem however is that the previously sedimented meaning structures may prevent us from understanding the meaning structures that are emerging in and through the new technologies. The phenomenological version of this paradox indicates that even if sedimentation of previous acquired meaning structures is an essential condition, de-sedimentation also remains an essential

feature of all meaning constitution. Moreover, this relation between sedimentation and de-sedimentation or reactivation works in two ways at once. On the one hand, there must be a continuous reactivation of the original meaning structure of that which may be in the process of becoming de-sedimented in order that this process be noted; on the other hand, there must be a continuous de-sedimentation of precisely those sedimented meaning structures that need to be reactivated in order that one remains open to the possibilities inherent in the transforming conditions. The point, of course, is that even if the very idea of an original mode of being of the meaning structure is relinquished this does not preclude either the possibility or necessity of processes of reactivation and de-sedimentation even though we now have to accept the fact of the object as both an infinite task and fundamentally recalcitrant to any process of absolute sense-making.

Moreover, it should also be noted that the object itself, and here the object is at least at a minimum the internet, is not a passive recipient of senses, but an active element in generating processes of sedimentation which can radically contradict previous processes of sedimentation. Nonetheless, the fact of previous processes of sedimentation can make us radically incapable of experiencing processes of sedimentation which are nonetheless underway. Here, it seems to me, Husserl's notion of protention in his analysis of internal time consciousness is extremely powerful. Protention indicates a level of inertia in the very condition of experience. Insofar as the now of experience is extended in the structure Retention-Protention, Husserl indicates the possibility of the future orientation of experience being overdetermined by elements retained from previous experiences. Indeed, the very structure of time consciousness makes processes of sedimentation possible, if not necessary. The relation between retention and protention as a condition of possibility of sedimentation, gives to the process of sedimentation something of the character of resistance in Freudian psychoanalysis. The inertia of protention covers over the recalcitrance of the object in its emerging processes of sense-making, generating a fundamental tension between

sedimentation and the possibility of emerging original meaning structures.

The possibility of a fundamental tension between sedimentation and activation allows us to consider yet another sense in which writing renders communication virtual for Husserl. Moreover, this further sense of virtual indicates yet another problem with claims concerning the political potential of the internet. The second sense of virtual indicates that despite being written down the words may never in fact be received either actively or passively or may suffer the same fate as spoken words, becoming the victims of time and circumstance. This is clearly a problem with internet communications. As the proliferation of messages on the net approximates infinity, there is an increasing possibility that a posted message will never be received. This is one of Herbert Dreyfus's main criticisms of internet research (Dreyfus 2001). While search engines differ in the way they organize relevance of information, it is essential that the search make selections based on information input by the user and categorize the selection in terms of some predetermined criteria. As the quantity of information on the internet increases, it becomes more and more likely that information retrieved will not be relevant to the user based on her initial inquiry even with more and more powerful algorithms. Moreover, much of what is relevant will not appear in the initial pages of the search results and thus may be ignored altogether. For Dreyfus, the problem here is that the internet (indeed, he suggests, all data search engines) has no means by which to ascertain specific intentions behind a given search entry. Where classification of search results occurs by frequency of "hits" this can mean that the most relevant search results are never even considered and that information relevance comes to be based on a kind of opinion poll or popularity contest.

Dreyfus is concerned to indicate that data search engines make inevitable the fact that relevant information will be overlooked; the trajectory of the argument being developed here is far more concerned with information being overlooked because of previously established meaning structures. For Dreyfus the problem of overlooked material is a problem intrinsic to the search engine, for us the problem is also with

the protentional character of experience, the predetermined meaning structures of the potential user. The continuity with the argument made above should be self-evident. There the issue was with experience itself and here the issue is with the content of that experience, though the two cannot be rigorously separated. There the analysis was noetic, here we turn to the noematic. For Dreyfus the issue is relevance of information, for us it is irrelevance of information according to previously established meaning structures. The significance of this shift can perhaps best be indicated by a consideration of face to face contexts. In face to face contexts it is enormously difficult, if not impossible, to avoid alien processes of sense making. Different people react to this in different ways: for some it is highly disturbing, for others exhilarating, for others still a fact to be ignored to the extent this is possible. Nonetheless, the possibility of a disruption of established possibilities of sense making is a constitutive possibility of the life world.

In face to face contexts the issue is not what is overlooked, but the unanticipated that cannot be overlooked. The unanticipated that cannot be overlooked has the potential to reactivate sedimented or naturalized meaning structures, opening consciousness onto a wider world or generating conditions of apprehension. Importantly, the subject within conditions of face to face encounter has few means by which to prevent disruptive encounters and often very few means by which to respond. My intentions, in fact, are forever being thwarted by unanticipated objective conditions. These conditions resist my previously established processes of sense making, de-sedimenting previously acquired meaning structures. Meaning structures, in face to face contexts, are more or less at the whim of objective conditions. The object itself poses a challenge to processes of sedimentation. This does not mean that within such contexts new forms of sedimentation do not occur or that there is not a continuous process of re-sedimentation, but that these are themselves constantly subject to challenges from objective conditions. In face to face contexts there is no means by which to eliminate completely the unanticipated or recalcitrant object.

The distinction I am making can be easily understood by considering the difference between the internet and a library.

Initially, internet and library work in similar ways, both begin with search engines. The user enters the library or internet search engine with some predetermined question or some predetermined object in mind. Entering the question into the search engine, whether it be electronic or card based matters little, the user generates a list of possible responses. Some of these responses will be of little interest, some will be related to the initial search merely accidentally (two people with the same name), some will be related but not quite what one is looking for, some will be not quite what one was looking for, but nonetheless contribute a mode of proceeding given the initial question, and sometimes one will find what one is looking for. Strikingly the same situation occurs here as occurs with card catalogues, the difference is not a difference of possibility but a difference of speed, ease and possible responses. On the internet, a failed search is easily rectified, a new search takes seconds to conduct, possible responses can be easily saved and new questions asked based on insights derived from initial search, and all more or less instantaneously. The problem lies not in the possibilities of questions that can be asked or the speed with which responses occur, the difficulty lies with the fact that every search is based entirely on user input. The object that emerges as a consequence of user input is an object to some extent determined by user input. It is the subjects predetermined meaning structures that determine which objects will emerge. And indeed part of the problem here is that as users become more sophisticated in their search techniques, the object that emerges is more and more likely to correspond with intentions, i.e. more and more likely to correspond with predetermined meaning structures. Again all of this applies to the library user or the bookstore user up to a point. As soon however as the library user leaves the catalogue, the object comes to intrude on users intentions. The catalogue, of course, directed me to a particular place in the library, but to get to this place I pass hundreds if not thousands of books that have nothing to do with the book I am seeking, a leisurely stroll brings me into contact with subject matters that I never would have dreamt of entering into a search engine, and probably never would have occurred in the context of my search and

probably would have ignored if they did. When I reach the place where the book I am seeking is supposed to be, it is surrounded by potentially hundreds of books by the same or different authors on the same or more or less the same subject⁴ which I have no choice but to scan if I am to find the book I am looking for and this especially if the book has been mis-shelved. These books are themselves surrounded by groups of books on what someone else – the librarian, the Library of Congress, etc. – has decided are related subjects, quite possibly a connection I would not have made left to my own predetermined meaning structures and as such never would have encountered by means of an internet search. What I encounter in the shelves are a group of objects which quite possibly never would have been the object of a search that I intentionally conducted and quite possibly never would have emerged as the result of an accidental (that is if accidental is even possible here) association of terms I entered into the search engine. What I encounter, as in the case of face to face encounters, is an object or group of objects that have the potential to expand or even disrupt my previously established habits of meaning making.

Of course, it is not the case that when I go to the library, I always encounter objects I would never have dreamt of seeking out, it is at least in principle possible to go directly to the book being sought and not notice any others, and it is the case that in performing internet searches I do sometimes discover things I would never have consciously sought, but the difference is not merely a matter of degree. In scanning the shelves at the library, I am necessarily the passive recipient of another's decisions even if I know exactly what I am looking for. In opening a link on an internet search, in moving from page to page of possible links or in seeking beyond exactly what I am looking for, I am always and necessarily actively engaged in my choices, unless of course I accidently click a link, but even this accident cannot be traced back to objective meaning structures.

The point here is not that there are too many possibilities available on the internet, as the sheer volume of internet traffic might make one assume; the problem is that the objects encountered are too determined by the subject. The excess of the internet is almost never encountered as excess, whereas the

much smaller excess of the library is instantly encountered as such. The excess of the library is the excess of a world that exceeds the very possibility of my consciousness of it. Recent studies of the internet have suggested that as much as 95% of messages sent are in fact spam, we fail to realize this because most spam is today blocked by filters. The internet is the equivalent of a bookstore or a library that had a device to prevent me from seeing any book that I had not at least to some extent previously intended. The internet is a device that restricts, to the extent this is possible, the objective character of information, the object pole of consciousness, to a mere correlate of a previously established meaning structure. The “real world” opens up, whereas the virtual world closes down, especially as search algorithms become more sophisticated, not because I become a disembodied subject, but because the world ceases to be objective, ceases to be an object potentially recalcitrant to my intentions.

It has been suggested however that, while this may have once been the case, these kinds of limitations of internet communication have been overcome as a consequence of so-called social media. Moreover, the political significance of social media has been manifest in what has come to be known as the “Arab Spring” – the revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, and the uprisings in Bahrain and Syria, etc. Two points need to be made, the first philosophical following the above discussion, the second empirical of which I will only say a few words in the context of the discussion of politics below.

The argument above suggests, in part, that one of the consequences of internet based communication is that in order to receive information I have to actively seek it out. Even when receiving e-mail, I have the capacity to filter unwanted messages either manually through deletion or by adjusting the settings on my spam filter. This ability to filter is impossible in face to face interactions. I cannot choose what I want to see or hear because the objective world precisely resists my intentions. Social media, such as facebook, twitter, myspace or academia.edu, etc., are said to be an attempt to return some of this objectivity to internet communication. This argument, however, fails to take into account the structural issues raised

above. While it is not the case that social media precludes my being a passive recipient of messages from others, it is still the case that the levels of active choice far exceed that of face to face contexts. Indeed, what is most striking about social media is that I actually chose precisely those people from whom I will receive information. An internet search in general does not preclude me from acquiring information from people I do not know, people from whom I have not and would not chose to receive information, but social media are actually predicated on this initial choice. In the example of the library above we are confronted by objects for which we would never have deliberately sought, in no way have we restricted the egos that will enter into our fields of consciousness. Social media may not limit the information we may receive, but it has rendered the “egos” from whom we will receive information a determination of my own choices. In the context of social media, I actually have the power to delete not information, but precisely subjects, something that has been attempted in the world of face to face communications, but is increasingly today frowned upon. In the context of normal internet searches it is the object that is a determination of my subjectivity, in social media the subject him or herself is a product of my decisions, a reflection of my own ego. The preconstituted meaning structures then have the potential to not only determine what information I will receive, but even those from whom I will receive it. It is as if, as an ideal, the internet would only provide me with information I had already intended from people with whom I already know and already agree. Not only is the recalcitrance of the object threatened, so too is the alterity of the other ego.

It should not be assumed that the constant references to face to face communication above indicate a reference to some primordial state of communication. This primordial state is already precluded by Husserl’s reference to the essential passivity underlying all communicative acts. The reference to face to face communication has been elicited by the tradition in communication theory which suggests that with the new electronic and more importantly digital modes of communication we are entering a new age of orality. This new age of orality is evidenced in the increasing significance of the

aural over the visual and the increasing potentials of instantaneous communication. The difference between the new and the old lies in the proximity of the other with whom one communicates. Within oral societies, the dominant mode of communication demands the physical proximity of the body of the one with whom I communicate. We have already considered the ways in which this presentation of the difference is riddled with idealist abstractions, but this does not mean that there is not still a difference.

Communication theorists have tended to understand communication epochs solely through the mode of communication and not through the equally significant possibilities of experience and world constitution. As already suggested, within contexts of face to face communication the subject has very little control over the kinds of messages it will receive. The subject, in other words, is an opening onto the world which confronts it with its infinite variety of recalcitrant phenomena. Sedimented meaning structures, with their necessary reference to the intersubjective community, must remain open to and capable of incorporating both the unanticipated and the incomprehensible – unanticipated and incomprehensible at least from the perspective of the previously constituted meaning structure. Meaning structures must remain open to adjustment and reconstitution in their confrontation with the object and thus remain perpetually open to the intersubjective constitution of radically new objectivities. That these objectivities tend to be constituted from within previously sanctioned modes of making sense should not detract us from the perpetual processes of reconstitution necessitated by the inevitability of otherwise recalcitrant objects.

Within this context of face to face communication the other ego is of necessity both a condition of possibility for and a threat to communally sanctioned modes of making a sense. The other ego is the indeterminate other of previously constituted objectivities, precisely that which threatens perpetually to thwart my previously constituted habitualities of making sense. The other ego and the unanticipated or unanticipatable object are the indeterminate horizon of all sense making and as such open the possibilities of making sense onto the infinite and as such open the world onto the possibility of not making sense at all. Strikingly,

perhaps, it is this condition of the possibility of the world not corresponding to my intentions, and thus the possibility of not making sense, that we encounter through the various mass media and in particular through broadcast media. The book I am reading may disturb me, upset my preconceptions, force me to think of things I would rather ignore. Unless the TV program has been seen before, we cannot know in advance, beyond certain basic formal elements, the kinds of images or subject matters it will contain. The broadcast constitutes a kind of radical otherness to our intentions. We can change the channel, but while the TV is on we are subject to the decisions of another and generally another who remains almost completely unknown to us or even anonymous, and this condition is precisely the nature of the technological limitation of the medium itself. And while TV does have the potential to bring about sedimented process of sense making, especially those that correspond to the corporate and political conditions of TV programming, it also has the potential to reveal, by rendering objective, unpleasant or disturbing previously constituted processes of sense making in ways that normal face to face and internet communication do not. Moreover, unlike social media in which we only engage with those with whom we already agree or with those we chose to disagree, TV has the potential to present positions and perspectives from people with whom we would never chose to associate and with whom we may disagree in ways that preclude either face to face or facebook associations.⁵

The internet allows us to transmit messages and generate critique at a rate and in a quantity unprecedented in human history. But it allows sense making to be determined by the subject more profoundly than ever before in the history of humanity. The object which has the potential to disrupt processes of sense making recedes into the background and the world ceases to have the potential to collapse into a state of senselessness. Making sense is an activity that emerges as a consequence of a perpetual confrontation, a confrontation that has the potential to become political as it becomes communal. The object always constitutes a potential threat to previously constituted conditions of sense-making, the subject is of necessity resistant to this threat. The internet runs the risk of eliminating this threat all together. If the internet were the

only means by which we received information, then the possibilities of making sense and even of making sense of the internet would vanish. Making sense only occurs against the threat of no longer making sense and it is this threat of no longer making sense from the perspective of the community that constitutes the space of politics.

At the centre of any political engagement is an object that is the object of potential disagreement; the infinite task of the political community – and here we can think object either as that about which we agree or disagree or as that towards which we are heading, or indeed as the community itself. It is the recalcitrance of these objects with respect to the community that constitutes the space of politics. It is the recalcitrance of the object, the fact that it forces us onto processes of de-sedimentation and re-sedimentation, that constitutes the political community as political. Insofar as internet communication is self-selected communication, the internet decreases the recalcitrance of the object, profoundly restricting the conditions for the constitution of objectivity, completing the potential to fulfill every desire denied to broadcast media, and perhaps in the long run eliminating the very possibility of politics and community.

Although initially the mainstream news media, and again TV in particular, presented the recent revolutions and uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East as though social media played a significant if not decisive role, the same news media have subsequently suggested that the role played may have been overstated.⁶ This fact is not really surprising. A quick glance at the World Bank's Development Indicators (2010), easily available on-line, suggests that in 2009 only 33.5% of the Tunisians, 20% of Egyptians, 18.7% of Syrians and 5.5% of Libyans were internet users. The notion of "internet user" does not imply ownership of the means of access; it includes those who access the internet through cafes and libraries and on university campuses or at work. These numbers should be compared to the more than 75% in the UK and the US. More importantly, the governments of these countries have at one point or another all shut down internet access, and yet events continued to unfold. As such, while it is clear that "social media", where and when they have been

available, have been essential to the dissemination of information to the outside world, their roles in the uprisings themselves – with the possible exception of Tunisia – must have been extremely limited. Of significantly more importance was the information disseminated by Al Jazeera, but even here we are failing to think the uprisings from the perspective of what is essential to the possibility of political action.

Following Husserl, it would be wrong to understand posts on social media as if they were not objects with possible effects. Despite being objects, however, these were not the objects at the heart of the uprisings. At the heart of the uprisings were social and institutional conditions which demanded a communal response or to be more precise constituted a community where previously there was only an aggregate. What occurred was not merely a result of the production and receipt of information, however objective that information was, it has just as significantly been a case of being caught up in conditions as they unfolded without anyone having a clear sense of what was unfolding. Subjectivities are caught up in the radical recalcitrance of the object, they become subject to that object and act in accordance. Thus while North Africa and the Middle East have erupted in demands for fundamental social and political change, in North America and Europe what demonstrations there have been have been motivated by single issues – tuition increases, for example – or have been random and seemingly unmotivated, without even vague underlying objectives.⁷

Despite massive inequalities of wealth, economic conditions that have not been experienced since the thirties, global warming, unjust wars and global insecurity, bankrupt or simply barbaric medical systems, etc. in those places with greatest access to information serious political unrest seems less likely than at any other time in the modern period. In radical distinction from the more affluent periods following WWII, and especially the 1960s and 70s, not accidentally the heyday of television, serious social unrest in the age of the internet appears highly improbable. It appears that the claims concerning social media, rather than giving us insight into

social, political and cultural conditions fulfil a purely ideological function.

The object is the centre about which politics is possible: without this object there is no politics, no community, no subject. The internet does not eliminate otherness; it is always possible that I will stumble unexpectedly across a website that disturbs my expectations. But unlike TV or newspaper articles, communication on the internet is to a much greater extent determined and controlled by the user. The user inputs information and selects what she feels will be relevant topics, she may even select those from whom she will receive information. E-mail can be controlled by spam filters and address blocking, or by deletion. Even what is called web surfing is controlled to a much greater extent by the surfer than channel surfing or the more oceanic variety. This ability for the user to control the kinds of information he/she/it receives is simply not present to the same degree in any other mode of communication. This does not eliminate the fact of intersubjectivity, but it does seriously transform the conditions of object constitution and the objectivity of that about which we communicate. This transformation rather than opening the user onto the world of infinite possibility has the potential to merely sediment, to an unprecedented level, previous acquired meaning structures. Moreover, while the otherness of the other is still a fact to be taken into consideration, this otherness can, at least to a certain extent, be controlled by the user and this seriously transforms the conditions of community constitution. That it is the user who controls the conditions of constitution of both community and objectivity seriously compromises the possibility of anything like a politics or a public sphere from emerging. Much like suburban car culture, the internet user controls and perhaps even eliminates his or her encounters with those who may have the potential to upset processes of sedimentation, and as a result seriously jeopardizes the possibility of the emergence of objective meaning structures. The internet has the potential to work towards the subjectivization of all meaning and community, eliminating the necessary otherness of the other, be it object or ego.

NOTES

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² This argument should not suggest a disagreement concerning the significance of the lived body; the point in this context merely concerns the significance of the body in communication, and indicates that I have no desire to privilege face to face communication as a means by which to argue against the internet. This basic point indicates that this paper will not be concerned with arguments based on the importance of the internet for those incapable, for whatever reason, of engaging in face to face communication. Valery's arguments concerning the radio continue to apply (Valery 1964).

³ A common theme in science fiction. These fictional representations work precisely because the ego is not accessible to the other. What is perceived is the fundamental similarity, and this produces, regardless of technological mediation the experience of other ego. It takes an act of will to not see the android as an other ego and precisely for this reason often stands as a powerful metaphor for racism.

⁴ "Same subject" is also far more complex then it might seem. What the library determines as belonging to the same subject may have no relation to what I might have thought was the subject matter of the book I sought.

⁵ In presenting aspects of the argument here at various academic conferences this particular argument has been the most misunderstood and the most criticized. The reason for this misunderstanding and criticism reveals the extent to which the internet has performed its ideological work. One assumes that information provided by TV will be both already of interest to the viewer and be presented from perspectives with which the viewer already agrees. That this has not always been the case can be ascertained by consideration of images of the Vietnam War during the heyday of TV broadcasting. TV here precisely resulted in massive protests and demonstrations against the existing social and political conditions. One can easily add further examples from the Civil Rights Movement or the Women's Movement. Nothing even remotely comparable has occurred since the introduction of the internet and even less so since the introduction of social media in those places where it is most prevalent.

⁶ See, in particular, Frank Rich's excellent op-ed from February 5, 2011 in The New York Times (Rich 2011). Clearly, however, once the cat has been let out of the bag even insightful pieces like Rich's cannot put it back in. No doubt, as Rich explains, part of the reason for the claims made on behalf of facebook and twitter is that news agencies want to appear "hip", but it also gives to the rest of us a sense that we are nonetheless participating in our own small way

simply by signing up. The fact that it is likely that a revolution of the kind seen in Tunisia or Egypt would not have happened if “social media” were more widespread rarely even enters the equation. The question of ideology and the internet requires far more serious consideration. And this is also to say nothing of the enhanced possibilities for surveillance brought about by widespread internet use – an extremely important point in recent events in London and Vancouver which never took on a political dimension

⁷ This observation would seem to be contradicted by the case of Greece, but then one would need to take into consideration that Greece has the smallest number of internet users in the EU at a mere 44%.

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Gregory Cameron is a sessional lecturer in Cultural Studies and Communication Studies at Wilfrid Laurier University in Ontario. He received his PhD from York University's Social and Political Thought Program.

Address:

Gregory CAMERON

Wilfrid Laurier University

Department of Cultural Studies

Faculty of Arts

75 University Avenue West, Waterloo, Ontario

Canada N2L 3C5

Phone: 519-884-0710, ext.: 3755

Email: grcameron@wlu.ca

Nietzsche et les structures nihilistes de la culture européenne

George Bondor
Université « Al.I. Cuza » de Iasi

Abstract

Nietzsche and the Nihilist Structures of European Culture

The present analysis focuses on the way in which the Nietzschean genealogical strategy identifies and talks about the nihilism of European history. It seeks to identify the nihilist structures of this history, to find their origins and, last but not least, to think about the possibility of overcoming nihilism. Amongst the nihilist structures that Nietzsche had in mind, the one he considered to be at the root of all the others, and thus of the European man's way of life, is metaphysics itself, understood as Platonism, otherwise explained as a separation between "the true world" (of values and ideals) and the "apparent world" (of sensitive things). In this context, Nietzsche's destruction of this metaphysical scheme becomes a decisive one. Its role is to show through which confusion of meaning, that is to say through which deception, reason set itself up as an absolute master, assuming metaphysical properties such as self-consciousness, logical clarity, value, morality, as well as happiness. After the genealogical destruction, senses and instincts, feelings and affections are rehabilitated, these being all the elements in man which the "Platonic" metaphysics expelled from the sphere of sense because of its preference for reason.

Keywords: Nietzsche, reason, body, nihilism, genealogy, culture, community, metaphysics, hermeneutics

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Les structures nihilistes : la culture et la métaphysique

Lorsqu'il dresse la typologie du nihilisme, Nietzsche est pleinement conscient qu'il parle d'un « lieu » et que son analyse reflète un point de vue personnel. Pour lui, le nihilisme représente la manière d'être de l'Européen moderne et, implicitement, sa propre manière d'être. La modernité au XIX^e siècle, telle qu'elle est entendue et vécue par Nietzsche, est l'époque de l'extrême individualisme, mais aussi de la massification. C'est l'« époque des machines », où l'individu devient un instrument de l'ensemble. C'est l'époque du triomphe des masses, de l'enrégimentement des exemplaires uniques, devenus dès lors des masques anonymes. Les valeurs elles-mêmes se « démocratisent ». Conscient du fait que son analyse est subjective, limitée par son propre positionnement dans la modernité, Nietzsche rappelle toujours la possibilité de dépasser la manière moderne d'être et, à la fois, de se détacher du nihilisme. Dans ce but, on met en œuvre une thématique extrêmement complexe, destinée à identifier le type humain qui devrait être promu, cultivé et créé. On ne pourrait mettre fin à la domination de la machine que par l'apparition du surhomme, qui est censé sauver l'humanité du nihilisme. Son émergence n'est toutefois possible que si l'on a parcouru le nihilisme jusqu'à ses conséquences ultimes. Étrangement, l'expansion moderne de l'homme-masse, du « dernier homme », prépare l'arrivée du surhomme. L'aurore ne s'annonce que par un parcours préalable (et complet) à travers le crépuscule. « A l'opposé de cette diminution et de cette adaptation des êtres humains à une utilité spécialisée, il est besoin d'un mouvement inverse, la création de l'être humain *qui synthétise, totalise et justifie*, pour qui cette machinalisation de l'humanité constitue la condition préalable de son existence en tant que le support sur lequel il puisse inventer *sa forme supérieure d'être...* » (Nietzsche 1999, t. 12, 10 [17], 463 ; Nietzsche 1976, 116). Pour la condition moderne, les masses ont été un mal nécessaire (Tuttle 1996, 83-96).

La situation existentielle de Nietzsche est complètement paradoxale. Il appartient à la modernité, mais s'y oppose

violemment, en préférant la rupture. Il vit avec la tentation du surpassement¹. Il démasque le nihilisme, mais il le découvre à l'intérieur de soi-même. Son existence est une permanente tension, une contradiction intérieure aux accents tragiques. Il se considérait lui-même le dernier des modernes, en essayant de comprendre comment la condition moderne est-elle devenue possible, quelles en sont les sources et l'histoire. En cherchant la manière adéquate de mettre ces questions, Nietzsche découvre un nouvel enjeu de l'analyse historique. Cette dernière ne doit accepter ni l'idée que l'histoire est prédéterminée, ni l'hypothèse qu'à l'intérieur de l'histoire tout est le fruit du hasard. On a affaire dans l'histoire à un conflit des volontés de pouvoir, comme partout au monde. Le mécanisme en est le même. Ainsi que tout fait (naturel, organique ou humain) naît d'un inlassable combat des forces, qui engendre des configurations de pouvoir dont la stabilité n'est que relative, de même les phénomènes historiques dérivent de la dispute de forces dans un champ donné – contextuel, situé, relatif. Cette idée ne fait qu'approfondir l'analyse du pouvoir, qu'on considère ici par rapport à la réalité historique. Tout phénomène est explicable par la théorie du pouvoir, et l'histoire elle-même n'en fait pas exception. Dans l'histoire il faut découvrir les configurations de pouvoir, les structures qui, à un moment donné, connaissent une relative stabilité et qui, en vertu de cela, prescrivent les conditions d'existence de l'homme à cette époque-là. Afin de comprendre la manière d'être de l'homme moderne, il faut donc comprendre la logique de la modernité. Est-elle une structure historique autonome, une configuration de pouvoir fermée en elle-même ? Ou bien, au contraire, elle appartient à une structure plus vaste ?

L'investigation des origines d'un phénomène n'est pas neutre, mais elle est en même temps une lutte sur deux fronts : l'un structurel et l'autre historique. Le côté structurel apparaît au premier plan lorsque la critique généalogique découvre la logique du phénomène analysé, son articulation interne (même si provisoire et conjecturale). Celle-ci est un simple isolement d'un instant de l'histoire du phénomène en question. Les deux aspects sont complémentaires. La logique du phénomène étudié

(sa structure ou sa grammaire, la manière dont il se montre sous une apparence systématique) ne lui est pas conférée par un miraculeux début (*Wunderursprung*), mais ne lui est ni consubstantielle, annexée à lui depuis toujours. Mais elle se constitue – de manière peu spectaculaire, modeste, sans éclat – pendant son insignifiante évolution. Bref, elle est une structure historique, un « a priori historique », pour parler dans les termes de Foucault.

Depuis ses tout premiers écrits, Nietzsche identifie les principales formes de l'aliénation humaine, qu'il prend pour des formations historiques. Admirateur de l'Antiquité, il met souvent en discussion les tentatives modernes de la démythiser. C'est de ce conflit symbolique que dérivent ses premières critiques à l'adresse de la modernité, critiques qui s'aiguisent progressivement, en devenant de plus en plus précises et en acquérant un solide fondement théorique. Dans ses écrits de jeunesse, la modernité (démystificatrice et « machinale ») semble être responsable pour les formes d'aliénation les plus évidentes. C'est ainsi que s'explique son intérêt pour la philologie classique, l'unique discipline qui n'avait pour but l'expansion incontrôlée du savoir, mais la construction de soi, l'éducation individuelle (*Bildung*). Dans l'année 1859, Nietzsche assume le programme pédagogique de Wilhelm von Humboldt (Nietzsche 1967, t. I/2, 6 [77], 134), dont le principe directeur consiste en cela que le développement des capacités et des aptitudes individuelles est plus important que la transmission des connaissances. Or, la mission de la philologie classique, désignée comme discipline fondamentale de la formation individuelle, est de préparer l'individu pour créer une forme humaine authentique. Cette idée s'intègre parfaitement dans la tradition humaniste, définie par Wilhelm von Humboldt par le désidérata de l'authenticité, au nom duquel l'existence devient une lutte contre l'aliénation (Pöschl 1979, 144). Mais, en quoi consiste-t-il l'authentique de l'homme ? Selon Nietzsche, celui-ci réside dans le maintien d'une liaison directe avec la vie. L'accomplissement de la vie n'est pourtant possible que lorsqu'elle décrit une voie, en conférant une direction et un sens. En art comme en littérature, ce phénomène porte le nom de « style ». Par contre, le chaos n'exprime que l'absence du

style, conséquence du fait que l'homme manque l'accomplissement d'une vie authentique (Kassler 1999, 291). Dans une notice de mars 1875, le rôle des philologues « scientifiques » est limité à préparer le terrain pour le philosophe, « qui sait profiter de leur travail de fourmi pour dire quelque chose à propos de *la valeur de la vie*. Il va, bien sûr, de soi, que sans cette direction la plus grande partie de ce travail de fourmi est absolument insensée et superflue » (Nietzsche 1999, t. 8, 3 [63], 32). Les philologues non-philosophes, qui parlent des textes anciens sans comprendre l'atmosphère de l'Antiquité, c'est-à-dire la vie qui y est présente, sont au fond « (ses) véritables ennemis et destructeurs » (Nietzsche 1967, t. II/1, 252 sq.). Schiller et Goethe avaient, eux aussi, critiqué la démythisation dont Homère et son œuvre avaient fait l'objet. Bien que dans le texte *Homère et la philologie classique* (1869) il ne partage pas ces critiques, Nietzsche incrimine le courant démythifiant, largement répandu parmi les philologues scientifiques. Dans la seconde *Considération inactuelle (De l'utilité et des inconvénients de l'histoire pour la vie, § 6, 1874)*, Nietzsche soutient qu'une profonde compréhension du passé n'est possible qu'à la suite d'une parfaite familiarisation avec le présent. « *C'est seulement à partir de la plus haute force du présent que vous avez le droit d'interpréter le passé* » (Nietzsche 1999, t. 1, 293-4 ; Nietzsche 1990, 134). La réciproque est toujours valable : la compréhension du présent grandit de la compréhension de la tradition culturelle propre. On a donc affaire à une circularité herméneutique, fondée sur l'idée de comparer les solutions des anciens à celles du présent et de la propre tradition. En fait, la science de la littérature apparaît chez Nietzsche comme unitaire, car elle fait un tout avec la science de la culture et l'histoire de l'esprit (Pöschl 1979, 146).

La confiance du philosophe dans le pouvoir de la tradition devient plus forte vers la fin des années '70. Voici un fragment qui le confirme : « L'observation directe de soi est loin de suffire pour apprendre à se connaître : nous avons besoin de l'histoire, car le passé répand en nous ses milles vagues » (Nietzsche 1999, t. 2, 477 ; Nietzsche 1988, 454). L'idée susmentionnée signale la question de la culture, envisagée, cette fois-ci, de manière théorique. A l'avis de Nietzsche, la

culture d'un peuple (*Kultur*) doit être vue comme un tout, car elle dépend des expressions de la vie des individus choisis, donc de leur culture individuelle. Or, la formation individuelle (*Bildung*), la culture de chacun, ne peut s'expliquer que par le fait que l'individu intériorise les formes de vie présentes dans le passé de la culture à laquelle il appartient et, en même temps, de la culture universelle (et surtout de celle antique). C'est justement cette fondation réciproque, cette circularité qui existe entre formation (*Bildung*) et culture (*Kultur*), qui décrit les données de ce problème théorique, tel qu'il apparaît à l'époque. Nietzsche se rapporte donc à une question déjà pensée et formulée par ses prédécesseurs². En la mettant en évidence, il découvre que les racines du nihilisme moderne sont bien plus profondes. Celui-ci lui apparaît, à ce moment, comme une simple conséquence de la présence dans l'histoire européenne, depuis l'Antiquité même, d'une logique nihiliste. Dans la *Naissance de la tragédie*, il remarque une rupture au sein de la culture antique, une déviation qui se serait produite avec Euripide et Socrate. Ce n'est donc point fortuitement que l'apparition du premier grand philosophe de la Grèce antique est, pour lui, le premier signe visible du nihilisme. C'est pour cette raison qu'il arrive à croire que la modernité a débuté avec Euripide. La thèse n'est pas du tout nouvelle, car Schiller et Fr. Schlegel l'avaient déjà partagée (Behler 1989, 93).

Suite à ces réflexions, Nietzsche identifie la modernité avec la culture européenne même dans son ensemble. Le changement de perspective opéré ici ne reste pas sans conséquences. La question de la culture s'installe au centre de ses préoccupations, et la cause de cette évolution est évidente : la structure historique « coupable » de l'aliénation de l'homme européen, de son écart par rapport à la vie, c'est la culture même. Le terme de *Kultur* désigne les éléments qui, bien que présents dans la vie de l'individu, proviennent d'en dehors de lui : croyances et représentations, religions et normes morales, idéologies et institutions sociales, bref, valeurs et idéaux. On parle dans ce sens de la culture grecque, judaïque, chrétienne, française, anglaise et allemande.

Dès même la période de rédaction de *Humain, trop humain, Aurore, Le gai savoir*, l'analyse de Nietzsche se dirige

vers de divers ensembles socio-historiques, tels les nations, les peuples, les groupes sociaux, les sexes, les professions, les religions, les institutions. Cela prouve que le philosophe cherchait, déjà depuis cette époque, un concept unitaire de culture (Blondel 1986, 104). Bien qu'imposés par les hommes, les valeurs, les croyances et les idéaux représentent, pour l'individu en tant que tel, des vérités surhumaines, transcendantes. Tandis que pour leurs créateurs elles sont des conditions naturelles de leur existence, pour ceux qui les reçoivent tout prêtes (et de l'extérieur) elles représentent (ou, du moins, elles devraient représenter) de vraies contraintes, qui éloignent l'individu de soi-même. Les éléments de la culture pénètrent dans tout humain, par l'intermédiaire de la formation individuelle (*Bildung*). Ils entrent dans la vie de chacun, en la modelant. Notre existence, la perception sur les choses et le savoir sur le monde sont culturellement imprégnés. Les éléments de la culture fondent, en fait, les conditions de possibilité de l'existence de l'individu, par l'intermédiaire desquelles celui-ci évalue la réalité. La généalogie doit découvrir les origines mêmes des phénomènes culturels, c'est-à-dire les impulsions de première instance qui leur ont donné naissance, celles qui ont fait de la culture un instrument de domination. Et les instruments de domination les plus efficaces sont, nous l'avons vu, les valeurs morales. C'est pour cette raison que la généalogie s'en préoccupe avec prépondérance. Elle est, avant tout, une généalogie de la *morale*.

Nietzsche ne parvient à l'idée de la parfaite unité de la culture européenne que dans la période finale de sa création. Le fondement de son unité est la supposition platonico-chrétienne des deux « mondes » qui, selon lui, définit l'histoire de l'Europe comme étant profondément nihiliste. En son essence, le « platonisme » consiste dans le redoublement du monde sensible, le seul réel, par un autre monde, le soi-disant intelligible. En vertu de son caractère transcendant, ce dernier apparaît comme le seul « véritable ». Par conséquent, le monde sensible est considéré comme « apparent », impure, dérivé, recevant sa justification de l'extérieur. Selon Nietzsche, cette supposition est présente tout au long de la culture européenne, sous des formes diverses. Les philosophes, par exemple,

inventent le « monde vrai » comme un monde qui n'est accessible qu'à la raison, avec ses fonctions logiques. Socrate et Platon sont ses principaux artisans dans la pensée grecque. Ensuite, l'homme religieux le projette sous la forme d'un « monde divin » (« l'autre monde »), séparée de la nature (« dénaturé, contre nature »), opposé même à celle-ci (le judaïsme et, surtout, le christianisme). Enfin, l'homme moral l'imagine comme un « monde de liberté », c'est-à-dire « bon, parfait, juste, saint » (Nietzsche 1999, t. 13, 14 [168] C, 353 ; Nietzsche 1977, 132).

Les trois hypostases comportent quand même une stricte historicité. Elles évoluent depuis l'invention (*Erfindung*) platonique du « monde vrai », en traversant les moments chrétien et kantien (quand « le monde vrai », en tant que chose en soi, devient inaccessible à la connaissance, mais reste accessible par voie morale), vers l'affirmation de son inutilité (le positivisme et les libres-penseurs) et, finalement, vers son suppression, c'est-à-dire le moment nietzschéen (Nietzsche 1999, t. 6, 80-1 ; Nietzsche 1988, 30-1). L'évolution de cette « erreur » nous montre comment l'interprétation généalogique révèle-t-elle à la fois la logique et l'histoire de la culture européenne, intimement liées dans sa composition. Les figures de la volonté négative (le ressentiment, la conscience malheureuse, l'idéal ascétique) sont donc mises non seulement sous le signe du social, mais aussi sous celui de la métaphysique. C'est pour cette raison que leur révélation ne constitue pas seulement une critique sociale, mais aussi une destruction (généalogique) de la métaphysique.

La structure historique dont dérive le nihilisme de la culture européenne est donc, selon Nietzsche, la métaphysique sur laquelle elle s'appuie. Tout ce qui est arrivé à l'européen pendant deux millénaires apparaît dans une lumière nouvelle. La métaphysique est la « grammaire » de cette culture, sa « logique ». En la pensant de cette manière, Nietzsche suppose que cette-ci ne consiste dans une simple collection d'idées personnelles, dépourvues de liaison intime. Elle n'est pas la somme des conceptions sur le monde et sur la vie, comme on l'a longtemps cru. A l'époque, l'entendre comme système unitaire ne représentait pas une nouveauté. L'exigence de découvrir

l'unité interne de la métaphysique a représenté l'impulse décisif de la philosophie kantienne et, plus tard, de la philosophie spéculative hégélienne. Même si les interprétations de ceux-derniers ont été fondamentales, Nietzsche essaie de se frayer son propre chemin, en découvrant ainsi un nouveau sens de la métaphysique. L'identification de la métaphysique avec le platonisme, donc avec la dichotomie entre le monde vrai et le monde apparent, pourrait avoir ses origines dans une lecture faite par Nietzsche en octobre 1883, lorsqu'il lit le livre de Gustav Teichmüller, *Die wirkliche und die scheinbare Welt. Neue Grundlegung der Metaphysik*, Breslau, publié en 1882 (Schlechta 1975, 86). La constatation qu'il prend pour point de départ est extrêmement simple, et, en quelque sorte, contestable : la supposition centrale de la métaphysique européenne, celle qui prescrit sa manière de fonctionnement, réside dans le soi-disant « platonisme ». Mais il faut juger l'affirmation dans son contexte : Nietzsche parle de la manière dont il voit, lui, la métaphysique, de sa façon particulière de la problématiser. Pour cette raison, son idée ne peut pas être combattue par d'autres observations, hypothèses ou théories concourantes, mais il faut la considérer dans son effectivité. L'important n'est pas ce qu'elle dit explicitement, mais son enjeu. Quelles en ont été les conséquences ? Quelles mutations a-t-elle produit dans le domaine de la pensée philosophique ? Que s'est-il vraiment passé avec son apparition ?

Les sens, les instincts, les sentiments

Dans le chapitre « La raison dans la philosophie », du *Crépuscule des idoles*, Nietzsche présente deux idiosyncrasies des philosophes. La première, c'est leur manque du sens historique. Le déficit d'historicité a pour effet la négation du devenir. Les philosophes regardent les choses, les idées et les problèmes sous l'espèce de l'éternité, convaincus que *n'est* réellement que ce qui ne devient pas. D'où résulte la confiance qu'ils font aux concepts. Selon Nietzsche, les concepts sont pourtant des instruments rudimentaires. Pour quelle raison suspecte-t-on le devenir ? A-t-il quelque faute « métaphysique » ? Pourquoi faut-il le mettre à l'index, lui

justement ? Et qu'est-ce qui nous autorise de compter, au contraire, sur l'être ? Autrement dit, pourquoi l'être plutôt que le devenir ? Cette option, exemplaire dans son genre, reste tout simplement une question de foi. Or, celle-ci est, par définition, impossible à justifier. Objet d'une supposition élémentaire, l'être reste complètement inaccessible. C'est à qui, la faute pour cet état de fait ? La réponse des philosophes est immédiat et, en quelque sorte, prévisible : c'est la faute à la corporalité, c'est-à-dire aux sens. Identifié avec précision mathématique, le coupable est placé d'emblée dans un système de correspondances : sens-devenir-histoire. L'analyse est par conséquent structurée sur chacun de ces plans. Leur schéma est d'une parfaite clarté logique : les sens nous projettent dans le vertige du devenir, nous livrent à l'histoire, d'où nous essayons en permanence de nous évader, mais pour lui tomber prisonniers de nouveau (Nietzsche 1999, t. 6, 74 ; Nietzsche 1988, 25-6).

Dans l'histoire de la métaphysique, on a considéré les sens comme étant au plus haut degré responsables, en vertu de leur aspect trompeur. Ils mentent à tout moment, faussent le « vrai » monde, raison pour laquelle ils ne peuvent être qu'« immoraux ». C'est justement pour cela que la confiance en eux est synonyme de la foi au mensonge. Au fond, avertit Nietzsche, c'est nous qui leur attribuons la faute. Tout commence depuis le moment où, en nous imaginant que c'est de notre devoir de nous sauver du cercle du devenir, nous nous élançons héroïquement à la recherche de l'être, sans pourtant trouver la voie adéquate d'y accéder. Mais la cause de notre impuissance, de l'ainsi-dite « tromperie », ce ne sont pas les sens. Selon Nietzsche, nous croyons qu'ils nous trompent en conséquence de notre conception morale, qui détermine de manière univoque l'orientation vers l'être et la négation du devenir. Presqu'imperceptiblement, une erreur logique s'insinue ici, à savoir la confusion entre cause et effet, qui représente en fait un symptôme de la « la véritable perversion de la raison » (Nietzsche 1999, t. 6, 144 ; Nietzsche 1988, 38). A cet égard, l'intention de Nietzsche est de déculpabiliser les sens, en déplaçant la « faute » d'eux vers la véritable source du mensonge, nulle autre que la raison : « C'est la "raison" qui est

la cause de ce que nous falsifions le témoignage des sens » (Nietzsche 1999, t. 6, 75 ; Nietzsche 1988, 26). Par dévoiler cela, Nietzsche opère un glissement de la signification des sens et de la raison, tout en inversant leur rapport.

La décision initiale des Grecs a été de privilégier l'être, en refusant le devenir. La prévalence de la raison sur les sens n'est, donc, qu'une conséquence. Le soi-disant rationalisme grec provient d'une option d'ordre ontologique. Dans le contexte mentionné, Nietzsche déplace le rapport ontologique vers celui entre la raison et les sens, en mettant provisoirement l'accent sur ce dernier, mais c'est pour des raisons stratégiques qu'il le fait. A ce point, il ne faut pas comprendre la raison et les sens comme de simples facultés du savoir, comme il est d'habitude dans la philosophie moderne. Au fond, la décision ontologique initiale s'appuie sur une manière d'être, sur une capacité de l'homme et non sur un organe de connaissance. L'enjeu de l'exercice nietzschéen est, dans la section dont nous discutons, d'identifier des types de l'humain, et non des essences décharnées, ni des actes d'un sujet gnoséologique abstrait. En définitif, toute sa philosophie est une tentative de découvrir la typologie élémentaire des manières d'être.

Dans un autre chapitre du *Crépuscule des idoles*, « Le Problème de Socrate », Nietzsche analyse le rapport entre les sens et les instincts, en identifiant l'erreur de Socrate, à savoir la glorification de la raison, au détriment des instincts. Le philosophe grec n'était pourtant pas un cas exceptionnel, mais les symptômes de la décadence, qui le caractérisaient parfaitement, étaient déjà largement répandus dans l'Athènes de son temps. Conformément à l'interprétation de Nietzsche, ce qui avait semblé décadent à Socrate, chez ses contemporains, c'est l'anarchie dans les instincts, qui s'érigent en vrai tyran. Socrate trouve un remède à cette « maladie », « un *contre-tyran* qui soit plus fort qu'eux », à savoir la raison, avec son principal instrument de lutte, la dialectique (Nietzsche 1999, t. 6, 71 ; Nietzsche 1988, 23). Mais, le problème n'a-t-il pas été inventé – dès le début – avec l'intention d'imposer ainsi une prétendue thérapie libératrice ? C'est vers cette idée que s'oriente l'exercice nietzschéen. Premièrement, il ne s'agit pas d'une véritable solution, car elle est survenue en l'absence de la

possibilité de choisir. Si la raison a été considérée libératrice, cela est arrivé sans que Socrate et ses athéniens, « malades » de l'anarchie dans les instincts, puissent opter entre plusieurs solutions. En réalité, « ses “malades” ne choisirent librement d'être raisonnables, – c'était pour eux *de rigueur*, c'était leur ultime recours » (Nietzsche 1999, t. 6, 71 ; Nietzsche 1988, 23). C'est ainsi que Nietzsche s'explique le fanatisme que met la réflexion grecque tout entière à se jeter sur la raison ainsi-dite libératrice proposée par Socrate. Or, le « choix » qui n'est pas libre est, en fait, non-raisonnable. Ne pas pouvoir choisir en délibérant consciemment, c'est un acte contraire à la raison. En tant que prétendu remède, la raison entre en scène par un acte non-raisonnable. En imitant Socrate, le comportement des Grecs devient par conséquent « *raisonnable jusqu'à l'absurde* ». Cette expression illustre le paradoxe par lequel la raison s'instaure comme unique remède, en se servant pour cela de son *alter* même, la non-raison. Deuxièmement, Nietzsche montre que Socrate était un faux médecin, un prétendu sauveur. Son remède n'était qu'une duperie, car la lutte contre les instincts n'est elle-même qu'une nouvelle maladie (Nietzsche 1999, t. 6, 72-3 ; Nietzsche 1988, 23). La vraie maladie apparaît lorsqu'on ressent la nécessité de combattre les instincts. C'est le symptôme le plus évident de l'absence de l'*ascension*, donc de la négation de la vie : « Être obligé de lutter contre ses instincts – voilà bien la formule de la décadence : tant que la vie suit une courbe ascendante, bonheur égale instinct » (Nietzsche 1999, t. 6, 73 ; Nietzsche 1988, 24).

Lors de son analyse, Nietzsche ne recourt pas à une banale inversion, bien que, par un mouvement contraire à celui de Socrate, il revalorise les instincts au détriment de la raison. Il montre que la « logique » des instincts est insurpassable. La raison est immanente à cette logique. Elle découle du jeu des instincts, et non d'en dehors de ceux-ci. Autrement dit, elle est « un état de rapport entre différentes passions et convoitises », qui possèdent leur propre forme de rationalité (Nietzsche 1999, t. 13, 11 [310], 131 ; Nietzsche 1976, 313). En vertu de cela, le discours sur la raison devra être porté, dès lors, du « point de vue » des instincts, et d'aucune façon inversement. L'apparente inversion est un geste par lequel Nietzsche non seulement

libère les instincts de la tyrannie de la raison, mais aussi dégage un espace de discours sur les instincts non-subsumable au discours dominant de la raison. Ce dernier doit devenir immanent au plan des instincts. Dans d'autres sections, Nietzsche va affirmer que la raison dépend des instincts ; elle dérive de leur jeu, étant, par rapport à eux, seconde et marginale. Aussi longtemps que la raison avait été considérée comme le seul remède pour la maladie des instincts, elle avait été appelée à décrire tout l'espace de jeu, le rapport et la différence entre les instincts et la raison. Lorsque Nietzsche démasque la raison comme un faux remède, ce n'est pas son opposé qui s'installe en tant que « solution », comme si elle prendrait la place à la raison. Tout au contraire, le plan des instincts arrive à « commander » l'espace de jeu, le rapport, la différence entre les instincts et la raison. En d'autres mots, on ne renverse pas un rapport, mais on déplace son principe. La différence entre les instincts et la raison se modifie, son statut même change. La raison voulait auparavant être *l'autre* radical des instincts, pour devenir, à la fin de l'histoire qu'elle avait inaugurée, un autre relatif, profondément dépendant de la logique des instincts. Maintenant, elle dérive des instincts et, dans ces nouvelles conditions, elle ne peut plus rien décider quant à elle-même ou aux instincts. Elle ne possède plus une logique propre. Mais pour arriver à ce point, il a fallu transférer aux instincts son trait définitoire, à savoir la lucidité (la conscience). Dans ce but, on a symboliquement confronté les instincts à la raison, car ce n'était qu'ainsi qu'on pouvait opérer ce glissement de sens. Nietzsche n'invente pas une nouvelle théorie, mais il projette un espace du discours à l'intérieur duquel les anciennes « positivités » (en termes hégéliens), dépendantes de l'ancien discours de la raison, perdent leur validité, ouvrent la voie à de nouveaux sens possibles. Ce n'est pas par hasard que Nietzsche montre que les instincts, dans leur tension vers le pouvoir, essaient au fond de philosopher (Nietzsche 1999, t. 5, 20 ; Nietzsche 1987, 25). De leur espace de jeu naît le sommet le plus haut de la raison. On pourrait conclure qu'on n'a pas affaire à une inversion, mais au déplacement du rapport instincts-raison.

Après les sens et les instincts, Nietzsche redécouvre également la valeur des sentiments, qu'il arrache à la fausse domination de la raison. Dans un aphorisme tardif, il propose une « psychologie de la métaphysique », destinée à révéler le mécanisme existentiel dont dérive l'erreur de la foi immesurée en la raison. Tout part de la logique, car le « monde vrai » est inventé en vertu du principe de la non-contradiction. Il surgit par opposition au monde sensible, plus exactement à la manière dont nous le percevons. C'est la raison qui nous dit que « si A est, son concept opposé B doit être aussi ». Derrière ce raisonnement on ne trouve pourtant que certains sentiments (Nietzsche 1999, t. 12, 8 [2], 327-8 ; Nietzsche 1978, 318). Dans ce monde, la principale cause de la souffrance semble être le devenir. Ses expressions – le changement et l'accident, les affects et l'irraisonnable – deviennent des motifs de souffrance. Elles entrent dans la composition du monde, et on ne peut ni les éliminer, ni les contrôler. C'est justement pour cette raison, affirme Nietzsche, que la peur de souffrir a engendré un autre monde, d'où les causes de la souffrance terrestre sont exclues. Le devenir, les affects, le hasard sont devenus des attributs du « monde apparent », leurs contraires étant placés et ordonnés dans un « monde vrai ». «Ce qui a été le plus craint, la cause des souffrances les plus intenses (volonté de dominer, volupté, etc.) est ce qui a été traité avec le plus d'hostilité par les hommes, et éliminé du monde "vrai". Aussi ont-ils peu à peu biffé les EMOTIONS – Dieu antithèse du mal, c'est-à-dire la réalité placée dans la négation des désirs et émotions (c'est-à-dire exactement dans le néant) » (Nietzsche 1999, t. 13, 18 [16], pp. 536-7 ; Nietzsche 1977, 283). La fausseté du raisonnement par lequel on déduit la nécessité des termes opposés dérive, selon Nietzsche, de l'origine même des concepts, qui est située dans la sphère pratique de l'utilité (Nietzsche 1999, t. 12, 8 [2], 328 ; Nietzsche 1978, 319).

Suite à l'analyse antérieure on peut conclure que le nihilisme sous-jacent à la métaphysique occidentale a pour cause la dissimulation de la couche corporelle de la vie. C'est pour cela justement que la critique de la métaphysique prend la forme d'une récupération de la corporalité, en redécouvrant une

formidable pluralité en l'absence de laquelle aucune construction rationnelle n'aurait pas de sens.

NOTES

¹ Selon Dilthey, l'espoir de Nietzsche qu'il pourrait trouver en lui-même de nouvelles voies directrices, qui n'ont pas été parcourues jusque là, n'est qu'une simple illusion. Ni même le surhomme ne pourrait se soustraire à l'histoire, qu'il est obligé de porter dans l'âme. En croyant « qu'il doit s'abstraire de tout ce que l'histoire et la communauté lui ont donné », Nietzsche manque la réalisation d'une véritable conscience historique (Dilthey 1921, 528-9 ; Figl 1981/1982, 412-6).

² Jusqu'à la fin du XVIII^e siècle, le terme latin *cultura* a été transposé en allemand par *Kultur*, y compris lorsqu'il s'agissait de la culture individuelle. Ultérieurement, toute référence à cette dernière se fera par la notion de *Bildung*. La mutation se produit, le plus probablement, dans l'écrit *Über Goethes Hermann und Dorothea* (1797-1798) de Wilhelm von Humboldt, qui en accorde quand même la paternité à Schiller et à Fichte. *Bildung* traduit dès lors l'expression *subjektive Kultur*, le degré le plus élevé de la formation individuelle, quand on atteint la formation de la personnalité, tandis que *Kultur* reste une simple étape intermédiaire, où la culture se réalise uniquement par l'intermédiaire de l'intellect, sans pouvoir accéder à l'accomplissement de l'individu. Mais toutes les deux, *Kultur* et *Bildung*, s'opposent à la nature, en arrachant/libérant l'individu à la domination de celle-ci (Kopp 1974, 6 et 89-90 ; Blondel 1986, 649).

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George Bondor est chargé de cours au Département de Philosophie de l'Université «Al. I. Cuza» de Iasi (Roumanie). Docteur en philosophie de l'Université «Al. I. Cuza» de Iasi (2004), il est l'auteur du livre *La danse des masques. Nietzsche et la philosophie de l'interprétation* (en roumain, Humanitas 2008). Intérêts de recherche : la phénoménologie, l'herméneutique, l'histoire de la métaphysique.

Address:

George BONDOR

Al.I. Cuza University of Iasi

Department of Philosophy

Faculty of Philosophy and Social-Political Sciences

Bd. Carol I, 11

700506 Iasi, Romania

Tel: 0040 232 201284

Email: bondor@uaic.ro

Derrida, Foucault and “Madness, the Absence of an *Œuvre*”

Seferin James
University College Dublin

Abstract

This article argues that Foucault's 1964 paper “La folie, l'absence d'œuvre” ought to be understood as a response to Derrida's 1963 paper “Cogito et histoire de la folie”. I clarify the chronology of the exchange between these two thinkers and follow commentators Bennington and Flynn in emphasising themes other than the status of madness in Descartes. I undertake a thematic investigation of Foucault's 1961 characterisation of madness as the absence of an *œuvre* and the role of this characterisation in Derrida's 1963 paper. Then I turn to an investigation of Foucault's substantial change in position on these key themes with his 1964 paper. I argue that Foucault seeks to minimise the initial importance he attributed to his characterisation of madness as the absence of an *œuvre*, altering his understanding of the relation between madness and language as well as shifting the event that silences madness from Descartes to Freud. Derrida's reconsideration of Foucault's *Folie et déraison* in 1991 treats Freud as the new locus of the exchange. This is an implicit recognition by Derrida of Foucault's “La folie, l'absence d'œuvre” and confirmation of its place within the exchange.

Keywords: Derrida, Foucault, Cogito, Silence, History, Madness

1. Introduction

Michel Foucault published the major thesis from his doctoral studies in 1961 under the title *Folie et Dérison: Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*. In 1963 Jacques Derrida presented a paper at the *Collège Philosophique* titled “Cogito et histoire de la folie” that took Foucault's 1961 text as its point of departure (Derrida 1978, 36). Derrida notes in the opening lines of his paper that he had “the good fortune to study under

Michel Foucault” (Derrida 1978, 36) and he is known to have sent a letter formally inviting Foucault to attend the presentation (Foucault 1994, 25).²

There has been some confusion concerning the initial publication of Derrida's “Cogito et histoire de la folie.” It was published in the 1967 collection *L'Écriture et la différence* where a note mistakenly states that “Cogito et histoire de la folie” was originally published “in *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, 1964, nos. 3 and 4” (Derrida 1978, 445n; Derrida 1964).³ The paper was actually first published in 1963 in the fourth issue of *Revue de Métaphysique et de morale*. Derrida then had to wait until the next issue of the journal, the first of 1964, in order to publish a number of additional notes for the paper – “A propos de ‘Cogito et histoire de la folie’” – as correspondence to the journal. Derrida's “Cogito et histoire de la folie” first became available in English as “Cogito and the History of Madness” (henceforth CHM) when *L'Écriture et la différence* was translated by Alan Bass in 1978 as *Writing and Difference*.

Derrida stated in a footnote to the initial 1963 publication that “[w]ith the exception of several notes and a short passage (in brackets), this paper is the reproduction of a lecture given 4 March 1963 at the Collège Philosophique” (Derrida 1978, 389n).⁴ Derrida refers to material inserted between square brackets for the 1963 publication that expands on the problematic of whether the Greeks had a relation to madness.⁵ When the paper was reproduced in *L'Écriture et la différence* this note was no longer accurate in stating that the paper remained the same as the one pronounced at the *Collège Philosophique* apart from this addition. It was subject to an additional revision between its initial publication in 1963 and its subsequent publication in 1967.

The revision of “Cogito et histoire de la folie” between 1963/4 and 1967 ought to be of some scholarly interest because it involves the question of Derrida's early writing of *différance* with an 'a'. Schultz and Fried, in their annotated bibliography of Derrida's work, refer to “Cogito et histoire de la folie” as the place where Derrida first writes *différance* with an 'a' (Schultz and Fried 1992, 12). The sentence referred to by Schultz and Fried is where Derrida writes that “[t]he economy of this

writing is a regulated relationship between that which exceeds and the exceeded totality: the *différance* of the absolute excess" (Derrida 1978, 75).⁶ This statement is missing from the initial journal publication (Derrida 1963, 493) and must have been added during Derrida's revision between 1963 and 1967. It is therefore unclear whether Derrida first wrote *différance* with an 'a' in "Cogito et histoire de la folie."

In 1964, Foucault was approached with a proposal to republish his 1961 book in a popular edition. Against Foucault's wishes, this publication was to be "d'une édition très abrégée" (Foucault 1994, I, 26)⁷ retitled *Histoire de la folie*. This severely abridged 1964 edition was the basis for Richard Howard's translation of Foucault's text into English, published as *Madness and Civilisation: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* in 1967 (Foucault 1967). Among the many sections excised in the 1964 abridgement is the passage on Descartes to which Derrida had explicitly referred in his 1963 paper. The original 1961 Preface – where Derrida had, in Jean Khalfa's words, "concentrated his more general attack" (Khalifa 2006, xxiii) – was cut to one third of its former size. This abridgement of the 1961 Preface removes some of the lines to which Derrida refers in "Cogito et histoire de la folie" but some of the assertions that are most important to Derrida's argumentation were retained. Particularly, Foucault's statement of intent to give a history of madness and to return to the originary division between reason and madness (Foucault 1964b, xi-xiii).

Foucault also published a short article in 1964 titled "La folie, l'absence d'œuvre." (Foucault 1964a) Foucault will later state that this article was intended to "expand on a phrase I ventured rather blindly: 'madness, the absence of an *œuvre*'" (Foucault 2006e, xxxix). Khalfa states that it is in this article that Foucault "reformulates and develops some of the themes of the first Preface" (Khalifa 2006, xxiii).

Foucault published in 1972 a new edition of his 1961 text under the title *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*. This text is commonly referred to as the second edition of Foucault's text, but such a characterisation ignores the abridged 1964 edition. The 1972 text is also commonly referred to as an unabridged edition. While it is true that Foucault almost

completely restores the material omitted from the 1964 edition for the 1972 edition, the single exception to this restoration is that the original 1961 Preface, having already been reduced by two thirds for the 1964 edition, is now removed completely for the 1972 edition. The omitted 1961 Preface is replaced with a short new 1972 Preface.

Foucault added two appendices to the 1972 edition. One of these is the 1964 article “La folie, l'absence d'œuvre.” The reformulation of material from the original 1961 preface in “La folie, l'absence d'œuvre” therefore replaces the original preface material entirely in the 1972 edition. The second appendix added is “Mon corps, ce papier, ce feu.”⁸ Foucault describes “Mon corps, ce papier, ce feu” as “where I try to address a remarkable criticism by Derrida” (Foucault 2006e, xxxix). Foucault responds to Derrida on the matter of Descartes in “Mon corps, ce papier, ce feu” and this means that the passage on Descartes omitted from the 1964 edition is restored to the 1972 edition alongside a new defence of that passage against Derrida.⁹

Geoffrey Bennington translated “Mon corps, ce papier, ce feu” into English in 1979 as “My Body, this Paper, This Fire,” (Foucault 2006c) shortly after the 1978 translation of Derrida's “Cogito et histoire de la folie.” Foucault's defence of the original passage on Descartes against Derrida was therefore made available in English many years before the original passage to which Derrida had actually referred.

The 1972 edition was eventually translated into English in 2006 by Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa, and published as the *History of Madness*.¹⁰ This is the first complete edition of the text to appear in English. It is actually more complete than the 1972 edition upon which it is based as it also includes the original 1961 preface. The event of its publication is the first time that the unabridged 1961 preface and the original 1961 passage on Descartes have appeared in English. It is also the first time that Foucault's 1964 paper and 1972 appendix “La folie, l'absence d'œuvre” has been translated; “Madness, the Absence of an *Œuvre*” (Foucault 2006b, 541-9, henceforth MAO).

Derrida presented once more on Foucault's 1961 text at a conference marking the thirtieth anniversary of its original publication in 1991. Derrida's paper was published in a collection of papers from that conference in 1992 as "Être juste avec Freud: l'histoire de la folie à l'âge psychanalytique." (Derrida 1992) The paper was then translated into English by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas and published in 1994 as "To Do Justice to Freud: The History of Madness in the Age of Psychoanalysis." (Derrida 1994)

2. "La folie, l'absence d'œuvre"

The exchange between Derrida and Foucault has attracted a considerable amount of commentary and attention (See Bennington 1979; Boyne 1990; Brague 2002; Cook 1990; D'Amico 1984; Felman 1975; Flaherty 1986; Flynn 1989; Frank 1989; Harrison 2007; Kates 2005; Norris 1987, 213-223; Spivak 1976, lx-lxii; Switzer 2010; Wood 2009, 46-59; Žižek 2007).¹¹ While Foucault's original characterisation of madness as the absence of an *œuvre* in the 1961 Preface has received some attention (See Bennington 1979; Flynn 1989), the commentary on the exchange has been almost completely silent on MAO.

Only Shoshana Felman's article "Madness and Philosophy or Literature's Reason" refers to MAO in the context of a consideration of the exchange between Derrida and Foucault (Felman 1975, 224). Felman quotes one brief statement from MAO in order to illustrate Foucault's literary understanding of madness but does not undertake an exposition of the paper or comment generally on the relation of this paper to the exchange.

Foucault and Derrida never explicitly identified MAO as an important part of their exchange. Foucault does not refer to Derrida in MAO and describes "Mon corps, ce papier, ce feu" as where he responds to Derrida (Foucault 1972, „Préface”). Foucault's response to Derrida in "Mon corps, ce papier, ce feu" is largely restricted to the question over the status of madness in Descartes. This has been noted by Bennington (1979, 5-7) and Flynn (1989, 201).

Flynn writes that “[t]he basis of Derrida's critique of Foucault is hardly the pedantic concern that Descartes's First Meditation may have been misread in a passage that occupies less than 4 pages of a 673-page book” (Flynn 1989, 201).¹² Flynn's point here is somewhat overstated because Derrida does contest the question of madness in Descartes but he is correct to highlight the limitations of a sole emphasis on this aspect of the argumentation. Derrida spends the first half of CHM – some twenty pages – opening a number of questions over Foucault's intentions and methodology before broaching the specifics of Foucault's interpretation of the status of madness in Descartes.

Derrida relies on material from Foucault's 1961 preface in this first half of CHM, as Khalfa correctly points out (Khalifa 2006, xxiii). Khalfa also notes that Foucault reformulates themes from the 1961 Preface in MAO (Khalifa 2006, xxiii) but it does not seem to occur to him that these points might be combined into the question that I intend to raise here. The question of whether Foucault's MAO ought to be considered some kind of reaction or response to Derrida's CHM.

Having already situated MAO within a clarified chronology of the exchange between Derrida and Foucault, I now propose to undertake a thematic consideration of Foucault's 1961 characterisation of madness as the absence of an *œuvre* and examine the role it plays for Derrida's argumentation in CHM. On the basis of this thematic exploration it becomes possible to show that Foucault not only addresses the same thematic concerns in MAO as those raised by Derrida in the first half of CHM but also that (a) Foucault alters his 1961 position on the question of how madness relates to language, and (b) dramatically shifts his emphasis from Descartes to Freud.

3. Foucault's initial characterisation of madness as the absence of an *œuvre* and Derrida's interest in this

In the original 1961 preface Foucault poses the question: “What then is madness, in its most general but most concrete form, for anyone who immediately challenges any hold that knowledge might have upon it?” Foucault answers by asserting

that madness is "[i]n all probability, nothing other than *the absence of an oeuvre*" (Foucault 2006d, xxxi). These statements are omitted in the abridgement of the preface for the 1964 edition but it is in relation to this that Derrida states in "Cogito and the History of Madness" that "madness is what by essence cannot be said: it is the 'absence of the work,' as Foucault profoundly says" (Derrida 1978, CHM 51).¹³ Derrida accepts Foucault's assertion that madness is the absence of an *oeuvre* and recognises it as "a fundamental motif of Foucault's book." (Derrida 1978, CHM 65).

Foucault's assertion that madness is the absence of an *oeuvre* is associated with a number of arguments in Foucault's text and Derrida does not treat of them all equally. Madness as the absence of an *oeuvre* is (1) the historical identification of those who could not work among the incarcerated poor during the great confinement; (2) the absence of a body of work representing madness as madness; (3) that which makes history possible.

(1) The assertion that madness is the absence of an *oeuvre* refers to how madness emerged as a way of characterising the poor who could not work during the great confinement. Foucault states of the mad that:

Like the poor, they were subject to the rule of compulsory labour, indeed in many cases the singularity of their condition became perceptible against the uniformity of this constraint. In the workshops where they were expected to blend in with the others, they often signalled themselves through their inability to work and to follow the rhythms of collective life. (Foucault 2006a, 71)

For Foucault, madness initially emerges historically as a characterisation of the poor who could not work or who produce nothing. The term madness is first deployed historically as the recognition of the absence of an *oeuvre* in this sense.¹⁴ Derrida pays no obvious attention to this aspect of Foucault's assertion except insofar as the inability of the mad to engage in physical labour might be linked to the inability of the mad to create a written *oeuvre*. Such a link can be identified in Derrida's opening allusion to Hegel in CHM in which he undertakes a textual reformulation of the master slave dialectic. In Derrida's reformulation, the work that fosters the development of the

disciple's self-consciousness is the task of beginning to speak and the production of the text.

(2) Madness as the absence of an *œuvre* also refers to the absence of a body of work representing madness as madness. Foucault states:

There is no common language: or rather, it no longer exists; the constitution of madness as mental illness, at the end of the eighteenth century, bears witness to a rupture in a dialogue, gives the separation as already enacted, and expels from the memory all those imperfect words, of no fixed syntax, spoken falteringly, in which the exchange between madness and reason was carried out. The language of psychiatry, which is a monologue by reason *about* madness, could only have come into existence in such a silence. My intention was not to write the history of that language, but rather draw up the archaeology of that silence. (Foucault 2006d, xxviii)

Here Foucault argues that there was a prelapsarian time before discourse was divided into mad discourse on one hand and reasonable discourse on the other. The mad discourse is silenced and in this silence arises a monologue by reason about madness; a monologue that attempts to define and categorise madness, but in applying such *reasonable ways of knowing* never understands madness madly. For Foucault this is related to the constitution of madness as madness because “[t]he gesture that divides madness is the constitutive one”. (Foucault 2006d, xxviii) The silence that results from this division is madness as the absence of an *œuvre*.

Derrida accepts Foucault's assertion, but uses it to problematise the possibility of Foucault's text. Derrida argues that:

Foucault has attempted – and this is the greatest merit, but also the very infeasibility of his book – to write a history of madness *itself*. *Itself*. Of madness itself. That is, by letting madness speak for itself. Foucault wanted madness to be the *subject* of his book in every sense of the word: its theme and its first-person narrator, it's author, madness speaking about itself. Foucault wanted to write a history of madness *itself*, that is madness speaking on the basis of its own experience and under its own authority, and not a history of madness described from within the language of reason. (Derrida 1978, CHM 39)

Derrida identifies Foucault's ambition to let madness speak for itself as the desire to give madness an *œuvre*. Foucault's

assertion that madness is the absence of an *œuvre* then becomes a pivotal point, because Foucault's work will either actually be a work and hence a work of reason that fails to allow madness speak for itself, or will fail in such a drastic manner that it cannot be considered a work at all.

Foucault's intention is to create a work of madness without falling into the trap that Derrida argues it necessarily leads to. Foucault believes that it is possible to avoid this trap by returning to:

[A] language more original, much rougher and more matutinal than that of science, the dialogue of their rupture, which proves, in a fleeting fashion, that they are still on speaking terms. There, madness and non-madness, reason and non-reason are confusedly implicated in each other, inseparable as they do not yet exist, and existing for each other. (Foucault 2006d, xxviii)

Foucault believes that it is in this undivided language, where madness and reason are not yet separated, that his 1961 text is written. The ability to characterise language in this way is therefore very important for Foucault.

Derrida challenges Foucault's ability to utilise such an undivided language. Derrida argues that:

The misfortune of the mad, the interminable misfortune of their silence, is that their best spokesmen are those who betray them best; which is to say that when one attempts to convey their silence itself, one has already passed over to the side of the enemy, the side of order, even if one fights against order from within it. (Derrida 1978, CHM 42)

Derrida concludes that Foucault's attempt to create a work, especially a history, without a rational is ultimately naïve. Derrida asks rhetorically: "is not an archaeology, even of silence, a logic, that is, an organized language, a project, an order, a sentence, a syntax, a work?" (Derrida 1978, CHM 41) Derrida argues that "the work starts with the most elementary discourse" (Derrida 1978, CHM 65). Derrida's argument is that a rationality of some kind is intrinsic to language itself. He argues that *FD* cannot be a work of madness as Foucault desires, but is instead yet another work of reason. This is the core political charge of Derrida's CHM: that Foucault is only imprisoning madness in a more subtle way by denouncing its

imprisonment in a work that is itself inescapably reasonable, even if it is only separated from madness “by the ‘transparent sheet’ of which Joyce speaks” (Derrida 1978, CHM 66) when Joyce writes of *Ulysses* that “[i]n any event this book was terribly daring. A transparent sheet separates it from madness.” (Derrida 1978, CHM 36).

With this in mind, Derrida asks the cutting question of Foucault's text, “[w]ould not the archaeology of silence [i.e. of madness] be the most efficacious and subtle restoration, the repetition, in the most irreducibly ambiguous meaning of the word, of the act perpetrated against madness – and be so at the very moment when this act is denounced?” (Derrida 1978, CHM 41). This is the most embarrassing question that Derrida asks of Foucault in CHM because it deflates the moral tone and liberatory aspirations of *FD*. Foucault sought to emancipate madness, but Derrida argues that all he can do is denounce the crime of its incarceration while repeating it.

Derrida argues that Foucault's naivety in believing that it is possible to escape the ordered nature of language effectively causes his project to default to a situation in which Foucault can be said to have created a non-work of madness: “Foucault's determination to avoid this trap is constant. It is the most audacious and seductive aspect of his venture, producing its admirable tension. But it is also, with all seriousness, the *maddest* aspect of his project.” (Derrida 1978, CHM 40) For Derrida, Foucault's text can only be considered a work of madness because the work is unaware of its own impossibility. Foucault's work could not have been mad if it knowingly deployed a strategy of impossibility. It is only because Foucault does not realise that his project must fail so that it can, somewhat paradoxically, succeed. Derrida informs Foucault that he has only succeeded in spite of himself.¹⁵

(3) For Foucault, the absence of an *œuvre* is also what must be considered in order to come to terms with the full truth of our society. He argues that:

[T]hose obscure gestures [...] through which a culture rejects something which for it will be the Exterior; and throughout its history, this hollowed-out void, this white space by means of which it isolates itself, identifies it as clearly as its values. [...] To interrogate a culture about its limit-experience is to question it at the confines of

history about a tear that is something like the very birth of its history. (Foucault 2006d, xxix)

Here Foucault claims that what a society forces outside of itself creates the exterior that defines the interior of that society as much as what that society claims to stand for. This point is further developed by Foucault when he writes that:

The great *œuvre* of the history of the world is indelibly accompanied by the absence of an *œuvre*, which renews itself at every instant, but which runs unaltered in its inevitable void the length of history: and from before history, as it is already there in the primitive decision, and after it again, as it will triumph in the last word uttered by history. The plenitude of history is only possible in the space, both empty and peopled at the same time, of all the words without language ... The charred root of meaning. (Foucault 2006d, xxxii)¹⁶

Foucault argues that the work of society, its history, is linked to its non-work, its non-history. Foucault wishes to consider society from both sides of the delimitation that makes it the society that it is, with the intention of coming to a more profound understanding of it than would otherwise be possible. Though such an understanding would be more profound than a consideration of society that only operates on the reasonable side of that limit, Foucault argues that it is actually necessary to understanding in general:

The necessity of madness throughout the history of the West is linked to that decisive action that extracts a significant language from the background noise and its continuous monotony, a language which is transmitted and culminates in time; it is, in short, linked to *the possibility of history*. (Foucault 2006d, xxxii)

Foucault holds that it is necessary for understanding in general to understand the absence of an *œuvre*. It has become a matter of the possibility and constitution of meaning in general and as such, that is to say of the transcendental in a Husserlian sense.

Derrida is aware of implicit problems for Foucault's project in this understanding of the absent *œuvre* as that which makes history possible. Derrida argues that if this separation between madness and reason is a condition of "the historicity of history" (Derrida 1978, CHM 51), then the event of the separation of madness and reason – what Foucault considers the birth of history – cannot itself be an historical event. This

runs contrary to Foucault's attempt to historicise this event in his 1961 text such as when, for example, he refers to the separation of madness and reason taking place during a particular time frame: “[a]fter defusing its violence, the Renaissance had liberated the voice of Madness. The age of reason, in a strange takeover, was then to reduce it to silence” (Foucault 2006a, 44). Derrida's point here is somewhat confusing. He may appear to be arguing that the separation of madness and reason is pre-historical but this is not the case.

Archaeology can give a history of a time before historical records by examining, for example, remains from the neolithic period. This might lead one to conclude that it is possible to give an account of a pre-historical event. Such a conclusion would fail to realise that the term pre-historical implies temporality in a historical sense. To attempt to talk of the pre-historical is to historicise history itself and this is, inevitably, a historical gesture. Derrida is not arguing that the birth of history is pre-historical (a historical understanding) but rather that the birth of history is irrecoverable to any historical gesture. It is not a matter of history but of historicity; of history *qua* history, of the historicalness of history, of that which makes history as such possible but is not itself historical.

Derrida states that “Like nonmeaning, silence is the work's profound limit and resource.” (Derrida 1978, CHM 66) This resonates positively with Foucault's assertion that madness is the absence of an *œuvre* that necessarily accompanies the actual *œuvre*. It is relatively straightforward to understand that silence is the limit of the work when this is understood to mean that silence is the limit of language. For Derrida, this silence would not only be the absence of speech but also the absence of the written mark. It is not itself a mark, but nevertheless this non-mark still produces a difference between the marking of language and the non-marking of non-language.

Silence produces the limits of the work and hence defines and determines the specificity of the work as the work it actually is. It operates at every level of a text – every grapheme takes shape in ink against the blankness of the page and Foucault's work takes shape against the absence of an *œuvre*. Derrida therefore recognises the importance of Foucault's point

that the “great *œuvre* of the history of the world is indelibly accompanied by the absence of an *œuvre*, which renews itself at every instant” (Foucault 2006d, xxxii) Derrida's concludes that madness is not excluded from the cogito in the name of reason because madness is what exceeds the form of any ordered determination of the cogito. The blankness of the page will always exceed whatever is written upon it, making what is written possible but never exhausting itself in the taking place of writing. Silence is the condition of possibility for the work but it is not a resource.

This sense of madness as the absence of an *œuvre* is very close to what Derrida will come to term *différance*. The proximity of Derrida's consideration of madness as the absence of an *œuvre* to *différance* is evidenced by Derrida's revision of “Cogito et histoire de la folie” to include this term for its 1967 republication in *L'Écriture et la différence*. It is also evidenced in the prominence given to the motif of silence in Derrida's discussion of *différance* in *La voix et le phénomène*.¹⁷ Having established the role of Foucault's 1961 characterisation of madness as the absence of an *œuvre* in relation to Derrida's 1963 argumentation, I now move to consider Foucault's reformulation of these themes in his 1964 paper.

4. Foucault's 1964 paper “Madness, the Absence of an *Œuvre*”

Foucault's MAO departs from his 1961 text substantially in relation to the themes considered in the previous section. There is also a shift in style and methodology away from history, marked by the adoption of a prophetic tone. Foucault offers a new schematisation of how madness relates to language, one that is markedly different from his earlier statements. Finally, the matter of the strange violent event that was said in 1961 to have taken place at the end of the renaissance and the beginning of the classical age is shifted from Descartes to Freud with dramatic implications.

Foucault's 1961 discussion of madness as the absence of an *œuvre* discusses the significance of this phrase in relation to

history but he discusses madness as the absence of an *œuvre* without mentioning history in MAO:

[A] prodigious *reserve* of meaning. But 'reserve' here should be understood less as a stock than as a figure that contains and suspends meaning, which furnishes a void where all that is proposed is the still unaccomplished possibility that a certain meaning might appear there, or a second, or a third, and so on to infinity. (Foucault 2006b, MAO 547)

Instead of a history there is now prophecy. The still unaccomplished possibility; the *not yet said* of madness; the messianic promise of a future meaning.

Foucault opens MAO with the future oriented statement that “[o]ne day, perhaps, we will no longer know what madness was. Its form will have closed up on itself, and the traces it will have left will no longer be intelligible” (Foucault 2006b, MAO 541). This quotation implies that madness is presently still intelligible in some way, or at least potentially intelligible, because there may come a time when it will no longer be so. And yet madness cannot have been absolutely silenced by a historical event, as claimed in the 1961 preface, if it is still potentially intelligible today.

Potential intelligibility implies potential communicability, and therefore language in the broadest sense – and madness cannot then be silence and the absence of an *œuvre*. The exclusion and silencing of madness is no longer to be considered a historical event at the end of the seventeenth century but rather a threatening future possibility. It also suggests that it is possible to escape the relationship to madness that Foucault insists our putatively reasonable society is currently incapable of escaping. Would this not constitute another mysterious event of comparable importance to that which originally silenced madness but left our society in a relationship with this silence, this exclusion? Something must surely change in order for our society to be able to escape the already inescapable relationship to that which it already so vehemently denies.

Foucault continues his 1964 article by stating that “To the ignorant glance, will those traces be anything more than simple black marks?” (Foucault 2006b, MAO 541). Foucault here argues that the meaning of black marks will be missed.

These black marks appear to be an allusion to writing but perhaps a writing that is not recognised as such. A language that is no longer recognised as significant. There is again an orientation towards the future in Foucault's question here. If making broad philosophical claims concerning the empirical past has become a problem for Foucault's project, then his project will abandon history to dispute the future.

Foucault's characterisation of madness as black marks that cannot be understood by an ignorant glance implies that madness is still a language even if it is not understood as such. Rather than madness being excluded from language, madness is now a language that is no longer recognised as meaningful. Madness is no longer simply reduced to silence by a historical event. It is now as if society simply stopped caring to listen.

Foucault makes a distinction in MAO between the prohibition of acts and prohibitions within language:

The systems that forbidden acts obey are familiar [...] But the organisation of prohibitions in language is still little understood. The two systems of restriction are not superimposed the one on the other, as though one were merely the verbal version of the other [...] One day it will be necessary to study the field of prohibitions in language in all its autonomy. (Foucault 2006b, MAO 545)

This distinction is not a dichotomy. Foucault states that madness "long occupied an undecided region, which is difficult for us to define, between the prohibition of action and that of language" (Foucault 2006b, MAO 545-6). Focusing on language allows Foucault to discern four codes of prohibition within language:

[1] First of all, at the border between taboo and impossibility, we should identify the laws that govern the linguistic code (the things that are called, so clearly, *language faults*); [2] and then, within the code, and among the words or existing expressions, those whose articulation is forbidden (the religious, sexual, magic series of *blasphemous words*); [3] then the statements that are authorised by the code, licit in the act of speech, but whose meaning is intolerable for the culture in question at a given moment: here a metaphorical detour is no longer possible, for it is the meaning itself which is the object of *ensorship*. [4] Finally, there is a fourth form of excluded language: this consists of submitting speech that apparently conforms to the recognised code to a different code, whose key is contained within that speech itself, so that the speech is doubled

inside itself; it says what it says, but it adds a mute surplus that silently states what it says and the code according to which it is said. This is not a question of coded language, but of a language that is structurally esoteric. Which is to say that it does not communicate, while hiding it, a forbidden meaning; it sets itself up from the very first instant in an essential fold of speech. (Foucault 2006b, MAO 545 numbering added)

Foucault then states that “[i]n Western history, the experience of madness has shifted along this scale” (Foucault 2006b, MAO 545).

The first three of these codes of prohibition are relatively straightforward and Foucault gives examples of how madness is subject to each:

[M]adness is the excluded language – [1] the one which against the code of language pronounces words without meaning (the 'insane', the 'imbeciles', the 'demented'), [2] or the one which pronounces sacred words (the 'violent', the 'frenzied'), [3] or the one which puts forbidden meanings into circulation ('libertines', the 'obstinate'). (Foucault 2006b, MAO 546 [numbers added])

Of the fourth code of prohibition in language Foucault states that this “modification only really came about with Freud” (Foucault 2006b, MAO 546). Foucault therefore associates this code of prohibition with the development of psychoanalysis, and this may allow one to begin to understand the otherwise mysterious character of this fourth code of language prohibition.

Foucault explains that this psychoanalytic modification of language prohibition:

[A]ppeared as speech wrapped up in itself, saying, below everything that it says, something else, for which it is at the same time the only possible code: an esoteric language perhaps, since its language is contained inside a speech that ultimately says nothing other than this implication. (Foucault 2006b, MAO 546)

Madness is therefore speech that “says nothing other than this implication” of something else, that is itself not actually said. Mad speech says nothing other than carrying the unspoken implication that the speaker is mad.

This ability of mad speech to say nothing other than this mute implication of madness, regardless of what is actually said, makes madness for Foucault:

[A] prodigious *reserve* of meaning. But 'reserve' here should be understood less as a stock than as a figure that contains and suspends meaning, which furnishes a void where all that is proposed is the still unaccomplished possibility that a certain meaning might appear there, or a second, or a third, and so on to infinity. (Foucault 2006b, MAO 547)

Madness is conveyed mutely by implication, but it never plainly reveals itself regardless of what is actually said. Madness is *never yet said* and in this there is a messianic promise that it might be revealed in future – “the still unaccomplished possibility that a certain meaning might appear” – yet any actual revelation will not be madness itself, which still cannot itself be said as long as this code remains in effect.

The fourth code of language prohibition thus takes on the whole significance of madness as the absence of an *œuvre*. Foucault writes that:

Since Freud, Western madness has become a non-language because it has become a double language (a language which only exists in this speech, a speech that says nothing but its language) – i.e. a matrix of the language which, strictly speaking, says nothing. A fold of the spoken which is an absence of work.

One day, it will have to be acknowledged that Freud did not make *speak* a madness that had genuinely been a language for centuries (a language that was excluded, garrulous inanity, speech which ran indefinitely outside the reflective silence of reason); what he did was silence the unreasonable Logos; he dried it out; he forced its words back to their source, all the way back to that blank region of auto-implication where nothing is said. (Foucault 2006b, MAO 547)

Foucault's strategy in MAO is therefore to create a distinction between the prohibition of acts and prohibitions in language, while arguing that madness is located in a region difficult to define between these two kinds of prohibitions; then he briefly describes four kinds of prohibition in language, while arguing that madness has shifted through these as a scale; then he links the fourth type of prohibition in language to Freud, and finally proffers this code of prohibition as the meaning of madness as the absence of an *œuvre*.

Foucault's strategy in reformulating this key phrase – remember that he stated in the 1961 preface “What then is madness... In all probability, nothing other than *the absence of an œuvre*” (Foucault 2006d, xxxi) – is to marginalise its

centrality to his understanding of madness. The absence of an *œuvre* is no longer the answer to the question “What then is madness” (Foucault 2006d, xxxi), but only a subset of a greater subset of the answer to this question. Moreover, Foucault attempts to transform the phrase from a key tenet of his own project – the answer to the question “[w]hat is madness ... for anyone who immediately challenges any hold that knowledge might have upon it?” (Foucault 2006d, xxxi) – to a phrase that merely describes what Freud has done to madness.

In *Folie et déraison*, Foucault writes that “[a]fter defusing its violence, the Renaissance had liberated the voice of Madness. The age of reason, in a strange act of force, was then to reduce it to silence.” (Foucault 2006a, 44) Whereas in MAO Foucault writes that (repeating this quotation):

Freud did not make *speak* a madness that had genuinely been a language for centuries (a language that was excluded, garrulous inanity, speech which ran indefinitely outside the reflective silence of reason); what he did was silence the unreasonable Logos; he dried it out; he forced its words back to their source, all the way back to that blank region of auto-implication where nothing is said. (Foucault 2006b, MAO 547)

Freud finally dries madness out by making the unconscious nothing of madness meaningful through psychoanalysis. Madness therefore appears to be a language for Foucault in 1964 *until* Freud silences it. Foucault states that up to this point madness was a language in spite of it being 'excluded' and considered 'garrulous inanity'. The prohibition of madness takes place *within* language until Freud.

Foucault held in 1961 that there was a division within a prelapsarian discourse that created reason and madness through the exclusion of madness from language, but in 1964 Foucault maintains that the prohibitions of madness in language does not exclude madness from language but rather makes madness subject to a code of operation *within* language. In the fourth case of language prohibition, Foucault argues that Freud discovers madness as “the irruptive figure of a signifier that is *absolutely unlike* the others.” (Foucault 2006b, MAO 546) A signifier is still a sign, even if it is absolutely unlike all the others. Even if madness is not this strange signifier itself

but the difference between this signifier and all others – madness is still manifesting at this signifier and it is not clear how this manifestation of meaning in association with a signifier could be sharply distinguished from ordinary associations of meaning with a signifier. Foucault therefore withdraws substantially from his claim that madness was silenced and excommunicated from language and that madness is the absence of an *œuvre*.

Historically, madness is no longer silenced for Foucault at the end of the Renaissance and the start of the classical age – a silencing associated with Descartes and the incarceration of the poor in the Great Confinement – but is instead silenced by Freud in the nineteenth century. If Freud is now responsible for the “[t]he caesura that establishes the distance between reason and non-reason” (Foucault 2006d, xxviii), then Foucault may find himself in the unenviable position of having engaged in the historical study of the wrong historical period in *Folie et déraison* or, if Freud is to be considered the culmination of the caesura rather than the caesura itself, with an *event*, if this word is still appropriate, that appears to last for centuries across hundreds of incidents. No longer really an event but an eventually. A difference weakened by the scale of centuries on which it must be grasped.

5. Working silence

Should “La folie, l'absence d'œuvre” be considered part of the exchange between Derrida and Foucault? It has been necessary to open this question in the midst of an uncertain silence. A silence that has never been decisively broken by either Foucault or Derrida. There is a temptation to defer to these figures and their silence on this matter. To merely trace the possibility of a certain trajectory; remark the importance of an apparent absence or narrate a history destined to remain suspended. Perhaps such a temptation will always remain but through my labour I have at least come to know my own mind on this matter.

In this paper I have shown that Foucault's “La folie, l'absence d'œuvre” ought to be understood as part of the

exchange with Derrida. I have shown that it fits within a clarified chronology of the exchange with Derrida and that the title of this 1964 paper is important in a number of ways for Foucault's 1961 book *Folie et déraison* (Foucault 1961) and Derrida's 1963 paper "Cogito et histoire de la folie." (Derrida 1963) I have argued that MAO represents a change in position by Foucault on many of the key themes addressed by Derrida. Namely, that Foucault sets out to minimise the previous importance of his initial characterisation of madness as the absence of an *œuvre* and substantially alters his position on the relation between madness and language. Foucault dramatically shifts the locus of the exchange from Descartes to Freud with MAO and it is in relation to Freud that Derrida re-approaches Foucault's *Folie et déraison* in 1991 with "Etre juste avec Freud: l'histoire de la folie à l'âge psychanalytique." In doing so Derrida appears to silently recognise "La folie, l'absence d'œuvre" as a silent response by Foucault to "Cogito et histoire de la folie" and implicitly confirm its place within the exchange.

In any case, I am about to be evicted. I feel the silence coming for my last word.

NOTES

¹ This paper has been prepared for publication while in receipt of funding from the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences.

² "Derrida avait invité Foucault dans une lettre de 3 février" (Foucault 1994, 25).

³ Alan Bass makes a faithful translation from *L'Écriture et la différence* of this erroneous note (Derrida 1978, 437n).

⁴ This note originally appeared in the very first publication in 1963 in *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* (Derrida 1963, 460n). The note is then reproduced in 1967 in *L'Écriture et la différence* (Derrida 1967a, 51n). There are slight changes to this note between the 1963 and the 1967 versions but the material quoted remains the same so I have simply used the Alan Bass translation.

⁵ Foucault had denied that the Greeks had a relationship to madness where as Derrida maintains that this cannot have been the case. Remi Brague affirms Derrida against Foucault to argue that the Greeks had a relationship to madness (Brague 2002, 112). If the Greeks had a relationship to madness then this relationship would pre-date the violent event at the beginning of the classical age that is taken by Derrida to be the constitution of madness as such for Foucault. Derrida allows that reason exists in particular ways in

particular historical periods but he does not allow reason to be reduced or limited to a particular historical example (this is in keeping with the Husserlian resistance to psychologism and historicism of which Derrida was well aware).

⁶ This statement appears in the 1967 edition as: "L'économie de cette écriture est un rapport réglé entre l'excédant et la totalité excédée: la *différence* de l'excès absolu" (Derrida 1967a, 96).

⁷ Also note: "Foucault déchantait lorsque l'éditeur refusa de republier l'édition intégrale" (Foucault 1994, I, 26).

⁸ *Dits et écrits* states that the first version of "Mon corps, ce papier, ce feu" titled "Michel Foucault Derrida e no kaino" or "Réponse à Derrida" was published as an article in the Japanese journal *Paideia* in 1972 (Foucault 1994, I, 281). The "Michel Foucault Derrida e no kaino (Réponse à Derrida)" appears in French in volume II of *Dits et écrits* (Foucault 1994, II, 281-295).

⁹ In 1976 a slightly different edition of Foucault's 1972 edition is published under the same title: *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*. The 1976 edition removes the two appendices, "La folie, l'absence d'œuvre" and "Mon corps, ce papier, ce feu," added to the 1972 edition and the brief comments Foucault makes about these appendices in the 1972 preface. Scholars might consider it safe to ignore this publication as it adds nothing new to the text but the same rule would have applied to the 1964 edition and the dissemination of that version has had a marked influence on the historical reception of Foucault's text and the exchange with Derrida.

¹⁰ The choice of title for the translation is slightly confusing as *History of Madness* would be the most direct translation of the title of the abridged 1964 edition *Histoire de la folie* whereas the 2006 translation is based on the 1972 edition with the longer title *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*. The cause is likely that what Foucault terms the classical age is not the Greek and Roman period that this phrase connotes for English speaking readers but the period following the Renaissance.

¹¹ My thanks to Timothy Mooney for bringing Manfred Frank's comments on this matter to my attention.

¹² Perhaps Flynn is reacting against Flaherty's consideration of the exchange between Derrida and Foucault in terms of a disagreement over how to read Descartes (Flaherty 1986).

¹³ I have been tempted to consider Foucault's 1964 abridgement of *Folie et déraison* as part of his reaction to Derrida's CHM. The case for such an interpretation would have to be made on the basis of Foucault's rather precise removal of his discussion of Descartes at the start of the second chapter and removal of the rhetorical question and answer concerning the characterisation of madness as the absence of an *œuvre* from the 1961 Preface and Foucault's subsequent reformulation of these respective themes in MAO and "Mon corps, ce papier, ce feu." Against such an interpretation would be the fact that the abridgement was reluctantly undertaken by Foucault in order to prepare a popular edition for his editors (see note 6) and the relevant materials were removed alongside many of no relevance to Derrida's argumentation.

¹⁴ This sense of madness as the absence of an *œuvre* is interesting because a group of people with this ambiguous relationship to the means of production

who are clearly subject to political and juridical power marks a potential point of departure from Marx in Foucault's early work.

¹⁵ This is why Foucault's work is only separated from madness by a transparent sheet for Derrida (cf. Wood 2009, 47).

¹⁶ Note that in the Alan Bass translation Derrida quotes the last part of this passage as "The calcinated root of meaning" (Derrida 1978, 41).

¹⁷ I am thinking especially of the discussion of *différance* in the chapter titled "La voix qui garde le silence" (Derrida 1967b, 78-97).

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Seferin James is an IRCHSS scholar and a PhD candidate at UCD Dublin where he is preparing a thesis on Derrida under the supervision of Dr. Joseph Cohen. He was awarded an MLitt from UCD Dublin for his 2008 thesis *Master and Disciple: Derrida and Foucault*. He is a former editor of *Perspectives: International Postgraduate Journal of Philosophy* and presented at the Derrida Today conference in London, 2010.

Address:

Seferin JAMES

University College Dublin

UCD School of Philosophy

Newman Building

Belfield, Dublin 4, Ireland

Fax: + 353 1 716 8258

Email: seferin.james@ucdconnect.ie

Human Security: A Normative Perspective

Bogdan Ștefanachi
Romanian Academy, Iași

Abstract

The globalization process, even more obvious after the end of the Cold War, offers the conditions to define human security, focusing on the normative priority of the impact of policies on the individual. The international space, transformed under the pressure of globalization, becomes relevant to the extent that an alternative discourse that encompasses all these transformations comes out. This new narrative transforms the individual in the referent object of security. The study stresses the main theoretical transformations appeared within the post-positivist framework of analysis in order to identify the central components of the new understanding of security – human security.

Keywords: security, human security, human development, normative utility

1. Introduction

The end of the Cold War brings into foreground and overlaps the globalization discourse, the discourse concerning the (human) development along with the publishing in 1990 of the first UNDP *Human Development Report*, as an attempt of “enlarging people's choices” (UNDP 1990, 10). Within such a context, opened by the human development debates implied by the implications of globalization, the concept of human security

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is thus introduced in the middle of the 1990s. As a reflection of the general change of the stress from the military state-centric issues (assumed by the realist and neo-realist orthodoxism) towards the non-military, *The Human Development Report 1995* stated “the real point of departure of human development strategies is to approach every issue in the traditional growth models from the vantage point of the people” (UNDP 1995, 123). Such an approach projected upon the space of security becomes responsible for what we name human security because “*people-centered* approach to formulating and evaluating policy is the key conceptual contribution of human development to human security” (Tigerstrom 2007, 15).

Thus, the globalization processes, whose effects are exponentially intensified alongside with the end of the Cold War, create the conditions and shape the necessity to define human development and security adding normative priority to the impact different policies have on the individual. In other words, on the background of globalization, “human development and human security could therefore be described as parallel concepts, particular instances of a more general approach that is referred to, for lack of a better phrase, as *people-centered* or *human-centered*” (Tigerstrom 2007, 15). The international space, transformed under the pressure of globalization that moves away (at least partially) the state from the epicenter of policy making and implementing, gains consistency to the degree in which an alternative discourse that takes over and develops this transformation constitutes – or, this new *narrative* is represented by the transformation of the individual into the reference object of both development and security. This paradigmatic change opens the way to the rediscovery of normative arguments, especially when the end of the Cold War is not synonymous with the optimistic scenario of the *end of history* (Fukuyama 1992, 283). On the contrary, aggression and conflict continue to be a constant of the international relations (for some the post Cold War world is a comeback to interwar barbarism) sometimes even more difficult to counteract (for instance, the recalibrating of the terrorist phenomenon), a fact which requires a just response. As a direct implication of global insecurity, the search for the pragmatic means to *dam* and eliminate such

phenomena must continue, the shaping of a theoretic scope “to put practical limits on the use of force and thus to reduce, if not completely eliminate, the barbarity of warfare remains salient in what is at best a still emergent, global civil society.” (Viotti and Kauppi 2010, 411).

2. The Cold War and the (Re)Construction of the Security Framework for Analysis

The traditional view (proposed by Realism and Neo-Realism) of understanding the international space staked on the state as the single explicative variable and therefore, placed the responsibility to protect individual security to the state. From these positions it is claimed that the international system is anarchical and determines major implications on the behavior of the states. The impact of this axiom is that the “pacifist” behavior of states can never be guaranteed and also, that the possibility of force threatening/deterrence can never be excluded. “The history of international relations exhibits clearly the fact that states can be, and often are hostile to each other, that they can resort to violence and threats for various reasons. No state can be absolutely certain that another state or other states will not resort to force and this is why they refuse to limit their liberty of action” (Terrif et al. 1999, 36). Therefore, the *realist world* built on power and anarchy has a series of characteristics among which we can name: the major actors are not the individuals but the groups, especially the conflict groups, the most important being the nation-state; as common implication of this the two core elements are constituted: international relations are characterized essentially by conflict, and, on the other hand, the fundamental premise in (international) politics is power and closely linked to it – security.

Power and anarchical environment – here is the overall layout in which security must be approached. That is why states must do whatever stays in their powers in order to pursue their objectives and ensure their security. The resort to force, to (military) threats is only to a small degree a reality able to encompass the entire security agenda on a national level. The

“brutal” force threat is replaced today by new more gentle, more refined and less expensive ways, that include economic, politic, social or environmental sectors. Stefano Guzzini, in *Realism in International Relations* foresees this perspective – of “the fragmentation of realism” (Guzzini 1998, 191 *et sq.*) – even on the level of the realist approach. Therefore, referring to the *détente* policy proposed by Kissinger, Guzzini underlines the emergence of a new type of balance of power, a multidimensional balance which avoids the zero-sum game, and according to which the military loss of one party transforms into the gain of the other. The interests’ connection on the Kissinger’s *détente* policy background implies the emergence of interdependencies and thus we can encounter at least two power balances: the military and the economic. The outcome of such an interpretation determines the debate to leave the (zero-sum) loss-gain binomial and place itself within an argumentation that has *compensation* as its core concept. Military threat can be compensated using the economic compound, the latter becoming of major importance on the security agenda. Conceived traditionally, the *détente* policy, the policy of connection exhibited its boundaries but it also underlined the multiplication in the nature of threats and ways to manage them. So, security must leave the narrow framework of the strictly military determinations.

Despite the attempts to reform Realism and to supplement it with new analysis coordinates including a moral termination under the form of *ethics of responsibility* such intentions generated a series of difficulties because, for example, in the case of the above mentioned ethics “whilst instructing leaders to consider the consequences of their actions, it does not provide a guide how to state leaders should weigh the consequences” (Smith, 1986, 51). Realism does not only offer an amoral alternative for the state leaders but even builds an entire argumentation against those who attempt to bring ethics into international relations. From these positions and “starting from the assumption that each state has its own particular values and beliefs, realists argue that the state is supreme good and there can be no community beyond borders” (Baylis and Smith 2001, 152). Considering such a discourse, the developing states – precisely from the realism position – considered the civil rights

or human rights doctrine as an instability factor because it endangers domestic cohesion; in other words, human rights transform into the mechanism through which the moral standards of a state are projected upon other or others (Morgenthau 1978, 4-15).

That is why, if in the daily international politics (in which we directly or especially indirectly take part) we share and act on the foundation of some values and beliefs referring to what from the ethical point of view should be done, in the International Relations discipline this concern lacks almost entirely. There can be identified two main arguments for such a discrepancy. Firstly, the positivist orientation of the discipline, according to which explanations must be founded in regularities, which are observable in the immediate reality. Secondly, there exists a general skepticism concerning the epistemological status of the value judgments due to the fact that these are infiltrated with subjectivism (and therefore seem to be arbitrary and relative) and contrast essentially from factual judgments. Within such logic, the normative propositions are *soft*, because they could not be the subject of an “empirical validation or falsification which is the hallmark of *real* inquire” (Viotti and Kauppi 2010, 3). Resorting to “scientificity”, both (neo)realism and (neo)liberalism try to explain the dynamics of international relations in the terms of the structures that determine and support the actors to pursue their interests. Or, such an attempt excludes, almost entirely, the explanatory value of the norms and thus, generates deficient reasoning; an example in this sense being offered by Audie Klotz who argues that “the increasing strength of a global norm of racial equality...provides a systematic though preliminary explanation of the adoption of sanction against South Africa by a broad and diverse range of international organizations and states” (Klotz 1995, 7). This does not mean anything else but the fact that the appearance and development of the policy orientated against discrimination cannot be understood outside the norms regarding racial equality. Therefore, although in the (neorealist and neoliberal) theoretical mainstream the normative aspects are considered, at best, marginal, from the perspective of a post-positivist theory of

international relations we can foresee the possibility of a normative theory to emerge.

From this perspective the *traditional* explanatory structures are replaced by processes especially because the “structure has no existence or causal power apart from process” (Wendt 1992, 395); or, this implies a profound change by the fact that classical elements of the international relations – *self-help* and *power politics* – “do not follow either logically or causally from anarchy” and “this is due to process, not structure” (Wendt 1992, 394). It thus becomes obvious that identities and norms must be used in order to detect and explain the dynamics of international politics reflecting the manner in which they maintain themselves as well as the way in which those identities are shaped through the different level interactions. So, we can assert that the behavior of the states is inspired by the new ideas and norms and not by power and self-interest (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998), and, on the other hand we can observe that “what social scientists study are human actions and interactions” (Frost 1998, 126). In the conditions in which a given natural does not exist but rather it is built, we can then conclude that “we constitute ourselves within social formations which themselves are constituted by us” (Frost 1998, 126), a fact that further more implies that “we are not outsiders to these social practices, but insiders” (Frost 2009, 104).

Therefore, the here advanced post-positivism exercise consists in the attempt to make accessible what it is occulted by the current (traditional) way of doing politics, “to reveal our global international social order to be a human construct within which are embedded certain values chosen by us and to show how this construct benefits some and oppresses others” (Frost 2009, 127). If the norms and the way in which they constitute themselves become major explanatory factors, then we can identify at least three situations that raise ethical problems common to the international life and which subsidiarily refer to security aspects: the tension between sovereignty and human rights, the national self-determination and identifying the institution which can appeal to it legally and also the ethical problems that can spring from the *market failure* threatening the democratic functioning of the states (Frost 1998, 130-1).

Such a reconstruction of the international theory, on different grounds from the state-centric ones, is absolutely necessary to adequately theorize the “emerging forms of transnational political identity” (Wendt 1992, 425) and also to enlarge the explanatory sphere with the inter-subjective knowledge that constitutes identities and interests. Moreover, if we are to apply this interpretative frame to the security issue than we have to claim that neither the traditional arrangements focused on the state and its military capabilities, nor the international organizations approaches that subsume the state-centric logic (even though they contest it) can no longer represent solutions for the contemporary world problems. The licit use of force (including the military force) will have to be argued by human security, as novel formula, by this understanding as “a hard security policy aimed at protecting individuals rather than states” (Kaldor 2007, 180) – this aspect marks the first phase in the state-centric abandonment approach. On the other hand, also as a natural prolongation of this mutation, human security will reflect the importance of the norms within the construction of the social reality since “the world we built will reflect our ethical beliefs” (Frost 1998, 126), and this is even more obvious in the security discourse.

On the background of the globalization process, the security ensuring issue is obviously no longer a genuine military question. The end of the Cold War, the way in which it happened (stressing the fact that the Soviet Union’ security was compromised by the socio-economic weakness and by the lack of the institutional political legitimacy and not by the deficit in the level of military capabilities) ultimately determining the failure of the *traditional* manner of understanding security, intensified the debate concerning security studies in view of determining its object and study domain. As a “peace dividend”, security and the issue of security study, focused on the strictly military aspects and structures, as a result of its sub summation to the (neo)realist point of view, can be conceived of beginning with the end of the Cold War outside the *raison d’Etat* politics, outside the state-centric approach and thus we can foresee the normative judgments possibility.

3. Security – Development: a necessary relation

The infrastructure to constitute the resistance pillar of the *global transformation* marked by the end of the Cold War is represented by the technical revolution whose effect was reflected into the diminishing of the transport, communication and information costs. All these elements are also seen in the unprecedented growth of productivity, in the economic expansion and in the growth of the international trade. But the economic globalization is merely one aspect (perhaps the most obvious and visible) that, in order not to over-impoverish the content of the process, must be supplemented with other dimensions, such as the social, politic or cultural ones. Within such a context the “value globalization” takes place as well as a way to generalize ethical principles mirrored in the declarations concerning human rights; in other words, a “growing consciousness of humanity as a single community” (Kaldor 2007, 154). One of the most encompassing forms of such a discourse is embedded in the *Millennium Declaration* (fundamental document in defining development as well) that can be structured on two core dimensions: firstly, civil and politic rights, due to which individuals are autonomous in relation to the state power and are entitled to take part in the decision-making process and, secondly, economic, social and cultural rights that reflect the values of the economic and social equality, of solidarity and non-discrimination. Therefore, globalization as a term that interprets and explains the issues concerning the complexity and extremely fast evolving contemporary world, must be understood as an integration process not only of economies but also of culture and government and therefore of norms.

From a similar perspective and resorting to the same document – *Millennium Declaration* – we can identify the general plan that allows such a mutation to be sub summed to a set of fundamental values, “essential for the international relations of the XXI century” namely: liberty, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for the environment and responsibility (UN 2000). Thus, the reconceptualization of security becomes possible and at the same time necessary – in the formula of human security – on the background of its projection onto the broader framework of

development and moreover, as the core element of it, because “development must be understood as a process of positive transformation of one society” (Lawal 2006, 66), and globalization and development are basically “the two broad concepts of transformation” (Lawal 2006, 66). But, in the post-Cold War context, by moving away from the state-centric analyses, development in its turn comes closer to a broader conception placing at its core the individual, because „ people are the real wealth of a nation” (UNDP 1990, 9) or, as Amartya Sen considers “the double recognition of the fact that human beings (1) can become better and (2) can do more in this sense, can be also seen as a double thesis of human development approach” (Sen 2009, iii). From such a position and in complete convergence with the human security, “development can be seen as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy” (Sen 1999, 3), in other words, any individual constraint formula is excluded even if in its favor there could be invoked a series of material advantages (more often attained in short term). Human development requires in the first place the elimination of all the major sources that obturate individual freedom, from poverty to tyranny, from the lack of economic opportunities to the systemic social deprivations, from the lack of public facilities to the intolerance or to the hypertrophied formulas of statality (Sen 1999, 3). That is why Amartya Sen will consider that there can be identified at least two reasons why liberty should occupy the core position in defining de development process. On the one hand, for evaluation reasons, estimating the registered progress (by a society or community) must refer firstly to the degree to which individual liberty has been respected and consolidated. On the other hand, due to efficiency reasoning, development is completely dependent on the voluntary decision of the individuals (Sen 1999, 4-5). In this sense, the main objective of development must be represented by the consolidation of the individual capabilities or by the reinforcement of the opportunities individuals have in order to maximize their potential.

From the development perspective, the economic component is considered to be important, but not vital, the stress being on the “quality of growth and on the equity of its distribution” (UNDP 1995, 122), a fact mirrored in the

substantial and necessary (consciously created) connection between economic growth and the life of the individuals. The change of the stress from the state towards the individual within the sphere of development is embedded in *Human Development Report 1995* (UNDP 1995), and this project deeply marks the manner in which (individual, human) security will be approached. Within such a comprehensive frame, development is no longer thought in the national security subsidiary, as a presentation formula of the national interest. On the contrary, “redefining the concept of security to move away from military-focused state security and toward a holistic view of human security would reinforce the impetus to transfer resources from military to development spending. Human security was therefore intended to be not only similar, but also complementary, to human development” (Tigerstrom 2007, 16).

Although, very often the causes for the conflicts are of cultural source, still one can notice that frequently economic fractions/inequalities overlap the cultural differences. This means that the nature and the level of development can be identified as causes of the conflict and that the economic assumptions – that encompass the factors that predispose to conflict, and thus can offer explanations regarding the intra-state wars – can be grouped as it follows: group motivation associated with group inequalities; individual/private motivation and the social contract failure (Stewart 2004, 270-4). Therefore, a strong relation between development and security can be settled as long as promoting security implies social progress, and the other way around, as long as development represents the necessary underlayer for security. Or, in the conditions of the theoretical recalibrations that followed the Cold War, this means that “promoting security is instrumental for development, and that inclusive patterns of development are an important element in avoiding conflict, so that the development is instrumental to the achievement of security” (Stewart 2004, 277-8). If the *Human Development Report 1990* considered that “the basic objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives” (UNDP 1990, 9), and in 1994, human security was defined as the answer to the global poverty threat (UNDP 1994), then the connection between the

two concepts becomes obvious; the biunivocity of the this connection must be understood by the fact that the societal progress demands the diminishing of insecurity and, at the same time, the inclusive development represents a solid indicator for the increase of the security level (Stewart 2004, 285). But, moreover, we must underline that none of the two concepts can replace or substitute the other, remaining autonomous enough so that to be separately (but interconnected) analysed – “sorting out local security situations may be a necessary condition for sustainable development, but it is by no means a sufficient one. Equally, sorting out development may be a necessary, but it is by no means a sufficient condition for security, order, and justice” (Freedman 2004, 259).

4. Theory and Human Security Genealogy

In an essay entitled “Redefining Security” published in *Foreign Affairs*, Jessica Tuchman Mathews argues that security as concept must be rethought because “global developments now suggest the need for broadening definition of national security to include resource, environmental and demographic issues” (Mathews 1989, 162). Thus, the majority of the threats, identified by those who choose the redefinition of security, are related to the health and wealth of the individuals, to the social problems, to the domestic sources for instability as well as to the implied social costs. Although the *strong* connection between state and security is altered by the new threats that appear on the background of globalization, still these transformations are not extremely visible for the (neo)realist theoretical mainstream, aspect identified by Ronnie D. Lipschutz when stating that “whilst these threats obviously affect security, cohesion and the stability of the individuals, families, communities, societies and even states, it is not clear at all why they don’t represent threats to national security in the neorealist terms” (Lipschutz 1995, 6). Nevertheless, redefining security becomes necessary from at least two points of view: on the one hand, because territorial security is replaced with individual security and, on the other hand, because military security is replaced with security built on sustainable development (UNDP 1994, 24). That is why human security need

not be conceived as a defensive concept, in the manner in which territorial or military security is defined, but as an integrative concept built on (human) development; it must be conceived as “an integrated approach to human well-being, one that emphasized the interrelationships between poverty, human rights, public health, education and political participation” (Battersby and Siracusa 2009, 3). Similar to the case of human development, the redefining the reference object of security stressing the protection of the individual is determined by a series of structural factors, among the most visible being: the end of the Cold War (and of the ideological confrontation), the impact of the globalization, that often excludes the national level from the global-local causality, the ever clearer presence of the transnational actors, redefining the power relations and the emergence of new non-military nature threats as well as the increasing number of the intra-national conflicts (Fuentes and Aravena 2005, 22-3). These transformations generated sufficient arguments in order to define human security as encompassing four fundamental characteristics: (1) human security is a universal challenge and concern; (2) the human security components are interdependent; (3) human security can be sooner accomplished using prevention than subsequent intervention; (4) human security is centered on the individual (UNDP 1994, 23). On this foundation, human security faces two convergent perspectives: “safety from chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression” as well as “protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life” (UNDP 1994, 23). The demilitarization of security does not imply the elimination of traditional strategic concerns but only their supplementation with some other that no longer can be solved through the exclusive focus on the state level. Therefore, the human security concern does not replace the state security concerns that continue to be important in managing the violent threats, but transforms into a complement of the latter: “such a strategy should be developed on the dual framework of protection and empowerment in which the state and civil society have a complementary role to play” (Fouinat 2004, 294). Encompassing the optimism as well as the anxieties associated with the end of the Cold War human security analyzes aggression at the subnational, intranational

and international levels constituting into an analytical discourse “disassembling the state into its smallest components (people) in order to *put it back together again*” (Weinert 2009,154) just that the reconstruction brings in the foreground a state whose sovereignty is “increasingly conditional – dependent both on domestic behavior and consent of the outside world” (Kaldor 2007, 156).

Such a discourse is thus possible only under a post-positivist perspective, a critical perspective that eliminates the traditional tension between rights and sovereignty through the fact that ethical arrangements resulting from our affiliation to the global civil society (built on the human rights principles) do not enter into collision with the arrangements we assume as citizens of a sovereign states’ society (built on the law of states). In other words, from the position of the constitutive theory (Frost 1998; Frost 2009), the relation between the two arenas is “a sophisticated one such that certain ethical shortcomings we experience in one are remedied through our participation in the other” (Frost 2009, 104). Without mutually excluding themselves, but shaping the structures of the actors especially through their simultaneous participation within the two, “we are both civilians and citizens” implying that „we value the ethical standing that we enjoy in these roles” (Frost 2009, 104). Therefore, the new framework of analysis that occurs at the international level aims at the recovery of the normative aspects underlying the connection between individual and society and “translates the stability, resilience and security of each in terms of the other” (Weinert 2009, 155). Without denying the state and its importance in the context of the relation with its citizens – “states can be powerful custodians of human welfare, and thus worthy of contingent loyalty” (Harbour 1990, 80) – one can conceive of two simultaneous levels of analysis (apparently placed on contrary positions).

This analysis is initiated by Alexander Wendt, who does not contradict the neorealist depiction of the international system as an entirely competitive and populated by entities defining their actions in terms of *self-help*, but contests only the neorealist explanation of this world (Wendt 1992). Wendt says that what we traditionally consider to be a constitutive structure is no more

than an institution reflecting a social identity, which originates in the theories the actors develop from some towards others. Thus, if we cannot pragmatically contradict the international world order, then we can consider this a still frame in an ongoing process. Within this process, security depends on the way different norms, different worlds interact, in other words “concepts of security therefore differ in the extent to which and the manner in which the self is identified cognitively with the other” (Wendt 1992, 399), and from this process the power distribution and international anarchy develop. This encompassing perspective, due to the fact that it operates with identities and not structures, enables the existence of apparently irreconcilable entities. So, assuming the cosmopolitan position, a series of authors argue in favor of the individual centrality within the moral and politic universe (Harbour 1999; Kuper 2004). On the other hand, we have to highlight that the state and the international system encompassing the states continue to be a reality (even though a social built one), a fact for which the pragmatic *limitation* of the cosmopolitanism is thus entitled. The pragmatic cosmopolitanism (Weinert 2009) – transcending this cleavage marking two opposed manners of understanding and explaining international politics – preserves the individual as the referent and immediate beneficiary of security, but, at the same time, sees the state as the last referent and beneficiary and that is why human security can be also read as the means through which the state viability can be built. The implications of this grating are major because thus “human security both defends the sovereign state, and locates the state in a larger moral project” (Weinert 2009, 158), implying, on the one hand, the defining of the obligations towards the others, and, on the other hand, the (re)construction of the state according to the general accepted moral norms.

The 1990s are marked by a whole series of (re)theoretizations, security occupying a major place among them, that “has for too long been interpreted narrowly: as security of territory from external aggression, or as protection of national interests in foreign policy or as global security from the threat of a nuclear holocaust” (UNDP 1994, 24). Within such an atmosphere Barry Buzan will claim that the security of human collectivities is affected by factors belonging to five main sectors:

military, politic, economic, social and environmental (Buzan 1983, 75-83) and the *Human Development Report 1994* will identify seven components of the human security: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security (UNDP 1994, 24-5). From this general perspective, human security presents two fundamental dimensions: *freedom from fear* and *freedom from want* (UNDP 1994, 24) so, at the individual level this distinction is attenuated by the United Nations Commission on Human Security which defines human security as the protection of “the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and fulfillment” (CHS 2003, 4).

The realist traditional explanation, through its exaggerated attention conferred to the state, fails to foresee or even hides a series of real threats towards the individual and thus, the security fails even in its core objective: to protect (the individual). Therefore, overcoming the traditional approaches brings into foreground a series of new concepts such as societal security, comprehensive security, (global) international security and human security; this paradigmatic rethinking is reflected in *The Human Development Report 1994*, document within which the end of the Cold War represents the boundary between old/obsolete (traditional) and new. In the new international context – deeply marked by the implications of globalization – the exclusivity of national security is no longer possible due to the fact that a series of new concepts interfere in the realities with which we operate because “abstract concepts such as value, norms, and expectations also influences both choices and outcome of security” (Liotta and Owen 2006, 51). On the background of the mutations occurred at the end of the Cold War and as a direct implication of it “the ubiquitous idea is of security in an *extended* sense” (Rotschild 1995, 55), meaning the defining of a “permissive or pluralistic understanding of security, as an objective of individuals and groups as well as of state” (Rotschild 1995, 60).

In this new principles’ geometry that shapes contemporary security, the enlargement of the concept is undertaken in several directions. Therefore, from the point of view of the entities to which security must be ensured, the concept of security is extended from the security of the nations to

the security of the individuals. On the other hand – the concept is extended upwardly – from the nation to the international system. Third, the concept of security extends horizontally, supplementing the military perspective with the political, economic and environmental ones and thus, the range of security can basically receive human dimension. Forth, it also extends (as a natural consequence) the politic responsibility to ensure security from states to international institutions, subnational authorities, nongovernmental organizations, public opinion or markets (Rotschild 1995). Therefore, the major transformations generated by the enlargement of security and the make-up of security under these conditions became easily observable; the road thus covered marks the profound differences between the traditional paradigm and the new approach, as well as the complexity of the expansion of the new concept.

Coming back to the two components of the human security – *freedom from want* and *freedom from fear* – we have to mention that each of them circumscribes a different approach in defining: broad, respectively narrow approach. The enlargement of the analysis perspective can be considered as a revolutionary initiative because, unlike the state-centric security perspective, “it brings what are traditionally considered *development* or *humanitarian* considerations into the security discourse” (Liotta and Owen 2006, 42). From a more narrow perspective, the Canadian government, in a document entitled *Freedom from Fear* defines human security as “the freedom from the generalized threats to human rights, their safety and lives” (DFAIT 2000, 3) meaning that human security represents the focus on “protecting the individuals from violence and defining an international agenda based on this objective” (DFAIT 2000, 1). The narrow perspective in defining security individualizes the security issue in relation with development underlying “the more immediate necessity for intervention capability than long-term strategic planning and investing for sustainable and secure development” (Liotta and Owen 2006, 43). This view is also undertaken in *The Human Security Report 2005* according to which “the primary goal of security is the protection of individuals” (Human Security Centre 2005) (this aspect being of great importance for the reaffirmation of the change regarding the referent of security)

and focuses on security from political violence. In a more general manner, the report entitled *In Larger Freedom* stresses the necessity of the interrelation of the various perspectives on security and highlights the importance of the development as a strategy for the fulfillment security. The combination of these two points of view must bring to the foreground the relation (not easy to identify and theorize) between security and development “since human development is a key component of human security [...] today it is impossible to separate security and development” (Kaldor 2007, 193, 196).

This equals the necessity to sum the two perspectives – broad and narrow – a premise assumed by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) when proposing an encompassing formula – “responsibility to protect” (R2P) that translates into the responsibility of some agents or even states to implement the principles of security that sovereign states owe to their own citizens. Only that such an approach can become problematic due to the fact that the “responsibility to protect” also involves the right to interfere, moreover since in the current power topography some of the (dominant) states can appeal to this anywhere and anytime. In order to avoid such a situation, ICISS considers that the sovereign states have the responsibility “to protect their own citizens from avoidable catastrophe – from mass murder and rape, from starvation – but what when they are unwilling or unable to do so, that responsibility must be borne by the broader community of the states” (ICISS 2001, viii). This responsibility is in its turn constituted on “specific legal obligations under human rights and human protection declarations, covenants and treaties, international humanitarian law and national law” (ICISS 2001, xi). Moreover, the ICISS report explicitly refers to the language of the just war theory when identifies the constitutive elements of the “responsibility to protect” as the: responsibility to prevent, responsibility to react and responsibility to rebuild (ICISS 2001, 11-47) which, in turn represent a reiteration of the actions inserted by the UN General Secretary – Boutros Boutros Ghali – in *An Agenda for Peace* (1992): preventive diplomacy, peace-making, peacekeeping and post-conflict peace building. All of these represent in fact contemporary interpretations of the

classical principles of *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*, to which a third one is added – *jus post bellum*. Thus the resemblance with the just war becomes obvious and still the ICISS document “engages in only limited reflection on the ethical implications of its *responsibility to protect* agenda” (Holliday 2003, 119). Nevertheless, Nicholas Rengger considers that “it would be a mistake to abandon the just war tradition” (Rengger 2002, 363), and Mary Kaldor goes beyond that suggesting the transition from just war to just peace. This glide becomes possible since “states remain the only authorities capable of upholding the legitimate use of force, but their use of force – is much more circumscribed than earlier by international rules and norms” (Kaldor 2007, 173). More, the writer argues, there can be identified three principles that mark the difference between a *jus in bello* approach (a state-centric approach) and an approach based on human rights (a human-centered approach): the task of human security operations is to protect civilians, the protection can be thus fulfilled through stability rather than victory and, last but not least, those who violate human rights are individual criminals and not collective enemies (Kaldor 2007, 176-8). If, from the perspective of such debates, the normative component of the human security appears to be obvious, the “R2P” transformation into the fundamental principle of the collective security marks “a commitment to ethical progress in international relations” (Weinert 2009, 159) that becomes possible only to the degree that we understand the “indivisibility of security, economic development and freedom” (UN 2004, 1). Moreover, the necessity to develop a functional ethical compound for the analysis and interpretation framework of international politics becomes increasingly visible under the conditions of the terrorism recrudescence that needs to be counteracted and, on the other hand, the just mechanisms to offer the necessary criteria for legitimating the right to interfere must be identified.

Defining human security as comprehensive part in the debates marking the conceptual reshaping of the politic and social space from the last two centuries becomes relevant from at least three points of view. Firstly, human security unlocks the opportunity to address questions and challenges regarding the implications of the globalization process. Secondly, human

security can be used as an encompassing concept, a concept catalyzing the contemporary security agenda. And, last but not least, human security can be approached as a normative project and from this perspective the glide towards the individual as core of the security concerns is remarkable.

5. Epilogue

If the theorization of the human development represents an extremely important contribution to the paradigm change from the last decades, reflected in the shift of the stress from the economic growth (development) to the impact the development has on the lives and welfare of the individuals, human security completes human development introducing the perspective of descendant risks involved by severe poverty or different other intrastate sources.

Away from placing itself beyond a series of powerful contestations, the elaboration of the human security concept constitutes an important step towards the reconstruction of the international system gravitating around a just international order. Therefore, human security legitimates itself in the contemporary conceptual universe mainly through its implied ethical and normative dimensions. Placing at its core human rights' respect human security promotes the protection of the individuals and thus follows the necessity to put it in practice not as an illusive concept, but a basic request and fundamental right. Moreover, human security and human rights reinforce reciprocally because the former has the duty to establish the rights that are endangered in certain contexts, and the latter have the duty to draw the trajectory human security needs to frame. The ethical aspect is firstly implied by the core position the individual holds in the security discourse and by the redefinition of the international system according to this tectonic transformation built on the pre-eminence of human rights, aspect underlined by Kofi Annan when saying "we will not enjoy security without development, development without security, and neither without respect for human rights" (UN 2005, 6). The increasing importance and impact of the values and principles inserted in the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights

determines that the international order is no longer limited only to the aspects regarding the prevention of international conflicts but also extends upon the human rights promotion, upon maximizing means of personal welfare and freedom. Therefore, starting with the words of the Japanese Prime Minister Obuchi Keizo, we can argue that the core element of human security is to generate the normative framework within which “human beings should be able to lead lives of creativity, without having their survival threatened or their dignity impaired”. These ethic-normative coordinates are reaffirmed by Mary Kaldor when she identifies the principles of human security, that need to be applied both to the expected outcomes and also to the used means (both to *how* and *why*) as following: the supremacy of human rights, legitimate political authority, multilateralism, the bottom-up approach and the regional focus (Kaldor 2007, 190 *et sq.*).

In his attempt to operationalize human security answering the question *why human security?* Amartya Sen identifies a series of arguments that impose such an approach (Sen 2000). Human security is thus a way to manage *security of survival* by the stress added to the aspects related to *health, peace* and *tolerance*. Therefore, human security must be understood as a compound of the daily life and of the manner in which the quality of life must be preserved, mainly through social, politic and economic participation. Also, in the context of the technical advancement implied by globalization, human security must build a *linkage between informational access and ecological responsibility*, in the conditions in which human dignity, human equity and human solidarity are its constitutive elements. The human security perspective must shape the framework that will diminish global inequality and insecurity through the global human solidarity and thus, the dual danger globalization might generate be avoided: unfair inclusion or exclusion. And not least, the strengthening of human security built on the principles of the individual pre-eminence, redefines the international institutional framework supplementing it with a series of new actors reflecting this precise transnational solidarity.

On the other hand, the debates concerning human security must be projected in the broader framework of the critical studies of security. Contesting the methodology

exclusively state-centric concentrated brings human security in the proximity of the point of view developed by the representatives of the Copenhagen School, in the formula of the securitization theory (Buzan 1983; Lipschutz 1995; Buzan, Waever and de Wilde 1998; Buzan and Waever 2004). Therefore, the raising question is again– *why human security?* Is human security an alternative to securitization or just a necessary supplement in order to capture the complexity of the contemporary security? Human security – as part of the critical theory of security – identifies and reflects the chronic insecurities individuals and groups of individuals face, fact due to which, regardless its manner of conceiving (*broad* or *narrow*) the core element that conducts this concern is that the individual becomes the last object of reference (of security). Just that related to the question *who must offer security?* the human security theory doesn't give a clear response and doesn't neither suggest analytical mechanisms for this issue. On the contrary, from the Copenhagen School point of view – in its turn staking on the individual as the last security referent – a solid analysis framework is shaped, the securitization theory encompassing the following components: (1) identification of existential threats, (2) requiring emergency measures and (3) justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedures (Buzan, Waever and de Wilde 1998, 23-4). Therefore, from the analytical utility point of view, human security is irrelevant, precisely because it does not set out a *sui generis* framework for analysis. Still, it becomes extremely useful through its capacity of identifying *existential* threats to individuals/groups of individuals. In other words, “human security is positioned at the explanandum end of security studies, whilst the process tracing tool that is the securitization approach can be used to analyze and explain who does what, and with what effects in the human security literature” (Floyd 2007, 42). Unlike the Copenhagen School, from which perspective it is settled and analyzed *who, what* and *under which conditions* securitizes, the human security position will be able to settle the insecurities that threaten the individual referent of security. More, human security supplements the analytical utility of securitization with the normative one reflecting the “security analyst's ability to influence the securitization process in a

deliberate and thought-out fashion to a desired effect” (Floyd 2007, 39), since the analyze framework of the Copenhagen School “leaves the securitization analyst without any means to rectify what she/he her/himself has co-constituted, simply by virtue of performing security analysis” (Floyd 2007, 43). The convergence and complementarity of the two perspectives follow also from the fact that we can judge a securitization as positive or negative only through the point of view of its consequences and in accordance with an agent-neutral value and “human security constitutes just such an agent-neutral value, and the various elements of the human security agenda are thus valid examples of positive securitizations” (Floyd 2007, 44). Meaning that, if from the Copenhagen School point of view we can analyze securitization, human security offers the necessary lens to understand the manner in which the securitization functions. In other words, human security offers a normative correction of securitization more focused on analysis of the way it can be applied to reality. Nevertheless, each of these models is important in its own sense “one contributing to our understanding of how security is practiced, the other – on occasion and if successful – to its practice” (Floyd 2007, 45-6).

Also, the normative utility of human security results from the fact that, the task of such a discourse is to prioritize and arrange preferences due to the fact that the available resources (including those of the states) are limited, and, on the other hand, the obligations towards the others cannot be unlimited (limits appear at least in some situations if not all). Arranging preferences must take into account that both protection as well as the empowerment of the individuals must be fulfilled encompassing the state and not eliminating it from the security equation, moreover since “in ethical terms, human security is both a *system* and systemic practice that promotes and sustains stability, security, and progressive integration of individuals within their relationships to their states, societies and region” (Liotta and Owen 2006, 40) or, in other words, “human security allows individuals the pursuit of life, liberty, and both happiness and justice” (Liotta and Owen 2006, 40).

Although we can identify at least two major inconsistencies of human security: an endogenous one, in the lack

of intellectual sophistication (a sort of theoretical underdevelopment) and an exogenous one represented by its assuming by the political body through a contextual ideological interpretation, still “how we develop the concept of human security and imbue it with relevant meanings is, in fact, part of the process of implementing the paradigm shift” (Kaldor, Martin and Selchow 2008, 2). Without being a panacea for the international politics and international environment prophylaxis, human security can be fundamental in the justification of the ethics of interventions. The answers for the questions *when* and *how must/can intervene?* can be identified combining the analytical and normative utility, or in other words, constructing securitization on the normative argument of human security.

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Bogdan Ștefanachi (PhD) is lecturer in the Faculty of Philosophy and Social-Political Sciences, Political Science Department, at Al. I. Cuza University of Iași. His research interests are the Management of Conflicts, the Theories of International Relations and the Security Studies. From 2010 he is Romanian Academy postdoctoral grant recipient within The Knowledge Based Society Project and editor of the scientific journal *Logos & Episteme*. He is the author of the books *Legitimation of Political Power*, *Philosophy of the New Economy: Legitimation Mean of Liberalism* and *European Union Structures and Policies*.

Address:

Bogdan ȘTEFANACHI

Faculty of Philosophy and Socio-Political Sciences

Al. I. Cuza University of Iasi

Bd. Carol I, no. 11

700506 Iași, Romania

E-mail: stbogdan2000@yahoo.com

Artistic Autonomy in the “Post-Medium Condition” of Art: Conceptual Artworks as Performative Interventions

Cristian Nae
George Enescu University of Iasi

Abstract

The present text tackles the old problem of artistic autonomy given the constitutive heteronomy of post-conceptual artistic practices in terms of their medium-specificity. Instead of considering the idea of artistic autonomy as a modernist prejudice to be discarded, I suggest that it may be revised as the performative autonomy of discourse against ideological uses of language, given that conceptual art is considered as practice and activity rather than the production of objects. Resistance may be itself redefined as the performative re-articulation of language within its conventional use. Therefore, if aesthetic formalism tried to achieve the autonomy of art in the social sphere by means of medium-specificity, whereas early conceptualists strolled towards a functionalist type of artistic autonomy in the artistic sphere, contemporary post-conceptual practices revised the very concept of form as the critical communicative articulation of the social sphere.

Keywords: Artistic autonomy, conceptual art, performativity, ideology, interventionist practices

1. Conceptualism and the “Post-Medium” Condition of Art

Defining conceptual art, or at least, circumscribing its scope and explaining its particularities within the vast array of

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contemporary art seems an almost self-contradictory task, given the anti-formalist dimension of the early conceptual art manifestations – which also means that it was meant to be less a particular style and more a radical re-evaluation of the very concept of art. In whatever terms we may retrospectively describe it, conceptualism was, first of all, an anti-formalist *attitude* rather than a formal innovation in terms of the canonical language of art. At least in what concerns the development of contemporary art in Northern America and Great Britain, conceptual art reacted with artists such as Joseph Kosuth or John Latham against the dominant Greenbergian aesthetic paradigm and its formalist criteria for defining or understanding art (Wood 2004, 297-8; Morgan 1996, 3-27; Colpitt 2004).

Attempting yet to circumscribe its essential characteristics in terms of the use of the artistic language, conceptualism might be briefly described as an “art of the mind” [instead of the senses] (Wood 2002, 6). It might also be defined formally as a distinct artistic genre or language informed by the neo-avant-gardes broader reaction to the aesthetics and values prompted by abstract expressionism (Wood 2004, 296-8). That is, it can be defined by means of its medium specificity, as an art of language – “a kind of art of which the material is language” or as an art in which verbal (spoken or written) language and its “dematerialization” towards the purely conventionalized (and thus, intellectualized) significance replaces the visual language of images and the material presence of the signifier (Morley 2003, 142). Thus, it can be defined as “an art of ideas”, as it was defined both by the artists themselves as exemplified by Sol Le Witt’s “Paragraphs...” or Joseph Kosuth’s art series *Art as Idea as Idea*, and by art critics and theorists with clear expressions such as “information or idea art” (Lippard 2001, xv).

In the above-mentioned terminology it is paramount that “idea” (understood both as a preparatory sketch or project for the accomplishment of an artistic action or work, or as cognitive meaning) plays the crucial part instead of its material presentation. Considered a direct heir of Duchamp’s anti-aesthetic ready-mades, conceptual art is itself usually

interpreted as an *anti or an-aesthetic* artistic manifestation, because it renders irrelevant the sensuous appearance of the artwork, thus shifting the focus of artistic appreciation from artistic morphology to functionalist questions and criteria (Kosuth 2002, 18).

Such a decisive accent may have led some of its early commentators to suggest the well-known label of "dematerialized" art for the type of artistic practices associated with conceptualism (Lippard 2001, xvii and 42). Nevertheless, it has become quickly paramount that, even if conceptual art highlights the cognitive dimension of art and its intellectualized reception and experience, the thinking process has to be communicated through a sensible medium (Lippard 2001, 43). What has become clear with conceptualism is rather that idea can be conveyed through multiple or virtually *any* medium.

It seems logical, therefore, to speak about the "medium-indifference" associated with conceptual art (Wood 2002, 97). This "indifference" may also sum up the conceptualist condition of contemporary art as a "post-medium condition" (Krauss 2000), in which the conceptualist activity of reflection pervades all other types of artistic gestures. In Krauss's account, this condition reflects a conscious critical attitude towards the medium used by the artists, once we have entered the era when virtually any medium may be used to convey an idea. As summarized by Krauss, the major part played by conceptual art in this narrative seems to relate to the basic acknowledgement of art's interdependence on its related systems of consumption and production, the inherently intermediary and interdependent structure of artistic expression (Krauss 2000, 32) in the ensemble of cultural discourses and its engagement with the commercial system instead of an utopian denial of its mechanisms in search for a medium-specific purity, hence, autonomy of art (Krauss 2000, 11).

2. Aesthetic Formalism and the Problem of Artistic Autonomy

The precondition of this epochal shift in the definition and evaluation of art, which Kosuth described as "the shift from

a question of morphology to a question of function” (Kosuth 2002, 17) is that the aesthetic evaluation and appreciation of art, at least in formal terms, bears no import on the function and nature of art. In Paul Crowther’s terms, in conceptual art the relationship between form and content becomes contingent (Crowther 1997, 178). It seems reasonable, then, to take for granted the assumption that conceptual art plays a major role in the “anti-aesthetic” tendency to be noted in twentieth century art, understood not as a negation, but as “a critique that destructures the order of representations in order to reinscribe them” (Foster 1987, xv). The term also signals that the aesthetic realm of art altogether, as separate from the (socio)political field, can no longer sustain *per se* the critical attitude of resistance required from art in the postmodern conditions of an ever-growing cultural industry (Foster 1987, xvi).

But if conceptual art is giving up both the formal and the aesthetic elements which may seclude the sphere of art as an autonomous public sphere in relation to social and political spheres and the dominant cultural discourses at a certain time, the old problem of artistic autonomy reappears in new terms. What sort of critical autonomy may still claim such an art in relation to the social sphere and its culture? Is it still possible to differentiate the critical potential of art from the ways of mass culture and cultural industry absorbing images into its spectacular regime of production and consumption, given the medium-heteronomy and the inherent dependency of conceptual art to the non-artistic spheres of everyday life, politics and culture? Can conceptual art evade these problems by stepping out altogether from the realm of images directly into their ideological frameworks of interpretations? And, most of all, is the problem of autonomy an obsolete desire and an inappropriate claim in the new system of contemporary art?

As Adorno warned us, the problem of artistic autonomy seemed to be more than a desirable formal condition of art in modernity (Adorno 1997, 8-9). Rather it turned out to be a necessary (albeit illusory) strategy of aesthetic resistance conceived in negative terms, served to guarantee art’s non-assimilation into cultural industry – and thus, its critical and

political potentials. The distinction between high and low art and the dialectic between the artwork's formal autonomy conceived as a social monad and its simultaneous embedding into larger structures of social production were not regarded necessarily as an obstacle, but rather as a necessary distance which is able to support critical judgment instead of collapsing into a passive reaction of immersed contemplation within the aesthetic experience of art. Now, given conceptual art's embrace of the low art's favorite mediums of production, that is, the machinery of mass media and its structures of promoting and distributing information (Alberro 2003, 100-10), in a way similar to Pop Art's collapse of the distinction between art and commercial graphic design (and, *in extenso*, between a glamorous high art and the growing aestheticism of everyday-life), one may as well suspect that, despite its austere looks and critical apparatus, conceptualism may have ultimately signed the documents of complete resignation in respect to the problem of artistic autonomy.

This problem seems to become even more important when the aesthetic dimension of autonomy is at stake, since the post-medium condition of art also seems to mean giving up the aesthetic autonomy of artistic experience and reception, which may have secluded the realm of art in the cultural sphere. How is then autonomy secured for a type of art that promoted itself a purification of art precisely from its aesthetic heteronomy?

There are at least two important questions related to the conceptualist demise of formal *and* aesthetic types of autonomy of art. First of all, we may criticize the formalist conventions of conceptual art, which in retrospect may have only expanded the formal vocabulary of art without actually replacing the fundamental modernist presuppositions of Greenberg's four-points purist definition of art as aesthetic form. On the contrary, as several authors have already pointed out (Wood 2004, 298; Colpitt 2004, 32-6), it may have presented a purist and essentialist hence modernist definition of art in simple negative terms. In Kosuth's works, for instance, pure visuality is replaced by concepts or ideas; subjectivity is evacuated by the pure "objectivity" of impersonal (and seemingly authorless) statements; sensuality is replaced by thinking, reflective and

interpretive processes; considered to be oppressive, “high art” is collapsed into “low art” or even no art at all – that is, into the realm of everyday-life language, practices and transactions; being considered before as the key factor in the definition of art, aesthetic value as an intrinsic value of the aesthetic object is explicitly denied. Among his arguments, Colpitt also notes Kosuth’s insistence on the idea of art for art’s sake, while the insistence on tautology may also resemble Greenberg’s flatness of the canvas (Colpitt 2004, 34). Last but not least, Colpitt notes reductionism, that is, the elimination of unnecessary conventions as an important underlying intention of Kosuth’s investigations, which, according to Greenberg, may be considered one of the main drives of modernist progress or advancement (Colpitt 2004, 36).

This means that, at least for the “early” or “pure” conceptualists such as Kosuth, the investigation into the nature and function of art initiated by conceptual or reflexive art, the problem of the autonomy is not only present, but also plays a key role in the process of investigation, justifying both the search for essentialist criteria of art and the meta-artistic character of the artistic production itself. The “conceptual” features of art are meant precisely to secure the autonomy of art in relation to the manipulation of image in popular culture or mass-media.

But the same problem of artistic autonomy becomes important in conceptual art in what concerns its entangled relationship to the art market, its conventions and ideology. It may be argued that the formalist understanding of the autonomy of art, for which Kosuth is the best example, makes it blind to the options of direct political engagement, thus acquiring at best a professional autonomy from the critical judgment and thus, failing to find a proper audience except for a narrow circle of “initiates” and peers (Stimson 2004, 290). It has been equally noticed that, in doing so, Conceptual art did not elude art’s constituent dependency on the market and the larger cultural industry, despite its innovations concerning the systems of artistic distribution. Thus, the utopia according to which ideas were meant to be anti-commercial given the explicit denial of objecthood was considered to be failed (Lippard 2001, 264; Burn 1999, 320-333).

Particularly, conceptual art may have equally been prone to a fetishism of ideas, being constrained by an organizing principle borrowed uncritically from the world of work and engineering, that of "productivism" or "production for production's sake" (Stimson 2004, 283-91). It has equally been accused of having served the interests of the market by promoting cheap goods for an economy affected by crisis (Smithson 1999, 284-5). Last but not least, the idea of a market-free economy of art has been criticized on grounds of conceptual art's embrace, complicity with and eventual incorporation of promotion and distributions systems pertaining to mass-media and advertising (Alberro 2003).

3. Use and Function: Conceptualist Interventions and Critical Performativity

Here we also may note that, essentially, conceptual art has succeeded in highlighting once again the inherently *communicative* dimension of art. The idea of "dematerialization of the artistic object", as Lippard dubbed the early conceptual artworks, plays an important part in understanding conceptual art if redefined as an information-oriented communicational structure of art, since in a "post-medium condition of art" the image of the artwork as an aesthetic object "to be looked at" is replaced with the transmission of any kind of information between the artist and its public (Alberro 2003, 10-17).

It is also true that, in this process of radical redefinition of art, early North American conceptualism may have been infused with the cybernetic revolution proclaiming an ideal of communication based on objective and positivist knowledge borrowing terminology such as "art as software" and "system aesthetics" (Shanken 2004, 236-43), doubled by a strong belief in the power of language to convey ideas as transparently as possible (Drucker 2004, 256-62). Such suppositions may also underpin the engagement with information regarded as a democratic gesture for some conceptual artists, and the important position played by written text, indexical and documentary photography and other means of recording information such as the tape-recorded ambient sound in Christine Kozlov's iconic work *Information: No Theory* (1979),

in which the process of constant remembering and erasure is expressed by the endless process of tape-recording all sounds in the given environment during the exhibition in a continuous loop, while simultaneously erasing the old ones registered on the same tape. The underpinning ideology describing the tension between images and information is that, if images may be manipulated in their rhetoric force and given their complex visual articulation, written text may acquire objectivity in artistic communication, since it adheres to a purely intellectual experience of reception. Thus, conceptual art may also communicate in a democratic and *collective* manner, since the interpretive competence required for understanding and responding to a text is no match for the interpretive complexity of an image. It also opens up a space of collective and intersubjective reception instead of the subjective and emotional private space of reception required by aesthetic formalism.

In order to accommodate both the perceptual indifference and the conceptual autonomy of the artworks which seems to rest at the core of conceptual art as a critical gesture, we may be required both to redefine the modernist concept of artistic form as the perceptual articulation of visual images, which is clearly inoperable here, and the subsequent concept of artistic autonomy associated to the formalist tradition of autonomy as linguistic purity belonging to a specific evolutionary narrative of the medium itself. First of all, it is not necessary that artistic autonomy should be expressed as art for art's sake (despite Kosuth's obsessive interest in debating the nature and boundaries of art). In other words, the problem of autonomy given the heteronomy of conceptual art as an art infused into usual structures of communication and representation becomes a problem of linguistic autonomy against other possible uses of language. The problem of the autonomy of art shifts accordingly "from a question of morphology to a question of function" (as Kosuth had put it) and becomes, therefore, in itself, a *performative* problem.

Concerning the (postmodern) question of the post-medium condition of conceptual art and consequently, of contemporary art in broader terms, we may note that it did not immediately turn *any* artistic manifestation into a "conceptual"

gesture. In fact, as Tony Godfrey noticed, the conceptualist artworks may be restricted to a quite limited array of favorite techniques of expression. Accordingly, the artwork itself may consist broadly in four types of supports, all of which may have been considered to be non-artistic or at least to belong to the non-artistic sphere of everyday life and communication: ready-mades, interventions, documentations and words (Godfrey 1998, 7). We may expand the last category according to the way words are used into written text in order to produce a spatialization of language, written texts used as narrative or documentary device meant to inscribe or instantiate temporality (processes or events) and texts used as a performative device, especially exploiting the dimensions of direct communication and orality, by means of conversations, formal or informal dialogues and other forms of collective discourse. If the ready-mades in Godfrey's classification may have appeared as one of the possible and major artistic precedents to be reprised and reconsidered, the use of contextual interventions starting over from the performative dimension of placing an object in a situation, the documentation of a situation or an event and the textual description or statement are certainly new ways of understanding art, appropriated (among others) from the legal and administrative language (Buchloh 1997). If conceptual art focuses on communicational and informational structures and sometimes borrows these structures from related fields such as the scientific language and analytic philosophy (Osborne 1999, 47-65). For instance, it is the case of Joseph Kosuth's insistence on tautology and analytical propositions, or of Art and Language's use of an "academic philosophical jargon". But other conceptual artists also analyse the transmission/replication/critique of information in different other social fields such as law and administration, politics, sociology and the humanities. Thus, conceptual artists more often highlight impersonal and intersubjective formats of communication, pointing to the conditions of discourse and perception in which such public communication is structured in present-day social life. By means of an artistic use, these become aesthetic "forms" which only highlight conceptual art's communicative potentiality.

Moreover, the inherently communicative and performative dimension of conceptual art as the heir of Duchamp's critical revolution of artistic criteria may be seen especially in the interpretation of the readymade itself as a nominalist *gesture* (Duve 1999, 382-93). This interpretation takes Duchamp's performative gesture of proposing the readymade as art by the act of naming as the key artistic prerogative of contemporary art, the institutional gesture that brings artistic legitimacy to an object belonging to the sphere of the everyday-life. The conceptual intervention (such as naming the infamous object "Fountain") is thus a performative production of the artwork, an intervention which turns the object into art – "this is art" (Duve 1999, 301-20). Thus, the conceptual *gesture* of providing a new name for an ordinary object becomes the *work* of the artist and the transformative factor in relation to the ordinary object¹. It is also remarkable that, according to a reading retrospectively influenced by the institutional critique art practices of the seventies, Duchamp's work may be conceived as the gesture of provoking and challenging the conventions of art by doubling the authorial instances (the invention of the fictitious author Richard Mutt), claiming the artistic status for an ordinary object and defending the imaginary author by means of an apologetic statement. This interpretation turns his work into a strategic artistic intervention, based on authorial multiplication and conceptual recontextualization. We may thus redefine the uses of documents and words as representing strategic forms of interventions, whereas intervention becomes the pivotal category in Godfrey's classification, subordinating all the others as alternative modes of performativity. Consequently, the conceptualist intervention becomes the name of a strategic performative production of cultural discourse. But the performative dimension of the conceptualist production artistic production seems to depend on the production of the speech-act in appropriate institutional conditions (that, is, the artist has the legitimacy to name something and performs such ritual into the appropriate institutional context). This only highlights the second problem associated with the conceptual art's autonomy in relation to the institutional conditions and conventions

governing art, noted by Buchloh in his critique of conceptual art's early gestures belonging to a formalist "aesthetics of administration" (Buchloh 1997, 117-20).

4. Some Supportive Examples: The Ideology of Language and its Conceptual Critiques

Thus, we may arrive at the second major question, that is, how conceptual art as intervention may acquire its critical potential once its modes of expression are embedded into the ordinary channels of communication, that is, once medium has accepted the heterogeneous and heteronomous modes of production in relation to the material structures of production prevailing in the consumer's society and the ordinary language and ideology in totalitarian systems of Eastern Europe and Southern Latin America. This takes us back to the question of the power of performative acts which may explain why interventions may be more desirable than the production of objects. We may briefly state that, with conceptualist gestures, the critical use of language is meant to pay attention to the ideology behind an image or a discourse – that is, to the naturalization of a belief or a discourse.

Here I take ideology to be constituted not only by an explicitly textual set of statements, but also by unconscious beliefs and by the implicitly textual (or "discursive") elements inscribed in an image which support, confine and make possible the circulation and interpretation of that and other related images in society, often regulating the rhetorical functions and uses of the image (associated with the "figural" regime of the image) (Bryson 1981, 3-5). Also, in a Barthesian vein, I understand ideology as "the process whereby social life is converted to a natural reality", leading to "the confusion of linguistic and phenomenal reality" (Eagleton 1991, 2). I also think this specific notion of ideology as the naturalization and universalization of a particular set of dominant values, accompanied by an exclusionary process of obliteration and false conciliation of social antagonisms is particularly suited for approaching many (now) historical works of conceptual art of a

marked performative structure taking place in the seventies and the early eighties.

Such a redefinition of conceptual art as (inherently) a performative, interventionist practice may offer a clearer answer to the problem of artistic autonomy as a pragmatic problem related to the critical uses of language. The critical reuse of the dominant language in a certain cultural and political space may define the way artistic autonomy may be obtained. Therefore, achieving autonomy relates to the critical gesture of dismantling or criticizing the dominant ideology at a certain time and in a specific cultural and social space.

A few examples of such performative interventions may suffice to offer concrete art historical ground for the theoretical claims from above. When artists associated with institutional critique such as Hans Haacke make use of ready-made, that is, found and existing documents, consisting in notes and photographs in order to debunk the ideology of the museum as a corporative structure infused with capitalist values of profitability and hence as an interested institutional structure as opposed to the alleged neutrality of its purely aesthetic function and values, they install their work in the communicative structures already existing in the context they intervene in. It is the case of Haacke's well-known works such as the *Manet Projekt 74*, refused by the Wallraf-Richartz Museum in Cologne and eventually realized in the Paul Menz Gallery in Cologne by exhibiting a color reproduction instead of the original, where he detailed the provenance of Manet's *Bunch of Asparagus*, a piece who had entered the museum as a permanent loan from former Nazi patron and Deutsche Bank manager Hermann Joseph Abs, or the equally controversial *Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, A Real Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971*. The last art piece consisted of 146 photographic views of New York buildings, six pictures of transactions, maps of New York districts and an explanatory wall. Each photograph was accompanied by a type-written text describing the location and the financial transactions around each pictured building. By means of this work, Haacke discloses the transactions of a real-estate firm between 1951 and 1971 whose influential owner was also connected to the Guggenheim

museum where Haacke was supposed to present the work in a single-show. The effects of such use of information were enormous, since the show itself was cancelled, thus raising even more questions about censorship and the limits of critical discourse.

Haacke's artworks also have the function of pointing to their context of utterance and use, to the structures making possible discourse and to the way language is formed and discourse articulated, as well as to the system of power governing their possible or impossible material existence, the very possibility of being uttered as such and the system of their exclusion – the study of which formed, for Foucault (1981, 60-4), the object of an "archeology of discourse". In Haacke's case, the performative artistic gesture plays an emancipative role for the consciousness of his public, his conceptual interventions attempting to debunk the ideological mechanisms concealing subsequent political realities behind the modernist aesthetic and formalist ideology of the institutionalized art space.

The performative function of conceptual language is sometimes double. For the *MoMA Poll*, Haacke actually asks visitors to answer questions in a sociological survey meant to obtain an actual response from the audience to the ethical problem revealed, namely the visitor's opinion on the political activities of Nelson Rockefeller who was, at the time both a candidate for presidency and a member of the MoMA board of trustees. In performative terms, he is thus both asking a question and making a request. In other situations, the intervention consists simply in reusing the existing language in order to force it to reveal hidden patterns of ideology.

Therefore, we may also observe that conceptual art as a critical gesture actually means to perform discourse analysis on a series of communicative practices related not only to the art world, but to the social and political realities at large. This is the case of the absurd situations of (noncommunication encountered in most of the conceptual art developed in constraining political situations such as the totalitarian political system of communist ex-soviet countries and its Eastern European sphere of influence and to a certain extent in Latin America where it is also doubled by a highly subjective

and poetical function. It is only when adopting the performative stance towards such projects that their entire meaning and reasons become intelligible, that is, their inherent semantic non-intelligibility makes sense.

If the logic of communism is a totalizing one, which means that a fragment of language and the whole linguistic structure of society are intricately related, a piece of nonsense is taken to imply the nonsense of other similar operations which sustain party ideology by means of logical paradoxes. The basic assumption active here is the same fundamental one: that language is an essentially social activity: “people’s relationships with language are understood to be a model of their relationships with society” (Bobrinskaya 2008, 58). Consequently, to show the contradictions inside the structure of language means to show the contradictions of society itself.

The strategic effects obtained by indexical self-erasure of the work’s content in the work’s very structure is complemented in this context by what may be called a *politics of nothingness*, echoing the subsequent activity of voluntary “linguistic incomprehensibility” in Moscow Conceptualism (Weinhart 2008, 70-3). It happens in the actions of the artistic group Collective Actions, performing seemingly absurd activities with no determinate content or paradoxical actions in which nothing happens except for the event itself. Sometimes, the event becomes the interruption of a routine, the suspension of an established order of significant events. In their first action, *The Appearance* (1976), two members of the group come out of the forest carrying suitcases after a period of waiting. They distribute to the other members of the group that simultaneously formed the audience certificates of presence as participants to the event and disappear as mysteriously as they have arrived. Written language serves to record these actions and comment upon the content of the accompanying documentary pictures. It serves as a framing device for a politically charged notion of “nothingness”, challenging the dominant ideology of “work”.

The performative reasons of conceptualist interventions also explain the way incomprehensibility surround the group’s play with ambiguous slogans only highlighting the uncanny event of their utterance, their very material occurrence in a

specific place. The transparency of the artwork attained in this way which serves to appropriate the language of power and to divert its meaning in a perfectly self-referential way, since it blurs the exact position of the subject of speech and the speaking subject. Who is speaking in actions of the Moscow group Collective Actions such as the red banner installed in the middle of the forest, that reads "I do not complain about anything and I almost like it here, although I have never been here before and know nothing about this place" – is it the decontextualized banner itself, the artist as the author of the text or the reader? The very structure of the utterance is self-contradictory. If, in the first and second sense, the meaning of the utterance is absurd and clearly ironical, in the last indexical identification it becomes both ironical and sad, since it is imposing to the disoriented virtual reader (which in the original context of production, was also a participant) the hasty precaution to restate the official ideology that "everything is fine and he does not complain" about the incomprehensible situation he is set in.

The double reading of the works with slogans leads us to a particularly influential trope: irony. It is the way irony is inserted into the artistic mimicry of official bureaucratic structures of linguistic production that may explain both the value and the significance of artworks such as those of Ilya Kabakov or the works with slogans of Collective Actions Group in Russia in the late seventies of the last century. As a figure pertaining to the performative dimension of language, irony supposes the appropriation and superposition of a literal, primary and indirect, secondary layer of meaning into the same utterance. In Hayden White's account of the trope, irony "is a trope that derives its effect of apoppositiveness to the description of things by playing upon the relation of opposition" (White 1999, 52). On a different account, irony is considered "a kind of metaphor, but one that surreptitiously signals a denial of the assertion of similitude or difference contained in the literal sense of the proposition" (White 1978, 72). Irony denies what it affirms in the first stance. Each utterance may thus be read in at least two divergent ways and sometimes the secondary

meaning may contradict the primary or literal assertion by the very act of its utterance.

This is also the case of Kabakov's works at the end of the seventies such as *Schedule for Slope Pail Dumping* (1980) or *Sunday Evening* (1979). The large enamel on masonite tables depict administrative structures regulating daily activities. The first work expresses a fictional five-year plan for the communal activities such as taking out the garbage meant for a certain block of flats, whose obvious symbolic associations (the rationalization of exclusion) humorously mark the absurdity of the task at the level of the society as a whole. Here, not only that language is annihilated by means of its spatialization in a painting, but semantic rationalization is performatively interrupted. As far as the second mentioned work is concerned, Kabakov paints a similar table which is astutely recording analyzing and classifying the garments and behavior of all his guests in a private dinner in a highly bureaucratic form, evaluating it overall with the mark "satisfactory". The conscious mimicry of the language of surveillance and administration and the alleged internalization of the disciplinary apparatus consisting in making notes and archiving any activity of the subjects, by means of its unaltered assumption, which simultaneously points out to the annihilation of subjectivity in the very act of repeating the "official" language.

Conclusion

The arguments and examples presented in the present paper support the claim that the performative dimension of conceptual art, which became clear and paramount in the works focused on identity politics in the eighties, is not only inscribed at the core of conceptual artistic processes, which may explain the use of textuality and other documentary activities as critical devices accompanying, commenting (and sometimes replacing) visuality. In stronger terms, it may also become the key element in explaining how the idea of artistic autonomy is not abandoned together with the aesthetic and medium-specific indifference of conceptual art. Understood in terms of critical cultural resistance, autonomy is rather redefined as the ability

of language to resist its heteronomous manipulation by the dominant cultural ideologies and political power. Resistance may be itself redefined as the performative re-articulation of language within its conventional use. Therefore, the implicit political dimension of early conceptual art becomes not only an epiphenomenal feature of geographically and temporally limited set specific artworks or a merely stylistic attitude, but a central position in accounting for the "post-medium condition" of post-conceptual art.

NOTES

¹ According to a much stronger institutionalist perspective, this primarily nominalist gesture gains legitimacy when uttered by its gesture of exposure in the appropriate institutionalized context, be it the Salon of Independents in 1917 or generally the spaces of the gallery, the museum or other designated and circumscribed spaces such as temporary structures of the biennials or the interventions into the public space as such under an explicitly declared artistic assumption.

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Cristian Nae is PhD Lecturer at the Department of Art History and Theory of the "George Enescu" University of Arts, Iasi, Romania. His research interests are the theory of contemporary art, aesthetics and the hermeneutics. He translated into Romanian Nicolas Bourriaud's *Esthetique relationnelle* and *Postproduction* and Roger Pouivet's *Qu'est-qu'une oeuvre d'art?*

Address:

Cristian NAE

Department of Art History and Theory

George Enescu University of Arts, Iasi

Str. Sarariei 189, 700451, Iasi, Romania

Email: cristi_nae@yahoo.co.uk

A Sketch of Deleuze's Hermeneutical Spin

Emilian Mărgărit
Al. I. Cuza University of Iași

Abstract

The aim of this article is to sketch the procedural nature of the modus in which Deleuze reads the other philosophers. The hermeneutical problem indicated by the indecision to consider his books on different authors as an authorized interpretation or as fantasist utilization may be scattered if we understand his hermeneutical attempts both as interpretation and construction (concept or problem). In addition, this indecision affects the guild of Deleuzian exegetes in respect to the directory idea (prime author) which could point out the general strategy of his philosophy.

Keywords: interpretation, construction, problematic, Deleuze, Hume, Nietzsche, Kant, Bergson

I believe it is relevant to describe Deleuze's 'interpretive method' in a plural manifestation form because its denomination in singular ought to include a complex web of positions regarding the problems arising from the preparation, conduct and waging of a 'guerilla war' within and with philosophy. This is the reason why I have selected Hume, Nietzsche, Kant and Bergson from his works (written in his early period), the elements that enable the realization of a sketch of his 'method'.

How can one explain Gilles Deleuze's philosophical initiative? How can it be explained taking into account the polymorphous nature resulting from its ambiguous relation with the 'academia'? Will we find an answer in case we discover what his philosophy aims to overcome, accomplish, oppose, or, to put it

more simply, in case we discover who or what does he write against?

If we analyze procedurally the implications of Deleuze's philosophy, we can state in principle that: a) his philosophy is not an unknown fruit (as one could think taking into account the famous exotic titles, especially in the English speaking regions, that announce an exegesis on Deleuze) that emerged accidentally from the old tree of Western philosophy and that b) his genuine concepts are *also* pro/ble/gram/matic reactions to the above mentioned tradition.

Vincent Descombes, one of the authors who attempted to outline the complex situation of the '60s atmosphere in France, exemplifies the subjectivity as main thread. It is a main thread to the extent that subjectivity faced a dual attack: a) against the idealist premises of phenomenology in search of a 'genuine' *cogito*, thus maintaining the subject as a principle, and b) against dialectics seen as pivoting around 'a higher concept of identity' (Descombes 1980, 76). We may relate Deleuze to these combatant attitudes if we widen the meaning presupposed by subjectivity and the horizon of its justifiability, if we take into account the 'flank' it opens up in relation to: "(...) the critique or deconstruction of interiority, of self-presence, of consciousness, of mastery, of the individual or collective property of an essence. Critique or deconstruction of the firmness of a *seat* (*hypokeimenon*, *substantia*, *subjectum*) and the certitude of an *authority* and a *value* (the individual, a people, the state, history, work)." (Nancy 1991, 4)

However, from this perspective only, we observe a purely reactive reactionary presence in Deleuze's case. Does his philosophy coagulates only and to the extent that it is a choleric reaction to the classical themes of philosophy, just like the light of a bulb only draws out and gathers the insects wandering in the dark? It is not by chance (but not undisputable) that the exegesis in the field suggests as direction vectors of Deleuze's philosophy authors that he approached. In this sense, Bergson, Nietzsche and Spinoza are linked in various ways in order to explain the Deleuzian project. Here are some examples taken from the literature in the field to support this argument.

For instance, Badiou believes that Bergson is the true inspiration of Deleuze's thinking (the idealism of his philosophy) (Badiou 1999, 39); in the same spirit, Keith Ansell Pearson believes that Deleuze's ontology owes everything to Bergson and that the reading of Spinoza bears a Bergsonian influence (Pearson 1999, 12). According to Constantin V. Boundas, the transcendental empiricism of Deleuze is Bergson-inspired (Boundas 2006, 11). Michael Hardt divided Deleuze's philosophy into a Bergson-inspired ontology, an ethics supported by Nietzsche's philosophy and a 'politics' supported by a collective model of Spinoza-inspired ethical practice. According to Hardt, the Deleuzian reading of Spinoza has Bergsonian and Nietzschean characteristics, and the successive reading of these authors ensured Deleuze with the anti-Hegelian project of his philosophy (Hardt 1993, X–XII). Todd May states that there is a 'holy Trinity' of Deleuze's philosophy where: Spinoza is the Son, Bergson is the Father and Nietzsche is the Holy Spirit. In the same line, at the 'individual all-round' section, Spinoza and Bergson make up Deleuze's ontology with the immanence and duration concepts. Also, Nietzsche holds the affirmative flag of a subversive ethics (May 2005, 25–27). In contrast (as an exotic contrasting example), Manuel Delanda relates his philosophy to the scientific discourse because he takes Deleuze as a procesualist thinker (Delanda 2002, 14–16).

We might think that the reason why the authors wooed by Deleuze are suggested as *directions* of his thinking consists in the fact that each of them is a counterpoint to the mainstream philosophy: Spinoza to the rationalists and theology; Nietzsche to the philosophy at large, it seems, seen as Platonic metaphysics; Bergson to Kant, Hegel or, generally speaking, to the way philosophical problems are constructed. In the scenarios described by the above mentioned writers, Deleuze appears to suggest himself as a spearhead for an already existing aggressive direction. However, it is imperative that we do not forget that Deleuze's way of reading singles out an author and somehow takes him outside an official tradition. Can it be stated that Deleuze has 'built' himself a tradition or is it possible that the selection of authors, the electivity lying at the basis of their exotic

cohabitation within a 'tradition' is proof of a taste for 'scandal' in philosophy?

I suggest that we discover the method of the Deleuzian reading by following the course of his first books and especially his very first book on Hume's philosophy, which is unjustly absent from the exegesis on the matter.

(a) Although it is not the main object of his first work, Deleuze puts into question the way one can tell which manner of reading is better than another. In Deleuze's view, to position oneself to a text is to detect the problem that makes up the foundation and the structure of a theory, that is to understand and question not the solution to a problem but the very interrogation that rephrases a certain type of experience, presupposing other connections, other differentiation relations, a new way of forcing things out, etc. (a surprisingly recurring theme forty years later in *What is philosophy?*). Therefore, to criticize is to detect a 'force deficit', a too mainstream way of thematizing the basic data of an experience, the insufficiency of a differentiation, the commonplaceness of a comment in relation to the experience of a problem through an author. "To put something in question means subordinating and subjecting things to the question, intending, through this constrained and forced subsumption, that they reveal an essence or a nature. To criticize the question means showing under what conditions the question is possible and correctly raised; in other words, how things would not be what they are were the question different from the one formulated." (Deleuze 1991, 106)

This is the reason why the Deleuzian transcription of the problematics of Hume's empiricism starts with the interrogation of the nature of subjectivity: is it not that the subject constitutes itself within the given? And the condition of possibility, the playground of this interrogation is given by the phrase 'relations are external to ideas' (Deleuze 1991, 24, 119). The Deleuzian empiricism takes on a type of reading that engages the history of philosophy through the problematics that break up the continuous aspect of its history; this reading frames an author with a constant view to the position of a precise problem – such as that of the subject – and to the presentation of the conditions of this problem. Thus, it is understood that to Deleuze the fidelity of a

reading *per se* limits itself to the maintaining of the problematic field, where the problematic field is the univocal relation described (rhizomatically) as the coupling of the problem to its emergence conditions. Therefore, the relation between Hume, his work and Deleuze's position towards it focus on the same fact when the consistency of the reading is in view and not so much its justness. The psychological or social factors can be conceived of as color enhancers of the problematics, that is they express the set of motivations and do not induce the degree of truth nor the degree of falseness of the question. *'Hume' is simply the nominal owner of a problematic field.* In a pragmatist way similar to a certain point with Richard Rorty, Deleuze can tell us that the importance of an author disappears or holds depending on the problematics that can recreate him (Alliez 2004, 33).

However, the generally defining aspect of the Deleuzian reading strategy is the fact that to interpret is to simultaneously construct, and the two generate the true unity of a creation if, of course, the creation makes current a certain problematics. "(...) to see the history of philosophy as a sort of buggery or (it comes to the same thing) immaculate conception. I saw myself as taking an author from behind and giving him a child that would be his own offspring, yet monstrous. It was really important for it to be his own child, because the author had to actually say all I had him saying. But the child was bound to be monstrous too, because it resulted from all sorts of shifting, slipping, dislocations, and hidden emissions that I really enjoyed." (Deleuze 1995, 6)

In other words, the Deleuzian reading way must be simultaneously understood as *interpretation and construction of concept* – a procreating 'sodomizing' as Deleuze himself calls it. A procedural division of this hermeneutic couple distinguishes on the one hand, in the case of the work on Hume, constructivism¹ as an immanent manner of restitution of the conceptual stake of an author, emphasizing the *play* of the structural elements, and on the other hand, an assembly and deconstruction strategy regarding mainly authors and their 'isms', concepts, distinctions pertaining to the official history of philosophy and that may be included generically under the label interpretation. Interpretation plays a minimal role in the assembly of the contrast elements (for instance, Hume – Bergson, Nietzsche – Freud), but a decisive one

when the problematics in question has a certain shape and conflicting determination in connection to a tradition or an event-author (Kant in this case). To be more precise, in the book in question, Deleuze inaugurates the relation Hume – Kant on the subject issue. This relation does not presuppose the reiteration of the historical sequence Hume – Kant in order to discover the difficulties that the former could not overcome in connection with the latter, nor to evaluate the epistemological solfeggio sung by Kant in order to dissipate the atonal skepticism of Hume. In the case of the problematics assumed by Deleuze, the reiteration of this sequence is decisive for the way in which, starting from Hume's philosophy, a theory of subjectivity can be *grounded* in its practical origins, as well as, of course, its conflicting relation with the Kantian transcendental theory.

Formally, the two movements that describe the physics of the Deleusian problematic moves in the case of Hume's philosophy can be extended by suggesting generically and unitarily a new way of working in philosophy, and particularly in the case of each book (Nietzsche, Bergson, Kant, Proust, Sacher-Masoch): a) *an immanent reading that goes through and connects the basic data of a certain problematics*; b) *a critical, sometimes de/re-constructive review or infusion of certain concepts, distinctions, major philosophical theses*.

(b) Deleuze's book on Nietzsche's philosophy is multiply relevant. Its importance can be biographically determined²; it is also decisively relevant to the first hand exegesis on Nietzsche. And not least, at the conceptual level, disregarding the other two relevant points, there is a problematics determined by the certification of a 'radical empiricism' and a 'nihilist dialectics'. We can configure and procedurally separate the *construction* and *interpretation* elements in order to detect the relation Deleuze – Nietzsche in his aggressive trial against philosophy the same way we described Deleuze's reading on Hume. "The philosophical learning of an author is not assessed by numbers of quotations, nor by the always fanciful and conjectural check lists of libraries, but by the apologetic or polemical directions of his work itself. We will misunderstand the whole of Nietzsche's work if we do not see "against whom" its principle concepts are directed. Hegelian

themes are present in this work as the enemy against which it fights.” (Deleuze 2002, 162)

Let us imagine Deleuze’s book like a battlefield within philosophy; his strategy must be deduced from the concrete movement of concepts, in connection with the enemy he encircles or carefully studies. The movements *per se* of a concept depending on its operative enemy, the encirclement, the jumble, the constant fight are the signs of what we called *constructivism*. The strategy of scrapping, assembly, local coherence and interdependence inferred from these movements bears the generic title of *interpretation*.³

(c) Deleuze’s work on Kant is a source of perplexity for the readers accustomed to his ‘hallucinative’ reading method. There is no ‘problematic staging’, no confronted positions, and no discussion about a possible lack: one is simply confronting some subtle notes depicting the cobweb of Kantian critical philosophy, put down with the thoroughness of an inquirer. In this sense, one of Deleuze’s commentators has a synthetic view on the hermeneutical scenarios displayed by Deleuze in his books, drawing them closer to the detective novel build-up manner: “Philosophy is a detective story to the extent that we start not from the knowledge or assumptions, but from the clues, disparate elements, combined later in a virtual world whose only consistency is the internal consistency of a possible model.” (Antonioli 1999, 15)

In comparison to the method I suggest, consisting in the definition of the Deleuzian reading strategy simultaneously as concept *interpretation and construction*, the narrative premise risks engaging and wasting the Deleuzian philosophy between the folds of an excessive and dominant pragmatist hermeneutics. The investigation of the inquirer assembles the clues in a montage and, secondly, in a coherent virtual scenario through the network of signs intersection and sending. The fact that the montage does not represent the ‘in-self’ of an author does not reduce the Deleuzian procedure to a merely narrative method. Moreover, the montage procedure is energized by a collage method⁴ that settles in conceptual constructions the clues of a level, placing it into the multiple and transversal network of the other levels that make up the work of an author; this takes place in various opposition or

alliance scenarios, within an unconventional or elective history of philosophy (Hume deconstructs the transcendental unity of the subject, Nietzsche completes the Kantian critique, Hume's link to Nietzsche concerning the exteriority of relations, the manner in which something can be thought, etc.). What is more, the authors who have a stand at the level of the various problematic representations are distributed differently⁵ (the Hume in his first book is different from the Hume in *Difference and Repetition*), in main or secondary roles (Bergson in *Difference and Repetition* in relation to *Logic of Sense*), a neuter tone (the book on Kant) or a negative tone (Kant as an example of the dogmatic image of thinking). *This is why, for Deleuze, the plan and the problematics of every authors, the produced oppositions or alliances are unique.* The Deleuzian investigation may suppose both an interpretation and construction procedure and a neuter action of 'parceling out' and deconstruction, as can be seen in his reading of Kant.⁶

(d) The situation is completely different in his work on Bergson's philosophy. Perhaps that is the reason behind the title of this work – *Bergsonism*. "The notion of difference promises to throw light on the philosophy of Bergson, and inversely, Bergsonism promises to make an inestimable contribution to a philosophy of difference." (Deleuze 2004, 32) The strategy of this work can be, in turn, traced back to the Deleuzian interpretation and construction method, only that, in this case, Deleuze focuses on the problematic lines emerging from what is to become a Bergsonian 'tradition'. Concepts as 'multiplicity', 'virtuality' are to be thrown upon the swarming relentless world and recovered as evanescent nets of experience (that condition no more than that are conditioning in contrast with the *a priori* schemes) making visible par example the concrete cadence of time as the books on *Cinema* have showed. This is the sense in which, and as a consequence of which I can understand the Bergsonian ubiquity in the explanatory positions of many Deleuzian themes.

In conclusion the hermeneutical spin proper to Deleuze's own way of making philosophy is not based on a vulgar or savage utilization of texts, concepts, distinction aiming to reach by all means a postmodern relativistic view on whatever is looking at. On the contrary we are dealing with a very 'serious' (as Foucault has labeled him) undertake in philosophy constructing within

philosophy with the reach material of tradition the virtual structure of what it is that make as to do what we do 'now'.

NOTES

¹ This term is coined as a terminal overview in the first section of *What is Philosophy?* on the manner in which philosophy makes shifts in the problematic jumps taken from an author to another (subject of Descartes and the subject of Spinoza or Kant for example). Furthermore if *What is philosophy?* is leveraged by a personal investigation of Deleuze regarding his one way of making philosophy, then the sketch of the hermeneutical spin we are trying to draw could be justified by the mega-theme of philosophy as such put in to act in this final book. Guattari is not excluded although the book mention is co-written, just an-present in respect to the lines that are 'fished' from the creative pool of Deleuze first period that stretches from the book on Hume till the *Logic of sense*.

² "It was Nietzsche, who I read only later, who extricated me from all this. Because you just can't deal with him in the same sort of way. He gets up to all sorts of things behind *your* back." (Deleuze 1995, 6) This phrase of Deleuze bears special awakens because it is hard to understand why Nietzsche is put in the 'later' list of authors 'dwelt' with since his book on Nietzsche is his second official book. We can understand this sentence if we presume that he wrote the other books (or some of them, *Bergsonism* for example) before that of Nietzsche and the order of publishing is just unimportant irrelevant or that is affirming the difficulties encompassed by his 'strategy' (that we are trying to sketch) and that the resistance of Nietzsche has made his 'capture apparatus' a more sophisticated, evolved philosophical parasite in the body of philosophy.

³ In the book dedicated to Nietzsche's philosophy we pursue the structural sphere of constructivism in respect to the concepts of force, will to power and the element that is correlated with them – quality. The non-philosophical embodiments present in those concepts (biology, thermo-dynamics) due to Nietzsche one strategy is re-dimensioned by Deleuze in the struggle against Hegelianism. Deleuze is shadowing Nietzsche's philosophy in the light of Salomon Maimon's project that is mainly constructed in regard to Kant's transcendental philosophy, thus we have a Nietzsche that passes (in the figural and literal sense) over Hegel to restate the stakes of post-Kantianism's and in an opening way to solve them. The sphere of interpretation is basically that with which Deleuze is in the first sits of Nietzsche exegesis, a systematic approach of Nietzsche's philosophy (a coherent explication of the relation between force and will to power with all its implications).

⁴ We must not forget that Deleuze is assembling various facts from let's simply say non-philosophical domains as literature, art, biology etc. as support for a philosophical thesis (the virtual for example).

⁵ Zourabichvili speaks of an "unconventional usage of indirect speech" in Deleuze's book on other authors (Zourabichvili 2004, 14). I would say that Deleuze relates only to what can his procedure retain and not "the story" itself of an author; electivity holds similar to the manner we chose our friends, basically

regarding personal traits and pure resonance. "Whether they're real or imaginary, animate or inanimate, you have to form your mediators. It's a series. If you're not in some series, even a completely imaginary one, you're lost. I need my mediators to express myself, and they'd never express themselves without me: you're always working in a group, even when you seem to be on your own." (Deleuze 1995, 125) The cause of this rhetorical 'echoes' through others is based first of all on a common cause (critique of transcendence, or ego for example) and in relation to our sketch by the very own procedure of Deleuze 'method' of philosophizing.

⁶ "My book on Kant's different; I like it, I did it as a book about an enemy that tries to show how his system works, its various cogs - the tribunal of Reason, the legitimate exercise of the faculties (our subjection to these made all the more hypocritical by our being characterized as legislators)." (Deleuze 1995, 6) Perhaps this is why in *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze will present a graphic sketch of how the subject circumscribed to the rigors of Kantian works. (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 56).

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Emilian Mărgărit has a PhD on the problem of empiricism and immanence in Deleuze ("Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iasi, Romania). His fields of interest are Early Modern philosophy, contemporary French philosophy, the concepts of nation and minorities.

Address:
Emilian MĂRGĂRIT
A.I. Cuza University of Iasi
Department of Philosophy
Bd. Carol I, 11
700506 Iasi, Romania
E-mail: emi_margarit@yahoo.co.uk

La liberté bergsonienne et la responsabilité

Masae Nagase
Ritsumeikan University

Abstract

Bergsonian Freedom and Responsibility

In the *Essay* Bergson defines personal expression as free. A free act is the expression of the conception of life found in a person's experience of life. Given that it is different for everyone, it cannot be expressed in language. That is why Bergson considers that the act which is the most free is one that is done without any reason. It can be said that Bergson himself felt the need to ground his conception of responsibility. In the *Cours II* he states two conditions of responsibility: freedom and discernment. The identity of a person which ensures that freedom is based in the conception of duration found in the *Essay*. In *Matter and Memory* Bergson tries to resolve the question of discernment with the help of his theory of memory. Bergson succeeded in solving the problems related to reason and to fanciful decision and solidly established the notion of responsibility while renewing the theory of freedom originally found in the *Essay*.

Keywords: Bergson, freedom, self, personality, responsibility, identity, recognition, rationality, recollection, memory

1. La liberté dans l'*Essai* et les enjeux laissés sans réponse

Mais chez l'homme, être pensant, l'acte libre peut s'appeler une synthèse de sentiments et d'idées, et l'évolution qui y conduit une évolution raisonnable (Bergson 2008, 207).

Cette phrase de *Matière et mémoire* est frappante, parce que Bergson y considère la liberté comme « raisonnable », tandis que dans l'*Essai sur les données immédiates de la*

conscience, publié en 1889, il écrivait au contraire : « cette absence de toute raison tangible est d'autant plus frappante que nous sommes plus profondément libres » (Bergson 2007, 128). Que signifie le passage de la théorie proposée dans l'*Essai* à celle que nous trouvons dans *Matière et mémoire*, paru en 1896, et où la liberté en arrive à être thématifiée comme raisonnable ? Comment Bergson peut-il affirmer de la liberté qu'elle est « une synthèse de sentiments et d'idées » et « une évolution raisonnable » ? Pour élucider ces questions, nous commencerons par examiner le problème de la liberté dans l'*Essai*.

1.1. La liberté comme expression de la personnalité

Pour Bergson, plus un acte est libre, moins peut-il s'expliquer par une raison. Dans l'*Essai*, Bergson définit comme libre un acte qui émane de notre personnalité entière et qui l'exprime. Ainsi il dit de la liberté :

Bref, nous sommes libres quand nos actes émanent de notre personnalité entière, quand ils l'expriment, quand ils ont avec elle cette indéfinissable ressemblance qu'on trouve parfois entre l'œuvre et l'artiste (Bergson 2007, 129).

Car l'action accomplie n'exprime plus alors telle idée superficielle, presque extérieure à nous, distincte et facile à exprimer : elle répond à l'ensemble de nos sentiments, de nos pensées et de nos aspirations les plus intimes, à cette conception particulière de la vie qui est l'équivalent de toute notre expérience passée, bref, à notre idée personnelle du bonheur et de l'honneur (Bergson 2007, 128).

Ainsi comprend-on que la liberté selon Bergson s'incarne dans l'expression de la personnalité et que dans l'acte libre, l'action accomplie exprime la conception particulière de la vie qui a fermenté dans toute l'expérience de la vie. L'auteur explique encore en ce sens :

A vrai dire, les états profonds de notre âme, ceux qui se traduisent par des actes libres, expriment et résument l'ensemble de notre histoire passée ... (Bergson 2007, 139)

A partir de ce constat, on peut dire que l'expression de la personnalité chez Bergson signifie surtout qu'un état profond de l'âme s'exprime. Bergson distingue deux aspects de la vie psychologique : « la vie consciente se présente sous un double

aspect, selon qu'on l'aperçoit directement ou par réfraction à travers l'espace » (Bergson 2007, 102). Ces deux aspects de la vie consciente sont également les deux formes de la durée et de la multiplicité.

Au-dessous de la durée homogène, symbole extensif de la durée vraie, une psychologie attentive démêle une durée dont les moments hétérogènes se pénètrent ; au-dessous de la multiplicité numérique des états conscients, une multiplicité qualitative ; au-dessous du moi aux états bien définis, un moi où succession implique fusion et organisation (Bergson 2007, 95).

Cette phrase exprime nettement les particularités des deux moi que distingue Bergson : le moi profond et le moi superficiel. Le moi profond est la multiplicité qualitative dont les éléments se pénètrent, qui dure véritablement, tandis que le moi superficiel est une durée homogénéisée et étendue, et qui offre une multiplicité numérique. Cette durée permet la coexistence de deux aspects contradictoires dans le moi profond, à savoir la conservation du passé et l'évolution changeante. Par conséquent, les actes qui proviennent du moi profond reflètent, par la pénétration mutuelle, la totalité des expériences de la vie passée.

La liberté bergsonienne consiste dans l'expression de la personnalité, c'est-à-dire de l'ensemble de notre histoire passée ; dans l'*Essai*, Bergson considère comme libre l'acte qui se base sur soi-même, ou qui est à l'origine de soi-même. Si la cause d'un acte se trouve à l'extérieur de soi, c'est un acte contraint, et on ne peut pas l'appeler un acte libre. Au regard de cette aptitude à se fonder sur soi, une telle liberté peut être comparée avec le concept de liberté dans la philosophie de Leibniz et de Wolff, même si chez le second l'action est déterminée. Selon Leibniz, tout choix est déterminé par la fusion du sentiment et du jugement rationnel opéré par la raison ou l'intellect ; lorsque le jugement rationnel est la cause principale de la détermination d'une action, on peut alors considérer que cette action est libre. Chez Leibniz, le libre arbitre est donc nié.¹ Dans les philosophies de Leibniz et de Wolff, comme le motif de l'action est d'ores et déjà déterminé, on ne peut exiger que l'acteur soit responsable de cette même action. Au contraire, la liberté vue par Bergson comme

représentation de la personnalité ne signifie pas que l'action est déterminée par le caractère et l'histoire personnelle d'un individu. Lorsque Bergson compare le rapport entre l'acteur et l'action au rapport entre l'artiste et son œuvre, ce qu'il envisage, c'est le fait que l'action est l'expression de la personnalité ; autrement dit il s'agit d'un rapport de « ressemblance ». Dans son cours de philosophie morale et politique dispensé au lycée Henri-IV entre 1891 et 1893, publié par Henri Hude dans les *Cours II*, Bergson dit :

Une action est notre œuvre quand elle exprime notre personnalité, quand elle se rattache à notre histoire, se rapporte à notre caractère. Ce n'est pas à dire qu'elle soit nécessitée par notre caractère ou déterminée par notre histoire. Les antécédents psychologiques n'agissent pas comme des causes physiques. Des antécédents étant posés, étant donné une vie antérieure, plusieurs actions sont données comme également possibles, mais une fois l'action accomplie, elle ne sera nôtre que si elle nous ressemble (Bergson 1992, 153).

1.2. L'acte libre sans raison

Mais Bergson pensait que pour qu'un acte soit libre, il ne suffisait pas qu'il soit fondé sur le soi. Car « notre vie intérieure dépendra bien encore de nous jusqu'à un certain point ; mais, pour un observateur placé au dehors, rien ne distinguera notre activité d'un automatisme absolu » (Bergson 2007, 113). De plus, il existe des cas où on ne peut pas distinguer les actions issues de causes extérieures de celles issues de notre propre volonté, quel que soit l'observateur (un tiers ou nous-mêmes). Ainsi en est-il du cas de l'hypnose. Bergson explique dans l'*Essai* que les patients sous hypnose considèrent les actions entreprises suivant des indications extérieures comme obéissant à leurs propres états de conscience.

Quand un sujet exécute à l'heure indiquée la suggestion reçue dans l'état d'hypnotisme, l'acte qu'il accomplit est amené, selon lui, par la série antérieure de ses états de conscience. Pourtant ces états sont en réalité des effets, et non des causes : il fallait que l'acte s'accomplît ; il fallait aussi que le sujet se l'expliquât [...] (Bergson 2007, 118).

Ce type de suggestion sous hypnose flotte au-dessus du moi de surface, telles des végétations indépendantes, sans se mêler au moi. Outre ces termes indépendants, il existe des séries plus

complexes qui, tout en se pénétrant, n'arrivent jamais à se fondre parfaitement dans la masse compacte du moi (Bergson 2007, 125). Bergson précise à titre d'exemple qu'il s'agit de l'« ensemble de sentiments et d'idées qui nous viennent d'une éducation mal comprise, celle qui s'adresse à la mémoire plutôt qu'au jugement » (Bergson 2007, 125). Cet ensemble forme un moi parasite au sein même du moi fondamental et empiète sur lui.

C'est pour cela que Bergson dit que, pour qu'un acte soit libre, il doit refléter les nuances propres d'une personnalité. Le moi profond fait que tous les états psychologiques passés, chacun avec leurs différentes nuances, s'interpénètrent dans l'état actuel. Cette tonalité constitue la particularité de chaque personne, la personnalité. « En un certain sens, nous les [opinions] avons adoptées sans raison, car ce qui en fait le prix à nos yeux, c'est que leur nuance répond à la coloration commune de toutes nos autres idées, c'est que nous y avons vu, dès l'abord, quelque chose de nous » (Bergson 2007, 100). Ainsi, dans l'acte libre qui exprime la personnalité, une nuance reflétée est un critère de choix. Concernant la notion d'acte libre, Bergson dit que l'on fait son choix sans raison et que dans l'acte libre, « nous nous sommes décidés sans raison, peut-être même contre toute raison » (Bergson 2007, 128) ; c'est que le langage ne peut pas rendre les idées propres à chacun de nous, car il les désigne par les mêmes mots (Bergson 2007, 123-124), l'explication de l'acte libre est vaine. Quand un acte émane de notre moi profond, c'est-à-dire de « l'ensemble de nos sentiments, de nos pensées et de nos aspirations les plus intimes » (Bergson 2007, 128), l'acte répond « à cette conception particulière de la vie qui est l'équivalent de toute notre expérience passée, bref, à notre idée personnelle du bonheur et de l'honneur » (Bergson 2007, 128). La langue ne peut pas exprimer de telles idées si personnelles.

C'est dans les circonstances solennelles, lorsqu'il s'agit de l'opinion que nous donnerons de nous aux autres et surtout à nous-mêmes, que nous choisissons en dépit de ce qu'on est convenu d'appeler un motif ; et cette absence de toute raison tangible est d'autant plus frappante que nous sommes plus profondément libres (Bergson 2007, 128).

L'acte libre sans raison dont Bergson parle apparaît dans les cas de décisions concernant une dignité de soi, mais non pas dans la vie quotidienne dont la plus grande partie est faite d'actions habituelles. Bergson considère que la liberté est

susceptible de degrés et il associe cet acte sans raison à la liberté la plus élevée.

Cependant, cette conception de la liberté, selon laquelle l'acte sans raison est libre, paraît incapable d'éviter la difficulté théorique de ne pas pouvoir distinguer entre l'acte libre et l'acte impulsif ou l'acte capricieux. L'acte qui consiste à répondre à une excitation par une réaction immédiate (Bergson 2008, 170) est considéré par Bergson comme une action automatique, ce qui est opposé à l'acte libre (Bergson 2007, 25). Il y eut effectivement de telles critiques peu après la parution de l'*Essai* (Azouvi 2007, 44-6). Parmi elles on remarque particulièrement celles de Lucien Lévi-Brühl et de Gustave Belot. Lévi-Brühl dira :

Encore cette liberté ne satisfera-t-elle pas ni ceux qui la veulent intimement liée à la raison, ni ceux qui l'appellent une « bonne volonté » (Lévi-Brühl 1890, 536).

Les critiques de Belot touchent plus directement les questions que nous venons de remarquer :

Est-ce être libre que d'obéir à des impulsions cachées, si intimement personnelles qu'elles soient ? (Belot 1890, 373).

Quand un homme agit en vertu de motifs dont nous ne trouvons pas l'analogie en nous, nous ne pouvons considérer son acte comme voulu, ni par conséquent comme libre, puisque nous ne voyons pas comment nous-mêmes nous pourrions le vouloir. Sa conduite nous paraît capricieuse ou folle (Belot 1890, 379).

Car, pour la [liberté] retrouver, [...] il faudrait une régression de la pensée intelligente vers la spontanéité irréfléchie, de l'humanité à l'animalité [...] (Belot 1890, 392).

On ne peut se contenter de dire que les critiques formulées envers le concept bergsonien de liberté sont dues à une compréhension incomplète ou erronée de la philosophie de Bergson, mais il faut admettre que dans l'action libre telle qu'elle est décrite par celui-ci, la position de la raison et de la volonté par rapport à l'action libre, tout comme le fait d'écarter l'arbitraire de l'action libre, posent des véritables problèmes.

1.3. Le commencement de liberté : la sensation affective

Cependant, considérer comme identiques l'action libre bergsonienne et l'impulsion (la spontanéité irréfléchie), comme le fait Gustave Belot, est erroné. Bergson opère clairement la

distinction entre les deux, en disant que la sensation affective est « un commencement de liberté » (Bergson 2007, 25). En effet, l'existence de cette sensation affective est la condition de la possibilité de l'action libre. Bergson insiste sur le fait que la sensation affective a le caractère du plaisir et de la douleur, et que par ce caractère la sensation affective provoque une réaction (Bergson 2007, 24-25, 29, 35). La raison pour laquelle le plaisir et la douleur, ou l'agréable et le pénible, provoquent la réaction, vient de ce que la douleur incite l'organisme à diverses actions pour échapper aux causes de cette douleur. Alors qu'il y a des organismes divers et variés chez lesquels une excitation extérieure engendre une réaction déterminée sans l'intermédiaire de la conscience, la présence de la sensation affective libère les organismes d'une existence consistant en une réaction purement automatique à ces excitations extérieurs.

Si le plaisir et la douleur se produisent chez quelques privilégiés, c'est vraisemblablement pour autoriser de leur part une résistance à la réaction automatique qui se produirait [...] (Bergson 2007, 25).

La sensation affective est « la conscience que nous prenons des mouvements involontaires qui commencent » (Bergson 2007, 26), de l'esquisse des réactions automatiques qui se produiront à l'avenir dans nos corps, sous l'action des excitations. Nous pouvons comprendre le caractère du mouvement automatique qui se prépare dans notre corps au moment où cette sensation affective apparaît à la conscience.

Mais comment nous permettrait-elle de résister à la réaction qui se prépare si elle ne nous en faisait connaître la nature par quelque signe précis ? Et quel peut être ce signe, sinon l'esquisse et comme la préformation des mouvements automatiques futurs au sein même de la sensation éprouvée ? (Bergson 2007, 25)

Si Bergson définit la sensation affective comme « un commencement de liberté » (Bergson 2007, 25), c'est parce que celle-ci, apparaissant à la conscience, nous apprend la nature de cet automatisme réflexe qui naît dans notre corps et que le corps lui-même tente de rejoindre. C'est la raison pour laquelle la présence de la sensation affective est le premier pas permettant de séparer l'action libre du mouvement automatique.

Il faut remarquer en outre qu'on s'élève par degrés insensibles des mouvements automatiques aux mouvements libres, et que ces derniers diffèrent surtout des précédents en ce qu'ils nous présentent,

entre l'action extérieure qui en est l'occasion et la réaction voulue qui s'ensuit, une sensation affective intercalée (Bergson 2007, 25).

La sensation affective introduit l'indétermination dans le processus d'action-réaction. Néanmoins, il ne suffit pas que la sensation affective apparaisse à la conscience. Si l'on se laisse emporter immédiatement par la sensation affective, il s'agit alors de l'impulsion, et comme l'écrit Bergson, « l'intensité des sensations affectives ne serait donc que la conscience que nous prenons des mouvements involontaires qui commencent » (Bergson 2007, 26) : ce n'est pas encore une action voulue, ni une action qu'on puisse qualifier de libre. Le rôle de la sensation affective est de « nous inviter à un choix entre cette réaction automatique et d'autres mouvements possibles » (Bergson 2007, 26). En établissant un écart dans la succession d'une action extérieure et d'une réaction corporelle, elle nous donne l'espace pour permettre une résistance au mouvement automatique et choisir une action différente de la réaction automatique. Ce que l'on choisit est bien de notre ressort. « En présence de plusieurs plaisirs conçus par l'intelligence, notre corps s'oriente vers l'un d'eux spontanément, comme par une action réflexe. Il dépend de nous de l'arrêter... » (Bergson 2007, 28). De cette façon, dans l'*Essai*, le concept bergsonien de liberté échappe à l'impulsion. Et pourtant, on peut dire que les questions autour de l'arbitraire et de l'impulsion posées par Belot et Lévi-Brühl demeurent. Donc la thèse de la liberté raisonnable que nous avons rappelée au début de cet article semble avant tout destinée à répondre à ces critiques (Bergson 2008, 206-7).²

2. La question de la responsabilité : deux conditions de la responsabilité

Il semble que Bergson lui-même ait trouvé une autre question par rapport à la conception de la liberté posée dans l'*Essai*. C'est la question de la responsabilité. Même si un acte a la nuance propre de sa personnalité, dans l'acte où l'acteur ne connaît pas la raison de ce qu'il a fait, il est impossible de définir la part dont il peut être considéré responsable.

Dans le cours de philosophie morale et politique au lycée Henri-IV en 1891-1893 (donc entre l'*Essai* et *Matière et mémoire*), que nous avons précédemment cité, nous voyons dans la leçon sur la responsabilité que Bergson essaie de fonder la notion de

responsabilité sur son propre concept de liberté. Bergson reconnaît deux conditions de la responsabilité : la liberté et le discernement (Bergson 1992, 152). Bergson introduit des degrés dans la responsabilité ; pour déterminer les degrés de la responsabilité il prend le cas de l'irresponsabilité complète, c'est-à-dire le cas du manque de discernement. Bergson y reprend l'exemple déjà convoqué dans *l'Essai*, le cas d'un sujet hypnotisé, exemplifiant une situation où l'on se trouve « agir sans apercevoir les causes réelles de ce qu'on a fait » (Bergson 1992, 159). D'autre part, reprenant la notion de liberté dans *l'Essai*, il rappelle qu'il y a aussi des degrés dans la liberté, de même que dans le discernement, degrés qui peuvent aller jusqu'à des éclipses totales de la liberté. C'est le cas de solutions de continuité dans la personne. « Tout acte libre émane de la personne et ensuite l'exprime. Or il est de l'essence de la personne de présenter une certaine continuité et de rester la même tout en changeant » (Bergson 1992, 161). Bergson reprend ici à nouveau l'exemple de l'hypnotisme comme solution de continuité dans la personne.

Pourtant, Bergson ne soumet à l'examen que des cas d'« irresponsabilité complète », mais non pas des cas de « responsabilité complète ». En ce sens, cette leçon laisse ouverte la question de savoir si l'on peut fonder une telle responsabilité complète. Et la réponse doit être contraire à ce qui se produit dans les cas d'irresponsabilité complète, c'est-à-dire que le discernement et l'identité de la personne doivent s'y trouver assurés.

2.1. Le fondement de la liberté : l'identité de la personne

Chez Bergson, l'identité de la personne se fonde sur la conception de la durée. Dans le cours de psychologie donné au lycée à Clermont-Ferrand, alors qu'il rédigeait *l'Essai*, Bergson dit de l'identité du moi :

Or un être qui reste identique au fond, tout en changeant sans cesse d'aspect, est un être qui dure. L'idée de durée, l'idée du temps n'est pas autre chose que la conscience que nous prenons de l'identité de notre être sous la multiplicité de ses modifications (Bergson 1990, 102).

Ainsi la conscience de l'identité de la personne n'est autre chose que la conscience de la durée.

Après l'*Essai*, Bergson renforce l'idée d'identité basée sur sa propre notion de durée dans le cours de psychologie donné au lycée Henri-IV, entre 1892 et 1893. « Quand je prononce le mot « je » ou « moi », je pense à un être simple apparemment un et identique. Mais cette unité, cette identité enveloppent une multiplicité indéfinie d'éléments psychologiques » (Bergson 1992, 284). Que sont ces éléments et la matière de l'identité du moi ? Bergson considère que la seule matière de la personnalité est l'ensemble des états psychologiques que nous ne rapportons pas à des objets (Bergson 1992, 285). Ces états sont justement ceux que l'on peut particulièrement appeler « subjectifs », ceux qui occupent uniquement du temps, en termes bergsonien, de la durée seulement: « la matière de notre personnalité comprend d'un côté les états affectifs présents et en première ligne les sensations organiques, (et) d'un autre côté les souvenirs de toute notre existence passée » (Bergson 1992, 286).

Il s'agit tout d'abord des états affectifs. Parmi eux, Bergson place au premier rang « les sensations organiques, c'est-à-dire la conscience que nous avons, la connaissance intuitive que nous avons de notre corps ». Ces sensations organiques constituent la base physique de la personnalité. La seconde matière est constituée par les souvenirs de notre vie passée.

Quand je dis « je » ou « moi », je fais d'abord allusion à un être qui est affecté en ce moment d'une certaine manière, mais je pense aussi à mon histoire passée. Ce passé se reflète dans mon présent. Ce que je suis est en grande partie ce que j'ai été. Mon moi est une continuité ininterrompue, et je ne peux pas saisir son état présent sans appeler toute la série d'états passé qu'il traîne en quelque sorte derrière lui et qui sont conservés par la mémoire (Bergson 1992, 286).

Selon Bergson, si les états affectifs présents sont le fondement physique de la personnalité, la mémoire (les souvenirs) procure la matière intellectuelle de la personnalité. Par ailleurs, en ce qui concerne cette multiplicité de la matière, il considère que ce qui en constitue la forme est, selon un point de vue simultané, une unité ; selon un point de vue successif, c'est une identité.

Ce qui constitue la forme de la personnalité par opposition à la matière, c'est une certaine unité présente et intérieure à la multiplicité des états psychologiques simultanés ; c'est aussi une certaine identité qui subsiste à travers les mille variations et

successions indéfinies des états psychologiques successifs (Bergson 1992, 286).

Bergson rejette l'idée d'un être qui unifierait la multiplicité des états psychologiques, depuis une position extérieure à ces états. Si l'on considère l'être qui unifie ces états psychologiques multiples et simultanés, comme étant en dehors de ces états, cet être serait radicalement différent d'eux, puisqu'il serait lui-même dénué de tout état psychologique. En effet, cet être a pour rôle d'unifier les états psychologiques ; « or il est difficile de concevoir, pour ne pas dire impossible, une existence psychologique qui ne serait déterminée par aucun état psychologique » (Bergson 1992, 287). La supposition de cette réflexion est de représenter la multiplicité des états psychologiques par la multiplicité des objets matériels. Ce qui est envisagé, lorsque l'on attribue une unité à un objet matériel en disant que l'objet matériel forme un tout, c'est qu'il s'en forme une seule idée, et mis à part le moi, il n'existe que des atomes juxtaposés ou que de la multiplicité : l'unité de cet objet a pour origine l'esprit du moi. C'est pourquoi une pensée qui considère un être qui unifie du dehors des états psychologiques, provient du fait d'attribuer la multiplicité occasionnée par l'objet matériel, c'est-à-dire la multiplicité numérique. L'unité qui structure la personnalité ne vient pas du dehors des états psychologiques, mais « des profondeurs de ces états eux-mêmes » (Bergson 1992, 288). Et ce que Bergson tente de décrire ici comme unité est cette unité de la multiplicité qualitative qu'il a mise au jour dans l'*Essai* (Bergson 1992, 288).

Au sujet de la continuité de l'identité du moi, Bergson refuse aussi « un moi extérieur à la série des psychologiques, et qui les regarderait couler en retenant le passé pour le juxtaposer au présent » (Bergson 1992, 289). Si l'on imagine des moments distincts qui seraient juxtaposés dans le moi, il est alors impossible de les unir. Encore une fois, chez Bergson, ce qui soutient la continuité de l'identité du moi, c'est l'unité de la durée comme multiplicité qualitative.

Chaque phase de notre vie intérieure n'est pas seulement le prolongement des phases précédentes ; on peut dire qu'elle les contient, que le passé vient se fondre dans le présent (Bergson 1992, 289).

Concernant cette fusion du passé dans le présent, Bergson exprime son identité en tant que « subtil et pénétrant observateur de l'âme humaine » (Bergson 1972, 1186), dans le passage suivant de l'*Essai* :

Quand je me promène pour la première fois, par exemple, dans une ville où je séjournerai, les choses qui m'entourent produisent en même temps sur moi une impression qui se modifie sans cesse. [...] Pourtant, si je me reporte, au bout d'un assez long temps, à l'impression que j'éprouvai pendant les premières années, je m'étonne du changement singulier, inexplicable et surtout inexprimable, qui s'est accompli en elle. Il semble que ces objets, continuellement perçus par moi et se joignant sans cesse dans mon esprit, aient fini par emprunter quelque chose de mon existence consciente ; comme moi ils ont vécu, et comme moi vieilli (Bergson 2007, 96-7).

Bergson appelle cette unité « une unité réelle, vivante » (Bergson 1992, 299) dans la personnalité. Cette unité réelle est, autrement dit, l'unité du moi profond. Comme nous avons vu dans la section 1.2., selon Bergson, nous vivons une vie quotidienne comme moi superficiel. L'identité de la personne se réalise dans l'expression de la personnalité, c'est-à-dire dans la liberté. La liberté bergsonienne est le retour à soi-même. De cette façon, entre deux conditions : la liberté et le discernement, la conception de l'identité de la personne qui assure la liberté peut se fonder sur la conception de la durée présentée dans l'*Essai*. Et pourtant, l'*Essai* laisse encore ouverte la question du discernement. Nous essaierons maintenant de montrer que Bergson a tenté de fonder sa conception du discernement sur sa théorie de la liberté que l'on trouve dans *Matière et mémoire*, en répondant aux critiques de Belot et de Lévi-Brühl.

3. La théorie de la liberté dans *Matière et mémoire*

3.1. « La limite entre la volonté et l'automatisme »

Le sujet de *Matière et mémoire* est notoirement connu comme la théorie du rapport entre le corps et l'esprit ; on y trouve des mentions sur la liberté ci et là, mais non pas d'exposé systématique. Pour mettre en relief la théorie de la liberté dans *Matière et mémoire*, nous prendrons comme fil d'Ariane « la limite entre la volonté et l'automatisme » (Bergson 2008, 128).

3.1.1. Deux formes de la reconnaissance

Bergson affirme que le passé se survit sous deux formes et par conséquent il distingue deux manières de reprise

du passé dans le présent, c'est-à-dire de reconnaissance. Les études sur l'attention à son époque, notamment celles de Théodule Ribot semblent particulièrement pertinentes pour comprendre le problème de la reconnaissance chez Bergson. Ribot distingue deux attentions, « l'attention spontanée » et « l'attention volontaire » (Ribot 1986). Bergson conserve cette distinction, mais il utilise l'expression « attention automatique » plutôt que « attention spontanée ». Tandis que chez Ribot, l'attention volontaire est passive de même que l'attention spontanée (Bergson 1992, 373), pour Bergson elle est active ; la distinction qu'il fait entre ces deux attentions révèle « la limite entre la volonté et l'automatisme ». Il prend la reconnaissance auditive du langage articulé comme l'exemple le plus complet de la reconnaissance : « entendre la parole, en effet, c'est d'abord en reconnaître le son, c'est ensuite en retrouver le sens, c'est enfin en pousser plus ou moins loin l'interprétation » (Bergson 2008, 119). Dans l'acte d'entendre une parole, Bergson sépare ainsi « la reconnaissance du son » de « la reconnaissance du sens », et montre que celle-là est « un processus automatique sensori-moteur » tandis que celle-ci est « une projection active et pour ainsi dire excentrique de souvenirs-images » (Bergson 2008, 119). Afin de mettre la différence entre l'action volontaire et l'action automatique en lumière, nous examinons ces deux processus de la reconnaissance auditive du langage articulé.

3.1.2. Un processus automatique sensori-moteur

Bergson explique la reconnaissance du son à partir de la situation qui consiste à écouter une conversation dans une langue inconnue (Bergson 2008, 120-8). Mes oreilles ne perçoivent qu'une continuité sonore impossible à distinguer et à répéter. Arriver à en discerner les mots et les syllabes provient de ce que les impressions auditives organisent des mouvements naissants, capables de scander la phrase écoutée et d'en marquer les principales articulations (Bergson 2008, 121). Les impressions auditives provoquent en moi des mouvements automatiques qui les imitent. Ces mouvements sont d'abord confus, en se répétant, « ils finiraient par dessiner une figure simplifiée, où la personne qui écoute retrouverait, dans leurs grandes lignes et leurs

directions principales, les mouvements mêmes de la personne qui parle » (Bergson 2008, 121). Ainsi s'organisent des mouvements naissants, « le schème moteur » se forme et les oreilles s'adaptent aux éléments d'une langue nouvelle.

La formation du schème moteur permet donc la reconnaissance accomplie par le processus automatique sensori-moteur. D'après Bergson, « il n'y a pas de perception qui ne se prolonge en mouvement » (Bergson 2008, 101). Dès lors, les mouvements qui se produisent dans notre corps en recevant des perceptions, sont des mouvements qui imitent des perceptions auditives, à savoir des contractions et tensions musculaires liées à l'articulation phonique. Comme la même perception auditive apparaît de façon répétée, le mouvement lié à la perception se répète ; ainsi s'établit la connexion sensori-motrice, ce que Bergson nomme « le schème moteur ». La répétition décompose le mouvement total de l'impression auditive confuse en mouvements élémentaires corporels qui tentent de l'imiter en en conservant la solidarité. Ces mouvements élémentaires sont d'abord confus, la répétition leur donne graduellement de la précision, « elle retrouve une à une, dans le mouvement total, les lignes qui en marquent la structure intérieure » (Bergson 2008, 122).

Cette reconnaissance par le mouvement est appelée « la reconnaissance automatique » (Bergson 2008, 107). Ainsi le schème moteur peut-il distinguer des mots dans une parole entendue qui n'était qu'une continuité sonore. Il implique « un discernement rudimentaire » (Bergson 2008, 126) et fait « un certain travail intellectuel » (Bergson 2008, 128).

3.1.3. Une projection active de souvenirs-images

Examinons maintenant la reconnaissance du sens, c'est-à-dire une projection active de souvenirs-images. Bergson explique la reconnaissance du son dans la situation qui consiste à comprendre la parole d'un interlocuteur (Bergson 2008, 128-139). Lorsque nous écoutons la parole d'autrui avec l'idée de la comprendre,

Ne sentons-nous pas plutôt que nous nous plaçons dans une certaine disposition, variable avec l'interlocuteur, variable avec la langue qu'il parle, avec le genre d'idée qu'il exprime et surtout avec le mouvement

général de sa phrase, comme si nous commençons par régler le ton de notre travail intellectuel ? Le schème moteur, soulignant ses intonations, suivant, de détour en détour, la courbe de sa pensée, montre à notre pensée le chemin (Bergson 2008, 135 ; nous soulignons)

Nous voyons donc que le schème moteur participe aussi à la reconnaissance du sens, mais son fonctionnement ici est différent de ce qu'il est dans la reconnaissance du son. Bergson appelle aussi la reconnaissance du sens « reconnaissance attentive » (Bergson 2008, 128) : « l'attention a pour effet essentiel de rendre la perception plus intense et d'en dégager les détails » (Bergson 2008, 109). Nos perceptions, lorsqu'elles sont données, sont confuses et n'accusent pas les détails. La projection de souvenirs passés analogues à la perception présente la rend plus claire de manière progressive.

Notre mémoire choisit tour à tour diverses images analogues qu'elle lance dans la direction de la perception nouvelle. Mais ce choix ne s'opère pas au hasard. Ce qui suggère les hypothèses, ce qui préside de loin à la sélection, ce sont les mouvements d'imitation par lesquels la perception se continue, et qui serviront de cadre commun à la perception et aux images remémorées (Bergson 2008, 112).

Ces souvenirs projetés ne sont donc pas choisis par caprice. Quand Bergson écrit : « La reconnaissance attentive, disions-nous, est un véritable *circuit* » (Bergson 2008, 128 ; souligné par Bergson lui-même), il nous suggère qu'il faut considérer le mécanisme de la reconnaissance attentive comme le circuit de la perception attentive. Dans la perception attentive, lorsque des circuits nouveaux qui enveloppent le premier se créent, ils se développent pour que la mémoire y entre. Alors, « selon le degré de tension que notre esprit adopte, selon la hauteur où il se place, cette perception développe en nous un plus ou moins grand nombre de souvenirs-images » (Bergson 2008, 116), c'est-à-dire dans le cône des souvenirs, selon le niveau que l'esprit adopte, le niveau, à savoir, le plan se détermine. Et c'est l'attitude corporelle ou le mouvement corporel qui sert d'intermédiaire (Bergson 2008, 112-6). Le souvenir qui est choisi par l'entremise du schème moteur est un souvenir appartenant au niveau symétriquement opposé à celui de l'objet perceptif (Bergson 2008, 129). « Il faudra donc, si nous sommes dans le vrai, *que l'auditeur se place d'emblée parmi des idées*

correspondantes, et les développe en représentations auditives qui recouvriront les sons bruts perçus en s'emboîtant elles-mêmes dans le schème moteur » (Bergson 2008, 129 ; souligné par Bergson). Dans le cas de la compréhension de la parole, l'objet est l'interlocuteur ; pour découvrir l'idée que sa parole exprime, l'auditeur règle son niveau sur sa propre idée à titre de souvenir qui lui correspond et la rappelle (Bergson 2008, 128-9).

Les images analogues à la perception présente, images dont ces mouvements auront déjà jeté la forme, viendront *régulièrement et non plus accidentellement* se couler dans ce moule [...] (Bergson 2008, 107 ; nous soulignons).

Cette régularité du rappel semble signifier que seuls les souvenirs analogues aux perceptions sont choisis pour rappeler, par l'intermédiaire du schème moteur, par les mouvements succédant aux perceptions. Or à ce niveau, il y a une multiplicité de choix.

Un mot d'une langue étrangère, prononcé à mon oreille, peut me faire penser à cette langue en général ou à une voix qui le prononçait autrefois d'une certaine manière (Bergson 2008, 188).

Cela implique qu'il existe plusieurs types de ressemblance, la mémoire essayant des hypothèses variées de combinaison et projetant divers souvenirs analogues. Le choix arbitraire est, selon Bergson, l'association fait sur la base AB du cône de la mémoire, car sur la base AB se dessinent dans leurs moindres détails tous les événements de notre vie. En un sens, tous les souvenirs différencieraient de leur perception actuelle, mais, en un autre sens, un souvenir quelconque pourrait être rapproché de la situation présente. S'il n'y a plus la préoccupation de l'action, en négligeant les détails, comme tout se ressemble, une conscience pourrait rapprocher arbitrairement n'importe quel souvenir de la perception (Bergson 2008, 186-7). Donc, le mouvement volontaire de l'esprit est le mouvement vertical qui saute de plan en plan du cône, par contre le choix arbitraire est fait sur un seul plan de la base.

Nous avons vu que la reconnaissance automatique était considérée comme un travail intellectuel rudimentaire. Puisque, de plus, Bergson dit qu'elle est « un prélude à l'attention volontaire » et qu'il nomme aussi la reconnaissance attentive

« reconnaissance intellectuelle », il est clair qu'elle est une opération intellectuelle.

Comprendre la parole d'autrui consisterait de même à reconstituer *intelligemment*, c'est-à-dire en partant des idées, la continuité des sons que l'oreille perçoit. Et plus généralement, faire attention, reconnaître *avec intelligence*, interpréter, se confondraient en une seule et même opération par laquelle l'esprit, ayant fixé son niveau, ayant choisi en lui-même, par rapport aux perceptions brutes, le point symétrique de leur cause plus ou moins prochaine, laisserait couler vers elles les souvenirs qui vont les recouvrir (Bergson 2008, 129 ; nous soulignons)

Dans la reconnaissance, donc, comprendre le langage articulé requiert le rappel actif régulier des souvenirs et nous pouvons dire que c'est ce en quoi consiste l'opération de l'intelligence.

3.1.4. La limite entre la volonté et l'automatisme

Nous avons examiné d'abord le processus automatique sensori-moteur et puis la projection active de souvenirs-images dans la reconnaissance. Mettons maintenant en lumière « la limite entre la volonté et l'automatisme » qui les sépare. Dans la reconnaissance automatique, avec la succession répétitive des perceptions et des mouvements qui les accompagnent, dans le corps le schème moteur se forme un certain mouvement commençant immédiatement à suivre une certaine perception. C'est ce en quoi consiste l'automatisme. D'autre part dans la reconnaissance attentive des idées, comme des souvenirs qui viennent couler dans le schème moteur accompagnant les sons perçus, sont rappelées et s'actualisent. Nous pouvons donc mettre en évidence une convergence entre les deux phénomènes, c'est-à-dire le fait que le schème moteur participe aux deux reconnaissances. Quant à leur divergence, la reconnaissance automatique ne s'accompagne pas du rappel des souvenirs, tandis que dans la reconnaissance attentive le rappel des souvenirs-purs a lieu. Nous pouvons dire que la particularité de la reconnaissance volontaire consiste dans ce rappel des souvenirs. C'est également pourquoi Bergson caractérise la reconnaissance du sens par « une projection active de souvenirs-images », c'est-à-dire le fait de projeter des

souvenirs sur des perceptions. Ce rappel se fait par un travail de l'esprit allant chercher dans le passé les représentations les plus capables de s'insérer dans la situation actuelle (Bergson 2008, 82), il s'agit donc d'une opération active et volontaire de l'esprit. Le rappel actif des souvenirs analogues aux perceptions actuelles insère une indétermination dans la connexion sensori-motrice déterminée où une perception est suivie automatiquement par un mouvement ; il permet l'action appropriée par le rappel des souvenirs utiles qui conviennent à la situation présente. Nous pouvons dire par conséquent que la limite entre la volonté et l'automatisme consiste dans le rappel actif et régulier des souvenirs.

3.2. La liberté raisonnable

Par rapport à l'expression « l'homme, être pensant » et « raisonnable », nous remarquons l'intention de Bergson de distinguer nettement l'acte libre typiquement humain de l'action animale, suite de la spontanéité sensible, et de réfuter les critiques de Belot et Lévi-Brühl. Dans la reconnaissance automatique, comme nous venons de voir à la section 3.1.2., le schème moteur effectue un discernement rudimentaire. Bergson mentionne également « le discernement » dans la théorie de perception pure : dans le cas de la perception extérieure, la conscience constitue le discernement. Au fur et à mesure que l'on s'élève dans la série animale, le système nerveux se développe et la perception progresse. Il est une chose qui est extraite du monde extérieur, de ce monde aux liens internes solides tramés d'actions et de réactions, et de là l'ablation de ce qui n'intéresse pas nos fonctions : il s'agit de la perception. La perception consciente consiste en ce choix, ce discernement annonce l'esprit (Bergson 2008, 27-35). Le discernement du schème moteur dans la reconnaissance automatique annonce davantage l'intelligence et fait « un certain travail intellectuel rudimentaire » (Bergson 2008, 128). De même que Descartes nomma la raison « la puissance de bien juger, et distinguer le vrai d'avec le faux », discerner peut être considéré comme une opération intellectuelle rudimentaire (Descartes 2000).

Néanmoins, la reconnaissance automatique se compose d'une association déterminée de la sensation et du mouvement. L'esprit, en son sens supérieur, consiste à se soustraire à la nécessité par le recours au passé. Dans la reconnaissance automatique, des souvenirs conservés dans le corps sous la forme d'habitudes sont utilisés, ce sont les souvenirs-images qui permettent l'indétermination. Ainsi passons-nous avec le rappel des souvenirs-images, de l'automatisme à l'acte libre, de la reconnaissance automatique à la reconnaissance attentive. Dans le cours de psychologie donné au lycée de Clermont-Ferrand, Bergson dit que l'intelligence est la faculté de connaître. Elle agence les idées, les regroupe entre elles et ainsi son multiple travail engendre un grand nombre de facultés intellectuelles: des facultés intuitives et discursives, les facultés du jugement et du raisonnement et celles de produire les signes et le langage (Bergson 1990, 90-91). L'intelligence selon Bergson contient donc ce qu'on appelle la raison. La reconnaissance attentive est un processus accompli par une opération raisonnable, comme l'a clairement montré l'analyse de la reconnaissance du sens dans l'exemple de la compréhension de la parole d'autrui (Bergson 2008, 129).

Comme nous venons de le voir à la section 3.1.3., l'attention consiste dans la projection du souvenir sur la perception: Bergson compare cela à «la réflexion». Sa conception de la réflexion est elle aussi essentielle dans le cas du discernement élémentaire qui produit la perception. Bergson considère la perception comme un ensemble d'actions du monde matériel extérieur qui ont rencontré nos fonctions, avant de réfléchir et revenir de nouveau à l'objet même (Bergson 2008, 33-34). Pourtant la réflexion dans l'attention n'est pas celle des actions extérieures même, mais la projection sur la perception des images-souvenirs conservées en nous.

Mais toute perception attentive suppose véritablement, au sens étymologique du mot, une réflexion, c'est-à-dire la projection extérieure d'une image activement créée, identique ou semblable à l'objet, et qui vient se mouler sur ses contours (Bergson 2008, 112; souligné par Bergson).

En ce sens, la perception attentive est également appelée «la perception réfléchie» (Bergson 2008, 114). Comme nous

venons de voir à la section 3.1.3., la perception et le souvenir courent l'un derrière l'autre et forment comme un circuit. Lorsque Bergson parle de « l'esprit capable d'action non seulement indéterminée, mais raisonnable et réfléchie » (Bergson 2008, 249), « réfléchie » renvoie probablement aux nombreux essais de l'esprit de projeter dans la reconnaissance attentive un souvenir, d'après diverses hypothèses tirées d'une perception actuelle, à savoir d'après des possibilités de choix.

Ainsi « une synthèse de sentiments et d'idées » regardée comme l'acte libre doit s'entendre de la manière suivante : les sentiments représentent la manifestation d'attitudes corporelles sur la conscience, manifestation que le schème moteur prépare, et à partir desquelles l'esprit va chercher des souvenirs ; les idées correspondant aux souvenirs rappelés (Bergson 2008, 140), nous pouvons donc dire que leur synthèse équivaut au rappel volontaire. Le choix des souvenirs ne se fait donc pas capricieusement, mais régulièrement, et par essai d'hypothèses, ce qui veut dire que la réflexion a lieu. La liberté raisonnable, à laquelle Bergson est parvenu dans *Matière et mémoire*, consiste dans le rappel actif des souvenirs par la volonté. Ainsi, l'homme peut accomplir un acte indéfini par rapport à la situation actuelle, cet acte est un acte réfléchi sur le fond des expériences passées.

Dans l'*Essai*, la liberté est, comme nous avons vu, susceptible de degrés, la liberté la plus élevée est l'acte sans raison. Dans *Matière et mémoire*, c'est la liberté raisonnable qui occupe la place de la liberté la plus élevée. « Ainsi, entre la matière brute et l'esprit le plus capable de réflexion il y a toutes les intensités possibles de la mémoire, ou, ce qui revient au même, tous les degrés de la liberté » (Bergson 2008, 250 ; nous soulignons). L'acte sans raison et la liberté raisonnable semblent opposés l'un à l'autre, mais la liberté raisonnable est conforme à la définition de l'acte libre dans l'*Essai*. Comme nous l'avons montré à la section 1.1., l'acte accompagnant la manifestation de la personnalité est l'acte libre, puisque la personnalité est l'ensemble de notre histoire passée, la liberté raisonnable qui dépend de l'actualisation des souvenirs passés est aussi une manifestation de la personnalité. C'est ainsi que

Bergson parvint à résoudre le problème de sa théorie de la liberté et put présenter sa conception de la liberté raisonnable.

Car si ces corps ont pour objet de recevoir des excitations pour les élaborer en réactions imprévues, encore le choix de la réaction ne doit-il pas s'opérer au hasard. Ce choix s'inspire, sans aucun doute, des expériences passées, et la réaction ne se fait pas sans un appel au souvenir que des situations analogues ont pu laisser derrière elles. L'indétermination des actes à accomplir exige donc, pour ne pas se confondre avec *le pur caprice*, la conservation des images perçues (Bergson 2008, 67 ; nous soulignons).

On voit aisément qu'une telle notion de liberté raisonnable surmonte les critiques de Belot et de Lévi-Brühl. Dans *Matière et mémoire*, le dernier paragraphe du dernier chapitre intitulé « L'âme et le corps » ainsi que la conclusion s'achèvent sur des remarques concernant la liberté, bien que l'objet du livre traite de la question du dualisme du corps et de l'esprit sur la base des examens de la mémoire. Il semble qu'un des enjeux de Bergson est de surmonter le problème de la théorie de la liberté présent dans *l'Essai*. Dans *Matière et mémoire*, la théorie de la mémoire constitue la question centrale, ce qui nous permet de conclure que, pour Bergson, la mémoire est synonyme de la liberté (Bergson 2008, 250).

NOTES

¹ Bergson ne nie pas le libre arbitre, pourtant il refuse son sens habituel qui implique l'égalité des contraires (Lalande 2006, 561).

² Tel est aussi l'avis d'Arnaud Bouaniche, éditeur de l'édition critique de *l'Essai* (Bouaniche 2007, 290-295 ; Bouaniche 2011, 23-25). Bouaniche attribue ce qu'on tient la liberté pour « sans raison » ou pour « raisonnable » à la méthodologie du point de vue, soit de la durée, soit de l'analyse. Dans cet article, nous montrons qu'il s'agit plutôt de la source d'acte ; ou bien du moi profond ou bien du moi superficiel et du moi parasite

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Massae Nagase a fait ses études à Graduate School of Lettres, Université de Ritsumeikan (Japon). Ses recherches et ses articles publiés portent sur la philosophie de Bergson, notamment sur le thème de l'union entre la matière et la mémoire et sur le problème de la reconnaissance.

Address:

Masae NAGASE

Graduate School of Lettres

Ritsumeikan University 1-9-12, Minami, Wako-shi,

Saitama-ken 351-01048 JAPAN

E-mail: masae.nagase@gmail.com

A Hermeneutical Approach to Political Responsibility: The Case of the Early History of Reception of the Apostle Paul's Paraenesis to the Romans

Victor Manuel Morales
Universität Paderborn

Abstract

Understanding happens within the course of history and is made concrete within particular discourses. This insight into the structure of understanding is largely indebted to Gadamer's hermeneutical philosophy and was methodologically worked out by Jauss' aesthetics of reception. Concepts such as *Wirkungsgeschichte* and *Rezeptionsgeschichte*, account for the way in which understanding is embedded in texts, contexts, traditions which are appropriated in the life-world of historically conditioned readers and users. Any discussion on the meaning of responsibility must consider its history as portrayed in the texts where it features as subject-matter. The concept of responsibility will be discussed here within the particular case of the issue of political responsibility as featured in the early reception of Paul's paraenesis to the Romans.

Keywords: understanding, meaning, political responsibility, civil obedience, history of reception, The Apostle Paul, Romans, paraenesis

The historical and communicative dimensions of understanding responsibility

Understanding is an *event*. More specifically, understanding what the meaning of a text is, comprises an interplay with its readers. Here meaning is always dependent on a given *perspective* in the sense that something has a meaning in relation to someone within a horizon or life-world, rather than being self-contained. Within this interaction, meaning experiences *historical*

growth. Likewise, the diachronic dialogue between readers takes place by means of other texts facilitating acts of communication and courses of action. This interaction also points out the social dimension within the historical unfolding of the meaning of a text. Meaning will be then what the text has meant in the various historically significant acts of communication and courses of action between the text and its readers through a constant fusion of horizons. All these acts of communication are stored, as it were, in the cumulative history of reception of the text, that is, the historically significant questions and responses generated during the act of reading become part and parcel of the meaning of the text. Within the framework of the concept of history of reception, responsibility can be described as *communicative courses of action* since *historical responses* can only be worked out on the grounds of an on-going dialogue between a *normative* text or an institution, whose *authority* is recognised, and those held accountable to it.¹ Questioning and answering lie at the very core of acting responsibly, that is acting communicatively, whereby the possibility for critical responses and courses of action is not excluded, but expected. As regards the ontic status of norms and principles, Strauss argues: “Human beings, in their actions and societal institutions, are therefore guided by *norms* and humans constantly give shape to basic *principles*. This at once also explains why human functioning in diverse societal relations do not *cease* to be *norm-oriented* – for in these instances they have to observe *collective norms*” (Strauss 2009, 42).

In the light of the history of reception of Paul’s paraenesis, what is at stake is the relationship between a particular civil authority to a given order of justice. Here political responsibility is linked to civil obedience which, at the same time, requires a *recognition* of an order of justice. In this regard, Strauss says: “When a *just state* acts in the pursuit of *public justice*, it has to observe collective norms. Furthermore, when a just state strives to observe *basic rights*, it assumes a task that could be performed in a *better* or *worse* manner” (Strauss 2009, 42).

1. The Apostle Paul's paraenesis to the Roman Church: Romans 13.1-7

1 Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. 2 Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. 3 For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. 4 For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. 5 Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. 6 This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. 7 Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honour, then honour. (*Holy Bible: New International Version* 1992)

The history of reception of the Apostle Paul's paraenesis² represents one example of what political responsibility as a historical event means through the dialogical relationship between Paul's exhortation and its historical audiences. Both text and readers are rooted in a life-world and traditions, which furnish them with a pre-understanding of the *Sache*, in this case, civil obedience. Its history of reception shows that reading the Scriptures involves thinking hard its implications – not being content with simplistic formulas. Certainly, this was never the case for the early Church. Reading the Scriptures always entailed a question of life and death for the majority of Christians. The Apostle Paul's paraenesis singles out civil obedience as an integral part of political responsibility. Nevertheless, the issue of civil obedience has always been a problematic one, particularly in the case of totalitarian regimes, where the political state of affairs can be compared to that of the Roman Empire. For that reason Paul's instruction has remained problematic for the Church throughout history. With regard to the early Church, Käsemann says: "In the New Testament times political responsibility was only a live option for the Christian in rare and exceptional cases and in areas of

subordinate jurisdiction. If Paul limits his scope to the requirement of obedience, this corresponds with reality; there was normally no other means of political expression for the stratum of society out of which early Christianity arose” (Käsemann 1969, 205).

Furthermore, there have been terrible examples of abuse of power theologically justified on this single text. Totalitarian regimes such as Nazi Germany and Apartheid in South Africa remind us of the necessity to reassess the interpretation of the Scriptures in the light of their whole council as well as in a continuous dialogue with philosophy and the sciences. Concerning totalitarian states and biblical interpretation, Käsemann argues: “For this reason it is impossible simply to transpose our passage into our modern situation. The fact that this has nevertheless been done in Protestantism for at least a century contributed to the phenomenon of ‘passive obedience’ and the catastrophes it conjured up. It is a dangerous factor in biblicism, which guards the letter and neglects prophecy, the actualization of the message” (Käsemann 1969, 205, 206).

The Scriptures open up to us in various ways as we read it. Paul’s paraenesis points out the relevance of political responsibility in the life of the churches in the capital of the Empire. Civil obedience appears as part of the general instructions he gives on his call to offer themselves as a living sacrifice and the renewal of their minds. Various reasons have been offered to explain Paul’s reasons for his exhortation. One of them could have been an absolute misunderstanding of Christian freedom in the light of their hope of an imminent end. Paul had to correct their attitudes to their civil obligations to which they were still bound in spite of their heavenly citizenship. The other reason has been the need to avoid drawing the attention of the Roman authorities to themselves unnecessarily. Roman authorities were not able to distinguish between Jews and Jewish Christians at that time when many Jews were expelled from Rome under Claudius in 49 A.D. Exiles were allowed to return under Nero’s reign. However, escalating discontent among the less privileged Roman citizens because of tax reforms posed a threat to feeble household churches.

Paul's paraenesis to the Roman churches represent one side of what the Bible teaches regarding politics, and more, specifically on civil obedience. The flipside of this is obviously the Book of Revelation 13, where John renders a rather gloomy image of a blood-thirsty State rebelling against God while persecuting His church. These two positions are difficult to reconcile at first. But it is rather telling that early interpretations of Romans 13.1-7 never seemed to have heightened the inner tension in the New Testament. On the contrary, the earliest interpretations played off Paul's paraenesis against The Book of Acts 5.29, "Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men!"

The origin of the churches in Rome is shrouded in mystery. It is uncertain who their founder was. The starting point for the discussion of the political life-world of the Roman church lies in the recognition of their precarious political condition as a minority. The purpose of Paul's paraenesis is to curb any rebellion among the Christian communities. It is quite clear that Paul was determined to dissuade the Roman Christian Jewish and Gentile from supporting any rebellious cause, and to persuade them to remain loyal to the Roman Empire. In order to grasp the importance of Apostle Paul's exhortation to the Christian communities in Rome it is important to consider the Hellenistic Jewish tradition, as well as his reinterpretation of the Graeco-Roman current world view at his time. The most significant idea in the Hellenistic Jewish political tradition was the absolute belief that Yahwe was King. God as a King chose and appointed people as instruments to rule on earth. Every nation gets a ruler from God. These rulers remain dependent on the authority of Yahwe. The king was designated as representative of God, his anointed and high priest. Jewish political thought also held that God appoints pagan rulers to carry out his judgements. This particular belief was very influential on the early Church. The belief that civil authority derives from Yahwe as well as the restricted loyalty to foreign oppressors conditioned by their non-interference in Israel's worship of Yahwe are two significant elements of the Hellenistic Jewish political tradition for the earliest reception of Paul's paraenesis.

However, on closer inspection, The Apostle Paul's paraenesis turns out to be subversive, if we consider that Roman emperors were elevated to a divine rank. Imperial ideology based on the worship of the emperor was highly advantageous for the interests of the Roman Empire. Cultural activity during the reign of Augustus was motivated by the self-grandeur and divine status of the emperor. Symbols were wrought to secure the continuous indoctrination of the populace. Roman authorities capitalised on the popular belief in the divinity of rulers as part of the world order. The illiterate masses were ready to accept their rulers since it was a matter of divine choice. Obedience meant to participate harmoniously in this world order. Paul, however, placed the emperor and the magistrates under the authority of God. Their authority was relativised as they were held accountable to a higher order. In this regard Wright suggest: "[...] if Paul has framed this great letter with an introduction and a theological conclusion which seem so clearly to echo, and thus to challenge, the rule of Caesar with the rule of Jesus Christ, is the rest of the letter in some sense about this as well, and if so, how? And what does this do to all our traditional readings of Paul, in both old and new perspectives?" (Wright 2002, 176, 177). In other words, Paul's paraenesis constitutes a true "parody of the imperial cult" and his whole theology entails a subversive political programme.

2. The early history of interpretation of Paul's paraenesis

After this brief introduction on the political traditions and the historical context of Paul's paraenesis, its early history of reception can now be discussed. It is, however, limited to some towering figures whose reception of the text turned out to be particularly influential to its subsequent readings. Anyone reading the works of the Church Fathers should not be hasty to dismiss them, because of their strange standpoints, but should recognise them as instances of the struggles of believers who took God's word seriously in the face of adversity. Their world is not our world and yet, the outcome of their battles has enabled

later generations of believers to formulate an answer rooted in the faith in the Risen Lord. When reading their works, we should not expect them to be, in most cases, textbooks on political theories, but we are more likely to find their ideas to be given in various genres: letters, prayers, apologies, homilies, commentaries, and treatises. Understanding what the Bible teaches had never happened in a vacuum, but by interacting with the world we all live in.

The first possible reception of Paul's paraenesis is found within the New Testament itself.

a) 1 Peter 2.13-17

This letter attributed to Peter witnesses to how widely spread Paul's teachings were at the end of the first century. Despite the striking parallels with Paul's paraenesis, there are also differences which widen the scope of civil obedience.

13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, 14 or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. 15 For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. 16 Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. 17 Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honour the king. (*Holy Bible: New International Version* 1992)

Whereas Paul claims civil authorities have been directly instituted by God, the author of Peter makes a further distinction locating its origin not in God's direct action, but as part of other human institutions. Obedience to the civil authorities is part of the witness Christians offer to the pagans. There is always a latent danger of misunderstanding Christian freedom which can turn into holy anarchy. Behaving otherwise could justify pagans' gossip threatening the frail existence of the Christian community. The author of Peter also specifies that fear is due to God, whereas honour is due to the king. Civil authorities have a two-fold duty: to punish wrongdoers but to praise good citizens.

b) Clement of Rome and the *Epistle to the Corinthians* (ca. 97 A.D.)

After Paul's Epistle to the Romans, the Epistle to the Corinthians represents the earliest document witnessing to the extant Christian communities in Rome. The church in Corinth was experiencing strife as one party in the church set out to depose their church leaders. Clement of Rome as a prominent leader of the Church undertook the responsibility to restore peace within the frail community and bring them to repentance. It is within this context that Paul's exhortation is echoed in the final prayer in the Epistle to the Corinthians.

Thou, Master, hast given the power of sovereignty to them through thy excellent and inexpressible might, that we may know the glory and honour given to them by thee, and be subject to them, in nothing resisting thy will. And to them, Lord, grant health, peace, concord, firmness that they may administer the government which thou hast given them without offence. (Clement 1919, LXI, 115)

Clement's prayer reflects one of the basic teachings of the Scripture regarding political life. Obedience to the authorities is the will of God. The Church is called to recognise this fact. Clement expands the scope of Paul's paraenesis by adding that besides power, glory and honour are granted to them by God. Clement reads Paul's paraenesis within the framework of the prayers for the authorities as taught in the Pauline pastoral epistles. Clement includes health, harmony, peace and stability as prayer requests and as the basis for social justice. He also equates obedience to the civil authorities as submitting to God himself. The prayer had a two-fold purpose: to assert loyalty to the governing authorities, and to stop internal quarrels which might draw the attention of the civil authorities. In that way, the existence of the church was guaranteed amid dangerous times of persecution.

c) Martyrdom of Polycarp (ca. 156 A.D.)

Polycarp was bishop of Smyrna and was tried by the Roman authorities. Literature on martyrdoms was popular in the second century. These instructive stories have been collected in the Acts of the Martyrs. It is important to underline

that Polycarp did meet the Apostles and first believers. Hence his teaching is in direct line with what the Apostles taught.

And Polycarp said: “you, I should have held worthy of discussion, for we have been taught to render honour, as is meet, if it hurt us not, to princes and authorities appointed by God. But as for those, I do not count them worthy that a defence should be made to them” (Lake 1917, X, 327).

On the brink of his execution, Polycarp was asked to swear by the genius of the emperor so that his life might be spared. However, he refused to yield to the demands of his executors and opposed them uttering the Christian teaching of respecting the authorities which have been appointed by God. Obedience here is synonymous with respect. Obviously, his own example speaks volumes of what he really meant. Blind obedience would have meant to go against the very grain of his faith in the Risen Lord which is non-negotiable. However, he made it plain to them that obedience to God as the origin of political power takes precedence over any civil authority. Here is where their limits lie. This is the first time this important issue is raised.

d) Irenaeus (late second century)

Both Irenaeus and Origen set out to counterattack the threats posed by Christian Gnosticism. This heretic movement along with Marcion’s heretic views constitute a huge challenge to orthodoxy and the stability of the churches in the second and third centuries. Irenaeus and Origen are towering figures in the Greek East.

For by the law of the same Being as calls men into existence are kings also appointed, adapted for those men who are at the time placed under their government. Some of these [rulers] are given for the correction and the benefit of their subjects, and for the preservation of justice; but others, for the purposes of fear and punishment and rebuke: others, as [the subjects] deserve it, are for deception, disgrace, and pride; while the just judgment of God, as I have observed already, passes equally upon all. (Irenaeus 1885, V, 24, 3, 552)

Irenaeus held that civil authorities were instituted by God as a remedy to sin. Both civil authorities and civil laws were established once the fear of God had vanished altogether

among human beings. He made an important distinction between the person of the ruler and his office. However he did not develop it fully as Aquinas did later on. Irenaeus believed that the course of action of civil authorities was determined by the kind of people they ruled. Irenaeus distinguishes between three different kinds of people. First, we encounter those authorities who are established to keep justice and to better the lives of those who rule. Other rulers are instituted to punish the wrongdoers; and yet oppressors are allowed to act because their subjects deserve no less than that treatment. Irenaeus held that civil authorities were basically instituted for the pagans' sake, since Christians were not supposed to endorse unjust practices. Civil fear replaces the fear of God preventing people from swallowing each other up like fish.

Irenaeus was faced with the bizarre Gnostic reception of Paul's paraenesis which was taken to actually indicate obedience to angelic or demonic powers. Irenaeus rejected it as a flight of fantasy arguing that Paul clearly refers to earthly powers to whom every Christian is under the obligation to pay taxes.³

e) Origen (ca. 185 - ca. 254 A.D.)

Origen's exegetical work represents the first attempt to present the Christian community with a commentary on the Scriptures. His commentary is drafted by the extensive use of allegory as his main exegetical strategy. Origen was bold enough to express his doubts about Paul's instruction on civil obedience in the light of the persecution the Church had been experiencing since the first-century.

Perhaps someone will say: When then? Is even that authority that persecutes God's servants, attacks the faith, and subverts religion, from God? To this we shall briefly respond. There is no one who does not know that even sight is a gift from God to us, as well as hearing and the ability to think. Well then, though we have these things from God, it nevertheless is within our authority to make use of our vision either for good things or evil things. In a similar way we use our hearing, the movement of our hands, and the reflection of thought; and in this the judgment of God is just, because we misuse these things that he has given for good use, for impious and wicked service (Origen 2002, 9, 26).

Origen offered a solution to this cul-de-sac by drawing a comparison between our senses and the purpose of civil authorities. Our senses are not evil in themselves, but the use of them determines their moral character. In the same way, civil authorities belong to the created order as well. Hence, they are also subject to distortion and misdirection. In the light of this reality, Origen was the first one to endorse civil resistance whenever civil authorities fail to abide by God's laws or natural order, which comprise civil laws to which rulers are also held accountable. Origen made an important observation when he asserted that the Church should not consider her task to curtail crime, since that is precisely the responsibility of the magistrates. They are responsible for passing all those laws which are not revealed in Scripture.

f) Chrysostom (349-407 A.D.)

Chrysostom was renowned as an extraordinary preacher. He was appointed as bishop of Constantinople where he was confronted by the excesses of the luxurious way of life of the imperial court and the clergy. Chrysostom became suddenly the bishop of the capital of the Byzantine Empire. His commitment to ethical reforms according to his understanding of the Gospel led him to a direct confrontation with the Empress Eudoxia. His initial friendly relation to her gradually deteriorated to the point when Chrysostom was condemned to exile where he died.

And he does not say merely "obey," but "be subject"...the reasoning that suiteth the faithful, is, that all this is of God's appointment...What say you? it may be said; is every ruler then elected by God? This I do not say, he answers. Nor am I now speaking about individual rulers, but about the thing in itself; [...] this, I say is the work of God's wisdom. (John Chrysostom 1975, 511, 615)

In this homily, Chrysostom affirmed that God instituted secular authorities to restrain evil within ourselves and among ourselves. Irenaeus and Chrysostom used the image of the fish eating other in order to explain how civil authorities are called to prevent anarchy and chaos. Chrysostom's interpretation is based upon the idea of a natural order from which law is

derived. He also believed that sin was the actual reason why civil authorities were instituted. They in turn are held accountable to God by means of the law.

g) Ambrosiaster (ca. 370 A.D.)

There is very little known about this Latin Church Father. His work was attributed at one time to Augustine and later to Ambrose. Erasmus rejected these attributions and named the anonymous “little Ambrose” or Ambrosiaster. However, his exegetical work represents a significant step in biblical scholarship. He wrote concise commentaries on Paul’s letters avoiding allegorical interpretations.

For if the earthly law is not kept, the heavenly law will not be kept either. The earthly law is a kind of tutor, who helps little children along so that they can tackle a higher level of righteousness. [...] Therefore, in order to back up the authority and fear of the natural law, Paul bears witness to the fact that God is the author of both and that the ministers of the earthly law have his permission to act. That is why he added: Those that exist have been instituted by God. So that no one should despise it as a merely human construction, they see the divine law as being delegated to human authorities. [...] Paul says that to pay tribute, or what are called taxes, is to show subjection. By doing this, people know that they are not free, but act under authority, which is from God. They are subject to their ruler, who acts as God's deputy, just as they are subject to God. (Ambrosiaster 2009, 100-1)

For Ambrosiaster, law plays a crucial role in the way that God deals with human beings. It is worthwhile to notice the more elaborate distinctions offered in his reception. First, Ambrosiaster sustained that there is a correspondence between divine law and natural law based on the fact that human being was made into the image of God. For Ambrosiaster, the fact that we have been made into God’s image allows kings to administer God’s law on earth. Kings take over from Adam the duty he once had of representing God on earth before the Fall. Afterwards, the natural law was forgotten. God had to remind human beings of it and revealed it to Moses. However, because pagans and Jews were not able to keep it, God had to send Jesus Christ his Son to restore it. That is to his mind the essence of the Gospel. If we fulfil the demands of the Gospel, we

will live according to God's law. God instituted kings to administer his law. Obedience to the king is tantamount to submitting to God himself. Paying taxes is one way to show submission and obedience. Kings are entitled to receive their dues as they carry out their duties to administer justice. Ambrosiaster's political thought was extremely popular during the Middle Ages supporting the ideology of the divine right of kings.

h) Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274 A.D.)

Aquinas wrought his answer to the questions posed by the text relying on his reception of Aristotle's ideas. Hence, the emphasis lay on the common good as the first basic principle for his political thought. The purpose of civil authorities is protect it. The second basic principle are the various manifestations of the law as divine, natural and human. Divine law leads everything to its fullness and is only partially disclosed to human reason and revealed in God's word. Natural law is the result of the appropriation of divine law shown in our innate ability to judge. Last, human laws are the outcome of the appropriation of the natural law. These laws are by necessity applied by means of coercion. Aquinas wrote various scholarly pieces regarding civil obedience. There are various references to Paul's paraenesis in texts such as Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard, his treatise on Kingship, in his *Summa Theologiae*, and in his commentary on *Romans*.

Therefore, if God recompenses wicked kings who fight against the enemies of God, though not with the intention of serving Him but to execute their own hatred and cupidity, by giving them such great rewards as to yield them victory over their foes, subject kingdoms to their sway and grant them spoils to rifle, what will He do for kings who rule the people of God and assail His enemies from a holy motive? He promises them not an earthly reward indeed but an everlasting one and in none other than Himself. (Aquinas 1949, I, 8, 62)

Rather do we call them happy if they rule justly, and if they prefer to rule their passions rather than nations, and if they do all things not for love of vainglory but for the love of eternal happiness. (Aquinas 1949, I, 8, 64)

Aquinas is wrestling here with the problematic issue of bad kings. He is concerned with this difficult question in a way

that nobody else did before him. He recognised openly that there are bad rulers who do not act according to the law of justice but are moved by his own greed and personal interest. Aquinas admits, however, here that these self-declared enemies of God and his order can still be blessed by God in their wicked actions. Why? Because their actions do not rule out their office as kings. He also embraces the distinction between the office of the ruler and the person of the ruler already suggested by Ireneaus, Chrysostom and Ambrosiaster. This insight into the office of the ruler as different from his person legitimises the need for civil authorities vis-à-vis anarchical threats.

In his commentary on *the sentences of Peter Lombard*, which is one of his early writings, Aquinas even endorsed tyrannicide in the case when rulers usurped power which was already an illegitimate means of obtaining it. Such an action goes against the very order of justice. In his *Summa Theologiae*, a later writing, he seems to offset his view on the matter pointing to examples from both Testaments where God deals with them directly. However, he still supported the possibility of civil disobedience as a legitimate response to illegitimate means of acquiring power. He affirms that nobody is under the obligation to submit to unjust commands. To overthrow a tyrant does not constitute an act of rebellion since a tyrant had long rejected to submit to the order of justice. For Aquinas, the ways by which rulers come into power determine the legitimacy of their position. Aquinas rendered civil obedience relative by placing obedience within hierarchical relations where everyone is somehow inferior and superior at the same time depending on where one is situated within that hierarchy. At the top of it is God.

Conclusion

The history of reception of this text shows the importance given to civil obedience in the way that the early Church understood her political role. Political responsibility here is based on the recognition of a given order of justice to which civil authorities are called to administer. The history of reception of this normative text for the Church entails an array

of responses to the way civil authorities and citizens are to relate to each other, on the one hand, and to a given order of justice, on the other, without which there could be no political responsibility. It remains a permanent task to work out what civil obedience means within various political contexts. It has been made plain here that drawing the limits of civil obedience is also part and parcel of political responsibility.

It also becomes apparent that no answer as to *how* civil obedience should be carried out is definite. Paul never intended to offer us a full-fledged political theory about the body politic. However, his exhortation addresses several still relevant issues such as the origin of the civil authorities, their basic duties, civil obedience as a basic political attitude, and a practical piece of advice: to pay taxes. His paraenesis is two-fold: it was a particular solution to a specific historical situation, on the one hand, and, on the other, it can be worked out in new contexts as pressing questions arise. This brief discussion on the early history of reception reveals the dynamic relation between readers and texts. Civil obedience, as stated in this paraenesis, was always offset by The Book of Acts 5.29.

The created nature of civil authorities, affirmed throughout its early history of reception, sharply contrasts with historicist views. Paul, however, kept silence over a good number of issues. He never gave a hint whether they were instituted before or after the Fall. The Church Fathers felt the need to specify their origin. They also felt they had to explain the nature of their duty by reference to the idea of a natural order where the concept of law plays a key role. Paul's paraenesis inspired them to unpack its implications. Their discussions and answers to pressing issues were determined by their own personal circumstances, such as persecutions or by the threats of heretic groups. Graeco-Roman philosophy had naturally a significant input in the elaboration of their answers. However, they were not doing something entirely different to what Paul did himself: Paul had reworked extant traditions from his own world and appropriated them.

Today's political scenario is infinitely more complex than that of the first century. Nevertheless, basic questions such as civil obedience cannot be brushed aside. Paul never described

an ideal political form. He never expressed any preference for monarchy over republic, or republic over aristocracy. However, Paul did affirm the idea of a given (created) order or structure even within the political sphere whose ultimate purpose is to guarantee that wrongdoing is punished and good is rewarded. In other words, for both civil authorities and citizens, political responsibility is not an option, but an integral part of our social action, which is always norm-oriented.

NOTES

¹ Concerning recognition of authority, Gadamer opposes it to blind obedience. (Gadamer 1976, 33).

² *Paraenesis* is a Greek term meaning exhortation or advice.

³ Although the Gnostic reception might be considered as far-fetched, celebrated twentieth-century theologians resorted to it by proposing a similar view portraying evil spirits as standing behind political powers. These powers experience a sort of temporary release until they are fully overcome by Christ. Among the proponents of this theory are Oscar Cullman and early Karl Barth.

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Victor Manuel Morales, PhD, is lecturer at the Language Department for International Business Studies at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at the University of Paderborn. His research projects are related to: hermeneutic philosophy and philosophy of education, the modern and contemporary reception history of New Testament political texts and the relation between theological discourses and philosophical discourses as reflected in the history of modern and contemporary hermeneutics.

Address:

Victor Manuel MORALES
Universität Paderborn
Fakultät für Kulturwissenschaft
Warburger Str. 100
33098 Paderborn
Germany
Email: vicmanmv@mail.uni-paderborn.de

Book Reviews

Facing our Delusions: Rosenzweig's Defence of Subtlety

Camelia Gradinaru
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Phil Rosenzweig, *Efectul de halou și alte opt iluzii economice care îi induc în eroare pe manageri* [The Halo Effect: ... and the Eight Other Business Delusions that Deceive Managers], București: Publica, 2010, 296 p.

Keywords: Halo Effect, Delusion, Performance, Success, Strategy, Skepticism

Success and performance are two terms that are excessively used nowadays. They became a part of the jargon used both by scientists and businessmen, the latter acting in an extremely competitive environment and under tremendous pressure. If a book that tackles these themes makes promises about “reaching high performance in the shortest time” (as we all seem to be in a constant time crisis), guarantees that it puts a scientific method to work (science is probably one of the last things that attracts people as religions used to do) and gives the reader safe and fast solutions for success (making use of our strong belief in causality), than it will certainly have good chances of becoming a bestseller. More, the business world with its throbbing rhythm, financial investments and stakes and with the inherent tension of the decision making process represents a

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fertile field for books that are relaxing and calming, and offer miraculous solutions and recipes. Without trying to minimize the researchers' efforts to answer "abysmal" problems such as how to be performant in business or what the necessary steps in adopting the best business strategy are, Phil Rosenzweig develops, in his much praised book, an attack on the prejudices that infect the business environment. He also unmasks the lack of scientificity that is partially present in the economic press, in the scientific research and in the social sciences literature.

Phil Rosenzweig seems to be an intimidating personality – he worked for Hewlett-Packard (1979-1986), taught at Harvard Business School (1990-1996), and now teaches at the International Institute for Management Development in Lausanne. He published papers in *Strategic Management Journal*, *Journal of International Business Studies*, *The International Executive*, *Academy of Management Review*, *Management Science*, *California Management Review*, *European Management Journal*, and he also produced case study analyses for Microsoft, Daimler Benz, Matsushita, Renault, Heineken, Rhône-Poulenc, Accor, MTN, Dubai Aluminium, Vodafone. A theorist and also a practitioner, Rosenzweig fully uses his 25 years of experience in the business world to develop his arguments. His starting point in this critique is the will to get away from the big quantity of "nonsense" in the literature, Rosenzweig mocking themes such as revealing the key to becoming an efficient manager, the X steps to reach glory or the "eternal" formula of success in business. Rosenzweig wants his book to be a filter or even a "censorship" tool that investigates the quality of reasoning that it is to be found in the economic literature, in particular, and in the social sciences, in general; thus, he courageously shifts away from *mainstream* economic texts, and this move proves to be proficient. Far from being an alarmist that ruins the serenity of the managers and of the researchers, Rosenzweig opts for a more realistic and more refined speech about business, decisions, corporations and performance. This speech is free of the usual illusions and fake promises, and this is the reason why it seems more efficient: it is uncomfortable, but well written and with good arguments.

There are at least three categories of public that this book addresses to. First, the book is dedicated to managers who – as

Rosenzweig says – are in no lack of sharp brains and tenacity, but do not have enough wisdom or self reflection. After reading this work, Rosenzweig hopes that the managers will learn to “think for themselves” and stop giving credit (silently and without criticism) to all sorts of “advisers”, regardless of their name and titles. If managers can think with their own minds, than their strategic and operational decisions will be more accurate (and this is where the real stakes are, Rosenzweig adds). If a manager wants to be wise, he must prove that he has the remarkable ability of getting along well in a world that now seems very unpredictable (and thus rules out both the “miraculous” and the hackneyed solutions). Second, the book can be a useful guide for the researchers activating in the field of social sciences. The scholars can become more experienced in discovering the traps that lurk us in every stage of a scientific research, starting with data gathering and ending with data interpretation. Third, the journalists should improve their work after the careful examination of Rosenzweig’s examples; thus, they may reduce the worrisome interpretive inconsistency in their analyses of success/breakdown of a company (Rosenzweig’s “lessons” for these three key categories can be found at www.the-halo-effect.com). Beyond managers, researchers and journalists, *The Halo Effect and the Eight Other Business Delusions that Deceive Managers* is a mandatory reference for those who are interested in the subject of (criticizing) pseudoscience. In fact, the pleasant style of writing along with the good argumentation and the excellent documentation (see the case studies of Cisco, ABB, Lego, for instance) are proof that Rosenzweig hoped that his book would be read by a larger public.

Noticing that the high performance is difficult to understand “even if it is just in front of our eyes” (p. 69), Rosenzweig chooses this angle of approach rather than the classical question of “What do we need for high performances?”. A big part of the economic thinking is affected by *delusions* that can deform our understanding of what performance is. Rosenzweig states nine widespread economic delusions: the halo effect (“the fundamental delusion”), the delusion of correlation and causality, the delusion of single explanations, the delusion of connecting the winning dots, the delusion of rigorous research, the delusion of lasting success, the delusion of absolute

performance, the delusion of the wrong end of the stick, the delusion of the organisational Physics. All of them contaminate the research and our efforts to increase the business performances, and this is the reason why Rosenzweig analyses them in a detailed manner. Even though many delusions are nothing but natural tendencies or common errors, the writer tells us that we should not worry; we must not see them as inevitable features, and if we are aware of them, we will know how to avoid them.

Without entering Rosenzweig's details, we have to say nevertheless that his critical approach resets the old problem of the "objectivity in the research process", and also offers a new perspective about the role played by the presuppositions in managerial reasoning. Even though the idea of studying the business environment from a scientific standpoint constitutes a debate in itself, I think that one of the main virtues of this book is the fact that it uses the "distinction problem" and criticizes the pseudoscientific tendencies in explaining the concepts of performance and success. Moreover, his work must be seen on a bigger background, a cultural background dominated by the effort to distinguish between science and pseudoscience (see terms like "junk science", "sound science", "fringe science", "voodoo science", "Cargo Cult Science", etc.). In Philosophy, we have already met, for instance, a very powerful critique of the postmodern authors (for their abuse of scientific concepts and for their technique of borrowing a scientific vocabulary using metaphors or other rhetorical figures of speech), such as the one done by Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont. The "Sokal affair" and everything that followed after the publication of *Impostures intellectuelles* is, thus, exemplary.

Also, Rosenzweig talks about another important distinction, namely the distinction between science and storytelling, between fact and fiction. In this vein, Rosenzweig proves that a lot of works in Economy are, if we analyse them, nothing else than beautiful stories about success, performance and remarkable businessmen. They are seductive because they reach a very deep human structure, a structure that is oriented towards stories, clarifying explanations and sapiential sayings. Of course, science tells her own story – that includes a certain

vision about the world – but it does it rigorously and by means of experiment, falsifiability and argumentation.

Rosenzweig reminds us that *de omnibus disputandum*, and in cases that are vague or sufficiently obscure (fringe science, interdisciplinarity, etc.) this principle has to be the most important one. Moreover, he showed that a lot of serious works, intelligent enough to avoid the halo effect, have not reached the same success as others that were full of errors, from the incompetent data gathering till the absurd conclusions. Paraphrasing Rosenzweig, this happened probably because the serious papers did say something meaningful about the business world, but they only succeeded in explaining small parts of it, while the bestsellers “revealed” a lot about the “heroes”, about their quest and ambition, and about their burning wish for certitude.

The „homeopathic” dose of skepticism and realism that Rosenzweig offers us has two goals: first, the demystification of our unjustified beliefs, magic formulas and ungrounded stories, and second, the awareness of the importance of risk, luck, incertitude and unpredictability in business. These simple ideas cannot guarantee our success, but they can, on the other hand, increase its chances; moreover, we must also opt for a form of management that shows signs of good health, that means it is free of the so called “coconut helmet”. To synthesize what has been said so far, *The Halo Effect and the Eight Other Business Delusions that Deceive Managers* is a pleasant reading, undoubtedly useful, with solid arguments, a book that does not hesitate to shout where others remained silent and kept our prejudices “alive and well”. This is a book that may increase our chances of being (more) critical, (more) focused and, why not, (more) sceptical.

Address:

Camelia GRADINARU

Al. I. Cuza University of Iasi

Department of Philosophy

Bd. Carol I no. 11

700506 Iasi, Romania

Tel: (+) 40 232 201282

Email: cameliagradinaru@yahoo.com

In Search for Forgiveness

Ionuț Bârliba
Al.I. Cuza University of Iași

Simon D. Podmore, *Kierkegaard and the Self Before God Anatomy of the Abyss*, Indiana Series in the Philosophy of Religion, Bloomington, 2011, 280 p.

Keywords: Kierkegaard, sin, forgiveness, despair, difference, anatomy, abyss.

Everyone who is somehow familiar with Søren Kierkegaard's philosophical writings has had the chance to notice that most of his influential concepts are far from providing a very optimistic view upon the individual's life and its perspectives.

Terms and themes such as *melancholy*, *anxiety*, *despair* and *spiritual trial* (or *struggle*) do not really reveal the most positive characteristics of human existence, an existence infinitely, radically and qualitatively separated from God through *sin*. If Kierkegaard diagnoses sin as the initial and the insurmountable difference between humanity and God¹ then what Kierkegaard provides through his works is just "a detailed cartography of the abyss without showing any exit from it" (xi).²

But here is where Simon D. Podmore³ "enters the arena" with his new book *Kierkegaard and the Self before God. Anatomy of the Abyss* setting a more optimistic perspective. The

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(original) sin determines an initial relation between the human self and God characterized as an impasse for the self to reach God. Simon Podmore starts his inquiry with these two questions: "How can the self be known in *relation* to a divine other who is infinitely qualitatively *different* from itself? And how can one stand *before* God when there is an infinite abyss *between* self and the divine?" and attempts to answer them by arguing "that the true expression of the infinite qualitative difference is found, not in the self's initial sense of sin and estrangement, but in the Holy *mysterium* of forgiveness. And as such, I maintain that the key to understand this transition from the consciousness of sin to the acceptance of forgiveness is also the key to the abyss." (xvi). Thus as a general aspect of the study Podmore suggests another way of reading Kierkegaard, by contrasting despair, melancholy, anxiety or spiritual trial with faith, forgiveness and the love of God.

A central concept of the book, *the abyss*, is introduced in the first chapter. Podmore states that in order to define one's existence before God it is compulsory to accept the distance (the abyss) which separates humanity from divinity. But the abyss cannot be assimilated with nothingness otherwise we can no longer speak about an anatomy of it⁴. It is quite interesting to point out the reason why Podmore associates these two terms, *the abyss* and *the anatomy*. "All anatomy involves a dissection (from the Gr. *anatome*: "dissection"), and dissection requires a cutting-apart (from the Lat. *dissecare*: "to cut into pieces"); hence the *severance* of the abyss is implied in its very anatomization - the infinite severance between God and humanity."(2).

Apart from this acceptance of *the abyss* (dn. *Dyb*) as the severance of humanity from God, Podmore stresses upon a second meaning. The Danish *Afgrund* implies another "kind" of abyss, "an abyss into which one can fall, in which one loses any ground on which one might stand before God." (8). This second meaning of the abyss suggests that what is the most dreadful is not the abyss in itself but the relation of the individual to the abyss. When the individual becomes conscious about the deep separation from God created through sin, God becomes the dreadful absolute Other, the One which the sinner relates to

through despair. Despair marks the relation between the individual and God, a step which the individual has to surpass in order to come before God for forgiveness.

But first “before the self can behold itself in this divine mirror” (9) it has to deal with this despair, it has to come to know itself and it has to recognize its failure to know itself according to its own powers. And only then, consequently, the “need to orient self-knowledge in relation to a divine *other*” (9) will emerge.

Podmore dwells on this inner struggle of despair in the second chapter entitled *The inner Abyss*. According to the author despair represents the failure of the isolated self to become a self before God. This failure of the self is to be found in the modern reading of the Socratic “know thyself”. Starting with its elementary sense as separation from the other, the self ends up by being also separated from itself (as the Cartesian striving to sustain the self as both the subject and the object of its own self knowledge). This myth of the autonomous self opens the way to the collapse into the postmodern “death of the self” which contagiously relates with the “death of God”, another modern assumption. Starting from the well known treatise of the self from Kierkegaard’s *The Sickness unto Death*, Podmore arrives to the conclusion that if “God is dead” “then surely ‘the self’ is also abandoned to the impossibility of becoming transparent to itself, for it cannot do so alone. Without God, the self has only its melancholy failure to become itself on which to meditate.” (23). And even the death of God itself comes as a consequence of this modern autonomy of the self, as defining itself without the God on whom it once depended (24).

Ultimately from man’s perspective the estrangement between self and God is an abyss created through *sin*, which drives his self to despair, melancholy and anxiety, while from God’s side the same abyss reveals itself as *forgiveness* (of sins). To put it simply, the individual has to find a way to arrive to the point where he can receive God’s forgiveness thus overcoming this estrangement from God.

While despair is the abyss of the unknown, melancholy is an existential abyss which expresses the sense of a loss.

Initially the (human) self senses the loss of the relation of itself to God through melancholy (in its religious acceptance). “The presentiment melancholy (Gr. *melancholia*) of the self which feels the presence and the absence, the loneliness and grief of the abyss between self and self, self and God” (50) also initiates the rise of self-consciousness. This presentiment gives self a “hint” for the eternal within itself, the sign of the initial relation between self and God. Eventually the importance of melancholy consists in the awakening of a religious longing “for that which is missing in relation to the self: namely the God-relation” (58). Still the religious melancholy is not sufficient in itself to overcome the abyss between the human and the divine even though it opens the desire to behold God.

Despite the alienation created by melancholy and despair and the fear and trembling of the self before that which is the Wholly Other (God), divine omnipotence does not crush the human but ensures his freedom. As Podmore puts it not only once throughout the fourth chapter (*The Melancholy Theophany*) “despite the fear of annihilation, divine omnipotence does not crush a person, but instead withdraws through the concessive gift of independence in the freedom of the self” (86).

But before one can be able to accept this gift of freedom one has to pass through a *spiritual trial*. Podmore starts the discussion on the spiritual trial (dn. *Anfægtelse*) around two biblical stories: the ordeal of Abraham and Jacob’s encounter with the Stranger. One of the most important issues in understanding Kierkegaard’s concept is that only if one dares to enter into the God-relationship does one encounter spiritual trial (106). The necessity of passing through this kind of struggle is a central step in the self’s becoming nothing before God (through resignation to the divine will).

This is the kind of trial which Abraham has to overcome when he is asked to sacrifice his son only to regain him right before he was about to kill him. Another important aspect regarding *spiritual trial* which can be foreseen somehow from Abraham’s story above is that “in its authentic form it does not express an instance of demonic dread, because it is ultimately a struggle of love prevailing over fear. Nor is it finally a struggle

to the death, since this trial seeks neither the annihilation of the self nor the death of God” (119).

Chapter six, *The Anatomy of Spiritual Trial* dwells further on the tormenting experience of spiritual trial starting with a comparative discussion between Kierkegaard and Luther upon the topic. Thus according to Luther *spiritual trial* “came to denote a form of temptation (*tentatio*), which takes place through an assault upon man (*impugnatio*) which is intended to put him to test” (120). Temptation can be identified as coming from the devil which from Luther’s point of view is the one which originates the tension of the spiritual trial within the human self. Kierkegaard though “situates the tension of spiritual trial irreducibly between the self and God” (129). If one can evade the temptation as being some kind of seduction, one should on the other hand voluntarily accept the confrontation with the dreadful Other if one intends to relate to God not through sin but through forgiveness.

Nonetheless both of them believe that the anguish of spiritual trial is created by the feeling that one finds himself before a dreadful God. What makes the difference between Kierkegaard’s *Anfægtelse* and Luther’s *Anfechtung* is that for the latter the tension of the spiritual trial is between the devil and the individual whereas for the former the same tension is only a matter between the individual and God.

As Podmore states “Kierkegaard’s understanding of spiritual trial was determined by the *voluntary* suffering of Christ’s passion” (137) and most of all by Christ’s fight to resist despair by praying at Gethsemane. Conceptually what “Gethsemane” suggests is prayer’s faith in divine possibility over human impossibility. Christ submits his will to the divine will which means he does not ignore his own willing but he acknowledges his thoughts and desperation in order to relinquish them (144). It is thus by renouncing the despair of human impossibility sensed in the very moment of spiritual trial (as in Christ’s Gethsemane) that the beginning of faith in divine possibility emerges (149).

We can ask ourselves at this point what does human impossibility and divine possibility actually refer to? In other words what is it that is possible for God and impossible for

human? Throughout the chapters of this book we could experience the great struggle that the human self has to pass through in order to (first be conscious about and then) surpass this abyss, this infinite, radical and qualitative difference as Kierkegaard names it which separates itself from God. If the meaning of this difference is essentially *sin* then the whole struggle is just a dying cause. But according to Podmore *sin* is not “the right answer”. Right from the beginning he confesses that “this project commenced under the belief that the meaning of Kierkegaard’s ‘infinite, radical, qualitative difference’ between humanity and God was essentially *sin*. Mercifully, it concluded with the conviction that the true meaning of the infinite qualitative difference between God and humanity is expressed through *forgiveness*” (xi).

What is it that can be forgiven? It is of course our sins but this is a job we cannot do and this is because of a thousand reasons thoroughly depicted by the author within his study. Though what we can do is to freely accept God’s possibility to forgive our sins. The self surrender of prayer marks the maximal point of intimacy between self and God and one must be careful in dealing with it otherwise one falls again in the deepest despair. It is decisive to accept that the self cannot “itself decide what *sin* is and decide the possible reach of forgiveness. The flaw is in conflating what one can forgive oneself with what God can forgive one: that is, the omission of the infinite qualitative *difference* between human and divine forgiveness” (167).

Kierkegaard and the self before God is not the lightest reading one can have and a book review of 2000 words is not the best way to clarify all the aspects and the themes treated (when rightly understood!). However, if you are interested in “a contemporary theological reading of the theme of the ‘self before God’ as defined by way of the category ‘of infinite qualitative difference’ in Kierkegaard’s writings” (xiii), exploring the problems of despair, anxiety, melancholy, spiritual trial and their more positive counterparts, faith, forgiveness and the love of God and if you are curious to find out how thinkers such as Augustine, Luther, Otto, Tillich, Levinas or Derrida deal with

such themes then Simon D. Podmore's latest study might be the right book to read.

NOTES

¹And indeed Kierkegaard states (Kierkegaard 1985, 47): "What, then, is the difference?" Johannes ponders. "Indeed, what else but sin, since the difference, the absolute difference, must have been caused by the individual himself".

²An idea that according to Podmore is shared by many philosophers and theologians as it is the case of Karl Barth.

³Simon D. Podmore is a Gordon Milburn Junior Research Fellow at Trinity College and British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow in the Faculty of Theology, University of Oxford. Some of his latest studies include: *Kierkegaard's Theophany of Death* (2011), *Lazarus & The Sickness Unto Death: An Allegory of Despair* (2011), *Kierkegaard as Physician of the Soul: On Self-Forgiveness & Despair* (2009).

⁴ The title of first chapter is *Anatomy of the Abyss*.

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Address:

Ionuț BĂRLIBA

Al.I. Cuza University of Iasi

Department of Philosophy

Bd. Carol I, 11

700506 Iasi, Romania

Email: ionutbarliba@gmail.com

A Bestiary of International Politics Lies

Diana Mărgărit
Al. I. Cuza University of Iasi

John Mearsheimer, *Why Leaders Lie. The Truth About Lying in International Politics*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Keywords: strategic lies, inter-states lies, fearmongering, strategic cover-ups, nationalist myths, liberal lies

From Machiavelli until nowadays, lying has been understood as a common solution when dealing with political facts. The shrewder the lie, the more effective the politics. When such a statement becomes a truism, it is not worth reflecting upon it, you take it as it is. Yet, who would have thought that lying in politics remains a questionable issue? In January 2011, the international relations editorial market was enriched with an interesting and challenging book written by the well-known scholar John Mearsheimer, *Why Leaders Lie. The Truth About Lying in International Relations*.

R. Wendell Harrison Distinguished Service Professor and Co-director of Program on International Security Policy at the University of Chicago, John Mearsheimer revealed a powerful voice in the neorealist studies of international politics. His other three books, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (co-written with Stephen Walt) (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001), *Conventional Deterrence* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1983), as well as his articles published in various important journals like *International Relations*, *Foreign Policy*, *European Political Science*, and so on, reflect

Mearsheimer's visibility and relevance in the studies of world politics.

In the 160 pages of the book, organized in nine chapters, preface, introduction, notes and index, the author attempts to reveal the signification of lying, the circumstances which determine it and its consequences on political relations. The usual assumption regarding politics, generally, and international politics, particularly, is that lying represents a habit among leaders. In this respect, Mearsheimer realizes a proper *ouverture* of the play by revealing the implications of President Bush's reactions after 9/11. As a matter of fact, the reports on the Iraq intervention asserted that Hussein had claimed he had had weapons of mass destruction and he would have used them. But, when intervening in Iraq, the Americans discovered that he had been bluffing all along the '90s. In fact, the report was lying and not Hussein, who declared several times that there were no weapons of mass destruction in his country. In Mearsheimer's opinion, the Bush administration told four lies (on the existence of evidences regarding the presence of weapons, Hussein's collaboration with Osama bin Laden, Hussein's implication in the September 11 attacks, the United States' determination to peacefully settle the disagreements with Hussein, when in fact the plans to attack Iraq were already made). In conclusion, the United States had lied and Iraq had told the truth. This recent international situation represents the reflection on how a lie can be used in order to influence the public opinion and, more exactly, how a lie quashes a truth.

Even though the former situation is understood as a classic case of telling a lie (from Bush's perspective), Mearsheimer brings in the verdict that lying in international matters is not as frequent as lying with national implications only. This statement is based on two main arguments which proclaim, firstly, that there are a few lies in international relations and secondly, that democracies are more likely to lie to their own people regarding external policies.

In politics as in every-day life, lying involves internal and external consequences, determined or undetermined results and despite the moral judgment, lying is not that harmful after

all. International lying is not necessarily misconduct; in fact, it is often thought to be clever, necessary, and even virtuous in some circumstances. Still, the paradox is that even though lying in international relations is not exactly a habit, it is regarded as indispensable to political realities. In addition, the international lies are almost any time easy to forgive because their invocation is considered to be in the public interest and for the maintaining of the stability of one state. International lies are forgettable because the international system is anarchic. Mearsheimer points out the fact that if something happens to a state, there is no one who could help it. By being aware of this situation, leaders use lying as a strategy for providing the safety of their country.

In the national system, telling a lie is punishable because there is a coercive force legitimated to correct any deviation from norms. The national system is therefore hierarchic and lying, even spreading it, should be punished because the use of this kind of strategies determines a perpetual lack of confidence between people.

Everybody lies in all kind of situations and from different reasons. As a matter of fact, telling lies is as usual as telling the truth concerning certain facts or events. Mearsheimer is mostly concerned about the high political lies told by leaders of developed states, understood as strategic lies (as opposed to the selfish lies) because they do not regard the personal benefit of those who use them, but the public national or international interests.

By questioning the meanings of lying, Mearsheimer admits that together with concealment and spinning, it is submitted to deception. Deception manifests itself as the consequences of preventing the other from finding the true side of facts, while lying, submitted to deception, is “when a person makes a statement that he knows or suspects to be false in the hope that others will think it is true. A lie is a positive action designed to deceive the target audience” (Mearsheimer 2011, 16). The aim of lying is to give a false image of the truth and it is the result of making-up facts or the combination of true elements in order to take one away from the true side of facts, in order to introduce the untrue, the false conclusion.

Mearsheimer avoids giving a so-called metaphysical answer, even though the question is one of a kind. In fact, he gives a procedural definition of lying, understanding it from a utilitarian point of view. This means that lying is good if it helps to overcome some social or political situations. Even if the intentions were good, their internal or external consequences are unfortunately not always positive. In this sense, the author operates with two sets of distinctions: a) lies that states tell each other and lies that leaders tell to their own publics; b) strategic lies and personal or corrupt lies. The four resultant types of lies can be mixed-up, but not all are acceptable. De facto, only the strategic lies and those between states can involve positive issues. Mearsheimer identifies seven kinds of lies, classified on the criteria of their specific purposes: inter-states lies, fearmongering, strategic cover-ups, nationalist mythmaking, liberal lies, social imperialism and ignoble cover-ups. Mearsheimer analyzes each one of these seven categories for their answer to two important questions: “why do states lie each other?” and “when do they lie to each other?”.

Firstly, the goals of inter-state lies are to gain a strategic advantage and to cut off the other’s chances of gaining similar advantages. Secondly, fearmongering presupposes increasing the intensity of a specific aspect in order to caution the population against a certain danger, by using fear and panic. Thirdly, strategic cover-ups hide some negative or destabilizing facts, under the false pretense of protecting the national interests. Fourthly, nationalist myths refer to the stigmatization of the other (be it a group or even a state) and the consolidation of the cohesion between citizens. This sort of lying appeals to national symbols and historic (often distortional) facts as to legitimate the policies of the moment. Fifthly, liberal lies are those made up to dissimulate the behavior of one state which breaks the well-accepted norms and the international law. Sixthly, social imperialism means lying to its own citizens with respect to other states; in other words, distracting them with international insignificant facts as to forget the unsatisfying domestic realities. Seventhly, ignoble cover-ups are the most condemnable because by such methods the leaders’ severe errors are hidden in their own benefits.

Despite identifying seven types of lies, only the first five are used in the name of national interest. This is the reason why Mearsheimer further neglects the two last ones. He remains consistent as he had already announced, in concentrating on strategic lies and not on the selfish ones. His concern focuses on the strategic lies because they are politically legitimate, as their aim is to determine positive consequences on the state. In fact, it is their intention which matters most, and not their consequences. In an analytical manner, Mearsheimer attempts to identify the main features of lying in international politics: types of international lies, reasons why leaders lie, what are the circumstances and the costs? The lesson that Mearsheimer tries to teach us is: lie only when it is absolutely necessary; you can never know its consequences beforehand – a necessary truism. Furthermore, taking into account the weight of the numerous cases of lying in the American presidential experience, I think that Mearsheimer's particular bet is to convince the American leaders to lie less.

After presenting the relevant systemic parts of the book, it is necessary to underline Mearsheimer extreme attention for clearness and coherence. His need of such a well-organized attempt is revealed by this fragment at the beginning in which he announces: “this book is comprised of nine chapters. I start by defining lying and the other two forms of deception: concealment and spinning. The subsequent chapter lays out the inventory of international lies. I distinguish between strategic lies and selfish lies, and explain why the focus is on the former kind. In the next five chapters, I look in detail at each of the different kinds of strategic lies. I consider the logic behind each type and when it is more or less likely to occur. In the penultimate chapter, I consider the potential pitfalls of international lying. I assess which kinds of lies are most likely to backfire and undermine a state's foreign policy and which are most likely to cause damage on the home front. I conclude with a brief discussion of what all of this means for American foreign policy and the United States more generally” (Mearsheimer 2011, 14).

Unfortunately, the September 11 events in United States – the example from the beginning of the book – is not, in

my opinion, a simple state of lies. In fact, it is a matter of relevance because what is a lie may prove to be important, and a truth may prove to be insignificant. The famous discourse of Donald Rumsfeld, former United States Secretary of Defense, on the same occasion, marks out this statement: “There are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns – there are things we do not know we don’t know”.

After turning the last page of the book, the impression of any reader might be that in international relations, lying has almost always negative effects. But what about the truth? What about the states with an official politics of lying (the case of genocidal politics in Nazi Germany hidden from the other states)? Which are the determined boundaries between lying and telling the truth? Can political realities be settled on the path of the truth and what are the costs? In this respect, lying and telling the truth should be done only when necessary. As two sides of the same coin, truth and lie function as conjectural moral instances. Beware of lying! Beware of the truth!

Address:

Diana MĂRGĂRIT

Al.I. Cuza University of Iasi

Department of Philosophy and Social and Political Sciences

Bd. Carol I, 11

700506 Iasi, Romania

E-mail: margaritdiana@yahoo.fr

La Mystagogie de Saint Maxime le Confesseur

Florin Crîșmăreanu
Université « A.I. Cuza » de Iasi

Maximi Confessoris, *Mystagogia: una cum Latina interpretatione Anastasii Bibliothecarii*, edita a Christian Boudignon, Turnhout: Brepols (Corpus Christianorum. Series Graeca, nr. 69), 2011, 187 + 99 p.

Keywords: Maximus the Confessor, Mystagogia, Christian Boudignon, critical edition, Corpus Christianorum

Au bout d'une attente qui s'est, finalement, avérée fertile, nous avons le plaisir de signaler la parution d'une nouvelle édition critique de la *Mystagogie* de Saint Maxime le Confesseur (580-662). Cette édition critique réalisée par Christian Boudignon, paraît en des conditions graphiques exceptionnelles dans la prestigieuse collection *Corpus Christianorum*. Pour au moins les deux dernières décennies, l'intérêt des éditeurs pour l'œuvre maximienne a été constant, ce qui fait qu'à présent Maxime soit, à côté de Grégoire de Nazianze, l'auteur avec le plus de textes publiés dans *Series Graeca*.

Il est difficile de parler dans les quelques lignes du présent texte de l'importance des textes maximiens ; cependant, il faut prendre conscience du fait qu'il est presque impossible de comprendre la théologie byzantine si l'on fait abstraction de l'œuvre de Saint Maxime. Parmi les textes maximiens, du point

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de vue des éditions, *Mystagogia* occupe une place privilégiée, avec, déjà, deux éditions critiques¹ et bien de traductions dans les langues vernaculaires².

Dans l'ouverture du volume en question, après l'„Avant-propos”, les „Abréviations pour les ouvrages cités” et „les œuvres maximiennes”, C. Boudignon nous propose une introduction extrêmement consistante (187 p.), où il inventorie, décrit et analyse très minutieusement les manuscrits complets ou détériorés qui ont conservé le texte de la *Mystagogie* (il s'agit de 40 manuscrits), les traditions directes et indirectes, les florilèges, citations et interpolations du texte maximien (XIII-CXLVI).

De même, toujours dans l'introduction (CXLVI-CLX), il entreprend une analyse du contexte où quelques chapitres de la *Mystagogie*, interpolés dans l'*Historia ecclesiastica* attribuée à Germain I de Constantinople (634-733) ont été traduits en latin par Anastase le Bibliothécaire (817-77), qui „n'avait pas une connaissance parfaite du grec” (CXLVII). La première traduction intégrale en latin de la *Mystagogie* n'apparaît qu'en 1548, réalisée par Gentien Hervet (1499-1584). Vers la fin de l'introduction, C. Boudignon analyse également les éditions imprimées de la *Mystagogie* (CLX et sq.).

Le texte grec de la *Mystagogie* comprend les pages 3-74. Il est de notoriété que le texte de Maxime est un commentaire liturgique, écrit, le plus probablement, environ 628/630. Comme on peut l'observer si on parcourt le texte grec, le mot qui donne le titre de ce traité - *μυσταγωγία* - n'apparaît pas très fréquemment (sans compter le titre, on en a trouvé encore deux occurrences: 15, 222 et 15, 224). Saint Maxime parle aussi de la *μυσταγωγία* dans d'autres ouvrages: par exemple, dans *Ambigua*, il considère que le but de la mystagogie est d'introduire dans la connaissance (*γνώσις*) du mystère. Ce qui signifie qu'il serait injuste de croire que ce n'est que de *Mystagogia* qu'on peut extraire les commentaires de Maxime sur l'Église et sur la liturgie. Il est certain qu'il faut recueillir ceux-ci en les cherchant dans l'ensemble tout entier de l'œuvre maximienne, qui, malgré la diversité des thèmes traités, a un caractère unitaire, soutenu par la visée christologique.

L'écrit maximien envisagé est formé d'un prologue et 24 chapitres dont les dimensions varient. Les exégètes sont

d'accord qu'on a dans la *Mystagogia* deux parties principales inégalement développées: dans la première partie, la plus développée (chapitres 1-7), Maxime expose la signification symbolique de l'Église (tant celle en pierre que celle spirituelle) ; la deuxième partie (chapitres 8-24) est consacrée par Maxime à l'interprétation spirituelle des cérémonies de la liturgie eucharistique. Dès le début du texte, Maxime affirme humblement que ce qu'il écrit ne lui appartient pas, mais qu'il l'a entendu, à son tour, d'un „grand vieillard” - „μεγάλω γέροντι” (4, 9) ou „heureux vieillard” - „μακαρίω γέροντι” (7, 75), qui parlait de la « sainte église » - ἁγίας ἐκκλησίας (4, 10) et de la « sainte synaxe » - ἁγίας συνάξεως (4, 11). En réalité, il est possible que cette invocation du „vieillard” ne soit rien d'autre qu'un artifice stylistique, courant à l'époque.

Bien que, par comparaison à d'autres écrits maximiens, la terminologie chalcédonienne n'est pas fréquente dans la *Mystagogia*, on a, je crois, des raisons suffisantes pour lire également ce texte de Maxime, tout comme les autres, selon une clé de lecture christologique, c'est-à-dire selon l'expression chalcédonienne: „ἓνα καὶ τὸν αὐτὸν Χριστὸν, υἰὸν, κύριον, μονογενῆ, ἐν δύο φύσεσιν, ἀσυγχύτως, ἀτρέπτως, ἀδιαφέτως, ἀχωρίστως γνωριζόμενον” („*un seul et même Christ, Fils, Seigneur, l'unique engendré, reconnu en deux natures, sans confusion, sans changement, sans division et sans séparation*”), devenue l'axiome fondamentale pour tout l'œuvre maximienne. Maxime nous offre un exemple en ce sens, dans le chapitre II: „La Sainte Église de Dieu est type et icône du monde constitué d'essences visibles et invisibles, en tant qu'elle admet la même union et la même diversité que lui (...) Elle est une selon l'hypostase (« μία ἐστὶ κατὰ τὴν ὑπόστασιν »), non divisée par ses parties” (15, 209-217).

Dans le commentaire maximien on observe deux niveaux de la liturgie, qu'il appelle le niveau „général” (γενικῶς - 43, 692; 60, 969; 60, 973; 61, 989; 62, 998; 62, 1012; 64, 1035) et le niveau „particulier/spécial” (ιδικῶς - 41, 669; 60, 970; 61, 975; 61, 990; 62, 1002; 63, 1017; 64, 1042; on y ajoute une occurrence pour γενικῶς dans le titre du chapitre 14 et deux occurrences pour ιδικῶς dans le titre des chapitres 13 et 22). Le niveau

général se réfère au mystère du salut de l'univers entier, la méthode d'interprétation étant ici surtout la méthode *typologique* (chapitres II et III de la *Mystagogia*). Le niveau *particulier* rapporte la liturgie à l'homme et à l'univers séparément, l'interprétation ici étant *anagogique* (chapitre IV de la *Mystagogia*).

En quelque sorte, pour Maxime, le cosmos (il s'agit de l'analogie entre les *intelligibles* et l'autel, les *sensibles* et la *nef*) et l'homme (il s'agit de l'analogie entre l'âme et l'autel, le *corps* et la *nef*) sont, κατ' ἀναλογία, des églises, selon le modèle de l'Église de Christ. Pourtant, il faut comprendre que ces analogies sont invoquées pour une raison méthodologique. En fait, „le système” maximien, similaire à celui dionysien, peut être considéré comme *pan-ecclésiastique*, supposant une „liturgie cosmique” (selon l'expression de Hans Urs von Balthasar), parce que tout l'univers participe à la divinisation, mais cette participation n'est pas égale pour tous, elle est en fonction de la capacité de chacun de recevoir les dons du Saint Esprit.

Le texte grec de la *Mystagogie* est suivi, dans le présent volume, par *Interpretatio Anastasii Bibliothecarii*, pages 77-89. Cette „*interpretatio*” est importante pour au moins deux raisons: premièrement, la démarche d'Anastase, bien que partielle, représente l'une des premières tentatives de traduction en latin du traité maximien (à la même époque qu'Anastase, Jean Scot Érigène va traduire d'autres textes de Maxime, comme *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* et *Ambigua ad Iohannem*); deuxièmement, on peut observer à quel point, dans l'époque d'Anastase, le commentaire liturgique maximien a influencé la liturgie des latins. Malgré les efforts assez précoces du traduction en latin des ouvrages maximiens, Maxime est un auteur que la scholastique classique néglige ou même ignore. Par exemple, un anonyme qui rédige au XII-e siècle sa *Disputatio catholocarum patrum adversus dogmata Petri Abelardi*, s'indigne de voir Abélard en appeler à l'autorité de Maxime: „Cela, il (Abélard) le tire manifestement d'un certain Maxime, un Grec me semble-t-il (*quem puto graecum fuisse*), que Jean Scot a imité en tout jusqu'à l'hérésie (*quem et Johannes Scotus usque ad haerisim imitatus est*)”.

Le volume s'achève avec un triple index: *Index Nominum* (93); *Index Locorum Sacrae Scripturae* (94-5) et *Index Aliorum Fontium* (96-7). Malheureusement, on trouve dans *Index Nominum* plusieurs renvois erronés - d'habitude une ligne plus en haut ou plus en bas que celle indiquée - à cause, probablement, de la rédaction technique ou de la mise en page du texte. Quelques exemples: ὁ ἀπόστολος apparaît à 184 et non pas à 183; Διονύσιος ὁ Ἀρεοπαγίτης apparaît à 54/55 et non pas à 55/56; Ἑλλην apparaît à 185 et non pas à 184; μακάριος γέρον apparaît à 130 et non pas à 129; Σκύθης apparaît à 186 et non pas à 185; Χριστός apparaît à 173 et non à 172.

Au-delà des trois indices mentionnés, un indice de termes grecs aurait pu achever cette édition; ce quatrième indice aurait été, à coup sûr, très utile au lecteur.

Dans l'espace des recherches de plus en plus nombreuses et attentives aux divers aspects de la pensée de Saint Maxime, Christian Boudignon s'est déjà imposé, à côté d'autres éditeurs et exégètes comme Peter van Deun, Carl Laga, Carlos Steel, B. Janssens, J. Declerck *et alii*, au nombre des connaisseurs les plus compétents de l'œuvre maximienne en général et de la *Mystagogie* en particulier. Dans son cas, la profonde analyse exégétique est doublée, d'une manière heureuse, par la rigueur du classiciste.

Après avoir soutenu sa thèse de doctorat en 2000 à l'Université de Provence Aix-Marseille (*La Mystagogie, ou traité sur les symboles de la Liturgie, de Saint Maxime le Confesseur (580-662). Edition, traduction, commentaire*), Christian Boudignon s'est dédié, pour presque 15 ans, à la tâche d'inventorier et d'analyser les manuscrits qui ont conservé le texte de la *Mystagogie*, qui s'est traduit par une importante activité de publiciste, au sujet de la vie et de l'œuvre de Saint Maxime. Cette activité va continuer, nous en sommes convaincus, dans un rythme aussi constant que jusqu'à présent. Nous attendons avec intérêt la traduction en français de la *Mystagogie* - et les commentaires de C. Boudignon - dont on a annoncé l'apparition dans la collection *Sources Chrétiennes*.

NOTES

¹ La première édition critique du texte de la *Mystagogie* a été réalisée par Charalampos Sotiropoulos, *La Mystagogie de Saint Maxime le Confesseur. Introduction, texte critique, traduction française et grecque*, Outremont: Athènes, 2011. Par rapport à cette édition-là, la présente édition, réalisée par C. Boudignon, est significativement supérieure.

² On mentionne ici quelques-unes des traductions de la *Mystagogie*: 1. La traduction en italien: R. Cantarella (1931); 2. Traductions en français: M. Lot-Borodine (1936-1938); C. Sotiropoulos (2001); M.-L. Charpin-Ploix (2005); 3. Traduction en allemand: H.U. von Balthasar (1941, rééd. 1961); 4. Traductions en roumain: D. Stăniloae (1944, rééd. 2000); C.-I. Streza (2009); 5. Traduction en néogrec: C. Sotiropoulos (1978, rééd. 1993); 6. Traductions en anglais: J. Stead (1982); G.C. Berthold (1985); 7. Traduction en russe: I. Venediktov, A. Mumrikov (1987).

Address:

Florin CRÎȘMĂREANU

Department of Philosophy

Faculty of Philosophy and Social-Political Sciences

Al.I. Cuza University of Iasi

Bd. Carol I, no. 11

700506 Iasi, Romania

Tel: (+)40 232 201054

Email: fcrismareanu@gmail.com

J. Hillis Miller: Reading as Inaugural Event

Ludmila Bîrsan
Al.I. Cuza University of Iasi

Éamonn Dunne, *J. Hillis Miller and the Possibilities of Reading. Literature After Deconstruction*, New York: Continuum, 2010, 160 p.

Keywords: good reading, deconstruction, misreading, religion as doing, speech acts, irony, impossible possibility.

Reading can be interpreted as an event. Similarly to the event which transforms its location into a sacred realm, reading turns space into a place where something unique and remarkable happened. Events occur; they come unpredictably, break the regular flow of history, and are characterized by singularity. Éamonn Dunne admits being sceptic about those books which promote a certain type of knowledge of reading art and practice, as their aim is establishing definitions and creating patterns. This is one of the reasons for him dealing with the reading possibilities, for assessing that good reading appears as an inaugural event “that changes one’s views about what that ‘how to’ in reading actually means”. His choice for the title itself was suggested by Derrida’s “A Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event”, where the author underlines that the experience of the event blurs the distinction between what is possible and what is not. Possibility refers to something that can suddenly occur and break the certainties of the present moment, which throws into confusion the way we relate to the world, to time and to ourselves. In Miller’s opinion, literature can be read only if it contains an inaugural meaning, only if the act of reading allows the reader to

discover something inaccessible in other ways. The impossible is not necessarily the opposite of what is possible, but something which can determine or affect it. Derrida believes that, precisely because reading is an inaugural event, it can be dangerous and anguishing, since we do not know just where it is headed. Reading is the performative use of language, due to the uniqueness of its occurrence and to its hidden, untold side. It is always something inaugural, a surprise; this is why one can never pretend being fully familiarized with a text. The subtitle hints to post-deconstruction literature. The author considers that there is no “before” and “after”, as deconstruction is present while reading from the very beginning of literature. He identifies deconstruction with good reading, bringing to discussion the existence of a certain moment in the deconstruction process, of openness to the event and of hospitality to the other and to what comes.

Éamonn Dunne’s reading effort is an important one, because it requested, first of all, him familiarizing with those authors mentioned by Hillis Miller (Thomas Hardy, Henry James, Thomas de Quincey, Friedrich Schlegel, W.B. Yeats, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Heinrich von Kleist, Charles Dickens etc.), followed by those with whom Miller permanently communicated through his writing (Paul de Man, Harold Bloom, Derrida, Poulet, Blanchot, Burke etc.). Dunne’s endeavour is a considerable one, as he tried to compress and synthesize Miller’s life works. We believe of great importance reminding here the three-stage classification of Miller’s writings as identified by Williams Jeffrey. The first one refers to Poulet and includes: Charles Dickens: *The World of His Novels* (Harvard, 1958); *The Disappearance of God: Five Nineteenth - Century Writers* (1963); *Poets of Reality: Six Twentieth - Century Writers* (1965); *The Form of Victorian Fiction: Thackeray, Dickens, Trollope, George Eliot, Meredith, and Hardy* (1968); *Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire* (1970). The following deal with Paul de Man and Derrida: *Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels* (1982); *The Linguistic Moment: From Wordsworth to Stevens* (1985); *The Ethics of Reading: Kant, de Man, Eliot, Trollope, James, and Benjamin* (1987); *Versions of Pygmalion* (1990); and *Hawthorne and History* (1990). The last period comprises those writings which borrow the speculative style of later Derrida: *Illustration* (1992); *Topographies* (1995);

Reading Narrative (1998); *Black Holes* (1999), *Others* (2001); *Speech Acts in Literature* (2001); *On Literature* (2002) and *Literature ad Conduct: Speech Acts in Henry James* (2005); *The J. Hillis Miller Reader* (2005); *For Derrida* (2009). The risk Éamonn Dunne himself undertakes is that of experiencing, in his turn, acts of reading, both when dealing with Miller's texts and with his own. At times, he follows Miller's footsteps, trying to have the same pace, other times he distances himself from his master: "I not only change it, I also change my own idiom. But in doing this I change the ideal itself, the presupposition of an origin. This is what happens to Miller when he reads De Quincey through Poulet and to me when I read Miller through De Quincey, and to you, dear reader, whatever else happens, when you read me through all of the above. The result is always a kind of fogle" (42).

The first chapter of the volume discusses reading as conduct, speech acts, crypthonymy, distant voices, literature's secret etc. Reading is viewed as an ethical act, a performance that belongs to what is called "life conduct", which consists in the things one does and which, in their turn, do other things. There is an irresistible, imminent but at the same time free reaction to the text, which also implies the responsibility for further effects. The failure of reading is always contained within the text, that is why the right understanding of the text means undertaking the risk of getting things in the wrong way. From this point of view, all readings are ethical, while their occurrences, no matter how unpredictable and surprising, are acts of conduit of life. The stress falls upon the act of doing, not upon knowing, as what is done cannot be undone, life occurrences do not stop, disappear, but continue to give birth to other things. "Doing" necessarily requires respect towards the laws beyond human comprehension, which unites us all. A "religion of doing" is reverence towards those laws, towards the secret present in all literature, the connection with the written word. This bond makes us think about Austin's statement "my word is my bond", which presents itself as the religious expression that unites us and determines our responsibility towards an unknowable law. Performative speech acts, as Dunne put it, can create unpredictable events: "The 'religion of doing', 'putting' things as a 'doing' things with words, is therefore a dangerous enterprise" (25). "*The Aspern Touch*" is

among James's writings that contain issues and themes also discussed by Miller, such as: the acts of reading and writing, the acts of responsibility and irresponsibility, the religion of doing, institutions, hospitality, history, biography, topography, spectrality etc. Éamonn Dunne believes that reading "*The Aspern Touch*" is like violating a tomb "in the sense that our own curiosities are analogous to the curiosities of our narrator" (11). Reading is doing, and one cannot precisely delineate when it is going to be an act of conduit, since reading is each time unique, unrepeatable. The tomb refers to an open secret, since we know about its existence, but at the same time it remains closed, and does not directly reveal its "entrails". The same secret defines text reading, as it is open and at hand for everyone looking for it, an unknown territory waiting to be explored, but, at the same time, reading can be regarded as lack of respect, like violating a tomb.

In the second chapter, Éamonn Dunne concentrates upon De Quincey and the problem of translation. Dunne sees Quincey's works as difficult: "His world is a shadowy and spectral universe, where life bleeds into death and death is always returning and bleeding back into life" (33). *The English Mail - Coach*, with its last section "Dream – Fugue", is one of the most interesting De Quincey writings, where the use of the notion *Tumultuosissimamente* [most tumultuously] raised numberless discussions, and illustrated the way in which incoherent images can distract the reader's attention and contradict each other. In Dunn's opinion, what happens during Miller's journey from one moment to another is a disastrous series of failures to describe the main reasons behind De Quincey's work; it imitates, in a very realistic way, the style and the tone of his subject, which compels the translation to move at high speed from one image to the next. Inspired by James and Miller, Dunne states that all readers are fuglemen. During the entire chapter, he tries to answer the everlasting question: What happens when I translate someone else's idiom into my own? Each translation takes further an already existing one, *ad infinitum*, thus the translator's task becomes ceasing to redefine what has been told before.

The third chapter deals with De Quincey's humour. Irony is not comic, but rather a form of madness, discontinuity, disillusion. At the same time, irony can be considered lack of

meaning and rationality, as it eludes knowledge. It is impossible to strictly define the limits of irony, to identify this trope-no-trope or to try to stop its development. One cannot speak about irony without being ironic. Each one of us lives this doubling as a paralyzing parabasis which stops our movement. In the end of the chapter, Dunne returns to the same questions, frantically looking for answers: Is Miller's work unique and idiomatic? Can each work be read in terms of a singular event? He insists upon the idea that theory and reading are asymmetrical. The very moment reading really starts, there is a shift in theory.

In the next chapter Dunne discusses the meaning of good reading in the academic circles. He brings up again the rigorous perversity and seductiveness of literary language, as Barbara Johnson explains it: "Rigorous perversity is a wonderful oxymoron. The first term denotes firmness, rigidity, harshness, inflexibility, austerity, stringency, toughness; while the second term indicates a contradictory dynamism, rebelliousness, deviancy, or aberrancy" (66). This word explains why literature fascinates us, surprises us, and the way in which language is meant to be mistaken, to lose itself and be discontinued. Dunne searches the answers to a new set of questions: What does it mean to read rightly? Can there be such a thing as the correct reading? What might that be? How would we know it? How could we show or teach it to others? The teacher is confronted with the possibility of choosing the wrong texts and thus of negatively influencing the life of his students.

In the fifth chapter, Dunne discusses the notion of prosopopoeia, inherent to all literature, no matter if the text is poetic or narrative. It happens while we read and it is indispensable: "A manipulation of this trope is the key to all good, responsible, responsive reading. It is the one thing we can say is indispensable. All readers are necromancers. Reading is the art and practice of a dark magic called necromancy, and, dare I say it, Miller is an arch-virtual-necrophiliac" (83). Dunne considers that there is no direct answer to questions such as: Where does this responsibility in acts of reading come from? Who lays it upon me? Who calls me to be responsible? And to whom, for whom, before whom am I responsible? If the reading responsibility is my own, than no one can ask for the responsibility of the texts I have not

read, as no one can be responsible for the results of my act of reading. On the other hand, the acts of speech are occurrences which imply a sense of responsibility for the speaker. One can only account for the things that happened; this is why Miller deems this to be the inevitability of misreading. As Dunne puts it in the sixth chapter, reading an activity and an event which offers the liberty of reading texts the way we want it, only if we take full responsibility for all consequences.

In conclusion, Dunne goes back to his idea that reading cannot be taught. Learning to read means experiencing the text by yourself, being surprised each time by what you encounter, like it were for the first time: “One learns reading by oneself, for oneself, all alone” (121). In Miller’s writings one cannot find the recipe or the right method for reading, since this is something one can only learn by oneself; one cannot live and die for someone else, and similarly one cannot read but for oneself. Teaching reading is unnecessary, but is good to keep in mind that sensitivity for irony is an essential prerequisite for good reading. Slow reading is recommendable, and not a dancing allegro. Such readers prefer to carefully look for details, to participate to the brand new world open by/in the text, to this event inaccessible from the outside. Dunne’s conclusion is that he never learned to read, since reading has no end-result and cannot be taught. Literature is so peculiar precisely because there cannot be a final reading. Good reading is always unpredictable, and the only option at hand for us is reading ourselves, closely, attentively, responsibly.

Address:
Ludmila BÎRSAN
Al.I. Cuza University of Iasi
Department of Philosophy
Bd. Carol I, 11
700506 Iasi, Romania
E-mail: ludmila.barsan@gmail.com

Jean-Luc Marion's Philosophy of Religion: Between Methodological Rigorousness and Hermeneutics

George Vamesul
Al.I. Cuza University of Iasi

Tamsin Jones, *A Genealogy of Marion's Philosophy of Religion: Apparent Darkness*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2011

Keywords: Jean-Luc Marion, philosophy of religion, phenomenology, Gregory of Nyssa, Dionysius the Areopagite, hermeneutics

Jean-Luc Marion's writings range from revolutionary approaches on Descartes oeuvres, to apologetic debates in theology and groundbreaking inquiries into the realm of phenomenology. When dealing with such a vast amount of topics the reader finds himself rather puzzled concerning the cohesiveness of Marion's entire corpus, and the question of how one should engage such a variety of subjects. While the originality of his work on Descartes seems to be a common place among scholars, the problem rests with the relation between phenomenology and theology. Here, the readings waver from a theological or hermeneutical or "non-egological" understanding, to claims that he is not theological or hermeneutical enough, or that the ego still plays an important role in his work¹. Despite all these conflicting narratives, there are scholars² that have a more holistic understanding of Marion's enterprise.

In his recent book *A Genealogy of Marion's Philosophy of Religion: apparent Darkness*, Tamsin Jones takes up the holistic view claiming that a remote narrative tends to overlook a more

basic tension, namely that between the demands of methodological rigor and the anti-idolatrous claim (4). Drawing on two Greek patristic sources in Marion – Dionysius the Areopagite and Gregory of Nyssa – he unravels the entire schema of this tension and, in the end, points a way to balance it.

The first task of the book (chapter I) is to reveal the place, the reason and the purpose of the many citings of Dionysius and Gregory throughout Marion's work. This whole itinerary leads Jones from analyses of Marion's first articles, through some of the most famous books (*The Idol and Distance* and *God Without Being*) ending with his last publication *Au lieu de soi: L'approche de Saint Augustin*. Besides providing arguments in favor of the holistic view – since *givenness* or the conceptual dyad *visible-invisible* are major themes that can be trace back to Marion's first writings (pp.15-17) – the analyses also reveal two important aspects of the way the citings of the Gregory and Dionysius work. First of all, the quotations function as a source of authority in contemporary apologetic debates – and also in more philosophical accounts – especially because of the manner in which the Fathers appropriate certain theological problems: instead of starting from a rational point of view and advancing different hypotheses, they wait to “receive properly what is to be received from God” (18). Secondly, Marion recovers these two authors in a univocal manner that frequently takes the form of employing Gregory's ideas as proofs for Dionysius. This pattern of citings is exposed exemplarily by Jones' analyses of Marion's *In the Name: How to avoid speaking of it*. Here Marion engages himself in a debate with Derrida who claims that negative (apophatic) theology cannot avoid metaphysics and consequently, is subjected to deconstruction (32). Marion responds to this critique with the idea of a third way of speaking in Dionysius. He draws on his translation of the term *αἰτία* as *the Requisite* instead of *cause*, claiming that for Dionysius this term has no intention of naming God, that is, has no connection with the Aristotelian predicative language. Instead, *αἰτία* denominates, pointing to a somewhat non-predicative language: therefore language praises God as *αἰτία* in the act of praying. Here, Marion faces in a very precise way the Derridean critique, since prayer praises God as something and therefore by naming. To avoid it,

he brings in Gregory's theory of language from *Contra Eunomium*, which claims that language does not name the essence of things but only fulfills the pragmatic function of indication, without manifesting something (36). This shows precisely how Marion mixes up the two authors in a univocal retrieval that governs explicitly or implicitly his entire work. The only problem with this pattern is raised by Jones' analyses of Marion's last published book *Au lieu de soi: L'approche de Saint Augustin*. It is obvious that this last publication is a turning point for Marion, shifting from the Greek Fathers to a peculiar Latin one, from apophasis to confession and from invisibility to beatific vision (42). Nevertheless it continues a movement which began with *The Erotic Phenomenon* and analyzes the moral implications of the passive self in relation with unlimited givenness. From this perspective, the pattern that Jones unravels is confirmed again.

Having that figured out, Jones proceeds further in the analyses of the legitimacy of such a univocal retrieval of the Christian authors in Marion's corpus. Although Marion employs the Fathers in constructing his anti-idolatrous (apophatic) strategy – that is, a discourse proper to God – he ignores that their approaches on the topic comes with a bigger frame of reference, one that involves also cosmological, theological and anthropological presuppositions due to which, instead of one apophatic strategy, Marion ends up with two different projects.

First, for Gregory, language has its place in a world determined by two components: *diastema* and *kinesis* (57). While the former describes the absolute gap between God and creation, the later constitute all beings in an ongoing movement toward an infinite creator. Hence, despite the fact that language is conventional, thus reflecting the human speaker, it is in the same manner reliable and humble due to the fact that it constitutes a response to God's revelation, regardless of the imperfections that comes with this response.

Second, from Dionysius' perspective, language is a system of symbols that points toward a divine creator. Since creation is understood as a hierarchical givenness out of divine love (58-72), this pointing is twofold: on the one hand, it sets up in a "projection" that opens the possibility for an ontological and an

epistemological connection between creation and creator; one the other hand, it always needs to be kept in mind that the sign never reaches its ground since the latter is beyond every signification. Thus, Jones concludes that in the Dionysian understanding of language there is a perpetual play between disclosure and concealment that materializes on the one hand in an infinite number of names, on the other hand in an ascent into silence that opens up a hymnic worship.

Consequently, since Dionysius' apophaticism is concerned with assigning human beings their right place according with God, while Gregory's deals with a never ending movement toward the divine, Jones finds their univocal retrieval inadmissible. Since he stated in the beginning that this pattern of citing implicitly influences Marion's philosophical works, the next two chapters represent an extensive analysis to disentangle which of the two anti-idolatrous strategies fits better with his phenomenology of givenness.

In analyzing Marion's phenomenology, Jones finds that it is driven by two central motivations: the claim to free phenomena from all conditions and idolatrous restraints, and the urge to show the possibility of all phenomena (79). This means paradoxically, that his method requires a universal (certain, indubitable and unquestionable) determination without deciding a priori any specific epistemological corollary (metaphysical specificity). The *reduction to givenness* seems to fulfill these two exigencies since, on the one hand it secures the indubitability of apparition of things without the certainty of objects, and on the other hand it renders itself as a counter-method (without giving up its hegemony toward other sciences) inasmuch as it intervenes after the fact, that is, after the manifestation of appearing. The method remains phenomenological since it confines to the necessity of the describability of phenomena, and it approaches revelation only as a pure possibility (94). According to Jones, this search for universality, despite Janicaud's observation, places Marion in the same line with Husserl. Nevertheless, since the method intervenes only "after the fact", I wonder how could one describe a pure possibility without any link to the actual happening, and thus, how could the neutrality of phenomenology remain untouched?

Furthermore, Jones argues that the framework of givenness leads back to Marion's recovery of Dionysius. Thus, while providing him with an apophatic strategy which entails the notion of givenness Marion's recovery of Dionysius also accomplishes a hierarchical understanding of the world which means an ontological and epistemological leveling of things. This leads Jones to a double conclusion: first, Marion's motivations – especially the claim for a universal method – leads him to refashion some of Dionysius' ideas and concepts – like the term *αἴτια* (100) – to fit his intention, and second, when criticized³ for the strange imports that come along with this apophatic strategy, he resumes to Gregory without a specific note.

Since Dionysius' apophasis does not provide a way out given the claim for a universal methodology, Jones turns to Marion's relation to Gregory, emphasizing the second pole of the tension: anti-idolatry. This second pole requires to loosen up the methodological component in order to allow a place for more hermeneutical inquiry, especially when it comes to the saturated phenomena. The problem can be put like this: if pure givenness and saturation require a more passive subject which lacks any transcendental function, how can one reinstate hermeneutics without betraying the givenness or the saturation of phenomena? This breaks down into two additional challenges: a) the problem of the description of the excess and b) the difficulty of religious exclusivity when encountering revelation (111-119). Following the thread of the first difficulty along Marion's work, Jones finds that saturation necessitates rather than forbids interpretation, but the latter is somewhat a more subsequent act. Jones turns here to a distinction made by Shane Mackinlay between the ontological and derivative sense of hermeneutics: while the former is ruled out by the absoluteness of the given, the later still remains an open possibility. As far as the second difficulty, it is obvious that Marion favors the Christian examples when it comes to describing revelation, but he claims that the later is safeguarded against exclusivity through the multitude of hermeneutical possibilities that are requested by its excess. Nevertheless the problem stands since in both cases Marion never elaborates the relation between the purity of givenness and the multiplicity of hermeneutical possibilities.

Jones returns now to Gregory in an attempt to see if his apophatic strategy could point a way to resolve Marion's problematic. Gregory states that the relation between scriptural interpretation and divine incomprehensibility results in a necessary interpretative pluralism (129). Since language has only a pragmatic function, it is due to God's kenosis that humans have access to revelation, but this happens by filling and overwhelming our finite capacity to understand and interpret it. In this act of interpretation the subject is not only disrupted, but also transformed to be able to receive more, and more, in an infinite movement towards God. Jones claims that this could serve as better example in pointing out a way for Marion's aporia.

In his last chapter, Jones proceeds to an appraisal of Marion's apophatic phenomenology. In his genealogical movement to uncover the tension between methodology and the anti-idolatrous pretence he has linked the former with Marion's use of Dionysius, and the latter with analyses on Gregory. In order to obtain coherence, Jones claims that the methodological pole is the least sustainable out of the two, since the reduction excludes any productive or volitional role of the subject (132). Not even through the recourse to love does Marion's reduction become any more clear: while insisting on the universality of love its appearance can only be personal and thus "subjective". Jones thinks that the abandonment of the claim for universality would yield to a softer understanding of the method, along the lines of Pierre Hadot's spiritual exercises. This would allow Marion to maintain the purity of givenness along with the plurality of interpretation (135). However, I believe that this might lead to the revoking of the reduction's phenomenological status. It is my content that a more accurate elaboration of the reduction, so that a clear distinction can be drawn between lack and excess of intuition, might lead to a clarification of the role of hermeneutics. I believe that this conceptual indistinctness (lack/excess) posits so much weight on hermeneutics leading the entire problem to an unsolvable aporia.

Turning on the second pole of the tension, Jones claims that in the development of the relation between pure givenness and the role of hermeneutics a more obvious and careful

consideration of Gregory could prove useful for Marion's entire project. With his understanding of language as a pragmatic discourse and the assigning of the limits of knowledge, Gregory outruns Dionysius whose recovery tends to unbalance the entire tension from Marion's thought.

Although I wonder whether such a specific import of Gregory would resolve the tension from Marion's work, Jones' book remains one of the most challenging exegeses. The clarity and force of the arguments, as well as the novelty of the analyses opens new and interesting ways to approach Marion's work.

NOTES

¹ For example see Janicaud, Dominique. 2000. "The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology". In *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn". The French Debate*. New York: Fordham University Press; Caputo, John D. 2007. "The Hyperbolization of Phenomenology: Two Possibilities for Religion in Recent Continental Philosophy". In *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion*, edited by Kevin Hart. Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press; Kearney, Richard. 2011. *The God Who May Be: A Hermeneutics of Religion*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press; Mackinlay, Shane. 2005. "Phenomenality in the Middle: Marion, Romano and the Hermeneutics of the Event". In *Givenness and God: Questions of Jean-Luc Marion*, edited by Ian Leask and Eoin Cassidy. New York: Forham University Press; Leask, Ian. 2005. "The Dative Subject (and the 'Principle of Principles')". In *Givenness and God: Questions of Jean-Luc Marion*, edited by Ian Leask and Eoin Cassidy. New York: Forham University Press.

² One of them is Christina M. Gschwandtner. *Reading Jean-Luc Marion Exceeding Metaphysics*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2007.

³ Derrida criticizes Marion with this precise intention in "How to avoid speaking: Denials" in *Derrida and Negative Theology*, ed. Harold Coward and Toby Foshay, Suny Press, Albany, 1992.

Address:

George VAMEȘUL

Al.I. Cuza University of Iasi

Department of Philosophy

Bd. Carol I, 11

700506 Iasi, Romania

E-mail: vamesugeorge@yahoo.com

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Faculty of Philosophy and Social and Political Sciences

Al.I. Cuza University of Iasi

Bd. Carol I, no. 11

700506, Iasi, Romania

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