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# **Research Articles**

## Time, Temporality, and the Scientific Investigation of Reality

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### Abstract

This article examines select correspondences between the physics and phenomenology of time that beg elucidation and position phenomenology to contribute to the scientific investigation of reality. Its analysis yields four observations. (1) The inherent tendency of things to change asymmetrically is the basis of time and temporality. Physics calls this tendency the “arrow of time.” Phenomenology calls it “ἀρχή κινήσεως” (*arché kiníseos*). (2) The physics and phenomenology of time posit isomorphic interpretations of reality. They both interpret reality as a unity of time, space, and beings. They also posit isomorphic interpretations of space. An analysis of the notions contemporary physics sometimes appears to presume suggests it is not immune to the prejudices induced by an ontic appropriation of reality, however. It also suggests a potentially constructive role for phenomenology in the scientific investigation of time and space. (3) Physics and phenomenology reveal time as a relation between one set of transformations measured against another set of transformations. (4) The human tendency to fall into the everyday comprehension of time may be complicating the scientific investigation of time.

**Keywords:** Time, space, temporality, physics, phenomenology, consciousness, intentionality, existence

### 1. Introduction

Contemporary physics—that is, physics generally understood as beginning with Albert Einstein’s “miracle year” of 1905—revolutionized our understanding of time when it falsified notions of time and space as absolutes and disclosed

them as an absolute unity (“space-time”) that unfolds asymmetrically (Greene 2004, 49, 59). It radicalized our understanding of time when it revealed the deep interconnectedness among time, space, and beings and discovered the flow and shape of space-time were contingent on an object’s velocity. Physics observes that the total transformations that comprise an object’s reference frame, that is, the object and everything moving with it, slow down and contract in the direction of its travel relative to its speed. The faster an object travels the slower its rate of time (time-dilation) and the greater its contraction (length-contraction) (Stannard 2008, 4-6; Stenger 2000, 68, 70, 87). Because every thing in the universe is always moving, even if the motion is the effect of gravity (*i.e.*, acceleration produced by a curvature of space), there is a “relativity of simultaneity” among all things. This means every thing is running at different times relative to every other thing (Greene 2004, 55, 65, 67; Stenger 2000, 67). Space-time is absolute because the combined speed of an object’s motion through space and time is always precisely equal to the speed of light (Greene 2004, 49), the speed of light is the “same in all reference frames” regardless of an object’s velocity (Stenger 2000, 69), and “no particles or signals of any known type are superluminal, that is, they cannot be accelerated to move faster than the speed of light” (Stenger 2000, 73; Greene 2004, 49).

Time dilation and length contraction usually are not noticeable in everyday life because the velocities of objects are generally an insignificant fraction of the speed of light (Stenger 2000, 70). Time dilation and length contraction also are not noticeable for the observer within non-inertial (moving) reference frames traveling at a significant fraction of the speed of light. Time and space for this person appear unchanged within his reference frame regardless of his velocity and can only be noticed by observers in inertial reference frames (Stannard 2008, 7). For example, if a person travels in a spacecraft moving at a significant fraction of the speed of light, space and time within the vessel would appear normal to him. If he could see outside the vessel, he would notice clocks ticking faster and space warping (stretching) to adjust for his speed. If

a person in an inertial reference frame could observe the vessel, he would notice any clocks inside of it ticking slower and the length of the spacecraft and everything inside of it contracted in the direction of its travel.

Modern physics also observes that reality always unfolds asymmetrically. It runs one way and one way only, “forward.” This one-way directionality stands in “pronounced contrast” to the “laws of Nature,” which are “essentially symmetric under time reversal” (Zeh 2007, 1). Physics calls this asymmetry the “arrow of time.” The arrow of time refers to increasing entropy, or the inherent property of things to move from ordered (symmetrical) to increasingly disordered (random) states with a consequential elimination of free energy. The most important “classes of phenomena” characterizing time’s arrow are radiation, thermodynamics, evolution, quantum mechanical measurement, exponential decay, and gravity. These arrows “represent the formalization of time in kinematic terms” and are often “regarded as even more fundamental than the dynamical laws themselves” (Zeh 2007, 5-6). Interpreted in terms of its arrows, especially the “Second Law of Thermodynamics,” time comes to light as a metaphor abstracted “from relative motions and their empirical laws” (Zeh 2007, 6, 12). It represents a relationship between one set of transformations measured against another set of transformations. The measurement of transformations with clocks is a significant expression of that metaphor. The fact we so readily associate clocks with time rather than the transformations they measure suggests its power. It further suggests the fundamental nature of the processes it represents and their intimacy to everyday life. It is problematic to discuss time without referencing the clocks we use to measure it.

A comparison of the contemporary physics and phenomenology of time suggests select correspondences that beg elucidation and position phenomenology to contribute to the scientific investigation of reality. Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger provide the most comprehensive phenomenologies of time. The focus of their reflections is not time per se, but time as such, or temporality. They throw different dimensions of temporality into relief, crystallize our thinking about time, and

reveal the interconnectedness between temporality, consciousness, and human being. They also provide a fuller understanding of temporality when read together than when read separately and can be coupled into a single analytical framework through the equivalencies between their renditions of transcendence. Both phenomenologies use transcendence as their “general point of departure” and interpret temporality per the commutability of its terms: that is, on the interchangeability of the “meaning is what is meant” (*νόησις εσται ου νοεῖται*) and “what is meant is its meaning” (*νόημα εσται ου νοεῖται*). Husserl’s understanding of transcendence (and by that intentionality) is “omni-present” in Heidegger’s rendition of transcendence as World, or There-being (*Dasein*, existence) individuated as being-in-the-World (*In-der-Welt-sein*) (Spiegelberg 1982, 362). The relation between *νόησις* (*noesis*) and *νόημα* (*noema*) corresponds remarkably with the relation between There-being and its disclosedness. The same way *noesis* transcends (passes beyond) itself and the thing it intends to the thing’s meaning, or *noemata*—such that *noesis* and *noema* belong “together inseparably” (Husserl 1960, 39), every phenomena is an intention, and every intention is the “meaning of its meant” (Husserl 1960, 46)—There-being transcends beings to their being (meaning) and comes to pass as its “There.” There-being is the disclosure of beings and the meaning (being, thingness) of the beings (things) it renders manifest (illuminates) within its disclosedness (unconcealment) (Heidegger 1962a, 171).

## 2. The transcendental-phenomenology of time

Husserl and Heidegger individuate temporality as a totality. The first renders it vis-à-vis human consciousness. The second renders it vis-à-vis human existence. Husserl’s transcendental-phenomenology of time describes temporality as a meaning-flux that binds “experiences with experiences” into a matrix of interconnected and overlapping meanings whose significance manifests phenomenally as the recollection, apprehension, and projection of meaning (Husserl 1931, 236; 1960, 75). Temporality is the “*fundamental form*” of

consciousness and dynamically structures this “universal synthesis” into an “openly endless unity and wholeness” (Husserl 1960, 43). It shapes each and every experience, imbues them with directionality, and amalgamates them into a flowing continuity of fractal-like arrays of self-similar intensions that simultaneously signify a past, present, and future such that “every intention has its intentions, which lead from the now to a new now, and so on: the intention toward the future and on the other side the intention toward the past;” and even retention has “its memorial intentions of the future” (Husserl 1966, 140).

Husserl distills the problem of time into three questions: *What does it mean that something has happened? What does it mean that something is happening? And, what does it mean that something will happen?* His responses to these queries illustrate the focus of his transcendental-phenomenology of time and effort to interpret temporality per its intentional structure and constitution (Husserl 1931, 231-234; 1960; 1966). Husserl indicates temporality as phenomenal (human) time and the meaning of time consciousness (Husserl 1966, 23). He calls the recollection, apprehension, and projection of meaning the “*lived experiences* of time” and respectively signifies them as the phenomenal past, present, and future (Husserl 1966, 24, 27).

The phenomenal past and future ensue principally from the noetic side of consciousness (Husserl 1966, 63). They are products of “intentional performance” or “active genesis” (Husserl 1960, 70, 77), not “self-given,” but, rather, “presentified,” and represent a “‘new constitution’ (*Neukonstitution*) or ‘re-constitution’ of reality” whereby consciousness largely intends its own significance (Lauer 1959, 88). The phenomenal present is constituted differently. It manifests more from the illumination of the *noemata* than from intentional performance because its directionality is overwhelmingly *already there*, revealed by consciousness rather than produced by it. “Immanent to constitution” rather than “immanently constituted” (Sokolowski 1970, 86), the balance of its significance originates noematically. How we take that meaning, of course, is another matter. In everyday life, the phenomenal present is lived as a stream of elusive “nows”

flowing asymmetrically between a recollected past and projected future. We dispel this significance when we suspend our spontaneous participation in “time” and reduce the present to its immediate givenness. Phenomenological reduction reveals the elusive flow of the present as an outcome of intentional performance, intentionality more as presencing (*γένεσης, génesis*) than becoming (*γινόμενον, ginoménon*), and, insofar as we suspend our spontaneous participation in “time,” the spatiotemporal horizon of our intentional acts as a spatiokinetic horizon. The reduction discloses the originary kinetic dimension of presence, or “ἀρχή κινήσεως” (*archí kiníseos*)—“the origin and dominating force (ἀρχή) of the moved-ness of beings whose nature is to be moved (*κινούμενα*)” and another word for φύσις (*physis*) (Richardson 1967, 313)—as the basis of temporality’s characteristic flow. This is why it is so difficult, if at all possible, to meaningfully bracket a “phenomenological nucleus” (Husserl 1966, 35), “source-point,” “now,” or “primal impression” (Husserl 1966, 5). There simply is no flow from where to extract a phenomenological nucleus because what first appears to be inherent to “time” turns out to be a product of intentional performance (Lauer 1959, 70-71). Instead, all we see is presencing: the immediate givenness of everything in its manifold differences, archetypical relatedness, and asymmetrical dynamism.

The relationship Husserl posits between the *noemata* and temporality is central to his transcendental-phenomenology of time regardless whether the primary source of the known object’s givenness is constituted noetically or manifests noematically. Time “arises from *my* relation to things” (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 412), and phenomenology “cannot explain the constitution of time without reference to the constitution of the temporal Object,” to the thing consciousness intends (Husserl 1966, 43). The *noemata* shapes and drives temporality; it structures and powers it. The asymmetrical, kinetic essence of phenomena, the fact that everything we intend regardless whether its genesis is active or passive is always changing one way and one way only, “forward,” drives “temporal determinations of every kind” to join “in a certain way as necessary consequences to every instance of coming to be and

passing away that takes place in the present” (Husserl 1966, 34). All intentions resonate with this one-way phenomenal dynamism. Immanent to consciousness is a power that unceasingly propels it away from its retentions, directs it toward a range of possibilities that comprise its future, and drives the sedimentation of meaning that effects the “tail” or “running of” of duration” (Husserl 1966, 34, 48).

### 3. The existential-phenomenology of time

Heidegger investigates temporality’s more *average* dimensions. He elucidates the meaning of time within an existential analysis of There-being that discerns temporality’s immanence to existence. His existential-phenomenology of time renders temporality as a pre-reflective manifestation of three primordial questions: *Who have I been? Who am I? And, who will I be?* These questions define the ontological (existential, phenomenal) meaning of past, present, and future, or, respectively, There-being’s “having been,” absorption in beings, and projection of its potentiality-to-be. They also distinguish temporality as the other side of concern (*Sorge*)—There-being’s intrinsic “need for the comprehension of being” (Heidegger 1962b, 244-245) and final “whereunto” of all meanings and references (Heidegger 1962a, 119-121, 274; Kovacs 1990, 61). Temporality is the ecstatic (*εκστατικός*) manifestation of concern, and the past, present, and future are its “*ecstases*” (*εκστάσεις*), or the ways There-being’s existentiality and indigence manifest within transcendence (Heidegger 1962a, 377; 1962b, 244-245). Temporality is the total, directional unfolding of There-being’s immutable drive towards its unattainable completeness (existentiality), its factual dependence on beings to be, and the impulse ingredient to the certain possibility it will one day absolutely not be (the phenomenon of death) (Heidegger 1962a, 227, 230-232, 244-245, 416; 1962b, 227). The past, present, and future constitute a totality (“temporalizing”) whose ownmost significance is “*primarily* futural” because in all three moments There-being is in “time” using “time” to comprehend and achieve “the way that it can be” (Heidegger 1962a, 386-387). There-being, a “dynamic

incompleteness” (Richardson 1967, 70) and “potentiality” for which “its own Being” is its capital “issue” (Heidegger 1962a, 183)—stays “*ahead-of-itself*” in the past, present, and future to be its own possibilities (Heidegger 1962a, 275, 279, 386).

Viewed existential-phenomenologically, the essence of temporality has nothing to do with clocks nor is it a “pure sequence” of elusive “nows,” without beginning and without end” (Heidegger 1962a, 377). The understanding of time as an elusive sequence of “nows” measured by clocks is an aspect of fallenness. Fallenness is the everyday alienation from being resulting from the ineluctable absorption in beings. An existential (structural element) and not an ontological defect, fallenness indicates the common mode of human being wherein There-being gives itself over to its internal need to dominate things to be, forgets its originary relatedness with the World, and loses sight of the equivalency between temporality and existence. Fallen from its ontological status as the disclosure of beings, There-being appropriates itself as a thing (subject) among things (objects) and time as a thing removed from existence. The fallen conception of time is bound up with There-being’s finitude. There-being must control the beings it depends on, including, most importantly, the body, to be, because it is these things in their thingness (There-being *is* what they *are*), and the best way to dominate them is to engage them ontically (as things removed from human being) and stay ahead of them through a conception of time that is linear and quantifiable: we facilitate our engagement of beings through an ontic appropriation of time independent of the transformations it signifies and as an object removed from the “self.” Moreover, because There-being *is* the (phenomenal) body, which perhaps is the most intimate indicator of ontic and ontological time, it must also contend with the phenomena of death, the “seal of its finitude” (Richardson 1967, 76), its “*distinctively* impending” (Heidegger 1962a, 294), and its indomitable “end and totality” (Heidegger 1962a, 285). As much as one tries to stay ahead of the body, it ages and one dies; the “phenomenal body,” an “element” of being-in-the-World and “potentiality” of There-being (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 106), always lies just beyond our ability to dominate it up to the point of death. As rendered by

existential analysis, then, the “now” is not eternally elusive because time is fleeting, but because There-being is profoundly finite. It is There-being’s completeness and control of beings that are always eluding There-being, not its now.

#### **4. A comparison of the physics and phenomenology of time**

A comparison of the physics and phenomenology of time yields four observations about time and the scientific investigation of reality.

1. The inherent tendency of things to change asymmetrically is the basis of time and temporality. Physics calls this tendency the “arrow of time.” Phenomenology calls it “*archí kiníseos*.”
2. The physics and phenomenology of time posit isomorphic interpretations of reality. They both render reality as a unity of time, space, and beings. They also posit isomorphic interpretations of space. An analysis of the notions contemporary physics sometimes appears to presume suggests it is not immune to the prejudices induced by an ontic appropriation of reality, however. It also suggests a potentially constructive role for phenomenology in the scientific investigation of time and space.
3. Physics and phenomenology reveal time as a relation between one set of transformations measured against another set of transformations.
4. The human tendency to fall into the everyday comprehension of time may be complicating the scientific investigation of time.

##### **4.1. The arrow of time and *archí kiníseos***

There is a remarkable parallel between the formalization of time in asymmetrical, kinematic terms, or what physics calls the “arrow of time,” and the phenomenological discernment of temporality’s noematic basis as *archí kiníseos*. The arrow of time, especially as it is embodied in the Second Law of Thermodynamics, posits time as transformations that move from ordered (symmetrical) to increasingly disordered (random) states. Similarly, the

identification of There-being's dependence on beings as a central element driving temporalization points to the "thingness" of things as an essential part of temporality's basis. Not only does There-being—consciousness appropriated in the broadest sense, including its existential dimensions—depend on the things it encounters, it is those things and an inherent quality of all things is their intrinsic tendency to change. The notion of There-being as its disclosedness, as the meaning of the things it intends, the *noemata*, signifies it is changing in accordance with the incessant, asymmetrical change phenomenally immanent to the things it unveils within its presence. The meaning of existence at every level is asymmetrically kinetic because the meanings of the beings There-being illuminates are always changing asymmetrically.

It is surprising that Heidegger failed to fold the notion of immanent, asymmetrical change more explicitly into his existential analytic. *Archí kiníseos* underscores the relationship between temporality and There-being's finitude. The fact that things, including the phenomenal body, which is always less than it was and the ultimate "having-been," are always changing profoundly aggravates There-being's dependence on beings. It relentlessly challenges There-being's power to control things and is a fundamental reason why There-being must stay ahead of itself in "time" to be. *Archí kiníseos*, especially as manifested in the development, decay, and death of the body, is the dynamism driving the confrontation between the possibility and impossibility of There-being's being. The understanding that There-being is the phenomenal body and the phenomenal body is always changing asymmetrically is why There-being is dying as long as it exists and distinguishes the phenomenon of death as a fundamental ontological arrow of time.

#### 4.2. Isomorphic interpretations of reality

Physics and phenomenology posit isomorphic interpretations of reality. They separately conceive of time, space, and things as a unity. Physics tells us it is not just objects that dilate and contract relative to their speed but absolutely everything comprising their frames of reference. This observation implies that at a fundamental level time,

space, and objects are bound into an entirety inclusive of the subject. The “entanglement” quantum mechanics observes between nonlocal particles further suggests a deep unity or connectedness among time, space, and things. The corroborated observation that some properties of particles can be “subtly intertwined” with the outcome of measured properties of different particles at a completely different location even if nothing is seen traveling between or connecting them suggests “space cannot be thought of as it once was: intervening space” (Greene 2004, 80). Instead, it suggests that although objects seem to be separated by space, at a basic level they also may be ubiquitously local and, hence, fundamentally unified.

The phenomenological rendition of reality as World, or the totality of beings that show themselves in their manifold differences, essential relatedness, and inherent dynamism, is similar to the conception of a unified reality proposed by modern physics. The World is the There of human being, that which There-being discloses, and the unity of *noesis* and *noema*. The differences among things may differentiate them phenomenally, but they do not sever them from one another within the context of existence. The World is phenomenon, and phenomenon, interpreted as a totality, is transcendence, or the way There-being comes to pass as the meaning of the things it discloses. In this totality lies “the ontological meaning of the ‘coupling together’ of space and time” (Heidegger 1962a, 420). The World may subsume different phenomena, including the being of space and time, but the things it subsumes in their thingness are always connected within a total meaning matrix. The fact that we commonly overlook the phenomenal unity we share with things, the World, and each other does not detract from their originary relatedness, but instead reflects There-being’s fallenness.

Noteworthy parallels also surface when we compare the physics and phenomenology of space. Physics is increasingly evidencing that space is not nothing, but has thing-like properties. Space bends, warps, curves, and stretches. It responds to the presence of acceleration, mass, and energy (Greene 2004, 75). Likewise, phenomenology reveals space to have a characteristic thingness and dynamism. There is a

kinetic quality to space that shines forth even when we bracket its existential significance, the phenomenal dynamism of the body, and transcendence. Space may be empty of apparent form and substance, but, appropriated phenomenologically, it is not nothing. Space is remarkably meaningful despite its characteristic “emptiness” and embodies an essential dynamism independent of its human significance. It resonates with its ownmost structure and meaning. The being and meaning of space configures consciousness, existence, and World. At the same time we move through space, space wraps around our movements; the phenomenal body is continuous with the phenomenon of space. Space is a facticity. It is already-There, given with World. We must deal with it to be and intend it in our day-in-day-out comportment with beings.

The parallels noted between the physics and phenomenology of time and reality do not propose to equate their conclusions. They also do not propose to leverage ontic conclusions to evidence ontological ones or assert more than an initiated understanding of contemporary physics. Their aim, rather, is to throw into relief possible presuppositional leanings that may be biasing the scientific investigation of reality. Assertions contemporary physics makes about its new and evolving understanding of the universe, for example, that space is no longer understood as “intervening space” or time and space are no longer posited as separate absolutes, betray a general point of departure that inclines toward a fallen comprehension of reality—one where every thing in the universe, including space and time, is disconnected from every other thing in the universe, including the universe itself. This seeming tendency flies in the face of how reality is immediately given in experience: phenomenon. Reality first reveals itself to us as a “that” (*eidōs*) before we distill it into a “what” (*idéa*). It does not show itself as a universe of subjects and objects disconnected from one another in space and time, but rather as a totality where things come to light both in their multifarious distinctions and essential relatedness. These observations suggest a potentially constructive role for phenomenological methods in the scientific investigation of reality. The contemporary physics of time and space may benefit by (1) more

aggressively suspending its presumptions and prejudgments about reality and (2) appropriating reality more as it is straightforwardly given and less how it is commonly taken.

#### 4.3. Clocks, transformations, and relations

The physics and phenomenology of time indicate clocks only measure one set of asymmetrical transformations (*e.g.*, those that constitute a clock) relative to other asymmetrical transformations (*e.g.*, planetary movement). They further indicate that not only do clocks fail to measure anything remotely similar to the everyday conception of time, it is unlikely there is anything like the everyday conception of time to measure. Physics equates time with its arrow, or entropy. Despite assertions that the universe should match the “time-reversal symmetry” supported by physical laws (Greene 2004, 147), there is no time in entropy. There is only entropy in entropy. Things may unfold toward higher states of entropy, relative to other things unfolding, and faster or slower depending on an object’s velocity, but they do not unfold in time. They unfold in space. We may call this unfolding “time,” but the name only appears to confuse the scientific investigation of reality by inclining us to look for time in places other than where it may be located. The apparent confusions effected by inconsistencies in the interpretation of time—or, what Husserl calls, the “difficulties, contradictions, and entanglements” that surface by “blending” ontic and ontological notions of time (Husserl 1966, 22, 31)—may be one of the reasons physics still struggles to agree on a “definitive, fundamental definition of time” (Greene 2004, 225).

When we render time either through physics or phenomenology we see time *per se*, the “thing” identified as something fundamental to reality, may not be nothing at all, but it may be far different than what we commonly anticipate. Time is something. It is a relation, and this relation, despite its ability to influence the system where it is located (*e.g.*, the cybernetics of time), only makes sense hermeneutically. Sometimes these relations have physical characteristics, such as when they denote the interaction among planetary objects. In other instances, the only significance they have is the

meaning we assign them, for example, the correlation between the emissions of cesium atoms at the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and a plane landing in Phoenix, Arizona. In all instances, however, their temporal significance is ultimately interpretational. The basis of time may be defined ontically, but its meaning is fundamentally ontological. It emerges in the context of existence and the power of transcendence to comprehend the meaning of things. The interpretation of time ensues within the more basic, lived observation that everything is always changing and is not equal to it.

#### 4.4. The hermeneutics of time

The phenomenology of time suggests the tendency to (1) fall into the everyday comprehension of time as a sequence of “nows” endlessly stretched out in a line between past and future and (2) confuse ontic and ontological notions of time may be challenging the ability of modern physics to investigate time. Professor Greene alludes to this possibility when he remarks that everyday experience “fails to reveal how the universe really works, and that’s why a hundred years after Einstein, almost no one, not even professional physicists, feels relativity in their bones” (Greene 2004, 77). The problems physicists often note they face investigating time further suggest a susceptibility to drift into an everyday or fallen conception of time. Janna Levin says time “completely” defies our attempts to define it as a “thing,” because it is “momentary” and the only definitions of time we have “harken back to the notion of time itself.” David Albert observes, “Time is the thing that everyone knows intimately, until you ask them to tell you about it.” Max Tegmark says, “There is basically no aspect of time which I feel we really fully understand.” And Alan Guth notes, “What is time?” is really the 64,000 dollar question to physics” (Greene 2011).

Modern physics complicates its ability to investigate time insofar as it drifts into fallenness. It becomes vulnerable to hermeneutical contradictions whose tenacity and illusiveness are sourced to the immanence of “time” to existence and the tendency to fall into a dichotomous appropriation of reality.

Phenomenology attacks the hermeneutical problems internal to the scientific investigation of time by distinguishing between ontological and ontic time and disclosing temporality's intimacy to comprehending and living. The phenomenology of time surfaces nothing to suggest there is a past, future, or flowing sequence of nows outside of their phenomenal significance, but instead identifies them as essentially products of intentional performance. The self-givenness we attribute to the past, future, and flowing present independent of what is intentionally produced is the side effect of the ontological blackout induced by the everyday absorption in things and alienation from the primacy we share with the World. It is a fallen conception of time that fails to convey temporality's ownmost significance and represents a turning away from its immediacy to the human situation.

The notion of human being as the temporal production and manifestation of meaning is a basic conclusion of phenomenological analysis. Phenomenology shows "time" is internal to everything we do, everything we think, and everything we are. It is intimately woven into language and another word for intentionality and transcendence. Indeed, so basic is temporality to the way we know and live the "world," that it may be more accurate, and definitely less ambiguous, if we replace the terms "consciousness" and "existence" with "temporalizing." "Time" defines us not just because it is the way we structure the World, but also because it is a concrete expression of the indigence ingredient to human being, most notably the phenomenon of death. Death induces our attention to time. If we did not die, we likely would have a radically different conception of time and reality where the comprehension of being would incline away from the temporal (fleeting) and lean toward the spatial (eternal). Life would center more on the concern for space and power to be it than the concern for time and certainty of losing it. We probably also would tend to dwell more in the ontological comprehension of being than in the ontic absorption in beings given there would be less need to attend to things. Our attention would incline more toward being as the "clearing" or "open space" where

things come to light and less on the things we rely on to accomplish our to-be.

These comments do not aim to gainsay the conclusions of modern physics, which lie well outside the scope of phenomenological analysis. Their intent is to throw light on the ontological presuppositions, assumptions, and tendencies that may be hindering the scientific investigation of time and reality. The history of science consistently demonstrates that the greatest enduring challenge to scientific research is our comprehension of reality and the extent to which we will defend it even when it is wrong. Phenomenology's ability to question and elucidate the appropriation of reality well positions it to address this problem, especially when it comes to the scientific investigation of time. The questions of time and human being are inextricably woven within the same problematic. Time is not just a thing among things. It also is a lived, integral part of the human situation and in many ways synonymous with life "in the broadest sense of the word" (Minkowski 1970, 18). When we scientifically investigate time, we cannot escape considering who we essentially are: temporalizing.

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## Husserl's Transcendental Idealism and Its Way Out of the Internalism-Externalism Debate

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### Abstract

This paper argues that through the conceptual distinctions between 'immanence' and 'transcendence' in *The Idea of Phenomenology* and *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, a proper understanding of transcendental idealism and 'transcendence in immanence' can avoid any metaphysical commitments of internalism or externalism, and reconfigure the debate on internalism and externalism by providing an alternative option. There are two interpretations towards whether Husserl is an internalist. The first one is that Husserl is an internalist as he employs the reduction method in order to 'returns to the inner mind'. The second interpretation, which is most welcomed by Husserlians, refutes the internalistic interpretation of Husserl and argues that neither internalism nor externalism can faithfully understand Husserl's phenomenology because Husserl's phenomenology does not tie to any tradition metaphysical commitment. Although I share this view, but an important text, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* is neglected by the previous debates. In the text, it does not only reexamine the two levels of 'immanence' and 'transcendence' in *The Idea of Phenomenology*, but also introduces one more level of 'immanence' and 'transcendence'. I shall argue that by the reconsideration of the three levels of immanence and transcendence, Husserl does not disconnect 'transcendence', so he cannot simply be employed into internalism, on the one hand; his phenomenology provides an alternative option rather than internalism or externalism.

**Keywords:** Phenomenology, Husserl, Internalism, Externalism, Immanence, Transcendence, Transcendental Idealism, Transcendence in immanence

The conceptual distinctions between 'internalism' and 'externalism' are applied to moral philosophy, epistemology, philosophy of language and philosophy of mind. Recently,

Husserl's phenomenology has been employed into the debate on internalism and externalism. There are two interpretations. The first one is greatly influenced by Heideggerian interpretation of Husserl that Husserl is an internalist (Carman 2003; Keller 1999). The second interpretation, which is the most welcomed by Husserlians, refutes the internalistic interpretation of Husserl and argues that neither internalism nor externalism can faithfully understand Husserl's phenomenology because Husserl's phenomenology does not tie to any tradition metaphysical commitment, namely internalism and externalism (Zahavi 2004, 2008; Crowell 2008; O'Murchadha 2008). Husserlians within the second camp share three common beliefs that (1) the doctrine of 'noema' is not a representation, and Husserl does not commit to representationalism; (2) there is a tight link between Husserl's phenomenology and externalism, but they are not equivalent to each other; (3) Husserl's proper accounts of intentionality and reduction lead him to transcendental idealism which is an alternative option available than internalism or externalism. While I share these views, Husserl's distinctions of 'immanence' and 'transcendence' are drawn by the methodological steps of the phenomenological reduction. Most of them draw resources from *The Idea of Phenomenology* and *Transcendental Idealism* (Hua XXXVI). However, an important text, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* ("Aus den Vorlesungen, Grundprobleme der Phaenomenologie, Wintersemester 1910/11", in *Zur Phaenomenologie der Intersubjektivitaet*, Hua XIII), is neglected. In this text, it does not only reexamine the two levels of 'immanence' and 'transcendence' in *The Idea of Phenomenology*, but also introduces one more level of 'immanence' and 'transcendence'. Through his explication, the very meaning of "transcendence in immanence" and transcendental idealism could then be defined. I shall argue that by the reconsideration of the three levels of immanence and transcendence, Husserl does not disconnect 'transcendence', so he cannot simply be employed into internalism.

The argument shall proceed in five sections. In section one, after a briefly presentation of how 'internalism' and

'externalism' are defined, I shall explain how the first interpretation employs Husserl's phenomenology into. In section two, I shall examine a particular task raised by Husserl in *The Idea of Phenomenology* according to which the traditional understanding of 'immanence' and 'transcendence' has to be critically examined. In section three, the importance of reduction method shall be introduced in order to make a proper account of intentionality. In section four, Husserl's account of the three levels of consciousness and intentionality shall be explicated. Through the explication of intentionality, in section five, the three distinctions of 'immanence' and 'transcendence' shall be drawn and the doctrine of 'transcendence in immanence' shall be explained. Finally, I shall argue Husserl's transcendental idealism does not only avoid any metaphysical commitments of internalism or externalism, but also reconfigure the debate on internalism and externalism by providing an alternative option.

### **1. The internalism / externalism debate and Husserl's phenomenology**

Within the philosophy of mind and the philosophy of language, Hilary Putnam's definition in "The Meaning of Meaning" is adopted by debaters. He argues that "meanings just ain't in the head" (Putnam 1975, 227). Putnam argues against the tradition concept of meaning, knowing the meaning of a word is determined in our mind. He gives a famous "Twin Earth" thought experiment. Oscar as an Earthian and Twin Oscar as his Twin Earthian counterpart have alike psychological states. Oscar and Twin Oscar both have the belief of what he calls 'water'. However, Oscar talks of water when he refers to H<sub>2</sub>O; Twin Oscar talks of water when he refers to XYZ. Oscar knows nothing about XYZ while Twin Oscar knows nothing about H<sub>2</sub>O. Therefore, Putnam believes that "the (same) psychological state of the individual speaker does not determine 'what he means'" (Putnam 1975, 270). And the thesis of meaning determining extension/ reference is largely derived from Frege.

Taylor Carman and Pierre Keller are the scholars who explicitly argue that Husserl is an internalist. They have two

basic arguments. First, the reduction is the methodological step to return to the sphere of internal psychological state. Husserl strongly emphasizes the necessity of reduction method. Carman claims that “in methodologically turning away from everything external to consciousness and focusing instead on what is internal to it” (Carman 2003, 80). In this interpretation, Husserl is an internalist in the sense that the reduction method is appealed to what is internal to consciousness, namely noemata which is construed as Fregean *Sinne* (Carman 2003, 68). Therefore, reduction is an evidence for the internalistic interpretation of Husserl. Second, Husserl shares the similar feature of most internalists committed to, namely representationalism. Keller asserts that “the narrow representational content that we are presented with in our individual private experiences is the ultimate basis for the philosophical investigation of the condition under which narrow and wide content are possible” (Keller 1999, 112). Keller does not explicitly explain what representational content is, but we can draw resources from Follesdal and Dreyfus who believe Husserl is a representationalist (Follesdal 1969; Dreyfus 1982).<sup>1</sup> They believe that noema is an abstract structure by which the mind can direct towards external objects. Noematic *Sinn* is a complex descriptive sense which is inherent in noema. Since the abstract character of noema and noematic *Sinn* is an ideal medium which can never be regarded as something ‘outer’, meaning does not have direct connection with the external world. Therefore, they conclude that the ultimate basis for the philosophical investigation, in Husserl’s phenomenology, is ‘the inner’. But does Husserl commit to representationalism? Is Husserl’s doctrine of ‘immanence’ alike to what they understand as ‘the inner’ or ‘internal to consciousness’?

## **2. The critique of traditional distinction between immanence and transcendence**

Before examining Husserl’s distinction between ‘immanence’ and ‘transcendence’, we may have a look at Husserl’s critique towards traditional distinction between immanence and transcendence, so that we could understand the aim of the reduction method, a proper account of

intentionality and the distinctions between 'immanence' and 'transcendence'.

"If we take a closer look at what is so enigmatic about knowledge, and what causes our predicament in our first reflection on the possibility of knowledge, we find that it is transcendence" (Husserl 1999a, 27). When we reflect the possibility of knowledge, we find that "the enigma about knowledge is its transcendence" (Husserl 1999a, 33). The known objects are something other than 'I', but how can we cognize the known objects? It is a long-lasting but important philosophical question. Husserl in *The Idea of Phenomenology* claims that "indeed, our lack of clarity with regard to the sense or essence of knowledge requires a science of knowledge, a science that dedicates itself solely to getting clear on the essence of knowledge" (Husserl 1999a, 25). His aim is to require a science of knowledge with clarity. But why is it so important to require clarity? And how do we seek to clarity?

Facing the unsolid ground of epistemology, Husserl criticizes that "all of the basic errors in epistemology are connected to the above mentioned μεταβασιζ, on the one hand, the error of psychologism, and on the other, the error of anthropologism and biologism. This μεταβασιζ is exceedingly dangerous" (Husserl 1999a, 31). What does μεταβασιζ mean? Why is it so dangerous? "μεταβασιζ" means transition. Husserl introduces an argument that if knowledge which is not in the genuine sense given, then it is transcendent. If it is transcendent knowledge, then it has to be critically examined. All positive knowledge is knowledge that is not examined. Therefore, all positive knowledge is transcendent knowledge. Further, psychologism, anthropologism and biologism are positive knowledge. If epistemology is based upon these, then it would lead to errors, namely transitions ("μεταβασιζ").

Husserl proposes two criticisms towards these errors. The first one is their misunderstanding of transcendence, namely as physical phenomenon. The second one is critic of their misunderstanding of relationship between transcendence and immanence. Firstly, from the perspective of psychologism, it seeks transcendent object as physical phenomenon. Husserl argues that "psychical phenomenon" is always quite

questionable, and frequently misleading. It is because it, on the one hand, misleads people to say that perceived, imagined, asserted or desired objects ‘enter consciousnesses’, or to say that such objects ‘are taken up into consciousness’. On the other hand, it misleads people to say ‘consciousness’ or ‘the ego’ enters into this or that sort of relation to them, or to say that intentional experiences ‘contain something as their object in themselves’ (Husserl 1977, 557). In these senses, it claims that with different mode of treatment, the same physical phenomenon can be divided as an ideal object in perception or the external real physical object perceived.<sup>2</sup> We are dealing with the relationship in which the object’s appearing consists (the concrete perceptual experience, in which the object itself seems present to us) and of the object which appears as such.<sup>3</sup> Then how does the physical phenomenon can be cognized?

Secondly, from the perspective of anthropologism and biologism, Husserl criticizes that such expressions promote two misunderstandings of relationship between transcendence and immanence. The first misunderstanding claims that “we are dealing with a real (*realen*) event or a real (*reales*) relationship, taking place between ‘consciousness’ or ‘the ego’... and the thing of which there is consciousness” (Husserl 1977, 557) The second misunderstanding claims that “we are dealing with a relation between two things, both present in equally real fashion (*reell*) in consciousness, an act and in intentional object, or with a sort of box-within-box structure of mental contents” (Husserl 1977, 557) For the first misunderstanding, is it true to say that we are dealing with a real (*realen*) event or a real (*reales*) relationship? Is the relationship of cognitive contact between transcendence and immanence a real relationship? How is it possible? For the second misunderstanding, is it true to say that we are dealing with a relation between two things, both present in equally real fashion (*reell*) in consciousness? Would the second misunderstanding mix up the act of consciousness and the conscious object or object of givenness? If so, how can it draw a distinction between transcendence and immanence? How is it possible?

Back to the previous question, why is transition (μεταβασις) so dangerous? Husserl explains that “this μεταβασις

is exceedingly dangerous, partly because the proper sense of the problems never made clear and remains totally lost in it, and partly because... easily slip back into the temptations of the natural modes of thinking and judging as well as false and misleading formulation of the problem which grow on their basis" (Husserl 1999a, 31). The knowledge of errors in epistemology, "then, is just human knowledge, bound to the forms of the human intellect, incapable of making contact with the very nature of things, with the things themselves" (Husserl 1999a, 18). Therefore, Husserl suggests that this is true in that no knowledge can be counted as pre-given without examination at the beginning. He urged to perform epistemological reduction, "that is, all transcendence that comes into play here must be excluded... of epistemological nullity" (Husserl 1999a, 30).

### **3. The introduction of phenomenological reduction**

In epistemological investigation, if objects as transcendence are not critically examined, it should not be utilized as pre-given. In Husserl's terminology, they are "epistemologically *null*" (Husserl 1999a, 34). Husserl asserts that the first and fundamental part of phenomenology in general is to attend sole the task of clarifying the essence of knowledge and known objectivity. In its task of clarifying the essence of knowledge and known objectivity, phenomenology designates a science. More importantly, it "designates the specifically philosophical attitude of thought, the specifically philosophical method" (Husserl 1999a, 19). The phenomenological attitude first requires "free from presupposition" (Husserl 1977, 263). How can it achieve the phenomenological attitude?

"Only through a reduction, which we shall call the phenomenological reduction, do I acquire an absolutely givenness that no longer offers anything transcendent" (Husserl 1999a, 34). It shows that Husserl aims at acquiring absolutely givenness through phenomenological reduction. "Through the epistemological reduction we exclude all transcendent presuppositions, because the possible validity and sense of transcendence is in question" (Husserl 1999a, 37). In this sense,

the phenomenological reduction can achieve the phenomenological attitude. Then how does the phenomenological reduction perform?

The phenomenological reduction is a way “to alter the natural attitude radically instead of remaining in this attitude” (Husserl 1999b, 57). One procedure is the attempt to doubt universally.<sup>4</sup> This doubt “do not give up the positing we effected”, but the positing undergoes a modification. The positing remains what it is, but we “put it out of action”, we “exclude it”, we “parenthesize it” (Husserl 1999a, 59). It is changing of attitude from taking for granted to critically examination. Through phenomenological reduction, what can it remain? Through the reduction, “we shall go as far as is necessary to effect the insight at which we are aiming, namely the insight that consciousness has, in itself, a being of its own which in its own absolute essence, is not touched by the phenomenological exclusion. It therefore remains as the “phenomenological residuum”.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, Husserl suggested that the phenomenological way is firstly to “keep our regard fixed upon the sphere of consciousness and study what we find immanently within it” (Husserl 1999b, 65). As the first interpretation mentioned above, Husserl is always interpreted as ‘internalism’ since through reduction, consciousness remains as the phenomenological residuum, and attains superior status comparing to the ‘outer world’.

#### **4. The three concepts of consciousness and the doctrine of intentionality**

In order to avoid the internalistic interpretation, a proper account of consciousness and intentionality is necessary. Through phenomenological reduction, Husserl, in *Logical Investigations*, uncovers that there are three concepts of consciousness.<sup>6</sup> The first one is consciousness as the entire, real (*reelle*) phenomenological being of the empirical ego, as the interweaving of psychic experiences in the unified stream of consciousness (Husserl 1977, 537). The second is consciousness as the inner awareness of one’s own psychic experience.<sup>7</sup> This third is consciousness as a comprehensive designation for ‘mental acts’, or ‘intentional experiences’, of all sorts.<sup>8</sup> For the

first concept of consciousness, in flux from one moment to the next, and interconnected and interpenetrating in manifold ways, experience composes the real unity-of-consciousness of the individual mind. This concept of consciousness can be seen in a purely phenomenological manner, which cuts out all relation to empirically real existence. Take an example, when I see a red rose, the sense-aspect of color forms a real constituent of my concrete seeing. It is as much an 'experienced' or 'conscious' content, as is the character of perceiving, or as the full perceptual appearing of the colored object. In this sense, "as belonging in a conscious connection, the appearing of things is experienced by us, as belonging in the phenomenal world, things appear before us. The appearing of the things does not itself appear to us, we live through it" (Husserl 1977, 538). We can draw a distinction: the relation of the phenomenal object (conscious content) and the phenomenal subject (empirical person, a thing) is different from the relation of a conscious content in the sense of an experience and consciousness in the sense of a unity of such conscious contents. The former relation concerns with the relation of two appearing things. The latter relation concerns with the relation of a single experience to a complex of experiences.<sup>9</sup>

For the second concept of consciousness, it is expressed by talk of 'inner consciousness.' Husserl asserts that 'inner perception' is "to accompany actually present experiences and to relate to them as its object" (Husserl 1977, 542). The 'self-evidence' usually attributed to inner perception shows it to be adequate perception. It is because this adequate perception ascribes nothing to its object that is not intuitively presented but intuitively presents and posits its objects just as they are in fact experienced in and with their perception. In this sense, the intentional perception corresponds with complete perfection, achieves adequacy. It is therefore itself a real (*reell*) factor in our perceiving of it. Therefore, we can draw a distinction: inner perception as the perception of one's own experiences and inner perceptions adequate or evident perception.

The second concept of consciousness refers to inner consciousness or inner perception. It is about the perception of one's own experience and adequate or evident perception. To

bear a point in mind, Husserl's inner perception is different from Brentano's as he strongly emphasizes. It is because in Husserl's interpretation, Brentano's inner perception reproduces what is 'in' the mind (inexistence), but Husserl's inner perception is a reflection upon the pre-reflective experiences. Inner perception does not reproduce, on the one hand; it does not bring something 'in' our mind out. Instead, inner perception is conscious of pre-reflective experience, so it is 'the perception of one's own experience'. The first concept of consciousness refers to the real unity-of-consciousness of the individual mind composed by experience and content. It is about the relation of two appearing things and the relation of a single experience to a complex of experiences. The second concerns with single experience but the first concerns with the relation of a single experience to a complex of experiences. On the one hand, Husserl, therefore, described that "undeniably the second concept of consciousness is the more 'primitive': it has an 'intrinsic priority'" (Husserl 1977, 543). On the other hand, the second concept and the first concept show that the unity of the concrete phenomenological whole coexists. These 'unities of coexistence' pass continuously from one into next, composing a unity of change, of the stream of consciousness. "This accordingly forms the phenomenological content of the ego, of the empirical ego in the sense of the physis subject. Phenomenological reduction yields the really self-enclosed, temporally growing unity of the stream of experience. The notion of experience has widened out from what is inwardly perceived, and that is in this sense conscious, to the notion of the 'phenomenological ego', by which the empirical ego is intentionally constituted" (Husserl 1977, 545). Up to this moment, we understand the first and second concept articulate to the phenomenological ego, but how can we draw such concept? Precisely, what is the condition of possibility for us to draw the first and second concepts of consciousness?

Here, the third concept of consciousness has to be introduced. It is defined in terms of 'acts' or 'intentional experiences.' In such intentional experience, "things seized in their phenomenological purity, furnish concrete bases for abstracting the fundamental notions. There are acts 'trained

upon' the character of acts in which something appears, or there are acts trained upon the empirical ego and its relation to the object. "The phenomenological kernel of the empirical ego here consists of acts which bring objects to its notice, acts in which the ego directs itself to the appropriate object" (Husserl 1977, 550). To be specific, intentional relation, understood in purely descriptive fashion as an inward peculiarity of certain experiences, is the essential feature of 'physical phenomenon' or 'acts'. In this sense, Husserl accepted Brentano's definition of intentional relation as "phenomenon intentionally containing objects in themselves a circumscription of essence" (Husserl 1977, 555). But there are differences between them.

Firstly, Brentano believes that intentional experiences direct themselves to the presented objects. The direction is in an intentional sense. It seems there are two things present in intentional experience. Unlike Brentano's doctrine of intentionality, Husserl clarifies that "there are not two things present in experience, we do not experience the object and beside it the intentional experience directed upon it... only one thing is present, the intentional experience" (Husserl 1977, 558).

Secondly, as mentioned previously, the perceived physical object is not 'in' consciousness like Brentano's claim. Husserl gives an example of having an idea of God Jupiter, the idea of God Jupiter is a particular sort of experience, but not "part of the descriptive or real make-up (*deskriptiven reellen Bestand*)" (Husserl 1977, 559). The idea of God is neither 'inside' consciousness nor 'outside' consciousness as it does not exist at all. It is an 'intentional' object rather than something 'immanent' or 'internal'.

Through drawing distinction between Brentano and Husserl, we will find that the essential descriptive character of the intentional experience is intentionality. Intentionality, in previous description, means "conscious of", "refer to" or "aim at". If intentional experience is present, then through its own essence, the intentional 'relation' to an object is achieved, and an object is 'intentionally present'; these two phrases mean precisely the same. In this sense, objects is not 'internal', but "are only intentional, only an object of consciousness, something presented (*Vorstellungen*) in the manner peculiar to

consciousness, something apparent <as apparent> (Husserl 1999b, 113).

### **5. The doctrine of intentionality and the conceptual distinction between immanence and transcendence**

In the analysis of the structure of experience, “the qualifying adjective ‘intentional’ names the essence common to the class of experience” (Husserl 1977, 562). It shows that our structure of experience is always intentional. Through the doctrine of intentionality, we understand that “an experience may be present in consciousness together with its intention, although its object does not exist at all, and is perhaps incapable of existence. The object is ‘meant’, i.e. to ‘mean’ it is an experience, but it is then merely entertained in thought, and is nothing in reality” (Husserl 1977, 558). Take having an idea of God as an example, if I have an idea of Christian God, this Christian is my presented object, he is ‘immanently present’ in my act or experience. It means I have a certain presentative experience, the presentation of the Christian God is realized in my consciousness. Husserl explains what ‘immanent’ is:

“The ‘immanent’, ‘mental object’ is not therefore part of the descriptive or real make-up (*deskriptiven reellen Bestand*) of the experience, it is in truth not really immanent or mental. These so-called immanent contents are therefore merely intended or intentional, while truly immanent contents, which belong to the real make-up (*reellen Bestand*) of the intentional experiences, are not intentional: they constitute the act, provide necessary *points d’appui* which render possible an intention, but are not themselves intended, not the objects presented in the act.” (Husserl 1977, 559)

Here we can draw the first conceptual distinction between transcendence and immanence. This distinction can be found in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. Husserl claims that the sense of transcendence is that “the object of knowledge itself is not present in the act of knowledge... It belongs to the essence of the intentional relation (being just the relation between consciousness and the object of consciousness) that consciousness, i.e., the respective *cogitatio*, is consciousness

about something that what it is not” (Husserl 2006, 64). This conceptual distinction articulates to the real make-up (*reellen Bestand*) of the intentional experiences. Immanent is relative to intentional. The ‘immanence’ refers to that real make-up (*reellen Bestand*) of the intentional experience. In this sense, the ‘transcendence’ refers to that the intentional object, which is not really (*reell*) immanent. Therefore, Husserl, in *The Idea of Phenomenology*, explicitly describes that:

“It (transcendence) can refer to the fact that the known object is not really (*reell*) contained in the act of knowing. In this case, ‘given in the genuine sense’ or ‘immanently given’ would be understood in terms of real (*reelle*) containment: the act of knowing, the cogitation, has real (*reelle*) moments that really (*reell*) constitute it...Here ‘immanent’ means ‘really (*reell*) immanent to the experience of knowing’.” (Husserl 1999a, 27)

The first conceptual distinction between transcendence and immanence are drawn. It refers to the condition of possibility of experience of knowing, namely intentional experience.

The second type refers to the adequacy of knowledge. The distinction results when we regard it as a classification of individual objects. Husserl asserts that according to this, “individual objects break down into those which could be given intuitively in absolute self-presence and those which can only appear as self-present” (Husserl 2006, 65). In the footnote, Husserl explains that the former could have existed only as having been perceived and they can be potentially recalled; the latter could have existed before all perception. How could these be understood? The very distinction between them is the change of attitude. Those which can only appear as self-presence but not absolute self-presence remain in the natural attitude. Husserl regards them as transcendent. In a contrary, “every phenomenological consciousness is related to immanence; the immanent is the field of phenomenology” (Husserl 2006, 65). Through reduction method, this meaning of ‘immanence’ could then be drawn as phenomenological reduction as a methodological step ‘creates’ the field of phenomenology, namely the second sense of ‘immanence’. If we understand the second sense of transcendence refers to objects which can only appear as self-presence and the second of

‘immanence’ refers to object which can be given intuitively in absolute self-presence, then we may ask what the essential features of this sense of ‘immanence’ is? What is the meaning of ‘absolute self-presence’?

In *The Idea of Phenomenology*, Husserl explains that,

“But there is another sense of transcendence, whose counterpart is an entirely different kind of ‘immanence’, namely absolute and clear givenness, self-givenness in the absolute sense. This givenness, which excludes any meaningful doubt, consists of an immediate act of seeing and apprehending the meant objectivity itself as it is. It constitutes the precise concept of evidence, understood as immediate evidence. All knowledge that is not evident, that refers to or posits what is objective, but does not see it for itself, is transcendent in this second sense. In such knowledge we go beyond what is given in the genuine sense, beyond what can be directly seen and apprehended.” (Husserl 1999a, 28)

Precisely, ‘immanence’ refers to that is absolute and clear givenness, self-givenness in the pure phenomenological sense. This givenness, which excludes any meaningful doubt, consists of an immediate act of seeing and apprehending the meant objectivity itself as it is. “Absolute givenness” refers to “seeing, grasping what is self-given, insofar as it is an actual seeing that presents an actual self-givenness and not a givenness that refers to something not given—that is something ultimate. This is absolute self-givenness (*absolute Selbstverständlichkeit*)” (Husserl 1999a, 38). It is relative to inadequate and unclear givenness, not self-givenness. “Transcendence” refers to inadequate and unclear givenness, not self-givenness in pure phenomenological sense. On the first case, this conceptual distinction articulates to reflective thinking and the second concept of consciousness as the inner awareness of one’s own psychic experience. When we reflect on our inner awareness of one’s own previous perceptual experience, it is adequate givenness if we can consist of an immediate act of seeing and apprehending the meant objectivity itself as it is. It is inadequate givenness if we cannot consist of an immediate act of seeing and apprehending the meant objectivity itself as it is

or the meant objectivity itself is posited rather than self-giveness.

Apart from the two distinctions mentioned above, there is the third ways of understanding 'immanence' and transcendence which cannot be found in *The Idea of Phenomenology*, but *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* only. 'Immanence' refers to which is present in the flesh to consciousness, and transcendence refers to which is meant without such self-presence. Husserl explains what he means,

"On the side of immanence is only that which is seen (and, at the most, one could also say that the seeable of this kind is so united with the actual seen that a change in the reflective stance could lead from the one to the other), whereas on the side of transcendence would everything else, foremost everything non-present, albeit as an object of consciousness." (Husserl 2006, 64)

During this lecture in 1910-1911, Husserl delivered the time-consciousness lecture already. In the lecture, he uncovers the importance of retention. "As reflection [reduction] makes clear, the vitally present seeing is one with the vitally present seen." (Husserl 2006, 64) These two constitute the unity of the present. However, even if retention reproduces something which had been seen, this remembered or reproduced memories is meant without its self-presence but is meant as a presence of absence. Therefore, it would be transcendent to the present remembering consciousness. In this sense, Husserl is true to say that "phenomenology does not want to disconnect transcendence in every sense" (Husserl 2006, 65).

On the one hand, reduction is a methodological step that draws the three distinctions between 'immanence' and transcendence. On the other hand, the reduction method guarantees a proper understanding of 'immanence' and transcendence. 'Immanence' as the field of phenomenology does not disconnect transcendence, but constitutes transcendence in a proper way. As Jan Patočka in *An Introduction to Husserl's Phenomenology* well explicated, "the task of phenomenology is not to eliminate all objectivity but to ground objectivity itself in immanence... here the third stage begins, from absolute immanence to the discovery of

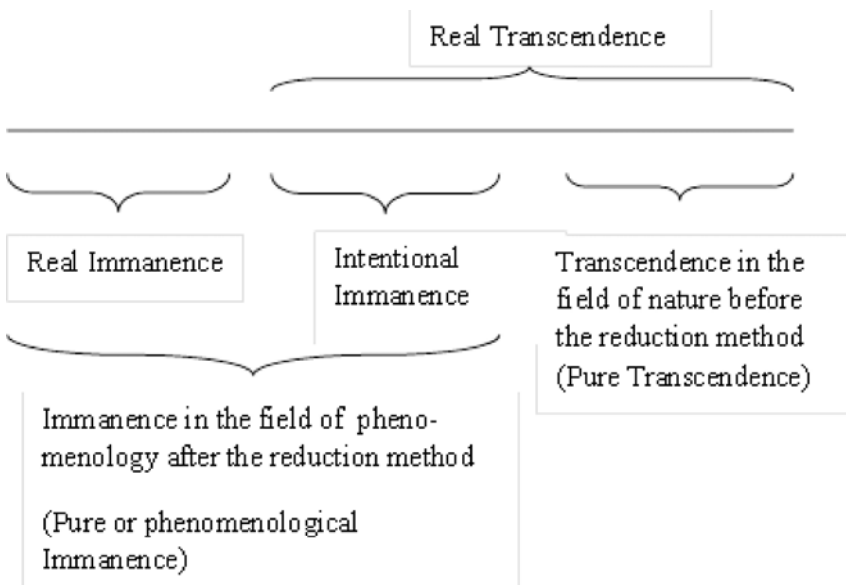
transcendence in immanence” (Patočka 1996, 92-3). It means that phenomenology as special method and special thought of attitude, through the methodological steps, demonstrates how transcendence is correlated to immanence.

To summarize the distinction, the first distinction is a classification of intentionality. The ‘immanence’ refers to that real make-up (*reellen Bestand*) of the intentional experience. The ‘transcendence’ refers to that the intentional object, which is not really (*reell*) immanent. Objects as transcendence are only intentional, only an intentional object of intentional experience. The second distinction is a classification of individual objects. The ‘immanence’ refers to those which can be given intuitively in absolute and clear self-givenness in the pure phenomenological sense. The ‘transcendence’ refers to those which can only appear as self-present in natural attitude. The third distinction is a classification of presentation. ‘Immanence’ refers to which is present in the flesh to consciousness. The ‘transcendence’ refers to which is meant without such self-presence. These can be derived as following:

Before phenomenological reduction	
Transcendence (3): objects which is meant without such self-presence	
Transcendence (2): objects which can only appear as self-present in natural attitude	
After phenomenological reduction	
Immanence (3): objects which is present in the flesh to consciousness	
Immanence (2): which can be given intuitively in absolute self-givenness	
Immanence (1): Real make-up (essential structure) of consciousness	Transcendence (1): Intentional objects

More important, we could find two important points in Husserl’s phenomenology. First, the distinction is guided by the reduction method. Second, phenomenology does not disconnect transcendence in every sense. For example, I hear a tone A in pre-reflective state which is in the natural attitude. The tone is transcendent object in the second sense. Through the reduction, the tone A is reflected and is brought to immanence through the

disengagement of natural attitude. The tone A is now 'in' the field of phenomenology. But it is still transcendent in the first sense as it is not the essential structure of consciousness but the object pole of an intentional experience. More important, through the reduction method, the past tone A which is thematically reflected and reproduced as a presence of the absence, as it were. It is the third sense of transcendence as it is meant without presence as presence. The relationship can be derived the following schema which is suggested by Rudolf Boehm (1965) with modification:



The schema shows that 'pure' or 'phenomenological' immanence does not exclude all real transcendence. Instead, it connects intentional immanence with is a real transcendence. That's the very meaning of 'transcendence in immanence'. Therefore, Husserl could not simply be employed into internalism as Husserl's doctrine of immanence is not an enclosed box-like-mind.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, through the explications of three levels of the distinction between immanence and transcendence, we will find that Husserl's phenomenology does not commit to any metaphysical presupposition of internalism and externalism. On the one hand, Husserl's doctrine of 'immanence' and 'transcendence' does not equivalent to 'internalism' and 'externalism'. Immanence does not mean the 'inner' or internal mind or object 'in' the self-contained box-like-mind which disconnects to the 'external' world. Instead, through the reduction, transcendent object is reflected and is constituted. Paul Ricoeur, in *Husserl: An Analysis of his Phenomenology*, well formulates that "as it appears to a consciousness, one can say that the object transcends that consciousness and likewise that the object is in that consciousness; but it is there specifically by virtue of being intentional and not by virtue of being a really inherent part of consciousness" (Ricoeur 1967, 8). On the other hand, Husserl does not share the same features of representationalism. As his criticisms of Brentano in *Logical Investigations*, there are not two things present in experience, but only one thing is present, the intentional experience. Through the reduction method, what is given intuitively is not representation 'in' our mind, but is direct to the experience as it were. It is clear that transcendental phenomenology firstly signifies a special method and attitude of thought. And "the reduction less and less signifies a 'return to the ego' and more and more 'return from logic to antepredicative', to the primordial evidence of the world" (Ricoeur 1967, 12). Therefore, Husserl's phenomenology could hardly be identified as internalist, but provides an alternative option towards the debate.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> In this paper, I am not going to criticize the interpretation. Please refer to Drummond, 1990.

<sup>2</sup> "Real" and "Reel" are two different concepts. "Real" is relative to "ideal". Real object refers to physical object, namely trees and tables. Ideal object

refers to concept, namely number and theories. “*Reel*” is relative to “*intentional*”. Consciousness contains *reell* content and intentional content. The *reell* content of consciousness refers to “the act of consciousness”. The intentional content of consciousness refers to “conscious object” and the way of givenness.

<sup>3</sup> It is because the difference between a conscious content in perception and the external object perceived in it (perception), is a mere difference in mode of treatment between, the same appearance being at one time dealt with in a subjective connection (in connection with appearances which relate to an ego), and at other time in an objective connection (in connection with the things themselves) (Husserl 1977, 538).

<sup>4</sup> Husserl emphasizes that there is difference between Cartesian universal doubt and his phenomenological reduction. “We start from here, but at the time emphasize that the attempt to doubt universally shall serve us only as a methodic expedient for picking out certain points which, as included in its essence, can be brought to light and made evident by means of it” (Husserl 1999b, 58). Husserl emphasized the difference between Cartesian universal doubt and his phenomenological reduction because Cartesian universal doubt is a method of negating positing or something doubtful. But universal doubt as a procedure of the phenomenological reduction effects a certain annulment of positing. The annulment in question is not a transmutation of positing into counter positing, of position into negation (Husserl 1999b, 58).

<sup>5</sup> “The phenomenological reduction will deserve its name only by means of this insight; the fully conscious effecting of that reduction will prove itself to be the operation necessary to make ‘pure’ consciousness, and subsequently the whole phenomenological region, accessible to us” (Husserl 1999b, 65-6). It shows that the phenomenological residuum is pure consciousness. But bear a point in mind, pure consciousness is not a box-like-mind, but the whole phenomenological region or the field of phenomenology.

<sup>6</sup> Rudolf Bernet and Theodorus de Boer argue that the term of *epoché* and reduction first appeared in 1907, but Husserl performed reduction method since *Logical Investigations* (See Husserl 1985, XX; de Boer 1995, 362-3).

<sup>7</sup> By the first and second concepts of consciousness, “not only is it evident that I am: self-evidence also attaches countless judgments of the form I perceive this or that, where I not merely think, but am also self-evidently assured, that what I perceive is given as I think of it, that I apprehend the thing itself, and for what it is” (Husserl 1977, 544).

<sup>8</sup> In phenomenological sense, “there are acts ‘trained upon’ the character of acts in which something appears, or there are acts trained upon the empirical ego and its relation to the object.” (Husserl 1977, 550). It means that “the empirical ego consists of acts which bring objects to its notice, acts in which the ego directs itself to the appropriate object” (Husserl 1977, 550).

<sup>9</sup> See Husserl 1977, 538-9. To have a better understanding of the single-complex or part-whole logic in Husserl, please refer to Solowoski 1977.

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## If meaningfulness is not always fulfilling, why then does it matter?

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### Abstract

We start from a quandary in the field of meaningfulness introduced by Susan Wolf, who attempts to make clear why meaning in life would matter. In common sense terms, fulfilment is considered to play a main role in the conceptualisation of meaningfulness. While initially taking this also for granted Wolf gradually comprehends that fulfilment is not the overall reason why meaning in life matters. She leaves however open the paramount question of what would make it then so particular. In this article, we explore this query to a fuller extent, and maintain that a promising road to an answer lays in the understanding that meaning in life is directive in an ineffable way. In order to fathom what this entails, a distinction between meaningfulness' and 'meaning in life' will prove helpful. Both have often been considered synonyms, but we argue that they are quite distinct, yet intrinsically related. Starting from a subject that is mainly discussed in analytic philosophy, we build a bridge to phenomenological praxis, indicating that we can only understand its core function - its ineffable way of being directive - through phenomenology.

**Keywords:** proneness to being moved, directiveness, meaningfulness, meaning in life

### I. Introduction

Starting point for this article is a difficulty Susan Wolf is confronted with in her book *Meaning in Life and Why it Matters* (2010)<sup>1</sup> when claiming that meaning in life matters because it creates fulfilment.<sup>2</sup> This inherent link between meaningfulness

and fulfilment is questioned by one of the commentators, Robert Adams, whom Wolf invited to contribute to the book and who illustrates the thesis that a life can be meaningful even if this cannot be expressed in terms of fulfilment. Wolf agrees with his comments, and in one of the concluding chapters of the book she resolves the issue by pointing to several reasons for a life to be meaningful, including fulfilment as only one of them. Yet, she regrets having to leave behind fulfilment as the overall reason. She has an important intuition in that there is an element prevailing when discussing meaningfulness, and we might lose sight of this leading element when introducing a diversity of reasons.

In this article, I take Wolf's intuition seriously and investigate whether it is possible to come any further in resolving the issue that something predominates when talking about meaning in life, something that ultimately matters.

## II. The Case

Let us first formulate the problem more extensively, drawing on an interesting dialogue between Wolf and Adams, in order to analyse how meaning in life is understood in terms of fulfilling.

To build her account of meaning in life, Wolf gives meaningfulness a place as a dimension of the good, a 'sort of value' (2010, 3) distinct from two other models offering people valid reasons to act. These models are, on the one hand, morality as duty, an impartial concern urging people to do what is best for human well-being from a universal point of view, and, on the other, happiness as rational egoism, steering people to follow what is in their self-interest. Next, she uses the method of taking seriously what common people say about the subject. She combines two general views, defining the first as the Fulfilment View, and the second as the 'The Larger-than-Oneself View'. The Fulfilment View holds that it is meaningful to do what one loves doing, and that being involved in activities or projects that matter to one provides a kind of fulfilment. Wolf remarks that fulfilment is no doubt a positive or good feeling, next to other good feelings such as pleasure, even intense

pleasure. Yet fulfilment to her is distinct from pleasure. She argues that one can imagine a person engaging in rewarding opportunities, and still having the impression that something is lacking in their life.

So the term fulfilment in relation to meaningfulness has a connotation that is distinct from its conventional interpretation. A fulfilling life does not necessarily mean a life of mere happiness, for the things that move, grip or engage us can make us susceptible to tension, disappointment, suffering. Yet, in general one can consider fulfilment a ‘distinctive good in life’ (Wolf 2010, 15) for most of us would readily put up with some of these consequences in order to follow our passions.

To Wolf, in the Fulfilment View, emphasis is nevertheless on the subjective quality of one’s life, and as such, on positive experiences. She interprets this as a form of hedonism. What matters is to achieve and preserve the feeling of fulfilment (2010, 16). What kind of activities give rise to these feelings is of less importance? To her this is not acceptable and that is why she combines subjective fulfilment with another popular view on meaning in life, the Larger-than-Oneself View. She redefines Larger-than-Oneself as Other-than-Oneself, a value that has its source outside oneself. So a meaningful life is a life that is both fulfilling for the subject and a life with engagements in an activity or project that is independently valuable. To Wolf, both are intrinsically related in what she calls the Fitting Fulfilment View. The rationale for this is that if one gets involved in an activity or project, one will appreciate it, partly on subjective grounds and partly on the ground that the project or activity has independent value.

Wolf formulates the combination of the two views as follows: ‘Meaning arises from loving objects worthy of love and engaging with them in a positive way’ (2010, 8). She also redefines this in more abstract terms, claiming that ‘meaning in life arises when subjective attraction meets objective attractiveness, and one is able to do something about it or with it’ (2010, 26). Whereas subjective attraction is definitely related to fulfilment, her query is how to understand objective attractiveness, activities and projects that ‘are at least also fitting to fulfilment’ (2010, 37).

Wolf invited four scholars to respond to her account. Of interest to our discussion is the issue raised by Robert Adams, who pondered why Wolf thought it necessary to add feelings of fulfilment to meaningfulness. Adams doubts whether we need this extra requirement. He agrees that it is plausible to think that one sort of fulfilment is the success of a person's major projects, this making a difference to the meaning of a life. Yet, he believes a life can also contain meaning in the case of a failed project that is valuable, and even derive meaning from it. He illustrates this with the example of the German officer Claus von Stauffenberg's attempt to assassinate Hitler. His project to liberate Germany from the fate of Nazism failed, and he was executed. Adams wonders whether this made Von Stauffenberg's life meaningless, saying he believes that Stauffenberg did not think so, even despite the failure of the project. Of course, it is very likely that he felt devastated the evening the project failed, not only because of his imminent death, but also because of the expected consequences for Germany. Yet, as Adams continues, he might have found consolation in the thought that he had no reason to despise himself, having done what was within the reach of his capacities. Consolation is different from fulfilment, and here Adam can make his point. He concludes, "This is terribly important. For one of the great things about positive meaning in life is that one can have it even when one's hopes and projects are not fulfilled and one does not feel good." (2010, 79).

Wolf's response to this recommendation is very nuanced and carefully thought through. She acknowledges that Adams is right in denoting the inadequacy of her characterisation of the subjective dimension of meaningfulness, due to the unwanted association with success and feelings of pleasure. She admits that the term fulfilment is misleading but adds that singling out the term 'love', as Adams suggests, will not resolve the problem, because, conceptually, love is less closely connected to meaningfulness than fulfilment. One can imagine people doing something out of love for their country, for example defending their country, yet if considering the task a duty, this will not be paradigmatically meaningful to them. So Wolf concludes that, in a sense, it might be more realistic to

give up the idea that there is a single subjective quality of experience. Instead of looking for a ‘catch-all term’ (2010, 112) to denote the subjective side of meaningful activity, ‘it might be wiser, if less satisfyingly determinate, simply to acknowledge that there is a range of such attitudes and conditions, which includes love and fulfilment (...) that an agent must have in order for engagement with it to contribute to the meaningfulness of his life.’ (2010, 114). So whereas Adams does not challenge her principal account, Wolf concludes with some regret that she has to abandon her search for a single important structural feature to characterise the subjective side of her account.

The question that arises is whether it is really true that Wolf should discard the idea of trying to find a single catch-all term. No doubt the discussion between Wolf and Adams nicely illustrates that fulfilment is important though not paramount. Yet Wolf’s regret about having to give up this conception may point to her intuition that ‘something’ prevails in the discussion about meaning in life. Could it be that her intuition is right, but that she did not find the adequate wording to bring into light this initial feeling? If her impression is right, it should, however, be a concept that leaves associative space to include both acts of fulfilment and acts that are of the utmost importance even if they are not fulfilling. Whereas it may be very unlikely for such a notion to be found, if we read Wolf’s book more closely, we can see that she actually points to such a vocabulary herself though due to the conceptual structure she uses – her account is structured around the concept of fulfilment – it only can appear in the margins of her thought.

In answering a question raised by John Koethe about the importance of success, Wolf further explains her reasoning, and it is here that the notion of guidance transpires. Wolf elucidates the thesis that in bringing up the idea of meaningfulness, she wanted to argue that there is a dimension along which a life may be considered valuable, distinct both from morality as duty and pleasure or happiness. She believes that thoughts of meaningfulness play a role in directing our lives and in guiding the lives of one’s children, even in shaping social institutions and in formulating political goals. She also

evokes this idea of meaningfulness somehow providing some kind of direction when she refers to the reverse case. Wolf states that ‘without the concept of meaningfulness and a vocabulary with which to discuss and explore it, we are apt to accept distorted conceptions of happiness and morality, to seek the wrong things, and to be at a loss to understand what is going wrong’ (2010, 109). Wolf understands that next to engendering a certain fulfilment, meaning in life has a directive force, one that is implicitly inserted in our personal lives as well as directive in our collective societal life.<sup>3</sup> She suspects that it also becomes visible the moments we think meaningfulness is absent. If so, this directive force has a rather profound function. The challenge to take up is how to reach a more adequate understanding of this kind of directiveness as an important singled-out feature of meaningfulness, both in subjective and in objective terms. The challenge is larger than can be imagined at this stage, for as I hope to make clear in the following part, the directive force plays a role in an ineffable way. Wolf does not recognise the guiding function of meaning in life from such a perspective, at least not explicitly, yet one could argue that implicitly she provides it a place in her account when using the notion of ‘proneness to being moved’. Proneness to being moved in a general way alludes to this directive force since it refers to a certain condition of the person. It alludes to a passivity, a receptivity to the world outside. Something crosses our path and we are susceptible to it, regardless of what sort of plan, project or activities we have, and this happens irrespective of our will. So expressed in this way, the notion is even quite central to her, for Wolf claims that ‘proneness to being moved [by reasons of love] is at the core of our ability to live meaningful lives’ (2010, 7). Even so, in the remainder of her account Wolf disregards the notion of proneness to being moved and turns her attention almost exclusively to the reasons of love by which we are moved, for she conjectures that these may sustain her in objectifying the notion of fulfilment. Yet, to achieve a subtler understanding of why meaning in life would matter, it might be worth exploring proneness to being moved to its full extent.

### III. The Directive Force of Meaning in Life

In the following, I will examine three cases of proneness to being moved (by reasons of love). The first case is a theoretical elaboration of the sewing case Wolf refers to and enables us to understand, in an introductory way, how to conceive of proneness to being moved as a directive force. As will become clear, to understand its depth, we will recur to a continental approach. To highlight the peculiarity in which it is guiding, I will contrast it with a more common-sense frame of morality as duty guiding us. Subsequently, two lived experiences will be dealt with, bridging analytic thought and continental thought, in order to designate the ineffable as a core aspect of meaning in life.

#### *The sewing case*

Let us have a closer look at Susan Wolf's example of a mother who stays up all night to sew her daughter a Halloween costume. To Wolf, this example is meant to illustrate our proneness to being moved by reasons of love, but since my aim is to contrast the way proneness to being moved is directive with the way morality as duty guides us, we will first consider it as an illustration of moral duty. We thus figure the mother carefully listening to her daughter's implorations to make her a Halloween dress for the next morning but instead of acting right away, she reflects on how to react to this according to a morality-as-duty account. Taking this in a strict sense, her answer then entirely depends on the referential frame in which she is embedded. We can thus imagine her going over the different aspects involved to reach a decision. She wonders whether sewing a costume is part of a mother's role, whether it is fair of her daughter to request this at such a late hour, and so on. The referential frame will inspire her decision in that it provides meaning and guidance. It enables her to make the right choices, as they follow from existing ideas and ideals about motherhood, fairness or justice. Whether the outcome is a yes or a no, in both cases it is well-balanced decision. To make

our case work, we will assume that she ultimately decided not to grant her daughter's request.

Turning now to a continental approach in order to grasp a deeper layer of proneness to being moved, we can further imagine that, as a result of the mother's refusal, the girl is disappointed, but does not say so. Yet, the disappointment shines through, and the mother becomes touched by it. She becomes prone to being moved by the love for her daughter. Through a particular gesture or something she said, the mother grasped the depth of her need for a fancy costume. The mother cannot be but receptive to it. She is receptive the very moment she is prone to being moved by love. Being prone is this involuntary 'welcoming' of the other's particular gesture, words or look. It is involuntary, because it is not steered by will or representation. We could say that the duty frame of reference is interrupted. While being moved, the mother intuitively grasps that this experience matters to her - it moves her regardless of her rational considerations. In that sense it is directive. Hence, both the morality-as-duty frame and the interruption of this frame by being moved make sense and are as such directive. A phenomenological approach can illustrate how proneness to being moved can be directive in a genuine distinctive way.

To further deepen our understanding of why proneness to being moved would be ineffable and at the same time directive, two lived experiences will be brought in, Rudy's case and the family case, each illuminating slightly different aspects of such an experience. Rudy's case will also illustrate that proneness to being moved forces us to make a distinction between meaning in life and meaningfulness, due to the way being moved comes about, while the family case serves to further clarify this distinction.

### *Rudy's case*

The first lived experience was told me during one of the in-depth interviews performed as part of a research project about Meaningfulness, Volunteering and Citizenship,<sup>4</sup> In the interview I asked Rudy, one of the interviewees, to recall a situation that moved him considerably. Interestingly, Rudy

does not refer to a loving situation worthy of love, such as Wolf has in mind, but to a range of situations all of which cause him to suffer. In other words, he equates being moved with suffering.

This is what he says:

“To see a park with no apple trees? That hurts, because [the park] does not live. Or when I visit a business and see its unsightly green areas. Nobody takes any notice and it is a contractor that comes to water them, [to me] these [plants and areas] are not living. That’s suffering; I suffer from that. I go around with a sense of suffering. [...] Take a car tearing past a biker; [it] makes me suffer, and feel for the biker. A mother that communicates badly with her child on the street, and behaves aggressively, I suffer with the child. And the fact that biodiversity in the world is crumbling, and that children suffer from particles in the air (...) This annoys me, makes me sad. What is it I suffer from? From the inhumane, the ugly, the simplistic, the stupid.”<sup>5</sup>

What does this fragment of the interview tell us? On different occasions, Rudy is prone to being moved, and susceptible to what he comes across, irrespective of what he is doing at the moment. Something from the outside interrupts him. Being moved befalls on him.

Distinct from Wolf’s example, the sewing case, where the mother got moved in a subtle way, Rudy tells us how he was moved by situations that appealed to him because he found them appalling. They left an imprint on him. Some time after the interview had taken place, I sent him an email message asking him if he could recall what happened at the instants he felt moved. Rudy’s answer contained the following meticulous clarification: “... there is a sense and intuitive grasping of what deeply matters [in life]. [When being moved by these situations], there is more than sensing a kind of absurdity. In the experience that something is not right, there is the presupposition that it can be different.” (*italics mine*). Rudy grasps that something is not right, not because of the idea that it is not right the way it is supposed to be or should be, but because he feels something is lacking, without this lack already having signification. This lack is apprehended as an absence of something that deeply matters. Rudy is moved because he

experiences non-sense, an absence of what matters. He is moved by this very absence. This non-sense makes sense to him as absence of what matters.

It is revealing that absence of what matters, matters to him, and even more revealing is the observation that it matters without this already having explicitness, strictly speaking. A singular feature of situations that move us and fall outside our signification is that they are directive in non-normative terms. In Rudy's case, they guide him in his life prior to any articulation in terms of right or wrong. Maybe we could go even further, for seemingly the peculiarity of this 'happening' is that it does not pertain to any referential category at all. In that sense it is ineffable. The moment matters and makes sense (as absence of what matters) and in that way adds meaning to life. Rudy's case is illustrative in that it shows how proneness to being moved is directive in an ineffable way. Yet it poses a problem as well, for can we still denote proneness to being moved in terms of meaningfulness? Meaningfulness, I believe, cannot be detected at this particular moment of being moved where there is absence of what matters. So although there appears to be something that adds meaning to life, expressing this in terms of meaningfulness would be awkward, to say the least. How to understand this? We may come to comprehend this tension more adequately if, as in the sewing case, we turn toward the action that follows. Indeed, in the interview Rudy did not only express his being moved, but explained how he acted subsequently. He reveals that he first reflected on it, and as a response to one of the cases that moved him, the sterile green zone in the park called 'nature', he went to the mayor of his town and proposed to organise an apple tree planting activity in the park, within the context of the Local Exchange Trading System (LETS) of which he is a member. Actually planting trees together with other members of the LETS is a feast to him, not so much for the socialising aspect, but because it enables him to change the situation he suffers from. Rudy's reaction thus comprises various stages. Firstly, there is the verbalisation of his being moved in terms of suffering. This implies that his being moved is brought into signification and thus given meaning. Subsequently, drawing

on the meaning it receives within his illuminating horizon, Rudy starts thinking on how to turn ‘absence of what matters’ into ‘that which really matters’ again. So absence of what matters, making sense, does not only preoccupy his mind, he literally takes action in order to set things in motion and change the situation, while involving others in it. If we now analyse this action from Wolf’s perspective of meaningfulness, we can comprehend that this part of the account satisfies hers; Rudy is positively engaged in a project that is worthwhile both from a subjective perspective (there is a restoring of absence in the way Rudy thinks it has to be restored) and from an objective perspective (the LETS members share his idea on this). And this is fulfilling to him. Wolf’s approach makes no allowance for the processes happening prior to action.

The continuation of the story in terms of reflection and action seems to indicate that meaningfulness comes in only at this very moment. In other words, the notion of meaningfulness starts making sense once we refer to Rudy’s reflecting on his being moved, or to his engagement in an activity. The fact that his proneness to being moved makes sense to him cannot be expressed in these terms because they are simply not appropriate to capture what is at stake.

So if we interpret the lived experience in this way, we unveil two ‘separate’ moments. First there is Rudy’s proneness to being moved which ineffably provides sense, adding meaning to his life, and second there are his reflections and actions, which make sense in terms of meaningfulness.

That the two are distinct can be illustrated in yet another way. We can, for the sake of the argument, imagine that, due to his being moved so often by the absence of what matters, Rudy’s grief has led him to an opposite reaction: he closes himself up in his house, so as not to have to be confronted with all the non-sense and suffering around. This would render any step towards action and engagement impossible. If Rudy thought and acted like this, we would no longer call this meaningful but rather associate it with a loss of this meaning and thus with meaninglessness. Rudy would no longer be able to partake of activities or projects that make his life worth living. So, more concretely, in this case, whether his being

moved by the absence of what matters is to be considered in terms of either meaningfulness or loss of meaning seems to depend on the significance, the meaning given to what has moved him. Rudy was prone to being moved by the absence of what matters. This made sense to him and was as such directive, but it is the way he interprets this and subsequently responds to this in terms of action, that is crucial in determining whether or not this experience became meaningful to him. Formulated in yet another way, being moved (in this case by the absence of what matters) can incline towards either meaningfulness or meaninglessness and what is decisive for this is not his proneness to being moved, but the way Rudy interprets his being moved, i.e. the kind of significance he gives to it with regard to a larger frame of reference.

We can take the distinction between the two one step further. If we are prone to being moved, we will never doubt or question that it matters when we are moved. In contrast, we may have doubts about the significance to be attributed to it, or the amount of energy to be put into subsequent action. Reflection on what moved us can make it turn either way. That we are moved and that our being moved matters, is of an enduring nature, even in hindsight, but the way we interpret it, in terms of meaningfulness or meaninglessness, is to some extent contingent.<sup>6</sup>

So, Rudy's case provides us a privileged view of how to grasp the distinction between meaningfulness in terms of signification and the associated action on the one hand, and proneness to being moved providing sense as direction, on the other. The subtle difference between the two moments in this particular experience is easier to grasp than in the sewing case, because of a dissociation between the two parts. Logically speaking, we would expect something that matters to turn into meaningfulness and something that matters through the absence of what matters, to turn into meaninglessness. For instance, in the sewing case, the mother can be prone to being moved by her daughter's question, this making sense to her in an ineffable way, with the subsequent sewing becoming a meaningful activity. Vice versa, we are almost naturally inclined to associate the absence of what matters with

meaninglessness. Being moved by the absence of what matters and this leading to meaningfulness somehow creates a logical dissociation, and it is here we can become more attentive to what is at play.<sup>7</sup>

### *The family case*

Let us now turn to the second lived experience. This serves as yet another example to show how meaning in life can be directive in an ineffable way, because it illustrates that proneness to being moved can be directive even without any signification given to it by the person involved in terms of meaningfulness. The example is based on a personal experience of mine and goes as follows.

On our way to our vacation house and after several hours' driving, my husband, my children and I were looking for a place to have a quick dinner. It was very late and we ended up in a cheap hotel where food was still being served. To our children (at that time very critical teenagers), the waitress was not dressed according to the current standards among their peers. Each time the waitress came in, in a too overtly way they looked at each other, pulling faces. I manifested my embarrassment and tried to point out their moral duty to treat all people with respect, but to no avail. My husband, on his part, did not participate in these instructive attempts of mine. He did not judge the children, did not address them directly. When the waitress came, he was very respectful towards her (as he usually is), and at one moment he said, as if he had not even noticed our discussion, "She looks very tired, poor soul". After this, the laughing stopped. When my youngest daughter got ready to carry on, the oldest simply ignored here.

My research work has made me particularly alert to such moments, so afterwards I asked my husband if he had said so on purpose, but this was not the case. His tiredness that day had made him absent-minded and unaware of what was going on at the table. Something in the behaviour of the waitress had told him she was very tired.

What does this lived experience reveal? We can see here how signification is meaningful and guiding, how it is

interrupted by being moved, and how the latter is directive in an ineffable way. Indeed, we can observe that the existing expectations with regard to dress code was guiding my daughters' behaviour. They conceptually 'locked up' the waitress in this signification. In my attempts to make them stop, I likewise resorted to standards from an illuminating horizon, trying to make them sound persuasive and thus guiding.

Next, my husband's words moved us, which interrupted my daughters' and my opposing intentions. I could not prevent this from happening. It interrupted my attempts at getting our children back on a decent track. I assume that, in a subliminal way, my eldest daughter was also moved (though we never spoke about it), for she no longer continued this game. The interruption made sense, directing or "redirecting" us.<sup>8</sup> To repeat, while I first went purposefully against my daughters laughing about the waitress's outfit, and while the laughing of my daughters was also a deliberate act, these two clashing intentions were interrupted by my husband's words, and directed away from it.

Interestingly, my husband had no intention to intervene, and as can be expected, this is not just a detail but crucial for being moved to be directive. No moral intention was involved; there was no attempt to make an exemplary claim. What was produced at that moment just happened, making sense without anyone being able to grasp it in terms of signification. It seemingly just made sense as something that mattered in an ineffable way.

The last sentence is not so innocent as it seems, for it points to a relation between the two terms ('sense' and 'mattered') that is at the heart of the matter. If we look at it closely we can see that there is no causal relation between both. What was produced at that moment does not make sense and thus matters, or vice versa, what was produced does not matter and thus makes sense. In this very case, both are in such an intrinsic way related that they are at the point of becoming a tautology, for what was produced can only make sense as something that matters.

Whereas so far the case is relatively analogous to the two former ones in that we can trace a distinction between the way in which significance (in relation to a referential frame) can be guiding and the proneness to being moved mattering in an ineffable way, it differs in that it has no continuation, there having been no follow-up action in terms of sewing or planting. What does this tell us about meaningfulness?

Two outcomes seem possible. As for myself, I considered the moment meaningful, and in hindsight this is because by reflecting on it I grasped in depth what it had done to the relationships involved. In other words, the moment became meaningful once I started reflecting on it and placed the experience in a meaningful horizon. Through reflection, it was brought into the realm of signification or a referential frame. Here, once again signification and meaningfulness are linked (I am not sure whether we can express this also in terms of fulfilment). In the case of my eldest daughter, it may be assumed that she did not reflect on what happened. Even so, the moment was orienting likewise as a breaking point (interruption) and as a leading point (directing or redirecting), thanks to something making sense or, as, one could prudently say, a sense circulating unwittingly and unintentionally among those present, leaving no more than a dim trace, but leaving a trace nevertheless, even if not in terms of meaningfulness. So this example seems to suggest that some context can be subtly guiding and as such contribute to meaning in life, without this being expressed or sensed as meaningful.

#### **IV. How Both Relate**

So far we have suggested that to understand the issue of meaning in life it may be beneficial to make a distinction between on the one hand proneness to being moved, this mattering or guiding in an ineffable way, and on the other hand meaningfulness or meaninglessness as being related to the way being moved is given significance. I will now further concentrate on the less discernible distinction between being moved and reflection (not the action), this turning the situation into meaningfulness or meaninglessness. While it was

emphasised that they are separate, it is also clear that they are intrinsically interrelated. The question is how. The three cases can help us a little further. When I asked Rudy if “being moved keeps him going, in the sense of setting him in motion”, Rudy wholeheartedly agreed. He probably took this very literally, grasping how his being moved by a situation leads to meaningful action. The intention of my question was subtler, however, namely that each time we are moved we are put on track again, even if this is not followed by action, as the family case shows. This track directs or redirects us because it reveals what deeply matters, without this already having signification. Rudy's case and the family case also showed that reflection on being moved is what made it turn in to meaningfulness (or meaninglessness). It is in this sense that it appears as if the possibility for meaningfulness and meaninglessness to come about is contingent on the proneness to being moved. Whether proneness to being moved turns into meaningfulness or meaninglessness depends on different reasons, but in order for us to speak in terms of one of both, we have to be oriented by our being moved by something. Meaningfulness or meaninglessness can arise only if we are moved in an ineffable way.

To be sure, this is a bold assumption indeed, for if meaningfulness and meaninglessness are contingent on our proneness to being moved, this means that situations considered meaningful or meaningless - always - presuppose a being moved. Could this be true? It would take us too far to examine this thoroughly here, but using the sewing case again, we will attempt to show that it is plausible that being moved is a prerequisite for meaningfulness to come about.

In the sewing case we concluded that, for the mother, morality as duty had significance as a referential frame and that as such it was meaningful and guiding. Words make sense against a horizon of meaning. We can now wonder if it could be that the frame was meaningful to her, not only because of a strict Kantian rationale, but also because the significance springs from a myriad of situations that have moved her on different occasions, prior to this rationale, and on which she then starts reflecting. An answer to this question, and its

plausibility, depends partly on how this frame is conceived of. From my point of view, a referential horizon is not only considered as a static conceptual frame but as something dynamic, influenced by the embodied praxis of daily life. If this makes sense we may well imagine that in the case referred to, the mother's first decision not to grant her daughter's request likewise sprouted from her having been moved by a certain situation. Indeed, it is very likely that in the praxis of life, the mother has been moved by specific events, for instance a news item on the fact that in certain places in the world, mothers are obliged to devote their entire life to their husband and children, which means they have no time left for their personal development. This may have struck her as 'unfair' and inspired her to make sure to keep a balance between the two. Yet, as we saw, the insistence of her daughter after the initial refusal, a certain look, or a certain movement moved the mother. We can conjecture that the latter situation of being moved makes her dubious. Thus, whereas she first did not grant her daughter's request due to specific understanding of fairness (drawn on being moved by a particular situation in the past), after being moved by the disappointment of the look of her daughter, the decision is suspended again, leaving open all possibilities. While this example shows the dynamic aspect of a moral view, more importantly for our case, it indicates that in both cases it is proneness to being moved by the situation that engenders, that sets in motion. Proneness to being moved by the situation could thus be conditional for a meaningful decision to come about 'next'.

Before concluding, we need to take one final turn, even if only briefly. While the cases discussed above suggest that meaningfulness (and meaninglessness) appear to be contingent on proneness to being moved, they also reveal a paradox. If what was claimed makes sense, an understanding of proneness to being moved seems itself to 'depend' on significance for it to have meaning. We can see this in two ways. Firstly, we can only recognise that there is such a thing as something that matters in an ineffable way, and fathom it, the moment we reflect on it, thus bringing it into signification or representation. This was illustrated by the family case, where we ascertained that the

eldest daughter did not reflect or attach significance to what had moved her. While there was something that directed her prior to her comprehension, she was not aware of it, and so, in that sense, it had no significance to her. Secondly, and even more paradoxically, we can only become aware of a certain sense that deeply matters in a way that is 'detached' from signification, because it interrupts signification. Without referential frame, nothing can be interrupted. So something can reveal itself as something that deeply matters, unless there is already a referential frame or signification.

The examples given suggest that there is a relation between an ineffable sense that matters, and meaningfulness (or meaninglessness) that comes about the moment this sense is made significant through signification. This relation can probably best be expressed in terms of an inherent interplay and we can prudently assume that this is what meaning in life is all about.

## **V. Ending Note**

In order to achieve a fuller understanding of what is at stake, it may be helpful to reconsider a few of the conceptual distinctions made so far, or more accurately, to refine and deepen these distinctions. Like some other scholars, Wolf focuses on activities that are meaningful. An account of meaningfulness is spun around and limited to involvement in worthwhile activities and projects. Positive engagement then is further linked to fulfilment. Wolf also alludes to the guiding function of meaningfulness, but cannot ground this in an optimal way within her frame of reference.

In this article an extra dimension was brought in, one that we called our proneness to being moved. We saw how this makes sense, how it matters, and how this can be directive without already having explicitness. These elements are not mere features of our proneness to being moved; rather the aspect of making sense, mattering and being directive are one and the same. Referring to them is a sheer repetition, coming close to a tautology. Proneness to being moved presupposes all three of them, for at the moment of being moves something

makes sense, matters (at times as absence of what matters) and directs in the same instant. In this way being moved adds meaning to our lives.

In this paper we subsequently assumed that the term meaningfulness, as used by Wolf, only makes sense the moment we start reflecting on being moved, (considering here reflection in its broadest possible sense) and acting. Being moved would then be conditional for meaningfulness (and meaninglessness) to come about. Yet as was shortly hinted at, what matters as making sense in an ineffable way can only be fathomed when brought into signification or a referential frame. Both are interrelated.

Our statement has implications for an understanding of the issue at stake, an issue we will now denote as meaning in life, while we will no longer use meaningfulness as a synonym for meaning in life, as Wolf implicitly does. Indeed, any study of the idea of meaningfulness, based on positive engagement in activities considered worthwhile both subjectively and objectively (such as undertaken by Wolf) basically covers only one dimension of what provides meaning to our lives. This also implies that the terminology developed to clarify this dimension is not suitable to grasp what is at stake in this other dimension, nor is it able to grasp the interaction between both. There is a built-in conceptual restriction. So conceptually, for the topic at stake a concrete suggestion could be to use 'meaning in life' as the overall term for, on the one hand, the study of proneness to being moved and, on the other, the subject in terms of meaningfulness (or meaninglessness) and the role of fulfilment in it. We can admit that both dimensions can develop their own vocabulary, without, however, losing sight of the intrinsic relatedness of both. The aim of this article was merely to point to one of them, proneness to being moved. How to understand this directiveness, and how exactly it relates to meaningfulness (and meaninglessness), requires much further reflection.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See also Wolf 1997a and 1997b.

<sup>2</sup> The topic of meaningfulness, meaning in life or meaning of life has been studied by various philosophers, and scholars in other disciplines. Interesting literature we can find in *The Meaning of Life* (Klemke and Cahn, 2008). This reader brings together several essays by 20th-century writers on this topic (Leo Tolstoy, Bertrand Russell, Albert Camus, Thomas Nagel, Robert Nozick) as well as by present-day authors. Also, issue n° 93/1 (2010) of the journal *The Monist* is dedicated to this subject, with contributions from analytically oriented authors. Most recent work is from Metz 2013. In the Dutch context, the works of Burms are important. See Burms and Dedijn 1986 and Burms 2012. Apart from Burms' and Wolf's perspectives, the mentioned perspectives are of little relevance to the statements I wish to make in this paper. Other authors likewise engage in this theme, more in particular Oakley 2010, Kekes 2008 and James 2010. Wolf's commitment to the topic is far less specific, which is why I have chosen to take her work as a point of departure.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Taylor explores to its full extent the link between moral horizons that are guiding, meaningfulness and identity. To Jean Grondin the guiding aspect of meaning in life is central, and so it is for John Cottingham, though to the latter the link between meaningfulness and spirituality is inseparable. These outlooks, no matter how interesting they are, differ too considerably from the perspective I wish to bring forward to take their work into consideration.

<sup>4</sup> The workshop 'Volunteers, Citizenship, Meaningfulness' was part of a research project on volunteering and victim-offender mediation set up by the Centre for Practice-based Research and Services (PRAGODI), Hogeschool-Universiteit Brussel. The Workshop was organised in collaboration with the Centre Leo Apostel for Interdisciplinary Studies (CLEA), and more particularly the Research Community 'Research on the Construction of an Integrated Worldview', Vrije Universiteit Brussel.

<sup>5</sup> The interview with Rudy was in Dutch, and a similar quote was used by Erik Claes in his article 'Civic Meaningfulness', published in the special issue of *Foundations of Science, Meaningfulness, Volunteering, Citizenship*, forthcoming.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Nagel in an interesting way demonstrates how all meaningful activity can turn into meaninglessness, and that this ultimately depends on the perspective one adheres to, namely an inner or an outer perspective, neither of which we can escape. He adds that these viewpoints 'function independently enough so that each can come as something of a surprise to the other, like an identity that has been temporarily forgotten.' (Nagel 1986, 209).

<sup>7</sup> Even though this example creates a logical dissociation enabling us to come closer to a distinction between two parts, Arnold Burms has convincingly demonstrated how a work of art can move us, and how this leads to meaningfulness. So even if something makes sense in an ineffable way, this leading to meaningfulness, a distinction between the two can be discerned (Burms 2012).

<sup>8</sup> The youngest daughter's lack of proneness is equally revealing. As can be understood, proneness to being moved is not something one can control or predict, it just happens, regardless of our will. It is something that comes about by the other. One cannot steer openness to the other or proneness to being moved. Some will simply experience this at one particular moment while others are at other moments.

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## Georges Canguilhem et la question de la « subjectivité » vitale

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### Abstract

#### Georges Canguilhem and the Issue of Vital “Subjectivity”

This paper outlines a hypothesis regarding the close connection between two problems in Georges Canguilhem’s work. The first problem is that of Canguilhem’s insistence to include considerations about natural selection in his work and of the role that this notion could play therein. The second problem consists in Canguilhem’s tendency to often use the term “life” as the subject of his sentences, even though this tendency may seem to at least partially contradict some of the central theses advanced in his philosophy. This paper attempts to show that these two problems should not be viewed as being isolated from one another, that there is a strong connection between the two and that a certain interpretation of the first one allows us to make sense of the second. To put it otherwise, the aim of this paper is to show that a particular interpretation of the role of natural selection in Canguilhem’s work could help explain why “life” plays the role of a preferred grammatical subject in his writings.

**Keywords:** Canguilhem, subject, life, natural selection, normal, pathological, normativity

Ce texte propose une hypothèse sur la conjonction entre deux problèmes dans l’œuvre de Georges Canguilhem. Pour les énoncer d’une manière abrupte, les deux problèmes sont les suivants : d’un côté, l’insistance de Canguilhem sur la notion de sélection naturelle et le rôle que cette notion joue dans ses écrits ; de l’autre côté, la tendance courante de Canguilhem de

faire de « la vie » un sujet grammatical insigne de ses phrases, alors même que cette tendance pourrait bien souvent sembler contredire – partiellement, au moins – les thèses centrales avancées par la philosophie de Canguilhem. Nous tenterons d'établir ici qu'il ne s'agit, en effet, pas de deux problèmes séparées, qu'il y a plutôt une conjonction étroite entre les deux dans les travaux de Canguilhem, et, enfin, que c'est une certaine interprétation du premier problème qui nous permet de comprendre le deuxième. Plus précisément, il s'agit de montrer que si « la vie » joue le rôle d'un sujet grammatical préféré dans l'œuvre de Canguilhem, cela pourrait s'expliquer par une certaine interprétation de l'importance de la notion de sélection naturelle dans ses travaux.

Mais avant de tenter de montrer leur conjonction, il vaut mieux essayer d'explicitier, ne fût-ce que brièvement, les deux problèmes pour elles-mêmes. Commençons par celui de la « subjectivité » grammaticale de la vie. Une longue citation nous aidera à l'introduire :

« Il est exact qu'en médecine l'état normal du corps humain est l'état qu'on souhaite rétablir. Mais est-ce parce qu'il est visé comme fin bonne à obtenir par la thérapeutique qu'on doit le dire normal, ou bien est-ce parce qu'il est tenu pour normal par l'intéressé, c'est-à-dire le malade, que la thérapeutique le vise ? Nous professons que c'est la seconde relation qui est vraie. Nous pensons que la médecine existe comme art de la vie parce que le vivant humain qualifie lui-même comme pathologique, donc comme devant être évités ou corrigés, certains états ou comportements appréhendés, relativement à la polarité dynamique de la vie, sous forme de valeur négative. Nous pensons qu'en cela le vivant humain prolonge, d'une manière plus ou moins lucide, un effort spontané, propre à la vie, pour lutter contre ce qui fait obstacle à son maintien et à son développement pris pour normes » (Canguilhem 1966, 77).

Il y a une sorte de volute logique dans ce passage qui nous semble importante et qui peut servir à rendre plus explicite ce que nous comprenons ici par la subjectivité grammaticale de la vie. Le normal, nous dit Canguilhem ici, n'est pas ou pas d'abord, en tout cas, à envisager comme une « fin bonne » à obtenir par la thérapeutique, il n'est pas, autrement dit à envisager comme une sorte de bien en soi, déjà donné, disponible dans le monde, pour ainsi dire. Au contraire,

il est à envisager comme étant essentiellement corrélé, pour employer des termes phénoménologiques, à une visée ; son mode d'être est celui de la visée, dans le sens où il n'existe pas en soi, mais comme une intention de « l'intéressé », comme un but à atteindre que le malade se donne. Il y a donc un caractère profondément subjectif du normal, en ce sens qu'il n'existe qu'en tant qu'il est visé par le malade. Et pourtant, cette subjectivité fondamentale du normal bascule, dans la dernière phrase du passage cité, dans un objectivisme profond, car, dit Canguilhem, en visant le normal, le vivant humain ne fait que prolonger un effort spontané de la vie. Le normal reste donc sur le mode d'être de la visée, mais c'est l'agent de cette visée qui change. Cet « agent » n'est plus un vivant ou un sujet humain ; ce n'est plus le malade ou l'« intéressé », mais c'est *la vie elle-même* qui vise le normal.

Tant qu'on ancrerait cette visée du normal dans un agent susceptible d'être considéré un sujet dans le sens philosophique du mot, le caractère fondamentalement subjectif du normal ne posait pas problème ; pourtant, dès qu'on l'ancre dans la vie elle-même – tout en s'interdisant de traiter la vie comme un Sujet métaphysique –, on est inévitablement appelé à justifier cette position, c'est-à-dire à montrer en quoi le normal garde son caractère de visée et, en même temps, à expliciter en quoi la vie est susceptible d'assumer un tel rôle d'agent d'une visée. Notre but ici n'est pas celui de résoudre ce problème à la fois très précis et très général. Il s'agira plutôt de l'ouvrir, d'identifier un élément qui pourrait nous permettre d'y entrer. Nous nous pencherons donc sur un problème préliminaire qui est celui de la « subjectivité » grammaticale de la vie, à savoir celui du glissement grammatical qui fait que la vie puisse prendre le rôle de sujet des phrases de Canguilhem. Pour le formuler d'une manière brutale, le problème que nous aborderons ici serait donc le suivant : si Canguilhem s'interdit de traiter la vie comme un Sujet métaphysique, qu'est-ce qui l'autorise pourtant à utiliser, dans ses écrits sur le normal et le pathologique, « la vie » comme un sujet grammatical de prédilection ?

C'est à cette question que nous allons essayer de répondre ici, et nous allons le faire en opérant une mise en

rapport de cette question avec une autre, non moins constante dans l'œuvre de Canguilhem. Il s'agit de celle de la sélection naturelle. Il faut noter que, dans chaque texte où Canguilhem aborde la question du normal et du pathologique – que cela soit dans sa thèse de doctorat de 1943 – *Essai sur quelques problèmes concernant le normal et le pathologique* –, ou bien dans son article sur « Le normal et le pathologique » de 1951, ou bien enfin dans les « Nouvelles réflexions sur le normal et le pathologique » de 1966<sup>1</sup> – dans chacun de ces textes donc, la question de la sélection naturelle surgit d'une manière quasiment naturelle sous la plume de Canguilhem. Voici un simple constat, dont la signification reste à dévoiler.

Cette signification est d'autant plus importante que, à notre avis, le voisinage strict entre le problème du normal/pathologique et celui de la sélection naturelle n'est pas sans difficultés. Notons que, lorsque Canguilhem se rapporte à la théorie de la sélection naturelle, c'est à la « synthèse moderne » de l'évolution qu'il se rapporte.<sup>2</sup> Or, il nous semble que, pour se défendre de l'apparent mécanisme de la synthèse moderne ou, pour le dire autrement, pour se garder de laisser l'impression d'une non-créativité de la vie, Canguilhem introduit toujours deux types de réserves ou de restrictions théoriques à chaque fois qu'il parle de la sélection naturelle. Il est, nous le verrons, intéressant de noter que ces deux restrictions sont toujours offertes ensemble par Canguilhem dans ses trois textes sur le normal et le pathologique.

La première réserve concerne le statut du milieu dans la théorie de l'évolution. Selon Canguilhem, il faudrait se défendre d'avoir une vision trop abstraite du milieu dont nous parle la théorie de la sélection naturelle. Voici une citation des « Nouvelles réflexions sur le normal et le pathologique », texte publié en 1966 par Canguilhem comme un complément de sa thèse de 1943 :

« si l'on considère la relation organisme-milieu comme l'effet d'une activité proprement biologique, comme la recherche d'une situation dont le vivant recueille, au lieu de les subir, les influences et les qualités qui répondent à ses exigences, alors les milieux dans lesquels les vivants se trouvent placés sont découpés par eux, centrés sur eux. En ce sens l'organisme n'est pas jeté dans un milieu auquel

il lui faut se plier, mais il structure son milieu en même temps qu'il développe ses capacités d'organisme » (Canguilhem 1966, 214).

Il ne faut donc pas voir l'organisme et le milieu comme étant d'abord séparés – chacun constitué de son côté, et qui sont seulement ensuite mis en rapport –, mais au contraire il faut les voir comme étant essentiellement corrélés l'un à l'autre : l'organisme se constitue en même temps qu'il structure son milieu. Si la théorie de la sélection naturelle peut donner l'impression que les vivants – par exemple, les organismes d'une même espèce qui forment une population – sont déjà donnés et qu'ils sont soumis seulement ensuite à l'action sélective d'un milieu lui-même donné comme extérieur à la constitution de ces organismes, Canguilhem, pour sa part, insiste que les deux – organismes et milieu – sont à envisager comme étant essentiellement corrélés.<sup>3</sup> Cela revient à dire que le milieu n'est pas donné, le même pour tous les types d'individus, mais qu'il est intérieurement différencié en fonction des stratégies de vie des types d'organismes qui s'y logent. En reprenant une distinction de von Uexküll, Canguilhem dira donc que « la *Umwelt*, c'est donc un prélèvement électif dans la *Umgebung*, dans l'environnement géographique » (Canguilhem 1952, 181).<sup>4</sup> La réserve par rapport à la vision courante de la sélection naturelle serait donc une réserve envers l'image d'un environnement unique et donné pour une certaine population, alors qu'il s'agirait, selon Canguilhem, d'un environnement lui-même relatif aux stratégies de vie qui ont cours dans cette population. Milieu et organismes, type de milieu et type d'organisme vont donc de pair, ils sont co-donnés, pour ainsi dire.

La seconde réserve de Canguilhem concerne la distinction entre adaptation et adaptabilité. Pour l'indiquer, nous allons reproduire ici un passage du même texte de 1966 qui nous a servi pour indiquer la première réserve :

« Il existe une forme d'adaptation qui est spécialisation pour une tâche donnée dans un milieu stable, mais qui est menacée par tout accident modifiant ce milieu. Et il existe une autre forme d'adaptation qui est indépendance à l'égard des contraintes d'un milieu stable et par conséquent pouvoir de surmonter les difficultés

de vivre résultant d'une altération du milieu» (Canguilhem 1966, 197).

Une espèce qui est trop adaptée à un milieu stable, qui manifeste donc un « spécialisation excessive », risque de périr lors de la plus petite altération de ce milieu stable. Inversement, une espèce qui contient en elle-même une « tendance à la variété » (Canguilhem 1966, 197) aura plus de chances à survivre lors d'un changement de son milieu. Dans ce sens, la deuxième espèce manifeste de l'« adaptabilité », alors que la première est seulement adaptée à son propre milieu. Canguilhem exprime ainsi ses réserves à l'égard d'une vision trop étroite de la notion d'adaptation : loin d'être la meilleure des choses possibles, une adaptation excessive n'est, à long terme, qu'une condamnation à la mort pour l'espèce qui la manifeste.

Analysées *séparément*, les deux réserves de Canguilhem – la corrélation organisme-milieu et la distinction entre adaptation et adaptabilité – ne posent pas problème. Pourtant, dès qu'on les analyse ensemble, on arrive vite à des tensions logiques. Car la deuxième réserve semble toujours risquer d'en nier la première. Au fond, qu'une espèce manifeste de l'adaptabilité alors qu'une autre ne manifeste que de l'adaptation, qu'est-ce que cela veut dire? La réponse à cette question passe par deux possibilités. Ou bien, d'un côté, on dira qu'un certain milieu *permet* une variabilité accrue, alors qu'un autre n'en permet pas – et ce serait alors cela qui expliquerait l'adaptabilité supérieure d'une espèce par rapport à une autre<sup>5</sup> ; ou bien, de l'autre côté, on dira que les propriétés intrinsèques d'une espèce lui permet de créer plus de variabilité par rapport à une autre espèce, *et cela dans un milieu comparable*, sinon tout à fait identique. Mais chacune de ces deux réponses nie, en fait, la corrélation nécessaire entre organisme ou espèce et milieu. La première réponse consiste à dire que le milieu est, à lui seul, responsable de la variété : et alors le milieu est de nouveau conçu comme extérieur – ou comme sans rapport intrinsèque – au vivant. Tandis que la deuxième réponse consiste à soutenir que le milieu ne joue pas de rôle dans cette variabilité différentielle, ce qui revient, au fond, à soutenir à

nouveau qu'il n'y a pas de corrélation intrinsèque entre le milieu et le vivant. Dès que nous prenons les deux réserves canguilhemiennes ensemble, nous tombons donc sur des tensions logiques. Pourtant, il faut noter qu'à chaque fois qu'il parle de la sélection naturelle, Canguilhem ne manque pas d'exprimer ensemble ou du même coup ces deux réserves.<sup>6</sup>

Le problème que nous abordons dans ce texte peut maintenant être reformulé. Comme nous l'avons dit, il semble que, pour se mettre à l'écart d'une vision trop mécaniciste de la sélection naturelle ou, autrement dit, pour aménager une place de créativité de la vie à l'intérieur de la théorie de la sélection naturelle, Canguilhem énonce, à chaque fois qu'il en parle, ses deux réserves ou restrictions théoriques. Pourtant, comme nous venons de le voir, ces deux réserves ne manquent pas de nous conduire dans des difficultés logiques. Alors, la question qu'il faudrait se poser est de savoir pourquoi, *malgré tout*, Canguilhem insiste-t-il à aborder la sélection naturelle dans ses textes sur le normal et le pathologique ? Pourquoi ne pas éviter tout simplement la question de la sélection naturelle ? On pourrait, sans doute, soutenir qu'il s'agirait, en effet, d'une simple déférence de Canguilhem à l'égard des sciences biologiques et de la théorie la plus compréhensive qui les soutient depuis Darwin. Pour une thèse de doctorat – son *Essai* de 1943 – une telle réponse semblerait sans doute raisonnable. Pourtant, ses discussions constantes et quelque peu répétitives sur la sélection naturelle dans tous ses textes ultérieurs sur le normal et le pathologique semblent faire signe vers une raison plus profonde. D'où l'hypothèse que nous avançons ici : à savoir, que la question de la sélection naturelle joue un rôle important pour la possibilité même – dont Canguilhem se sert si souvent – de faire de « la vie » un sujet grammatical dans ses écrits. C'est cela que nous essayerons de montrer ci-dessous, en passant en revue les trois points de recoupement entre la question de la sélection naturelle et celle du normal et du pathologique dans l'œuvre de Canguilhem.

## 1. La sélection naturelle et la polarité de la vie

Tout d'abord, la sélection naturelle relève, dans les considérations de Canguilhem, de la polarité de la vie. C'est l'un des points centraux de la démarche canguilhemienne, car la notion de polarité, quoique parcimonieusement explicitée dans les textes, sous-tend d'une certaine manière toutes les autres notions. Il y va, dans cette notion de polarité, de rien de moins que de la distinction entre le vivant et l'inorganique : « Vivre c'est, même chez une amibe, préférer et exclure. Un tube digestif, des organes sexuels, ce sont des normes du comportement d'un organisme. Le langage psychanalytique est fort correct en ceci qu'il qualifie de *pôles* les orifices naturels de l'ingestion et de l'excrétion. Une fonction ne fonctionne pas indifféremment dans plusieurs sens. Un besoin situe, relativement à une propulsion et à une répulsion les objets de satisfaction proposés. Il y a une polarité dynamique de la vie » (Canguilhem 1966, 84-5).

Il faut donc distinguer deux choses à l'intérieur de cette notion de polarité dynamique. D'un côté, il s'agit du simple fait que vivre signifie évaluer. C'est un point strictement nietzschéen, si l'on veut, celui que toute vie implique un jugement du bon et du mauvais, de ce qui doit être ingéré et de ce qui doit être évité ou excrété. Canguilhem reviendra, vers la fin de son *Essai*, sur ce point pour dire que « ce qui distingue un aliment d'un excrément, ce n'est pas une réalité physico-chimique, c'est une valeur biologique » (Canguilhem 1966, 148). Et cela *précisément* parce que l'excrément d'un vivant peut être l'aliment d'un autre : car cela signifie qu'il n'y a pas d'aliment ou d'excrément en soi, en fonction des seules propriétés physico-chimiques de l'objet en cause, mais c'est seulement sa rencontre avec tel ou tel vivant qui lui donne le statut d'aliment ou bien d'excrément. C'est dans ce sens que vivre, c'est évaluer ou bien juger en fonction du positif et du négatif. On songe ainsi à la paramécie de von Uexküll, pour laquelle les objets se différencient en deux classes seulement : d'un côté, des obstacles – c'est-à-dire la plupart des objets et qui déclenchent la fuite – et, de l'autre côté, des bactéries de décomposition qui sont, pour elle, la nourriture (von Uexküll 1965, 44-45).

Pourtant, il faut tout de suite ajouter qu'évaluer des objets comme bons ou mauvais ne peut se faire que par rapport à une fonction. Un tas de matière n'est un aliment pour un vivant que parce qu'il est « à digérer » – c'est, en effet, une autre manière de dire qu'il n'y a pas d'aliment en soi. Ainsi, dira Canguilhem, « le plus simple appareil biologique de nutrition, d'assimilation et d'excrétion traduit une polarité. Quand les déchets de l'assimilation ne sont plus excrétés par un organisme et encombrant ou empoisonnent le milieu intérieur, tout cela est en effet selon la loi (physique, chimique, etc.), mais rien de cela n'est selon la norme qui est l'activité de l'organisme lui-même. Tel est le fait simple que nous voulons désigner en parlant de normativité biologique » (Canguilhem 1966, 79). Nous voyons donc ici clairement qu'il est illicite de distinguer, comme s'il s'agissait de deux moments différents, entre une évaluation des objets et un fonctionnement de l'organisme. Fonctionner et évaluer sont indissociable. Dans ce contexte, la norme n'est donc que l'activité de l'organisme lui-même et, en se donnant une norme, à savoir en se comportant d'une certaine manière, l'organisme témoigne à la fois d'une certaine organisation interne et d'une certaine manière d'évaluer des objets.

Cette articulation de l'évaluation des objets et d'un mode propre de fonctionnement reçoit chez Canguilhem aussi le nom de non-indifférence biologique, c'est-à-dire la non-indifférence de la vie aux conditions qui lui sont faites. Et c'est en ce point précis, juste après la fin de la citation que nous venons de donner, que Canguilhem introduit dans sa discussion, d'une manière très abrupte, la notion de sélection naturelle : « Il y a des esprits que l'horreur du finalisme conduit à rejeter même la notion darwinienne de sélection par le milieu et la lutte pour l'existence, à la fois à cause du terme sélection, d'import évidemment humain et technologique, et à cause de la notion d'avantage qui intervient dans l'explication du mécanisme de la sélection naturelle » (Canguilhem 1966, 79). Contre les critiques de la notion de sélection naturelle qui prétendent que beaucoup de vivants meurent avant que leurs inégalités leur apportent un avantage ou un désavantage, Canguilhem affirme, en s'appuyant sur un argument de Georges Teissier, que « parce

que beaucoup d'êtres meurent avant que leurs inégalités les servent, cela n'entraîne pas que présenter des inégalités soit biologiquement indifférent. C'est précisément le seul fait dont nous demandons qu'il nous soit accordé. Il n'y a pas d'indifférence biologique. Des lors, on peut parler de normativité biologique » (ibid.).

Il est pourtant évident que, derrière le terme de non-indifférence biologique, on a affaire, dans les deux cas – celui de l'organisme et celui de la sélection naturelle –, à des choses complètement différentes. Du côté de l'organisme, il y a bien une norme, une manière d'être que l'organisme se donne et cela est, indissociablement, un rapport au milieu sous la forme d'une discrimination des objets. Il n'en est pourtant pas de même pour la sélection naturelle. On a bien affaire à des modes de vie, à des types d'individus différents qui sont confrontés à un milieu – Canguilhem dit expressément ici « sélection par le milieu » –, mais cela ne change pas le fait que la discrimination n'est pas entre les objets, mais bien entre les types d'individus. Ce qui est soumis à l'évaluation, ce n'est pas l'aliment ou l'excrément, mais bien les types d'individus eux-mêmes. Si l'on parle, comme Canguilhem le fait, d'une manière vague de « non-indifférence » vitale, cela n'empêche pas que, dans le contexte précis de l'aliment et de l'excrément, l'organisme est l'agent d'une non-indifférence à l'égard du milieu, alors que, dans le cas de la sélection naturelle, c'est le fait que les types d'organismes sont bien les malheureux patients de leurs rapports au milieu qui est désigné par ce terme de non-indifférence.

Nous pouvons donc conclure ce point en disant que si la vie est caractérisée d'une manière à la fois très compréhensive et pourtant très vague comme « non-indifférente » aux conditions qui lui sont faites, alors sous cette notion compréhensive dont Canguilhem se sert comme d'un fait minimal pour identifier la vie dans sa différence avec l'inorganique, sous cette notion donc subsiste une multiplicité de sens qui n'est pas facilement maîtrisable. Mais cela nous indique déjà que l'un des problèmes centraux dans la démarche canguilhemienne est le problème du « qui », à savoir le problème du sujet grammatical. Si l'on dit que la vie est non-indifférente aux conditions qui lui sont faites, l'agent et le

patient changent de place dès qu'on change de niveau biologique, dès qu'on se déplace de l'organisme individuel aux types d'organismes.

## 2. Sélection et maladie

Dans les travaux de Canguilhem sur le normal et le pathologique, la sélection naturelle est aussi convoquée d'une manière *analogique* par rapport à la question de la maladie. Pour arriver à en discuter, il faut noter que la vie ne se réduit sans doute pas à cette caractéristique minimale qui est la non-indifférence. Elle relève aussi de la plasticité. Il s'agit donc, encore une fois, de distinguer la vie de la matière, et c'est pour cela que, tant dans l'*Essai* que dans l'article de Canguilhem de 1951 sur « Le normal et le pathologique », c'est une citation de Bichat qui est convoqué et qui dit qu'il n'y a pas de pathologie astronomique, ou physique ou chimique (Bichat 1822, 20-21). Les lois de la matière sont ce qu'elles sont, et elles ne peuvent pas devenir autres. Au contraire, si les organismes peuvent tomber malades, c'est qu'ils relèvent d'une essentielle plasticité.

Il n'est donc pas surprenant que Canguilhem s'attache en premier au type de plasticité qui est impliqué dans le surgissement de la maladie. L'enjeu, pour Canguilhem, semble être le fait qu'objectiver la maladie revient à ontologiser la vie. Si la maladie est envisagée comme un simple mauvais extérieur qui vient s'insérer dans l'organisme, qui entre dans l'organisme « comme par la porte », alors l'organisme ne peut pas être vu autrement que comme une machine. Être en vie ne signifierait rien de plus qu'être un assemblage de pièces, et une intrusion de l'extérieur peut alors détraquer ou bien les pièces elles-mêmes, ou bien le rapport entre deux ou plusieurs pièces. De l'autre côté, envisager la maladie comme un simple écart quantitatif, comme un plus ou un moins par rapport à certaines valeurs normales, revient à tenir ces valeurs normales pour un type idéal et, par ce fait, à platoniser la vie. Les deux positions donnent une consistance ontologique propre à la vie, transforment la vie en un type d'en soi, à un type de faits dans les deux sens du mot « fait » : en tant que matérialité donnée, dans le premier cas, et en tant que cas soumis à un type idéal

dans le deuxième. Et si Canguilhem soutiendra que la maladie est une réaction, c'est-à-dire une manière « de réagir par une maladie à une lésion, à une infestation, à une anarchie fonctionnelle » (Canguilhem 1966, 77), dans cette idée, l'un des enjeux est celui que la vie n'est pas un fait, mais une opération ou bien une activité.

Mais cela entraîne deux choses. D'un côté, cela entraîne que c'est seulement un organisme entier qui peut tomber malade, et non un organe, par exemple. Ou, dans les mots de Canguilhem, « il n'y a de maladie que du tout organique » (Canguilhem 1966, 150). Comme l'a montré Michel Morange, même les anomalies génétiques qui pourraient sembler, au premier regard, comme des contrarguments factuels à la position de Canguilhem, ne le sont en fait pas. Dans le cas de la chorée de Huntington, montre Morange, la maladie ne consiste pas dans un gène muté, mais elle est plutôt le résultat de la lutte de l'organisme contre la modification protéique qui découle de cette mutation génétique (Morange 2000, 94-95). Quant à Canguilhem, en discutant si l'on peut considérer un leucocyte comme étant malade, il répond qu'on peut sans doute le faire, mais seulement pour autant qu'on le considère comme un organisme en situation de défense et de réaction par rapport à un milieu. Donc, continue Canguilhem, « le même donné biologique peut être considéré comme partie et comme tout. Nous proposons que c'est comme tout qu'il peut être dit ou non malade » (Canguilhem 1966, 151).

D'un autre côté, si la maladie est toujours la maladie de l'organisme entier, elle est inséparable d'une évaluation subjective. Tout comme dans le cas de la notion de polarité dynamique dans le sens restrictif que nous lui avons donné plus haut, cette évaluation est essentiellement double : d'un côté, si l'organisme réagit contre « une lésion, une infestation, une anarchie fonctionnelle », cela est fait toujours en vue du rétablissement du mode de fonctionnement antérieur qui vient d'être mis en question. C'est, dans l'exemple de Morange, parce que le gène muté produit des répétitions de glutamine dans les cellules où le gène est exprimé et parce que ces répétitions de glutamine perturbent la fonction cellulaire que le programme de mort cellulaire – qui donne en effet la maladie, la chorée de

Huntington – est mis en œuvre à l'égard de ces cellules. L'organisme veut rétablir son fonctionnement antérieur, et c'est cela que donne la maladie. Inversement, une fois la maladie installée, c'est le rétrécissement du niveau de vie qui nous la signale, c'est la réduction de la qualité et de la variété d'interactions avec le milieu qui nous la rend manifeste. La maladie est, pour ainsi dire, doublement subjective : tant dans son déclenchement en tant que réaction qui veut rétablir un fonctionnement antérieur ; que dans sa confirmation, une fois la maladie installée. C'est pour cela que nous ne voyons pas, à proprement parler, une tension entre la maladie comme réaction et la maladie comme rétrécissement de la latitude de vie, mais plutôt un cercle ou une présupposition réciproque entre les deux : la réduction de la latitude de vie est le résultat d'une réaction contre ce qui est déjà évalué comme un rétrécissement apporté par « une lésion, une infestation, une anarchie fonctionnelle ». Et cette dimension proprement subjective qui est révélée par – ou plutôt dans ou comme – la maladie est, peut-être, tenue, par Canguilhem lui-même, comme sa plus grande contribution dans le domaine de la philosophie de la médecine : « Nous ne faisons pas profession – assez bien portée aujourd'hui – d'indéterminisme. Nous soutenons que la vie d'un vivant, fût-ce d'une amibe, ne reconnaît les catégories de santé et de maladie que sur le plan de l'expérience, qui est d'abord épreuve au sens affectif du terme, et non sur le plan de la science. La science explique l'expérience, mais ne l'annule pas pour autant » (Canguilhem 1966, 131). C'est ici que s'ancre, chez Canguilhem, la priorité de la pathologie sur la physiologie. Il y a une science de la pathologie seulement parce qu'il y a d'abord maladie éprouvée, c'est-à-dire seulement dans la mesure où la vie s'éprouve. Il ne s'agit donc plus ici d'une évaluation par la vie, mais d'une auto-évaluation de la vie, pour ainsi dire.

Pourtant, si l'on passe à l'utilisation analogique que Canguilhem fait de la notion de pathologique dans le contexte de la sélection naturelle, on tombe vite dans des difficultés. Ainsi, nous lisons : « l'anomalie ou la mutation ne sont pas en elles-mêmes pathologiques. Elles expriment d'autres normes de vie possibles. Si ces normes sont inférieures, quant à la

stabilité, à la fécondité, à la variabilité de la vie, aux normes spécifiques antérieures, elles seront dites pathologiques» (Canguilhem 1966, 91). Si, en d'autres termes, un type d'organismes, distingué dans le cadre de son espèce par un certain écart génétique, s'avère inférieur aux autres types qui existent dans le cadre de cette espèce, ce type d'organisme sera dit pathologique. Ce qui est malade, dans ce cas, c'est le type en entier, c'est le type comme tout, car c'est seulement un tout qui peut être malade. Laissons de côté le problème posé par le fait que, dans les populations biologiques, la caractérisation des types est souvent conventionnelle, les populations ne présentant pas des différences discrètes, nettes entre les différentes valeurs du trait qui est en question, ceux-ci formant plutôt un continuum (qu'on songe à la taille corporelle, par exemple). Mais le problème plus profond, c'est que celui qui est malade, à savoir le type, n'est pas celui qui se juge tel. L'individualité malade n'est pas la même que celle qui s'évalue comme malade. Si le type s'avère inférieur, et en ce sens peut être qualifié comme pathologique, il est évalué comme étant inférieur par les autres types de l'espèce. En d'autres mots, s'il y a une réaction contre ce type, s'il est écarté à la suite d'un jugement d'infériorité, c'est l'espèce qui peut être, analogiquement, sans doute, désignée comme sujet d'un tel jugement. C'est en cela que l'individu qui porte la maladie, qui est malade, n'est donc pas le même que l'individu qui le juge malade. Il y a donc décalage, changement de niveau entre individualité et subjectivité du pathologique ici.

Pour écarter ce problème il ne suffit pourtant pas de dire qu'un organisme peut, quant à sa latitude de vie, se sentir malade par rapport à un état antérieur qui lui était propre, mais aussi par rapport aux autres individus qui l'entourent. Une telle distinction ne peut suffire dans la mesure où, dans chacun de ces deux cas, c'est le même organisme qui se sent malade, c'est le même individu qui évalue son état maladif. Alors que, dans la discussion sur la sélection naturelle, c'est le type qui est malade, mais c'est l'espèce qui le juge tel, c'est, si l'on peut le dire ainsi, l'espèce qui se sent malade en lui. Il y a, pour ainsi dire, un enchevêtrement des niveaux, une sorte d'indistinction des niveaux dans cette question de maladie

portée et de maladie jugée. C'est cela qui devient visible dans « Le vivant et son milieu », lorsque Canguilhem affirme que « pour Darwin, vivre c'est soumettre au jugement de l'ensemble des vivants une différence individuelle » (Canguilhem 1952, 171). Bien entendu, s'il s'agit d'une différence individuelle, il faut comprendre que le jugement est réservé au tout de l'espèce en question ou, selon le cas, à la partie de cette espèce qui partage un milieu qui peut raisonnablement être considéré comme un même milieu. Et, continue Canguilhem, « ce jugement ne comporte que deux sanctions : ou mourir ou bien faire, pour quelque temps, partie du jury. Mais on est toujours, tant que l'on vit, juge et jugé » (Canguilhem 1952, 171). On voit bien ici un point qui est souvent passé sous silence. On conçoit très souvent la sélection naturelle comme étant une sorte de rapport univoque entre le milieu et une population donnée, rapport par lequel le milieu élimine certains individus et en laisse survivre d'autres. Et les choses *semblent* se passer ainsi si l'on prend en considération le fait que si l'on change le milieu pour la même population, ce ne sont pas les mêmes, mais d'autres types de la population qui seront avantagés. Mais, si le milieu offre le cadre pour un « jugement » tel que celui dont nous parle Canguilhem, ce n'est pas lui qui l'accomplit : le jugement a toujours lieu entre les types d'individus qui appartiennent à cette population, c'est eux qui s'entre-jugent. Le milieu fixe, si l'on veut, le cadre et la sévérité du jugement, mais n'accomplit pas le jugement lui-même. En voyant donc la sélection comme une manière de s'entre-juger des types d'individus, Canguilhem nous apprend, en fait, qu'il ne faut pas voir la sélection naturelle comme un processus par lequel le milieu élimine certains individus et en laisse vivre d'autres. Au contraire, s'il y a sélection, c'est parce qu'un type ou certains types d'individus *vivent mieux* qu'un autre ou que d'autres dans un milieu donné. Qu'il s'agisse de ce qu'on appellerait aujourd'hui sélection de viabilité ou sélection de fécondité, le fait important à noter c'est qu'il n'y a pas une sorte de passivité essentielle par laquelle les types attendraient simplement un jugement de la part du milieu, mais que c'est au contraire leur manière de poursuivre leurs vies qui constitue, par elle-même, un jugement porté sur les autres. C'est en ce sens que les types

d'individus s'entre-jugent.<sup>7</sup> C'est pour cela que Canguilhem a raison de dire que si Lamarck pense la vie selon la durée, Darwin la pense « plutôt selon l'interdépendance » (Canguilhem 1952, 172).

Mais cette question de l'enchevêtrement des niveaux ou cette indistinction entre juge et jugé nous permettent de faire un pas de plus pour conclure notre propos. C'est ce que nous tenterons de faire en discutant un dernier contexte d'emploi, par Canguilhem, de la notion de sélection naturelle.

### **3. Sélection naturelle et normativité**

Il s'agit à la fois d'un emploi pour clarifier la notion de « normatif » et d'un emploi historique ou même fondateur. Par ce dernier, Canguilhem semble essayer d'expliquer pourquoi nous pouvons parler, aujourd'hui, par exemple, des valeurs normales de tel ou tel paramètre physiologique. Et sa réponse consistera à faire de la physiologie, vue comme « science des allures stabilisées de la vie » (Canguilhem 1966, 137), une science historique. Bien entendu, rien dans les instruments utilisés par la physiologie ne deviendra pour autant historique, on n'étudiera évidemment pas le fonctionnement du foie comme on étudie l'histoire de la démocratie, mais cela n'empêche pas que l'objet lui-même de la physiologie devienne un objet historique. Le normal d'aujourd'hui est devenu, il n'a pas toujours été le même. Dans les mots de Canguilhem : « au moment d'une rupture de stabilité physiologique, en période de crise évolutive, la physiologie perd ses droits, mais elle ne perd pas pour autant le fil. Elle ne sait pas d'avance si le nouvel ordre biologique sera physiologique ou non, mais elle aura ultérieurement le moyen de retrouver parmi les constantes celles qu'elle revendique pour siennes » (Canguilhem 1966, 137-8). Le normal change, il passe par des crises évolutives en même temps que les espèces qu'il caractérise, mais il se stabilise de nouveau, et cette stabilisation est le produit de ce que Canguilhem appelle le « caractère normatif ». La nouvelle norme de vie est dite, par Canguilhem, normative par rapport à l'ancienne, dans le sens où elle dévalorise l'ancienne avant de l'éliminer (Canguilhem 1966, 91).

Mais, au fond, qu'est-ce que ce caractère normatif ? Il ne s'agit pas de dire simplement que la nouvelle forme de vie élimine d'une manière abstraite l'autre de l'existence, mais plutôt qu'elle *prend sa place*. C'est pour cela que, dans l'article sur le normal et le pathologique de 1951, nous apprenons que le normal dans le sens de caractère moyen est en effet sous-tendu par le normal dans le sens de normatif, c'est-à-dire dans le sens où il est « prototypique et non simplement archétypique » (Canguilhem 1952, 203). C'est que ce caractère normatif du nouvel type d'individu n'est en effet que l'envers de la capacité de l'espèce de *se laisser entraîner* dans la direction proposée par ce nouvel type d'individu. Il ne s'agit donc pas de dire que le normal est relatif, qu'il n'est plus le même aujourd'hui que hier. Mais il s'agit, au contraire, de dire que la vie est tout entière relative à elle-même. Si un type d'individus est normatif, c'est qu'il devient prototypique pour son espèce, c'est qu'il l'emporte et lui donne une nouvelle direction et que, inversement, l'espèce se laisse ainsi « dirigée ». C'est ici, il me semble, que se trouve le sens le plus profond de l'utilisation par Canguilhem de la notion de sélection naturelle, alors même que les influences uexkülliennes, par exemple, auraient pu l'en détourner. Ainsi, si Canguilhem peut dire, à propos de Leriche, que la douleur « n'a de sens, n'est un sens, qu'au niveau de l'individualité humaine concrète » (Canguilhem 1966, 56), nous pouvons en dire autant de la vie : elle n'a de sens que pour autant qu'elle est un sens, c'est-à-dire que pour autant que, par exemple, chaque nouvel type d'organisme peut emporter ou entraîner avec lui toute son espèce. Le changement ou l'enchevêtrement des niveaux est donc une caractéristique essentielle de la vie dès qu'on ne la conçoit plus comme un fait ou comme un donné. Au contraire, si chacune de ses formes contribue au sens de la vie, c'est que chacune est susceptible d'entraîner tout son sens. Et si les normes sont instituées, c'est dans le sens où le sens même de la vie se refait avec chacune de ces institutions.

Si nous avons donc voulu parler ici du sens « grammatical » de la notion de « subjectivité » vitale, c'est parce que la vie a ce sens en premier. Chaque nouvelle « phrase » contribue au sens du texte entier et l'entraîne, à tort ou à raison, dans des directions nouvelles, mais à chaque fois, on ne

peut pas parler de la vie sans parler de *toute* la vie. De ce point de vue, la phrase la plus profonde de Canguilhem nous semble être celle où il tient « le monde vivant pour une tentative de hiérarchisation des formes possibles » (Canguilhem 1952, 200). Il y va bien de formes possibles car, dès qu'on ne tient plus les vivants pour des réalisations des idéaux pré-donnés, chaque nouvelle forme arrive avec sa propre possibilité sans en être précédée. Mais il y va aussi d'une hiérarchisation, dans le sens où tout se joue entre les niveaux : chaque nouvelle forme peut entraîner toute son espèce et chaque espèce peut se laisser ainsi entraîner. C'est bien une hiérarchisation et non une hiérarchie, car c'est dans les deux directions à la fois que tout se joue. Enfin, il s'agit bien d'une *tentative*, car tout se refait à chaque pas, le sens du tout est toujours en jeu. C'est dans le sens d'une telle tentative que la vie a une « finalité ». Car, dit Canguilhem en 1966, si le concept de finalité « à un sens, c'est parce qu'il est le concept d'un sens, le concept d'une organisation possible, donc non garantie » (Canguilhem 1966, 212-3). C'est précisément parce que la vie relève du sens, parce qu'elle est *du sens*, qu'elle n'a pas de sens précis ou établi. C'est en cela que, avec une superbe phrase de Canguilhem, « la pensée de la finalité exprime la limitation de finalité de la vie » (Canguilhem 1966, 212). Si la vie n'est pas une chose ou une substance, si elle n'est pas un idéal non plus, c'est qu'elle est une tentative ou bien une aventure.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Le premier et le troisième des textes mentionnés sont repris dans (Canguilhem 1966). Le deuxième se trouve dans (Canguilhem 1952).

<sup>2</sup> Cette synthèse de la théorie de la sélection naturelle avec la génétique des populations venait d'être mise en place par les travaux de plusieurs biologistes importants pendant les années 1930, quoique son achèvement se continuera jusqu'à la fin des années 1940. Le terme lui-même de « synthèse moderne » est forgé par Julian Huxley en 1942 (Huxley 1942). Dès 1943, Canguilhem indique clairement que c'est à la synthèse moderne qu'il se réfère lorsqu'il parle de sélection naturelle : « Il semble aujourd'hui que ce soit à l'interférence des innovations par mutation et des oscillations du milieu qu'on doive situer l'apparition d'espèces nouvelles, et qu'un darwinisme rajeuni par un mutationnisme soit l'explication la plus souple et la plus compréhensive du fait de l'évolution, malgré tout incontestable » (Canguilhem 1966, 90).

<sup>3</sup> Voici une thèse que Canguilhem partage avec Jacob von Uexküll (ce dernier étant, par ailleurs, bien méfiant à l'égard de la théorie de la sélection naturelle – cf., par exemple, von Uexküll 1926, 113). Il est intéressant de noter que cette réserve est exprimée d'une manière un peu confuse dans la thèse de Canguilhem (cf. Canguilhem 1966, 90-91) où il ne cite pas von Uexküll. Dans les années 1946-1947, dans une série de conférences (« Aspects du vitalisme », « Le vivant et son milieu »), Canguilhem citera explicitement et analysera certains aspects de l'œuvre de von Uexküll (Canguilhem 1952, 118-119 et 180-182), et c'est aussi à partir de ce point que sa réserve concernant la corrélation organisme-milieu prend une forme plus claire.

<sup>4</sup> Dans le même sens, nous pouvons lire dans un livre cosigné par Canguilhem que « Les places vacantes en un lieu donné, selon la terminologie de Darwin, sont moins des espaces libres que des systèmes de vie (habitat, mode d'alimentation, d'attaque, de protection) qui y sont théoriquement possibles et non encore pratiqués » (Canguilhem et al. 1960, 32).

<sup>5</sup> C'est la solution que Canguilhem semble avoir choisi en 1943 dans son *Essai sur quelques problèmes concernant le normal et le pathologique* : « Le milieu est normal pour une forme vivante donnée dans la mesure où il lui permet une telle fécondité, et corrélativement une telle variété de formes, que, le cas échéant de modifications du milieu, la vie puisse trouver dans l'une de ces formes la solution au problème d'adaptation qu'elle est brutalement sommée de résoudre » (Canguilhem 1966, 90-91).

<sup>6</sup> Cf., pour l'expression des deux réserves dans les autres textes de Canguilhem sur le normal et le pathologique, Canguilhem 1966, 90-91 (pour l'*Essai* de 1943) et Canguilhem 1952, 199 et 202 (pour l'article de 1951 sur « Le normal et le pathologique »).

<sup>7</sup> Cet entre-jugement est peut-être le plus évident dans la sélection sexuelle. Il ne faut même pas recourir à des présentations très spécialisées de celle-ci pour le comprendre : il suffit, par exemple, de se rapporter à l'une des descriptions qu'en donne Richard Dawkins (Dawkins 2009, 54).

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## Les enjeux stratégiques de la théorie du discours chez Foucault

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### Abstract

#### The strategic concern of the discourse theory in Foucault

In order to fully understand Michel Foucault's archeology of knowledge it is necessary to put it not only in the context of the discourse theories of the French school, but also in that of the linguistic theories of science. On the one hand, Foucault rejects the representational theory of scientific language (developed by Carnap and others). In his analysis of the discourse of the human sciences, with its complicated definition of the statement (*énoncé*), he aims to show that we cannot limit the language of knowledge to a vocabulary. On the other hand, Foucault's approach is a serious challenge to structuralism because it is impossible to analyze the language of *savoirs* without taking into account the statement's correlate (the referent issue). If the discourse of sciences is an artificial vocabulary created by means of the purification of the natural language, Saussure's semiology could not compete against the conceptual dynamics of representational semiotics, and should admit that, in the cognitive usage, signs are representations. Therefore, Foucault admits that the statement has a correlate, that this correlate is not a physical object and that it functions as a historical structure of the discourse. This structure (*épistémè*) can be seen as a norm; the changing of this norm cannot be identified but in the archive and its *description* is always retrospective, structural and archaeological.

**Keywords:** archeology, discourse, Foucault, knowledge, savoir, linguistic theory of science

Le dépassement de la linguistique de Saussure par les théories du discours (plus ou moins structuralistes) n'a aujourd'hui rien de spectaculaire. Pourtant, au début du mouvement structuraliste, cette entreprise a constitué une sorte de révolution épistémologique dans les théories du

langage. Chez Saussure on ne trouve pas la notion de *discours*, mais seulement les notions de *langue* (le système des signes avec leurs possibilités de combinaisons) et de *parole* (l'actualisation du système dans la phrase, qui constitue l'unité signifiante maximale – il n'y a pas d'unité signifiante transphrastique). La notion de *discours* était censée résoudre un certain nombre de problèmes théoriques et pratiques du savoir linguistique, mais il ne faut pas s'imaginer que la résolution de ces problèmes n'a pas donné naissance à des nouvelles difficultés ; comme le dit Vincent Descombes : « la sémiologie déplace toutes les questions vers l'analyse du discours » (Descombes 1979, 125).

### 1. Les sources : les linguistiques du discours

Chez Emile Benveniste le discours est défini comme niveau *sémantique* de la langue, par opposition au niveau *sémiotique*. Il parle de « sémiotiques de deuxième génération » qui devront proposer un nouvel appareil conceptuel afin de dépasser la sémiotique saussurienne par des analyses sémantiques (intra-linguistiques) et meta-sémantiques (trans-linguistiques). Cette dernière dimension devrait inclure les textes et les œuvres. Le sens de la notion de discours résulte de cette question de Benveniste, si les rites symboliques et les formules de politesse sont des systèmes de signes autonomes. La réponse du linguiste en est qu'ils ne peuvent pas se comparer avec la langue, car ils n'entretiennent pas une relation sémiologique en l'absence d'un discours, soit le « mythe » pour accompagner le rite ou le « protocole » pour les formules de politesse. Ces signes, pour être des signes, supposent l'existence d'une langue qui les produit et les interprète (Benveniste 1974, 50). On entend ici deux choses : que le discours appartient au domaine linguistique (le niveau sémantique) et que le mythe ou le protocole sont des discours ! Le discours diffère de la parole. Benveniste affirme les choses suivantes : a) l'énonciation représente l'*acte de production* d'un énoncé ; b) elle est l'œuvre d'un locuteur qui utilise la langue ; c) elle est donc la « conversion individuelle de la langue en discours » ; d) avant l'énonciation, la langue est une pure possibilité ; e) après l'énonciation, la langue est mise en

instance discursive ; f) dans l'énonciation, la langue exprime un rapport au « monde » ; g) la référence se réalise par le discours, étant partie de l'énonciation (Benveniste 1974, 80-82). On dirait que la parole équivaut à l'énonciation, alors que le discours serait l'énoncé. Mais le jeu de l'énonciation et de l'énoncé est compliqué : tantôt le « discours est une manifestation de l'énonciation », tantôt l'énonciation est une « forme de discours » (Benveniste 1974, 85). Disons qu'il s'agit d'un mécanisme de *production* dans le premier cas, et du *résultat* de cette production, dans le deuxième cas. Le discours serait le message ; son unité minimale – l'*énoncé*<sup>1</sup>.

Avant Benveniste, ce sont Lévi-Strauss et Barthes qui ont parlé d'une sémiologie du discours. Lévi-Strauss a dû formuler un certain nombre d'hypothèses pour faire l'analyse des mythes. La définition du mythe comme récit relatant des événements – qui se sont passés dans un temps de l'origine – soulève certaines difficultés à la linguistique saussurienne. D'une part, le mythe est une séquence de phrases appartenant à la parole et manifestant une dimension historique ; d'autre part, le mythe est présent de façon atemporelle dans la conscience collective. Lévi-Strauss déduit que le mythe appartient à une double structure. Il est formulé dans le domaine de la langue, mais il est analysable dans la parole (Lévi-Strauss 1958, 231). Pour comprendre correctement cette question, nous devons nous rappeler que, chez Saussure, le syntagme relève de la langue, alors que la phrase appartient à la parole. Le syntagme serait une combinaison de signes préexistant dans la langue, tout faite, elle ne sollicite pas la liberté d'action et l'inventivité du locuteur. Par contre, la phrase demanderait au locuteur de combiner les signes afin de réaliser la signification voulue<sup>2</sup>.

Or, le mythe suppose la répétition rituelle des mêmes séquences linguistiques, car il est la narration d'une histoire historiquement atemporelle. Au niveau linguistique, on dirait que le mythe est un macro-syntagme composé de phrases. Pour cette raison, Lévi-Strauss trouve nécessaire de parler d'un troisième niveau de signifiante, intermédiaire entre la langue et la parole, ayant un caractère linguistique tout en différant d'elles (Lévi-Strauss 1958, 231). L'analyse

structurale révèle que le mythe est structuré comme une langue, par des oppositions entre des unités signifiantes et des significatives. Ces unités ne sont pas les signes minimaux de Saussure ; ce sont des « grosses unités constitutives (soit mythèmes) » (Lévi-Strauss 1958, 232) qui nous apparaissent comme des phrases au niveau de la parole, mais qui sont les éléments d'un système, au niveau synchronique.

L'analyse du mythe n'est pas l'herméneutique d'une allégorie, car le récit mythique est structuré par une organisation étrangère (arbitraire) au contenu des phrases. « Le fil narratif n'est rien d'autre qu'un mélange désordonné d'éléments disparates » qui doit être réduit à un nombre de relations par « décomposition du récit mythique en segments discontinus que l'analyse réarrange en une structure de simultanités selon les lois de l'organisation » (Pavel 1988, 47). Le mythe est donc un *discours* dont la signification est donnée par la modalité de combinaison des éléments signifiants dans une syntaxe qui atteste l'existence d'une pensée mythique. Cette pensée serait *rigoureuse* (structurée) comme la science, *anonyme* (les mythes n'ont pas d'auteur), *autonome* (les mythes se pensent les uns les autres) ; *anhistorique* (les mythes sont une machine à abolir le temps). Cette forme de pensée ou d' « esprit humain » se manifeste comme *Discours*<sup>3</sup>.

D'une linguistique du discours, c'est Roland Barthes qui en a parlé. En systématisant l'hypothèse de Lévi-Strauss sur le troisième niveau linguistique, Barthes, avant Benveniste, a développé une « deuxième linguistique » et a fait la distinction entre linguistique et trans-linguistique. Selon Barthes, le discours est un niveau sémiotique qui représente une « autre langue », « un système sémiologique secondaire », ayant une organisation propre, bien que comparable avec l'organisation de la phrase. Dans ses *Mythologies*, Barthes affirme les choses suivantes : a) le mythe est un métalangage par rapport à la langue qui est son langage-objet ; b) ce qui est signe dans le premier système ne devient que signifiant dans le deuxième système ; c) le terme final du système linguistique est le terme initial du système mythique (Barthes 1956, 188 sq).

La notion de « discours » vient de la tentative de définir, par les catégories de la linguistique, des grandes chaînes de signes qui se présentent comme « mythes », « littérature », etc. Pour rendre compte du discours, la linguistique doit devenir une « translinguistique » ayant comme matériel de recherche : le mythe, le récit, les objets de civilisation, à condition qu'ils soient parlés (Barthes 1964, 81) ; « le discours serait une grande phrase (...) tout comme la phrase est un petit discours » (Barthes 1966, 3).

En fin de compte, il s'agit de ces formes culturelles qui, avant la naissance de la linguistique, ont toujours été appelées des « discours ». L'Écriture Sainte, le *logos* des philosophes et en général tout ce qui se présente sous la catégorie de l'*œuvre* sont des « discours ». Le langage de la science est également un discours, et toute catégorie linguistique qui est transversale aux langues naturelles, c'est-à-dire aux codes linguistiques, est un discours. Si la catégorie du discours a dû être réinventée, c'est parce que la sémiologie se présente comme un projet de refonte du savoir.

Selon Ricoeur, la première caractéristique de cette translinguistique serait que « tout discours se produit comme événement, mais se laisse comprendre comme sens » (Ricoeur 1975, 92). Ricoeur comprend le caractère événementiel à l'aide de l'expression « instance de discours » qui, chez Benveniste, veut dire « événement par excellence répétable, [mais, dit Ricoeur] c'est le répétable d'un événement, non d'un élément du système » (Ricoeur 1975, 93). Pour Foucault, cette caractéristique de l'événement discursif est importante : c'est le caractère d'événement qui distingue l'énoncé de l'ordre logique et de l'ordre linguistique. L'importance que prend la littérature chez Foucault (et chez Barthes) est liée au caractère de pur événement, car elle n'est pas répétition. Ni Parole, ni mythe, ni science, ni « objet », elle est une simple dispersion de l'objet et du sujet, annulation de la représentation et, si l'on veut, « répétition de la différence » (Deleuze 1969).

## 2. Le discours autonome de l'archéologie

Chez Foucault le concept de discours répond au projet de définir le langage au niveau de son « être » empirique. Le « discours » de l'archéologie est événement et production, spontanéité et autonomie. « Autonome », le discours l'est par rapport aux catégories de la subjectivité (psychologique ou transcendantale); « événement » – par rapport à la langue et à la structure; en tant que production il est une *pratique*. Ce que le discours produit ce sont des objets, des modalités d'énonciation (*des sujets*), des concepts et des stratégies théoriques. Compte tenant de ces éléments, on peut soutenir que *le discours est une production du savoir*. C'est à partir de là que Foucault l'analyse, en l'isolant de ces deux instances de formalisation et d'interprétation qui sont la langue et la pensée. L'archéologie se veut une *simple* description, car elle refuse d'anticiper toute production future d'énoncés et de les insérer dans une totalité. L'archéologie doit répondre à la question « comment se fait-il que tel énoncé soit apparu et nul autre à sa place ? » (Foucault 1994, 706).

L'archéologie cherche plutôt les règles qui ont gouverné la production des discours passés. Comme chez Saussure, ces règles sont indépendantes de la conscience de celui qui parle ; elles lui sont extérieures. Mais cette extériorité n'est pas celle du système de la langue, d'une structure ; c'est de l'extériorité de l'archive qu'il s'agit. A la différence de la langue et de la parole, l'archive est historiquement fermée: ses règles sont épuisées, ses énoncés ne peuvent plus être répétés. Le discours est une « langue morte » qui est connue à partir de *ce qui a été dit*, consigné, conservé, déposé, classé, achevé. Il n'y a pas d'archive sans poussière. C'est à partir de là que nous devons comprendre l'enjeu archéologique relatif au langage : l'archive est le phénomène empirique et consommé du langage. Si l'archéologue parle encore des conditions de possibilité et non pas de réalité, c'est parce qu'« on ne peut décrire exhaustivement l'archive d'une société. (...) En sa totalité l'archive n'est pas descriptible. (...) Elle se donne par fragments, régions et niveaux » (Foucault 1969, 171). « Analyser les faits de discours dans l'élément général de

l'archive, c'est les considérer non point comme *documents* (d'une signification cachée, ou d'une règle de construction), mais comme monuments, c'est – sans aucune assignation d'origine, sans le moindre geste vers le commencement d'un *arché* – faire ce qu'on pourrait appeler – selon les droits ludiques de l'étymologie – quelque chose comme une archéologie » (Foucault 1968, 708).

En tant qu'historien de la science, Foucault se propose de traiter le discours scientifique à la manière dont Lévi-Strauss traitait le discours mythologique et Roland Barthes, le discours littéraire. Mais l'application à l'archive suppose une théorie générale de l'archive ; l'archéologue n'arrive à son but que par découpage ou « segmentation » de la « deuxième langue ». Puisqu'il parle de l'« être du langage », Foucault ne peut pas se contenter uniquement du discours de la science ; il doit définir son concept de discours par rapport à la linguistique, à la logique et à la théorie du « langage ordinaire ». Il est nécessaire de traiter le discours comme discours en général, sans lui appliquer un traitement spécial pour chaque domaine de la culture. La différence entre la science, la religion, et la philosophie n'est pas un bon critère pour analyser le discours. Cela veut dire que Foucault donne une certaine priorité à la *fonction poétique* du langage ; l'analyse du discours scientifique part de la supposition d'un « degré zéro de la représentation » (Dosse 1991, 99). La recherche de ce « degré zéro » commence dès la rédaction de *l'Histoire de la folie*, suivie d'un bon nombre d'études sur la littérature. A l'époque des *Mots et les choses*, on peut parler d'une influence ou d'une réflexion commune chez Barthes et chez Foucault ; nous avons en vue une possible correspondance entre « les écritures aliénées » (Barthes) et « les fractions du langage » (Foucault 1966, 318) qui traduisent l'idée de la multiplication du langage moderne en plusieurs régions. L'impossibilité de les unifier dans une écriture unique fait penser à la littérature comme « utopie du langage » (Barthes 1972, 65) ou à l'« être du langage » (Foucault 1966, 394).

La question des fonctions du langage a été posée par Karl Bühler qui distinguait entre trois fonctions du langage : expressive (symptomatique), de signal et de représentation

(descriptive) (Auroux, 1994, 28). Bertrand Russell a identifié les mêmes fonctions : il disait que : « Le langage répond à une triple finalité : i) indiquer des faits ; ii) exprimer l'état du locuteur ; iii) altérer l'état de l'auditeur » (Russell 1993, 225). Ces trois fonctions ont été nommées par Roman Jakobson (1963, 214-220) « émotive », « conative » et « référentielle » ; elles correspondent à un schéma étroit de la communication, ne tenant compte que des trois personnes de la parole : l'émetteur, le destinataire et la « chose ». Jakobson propose la diversification des fonctions du langage partant d'un schéma plus complexe de la communication. Par exemple, la référence indique le contenu du message qui est donné par le contexte de la communication ; mais la transmission d'un message suppose également l'existence d'un *contact*, et d'un *code*. Jakobson fait correspondre au « contact » une fonction qu'il appelle « phatique », d'après l'étude de Malinowski sur le langage des primitifs<sup>4</sup>. Au « code » linguistique correspond la fonction « métalinguistique » qui donne au langage humain la possibilité de parler de ce langage même<sup>5</sup>. Il reste une fonction qui correspond au message lui-même : « La visée (*Einstellung*) du message en tant que tel, l'accent mis sur le message pour son propre compte, est ce qui caractérise la fonction *poétique* du langage »<sup>6</sup> (Jakobson 1963, 218). La fonction poétique est importante dans l'« art du langage », mettant en valeur la partie palpable des signes.

Il est évident que, dans l'ensemble des fonctions du langage inventoriées par Jakobson, la fonction représentative correspond au discours scientifique, tout comme la fonction poétique correspond au discours littéraire, et la fonction conative au discours moral. Foucault renverse cette compréhension de la question, quand il montre que l'objet d'une science se constitue au niveau discursif ; la science *invente* son objet tout comme la littérature produit ses mondes fictionnels. C'est le discours qui imprime à ces objets la catégorie de la « réalité » ; la « naturalisation » de l'objet « folie » à l'âge classique est un exemple en ce sens. Donc, la monumentalité du langage est de considérer le langage au niveau de sa possibilité de se réaliser en tant que « projet » de formation (production) des objets, des sujets, des concepts et des sciences.

Or, en sa qualité d'archéologue des sciences « imparfaites », Foucault essaie de donner à cette idée un caractère *technique*. La sémiologie est susceptible de réaliser une unification de la connaissance sans passer par une métaphysique. C'est à partir de cette idée que doit être comprise la critique foucauldienne de Heidegger. Une poétique du discours scientifique serait en mesure de proclamer la « fin de l'humanisme » sans faire recours ni à une projection vers le temps des origines, ni à une origine métaphysique de la temporalité. Il faut maintenant montrer à quel type de projet s'oppose cette « poétique » du discours scientifique et quelles sont les exigences qui le traversent.

### **3. Le langage-nomenclature : les énoncés protocolaires**

L'idée de l'indistinction entre les domaines de la connaissance en partant de la considération sur la nature du langage n'est pas une nouveauté foucauldienne. Les membres du Cercle de Vienne ont soutenu dès les années '30 que l'analyse du langage doit mener à l'unité de la science (Carnap) ou à la « science unitaire » (Neurath). Les représentants de l'empirisme logique ont soutenu que la distinction (faite par l'idéalisme allemand) entre « sciences de la nature » et « sciences de la culture » n'a pas de sens, tant que le terme « science » se réfère à des ensembles d'énoncés à *signification*, c'est-à-dire ayant un contenu perceptif et cognitif. L'empirisme logique est donc la première contestation de la scientificité des sciences de l'esprit ; la présentation de cette critique nous permettra de mieux traiter de la signification de la position archéologique.

Appliquant les principes de l'analyse logique du langage, dont la source est la philosophie de Russell et de Wittgenstein<sup>7</sup>, les philosophes de Vienne ont mis au fondement de tout problème épistémologique la réduction des énoncés complexes à des énoncés « de base » qu'ils ont appelés « énoncés protocolaires » ou « d'observation ». L'idée d'une *conception scientifique du monde* veut dire que « dans la science il n'y a pas de “profondeurs”, tout est à la surface » (Cercle de Vienne 1985b, 115). Les énoncés ne font pas l'objet

d'une herméneutique ; tout ce que la philosophie peut faire est de clarifier les problèmes de l'énoncé en faisant usage de la méthode de l'analyse logique du langage (*ibid.*). Ce n'est pas l'« essence » des objets, mais leurs « formes structurales » que l'étude du langage doit chercher, afin de montrer la possibilité de la communication universelle de la connaissance. Cette idée est assumée explicitement par Carnap (1928 ; 1934) dans *Logische Aufbau der Welt* et dans *Logische Syntax der Sprache*. L'unité méthodologique de la science reste à définir à partir des cinq projets revendiqués par le Cercle de Vienne, visant la fondation de l'arithmétique, de la physique, de la géométrie, de la biologie et des sciences sociales. La tâche de la fondation des sciences sociales est assumée par Otto von Neurath (1931/1932) qui en a traité dans son célèbre étude *Soziologie im Physicalismus*.

La définition des « énoncés protocolaires » a été l'objet d'un certain nombre de désaccords entre les philosophes de Vienne. Dans son *Dépassement de la métaphysique par l'analyse logique du langage*, Carnap disait que « ces énoncés se réfèrent à ce qui est donné, mais il n'y pas d'accord par rapport à ce qui est donné » (Carnap 1985, 158) ; il essayait ainsi de dépasser non seulement la métaphysique, mais également le désaccord entre les membres du Cercle sur la question des énoncés. Quelle que soit la nature des énoncés protocolaires, les membres du Cercle ont été d'accord sur le fait que l'analyse doit montrer comment *réduire* les énoncés complexes à des énoncés primaires et comment les *déduire* de ces énoncés. Cela pose la question des *règles de transformation* ; mais il y a aussi des *règles de formation* dont s'occupe la syntaxe. Une langue, dit Carnap, est formée à partir d'un vocabulaire et d'une syntaxe. Le vocabulaire est formé de mots ayant une signification ; la syntaxe comprend des règles de formation des phrases ayant un sens<sup>8</sup>. Dans cette étape de sa réflexion Carnap ne prend pas en compte la sémantique ; il dit que la signification d'un mot dépend de la syntaxe, c'est-à-dire des modalités qui règlent son apparition dans l'énoncé élémentaire ayant la forme « x est une pierre »<sup>9</sup>. La signification d'un mot est déterminée par son critère de vérification, soit la présence de ce mot dans un énoncé

élémentaire ou dans un énoncé dérivé d'un énoncé élémentaire. L'analyse logique consiste donc dans la réduction des mots à d'autres mots et, en fin de compte, à des mots qui entrent dans la composition des énoncés élémentaires. Autrement dit : ce ne sont que ces mots qui désignent un concept (ou, si on veut, une « chose », bien que cette dernière affirmation nous renvoie à la question de la nature controversée des énoncés protocolaires) qui ont une signification. Donc le langage de la science est représentatif, à savoir les mots significatifs représentent des « choses » (physicalisme) ou des « donnés perceptifs » (phénoménalisme).

#### **4. Les difficultés posées à la linguistique structuraliste par le langage de la science**

L'évocation de cette recherche analytique sur le langage de la science pose quelques questions de haute difficulté à la linguistique structuraliste attachée à l'idée d'autonomie de la langue. Nous pouvons grouper ces difficultés en deux classes : 1) des objections qui concernent l'idée de langue et de langage en général ; 2) des objections liées à la façon de concevoir la science comme entreprise linguistique.

1) Concernant les « objections » liées à l'idée de langue et de langage » nous proposons deux sortes d'arguments : a) ceux qui font référence à l'histoire de la science linguistique à l'âge moderne et qui concernent Foucault en tant qu'historien de la science du langage ; b) ceux qui font référence à la définition de la modernité en partant d'une réflexion sur le *linguistic turn* et qui concernent Foucault en tant que théoricien de la modernité.

a) L'idée de Saussure selon laquelle la langue n'est pas une nomenclature était en fait une critique de la détermination des catégories linguistiques par les catégories épistémologiques. En même temps, toutes les théories philosophiques du langage considèrent que le problème de la dénomination est capital. Ces théories ne sont pas intéressées par les « linguistèmes », quelles qu'elles soient, tant qu'elles ne peuvent pas servir à l'analyse de la signification et de la vérité. L'histoire des sciences du langage nous montre que ce partage a toujours fait problème à l'âge moderne. Par exemple

Foucault nous dit que, si à l'âge classique la grammaire générale était une logique, la science moderne du langage a dû devenir historique, en séparant la grammaire de la logique. Selon lui, le projet de formalisation de la logique a la valeur d'une compensation de la « perte d'unité ». Or, ce que Foucault ne nous dit pas est que la logique elle-même a acquis chez Frege deux significations : la logique comme langage et la logique comme calcul (Cf. Hintikka 1979, 716-722)<sup>10</sup>. On peut constater chez Frege qu'il y a d'une part, un intérêt pour la fondation des mathématiques et, d'autre part, un intérêt pour la question du sens et de la signification dans la langue naturelle (Cf. Frege 1971). Cette distinction nous montre en clair que la logique n'a pas abandonné le projet d'être une grammaire des grammaires<sup>11</sup>, comme la grammaire générale et la philosophie du langage de l'âge classique<sup>12</sup>.

S'il y a eu séparation de la linguistique et de la logique, cela suggère que la modernité a développé la question du rapport entre la pensée et le langage : i) premièrement du côté d'une linguistique générale ; ii) deuxièmement du côté d'un langage « bien formé ». Or, si le projet d'une linguistique générale peut « rejoindre » l'ancien projet d'une grammaire générale, c'est parce que la logique était déjà une « algèbre » qui permettait de poser la question de la fondation de l'arithmétique, par formalisation et axiomatisation. La logique comme langage est la « transparence de la représentation » ; elle constitue un tableau des fonctions logiques qui élimine le sujet comme principe de synthèse : quand le sujet intervient dans ses affaires, il y introduit les paradoxes de l'auto-référentialité. Dans la logique il n'y pas de sujet. Avant Saussure, Frege a fait en premier la critique de l'expression et de la représentation subjective ; face au système, le sujet est anonyme. Mais la réflexion logique et scientifique sur le langage demande *des objets* : la notion de « nombre » n'est seulement une *flatus vocis*.

b) Cet « oubli » de Foucault a comme conséquence directe une définition de la modernité comme « âge de l'expression », en partant de sa réflexion sur le statut épistémologique des sciences humaines. La définition des sciences humaines en tant qu'« expression du sentiment de la

vie », c'est l'empirisme logique qui l'a premièrement fournie. Cette considération part de la supposition que le langage significatif doit avoir comme corrélat des objets ; cette conception se situe dans le sillage de Frege, Russell et Wittgenstein. De fait, la critique de l'expression tenue pour représentation est commune à l'empirisme logique et à la pensée foucauldienne. Mais, si la critique empiriste et logique de l'expression est faite au nom de la signification (*Bedeutung*), Foucault part de l'idée saussurienne que la nature du signe n'est ni la représentation, ni l'expression. Dans la critique de Saussure, la représentation et l'expression sont synchroniques. Foucault veut les décaler pour faire jouer l'idée de diachronie selon laquelle il n'y a pas de sujet *quand* la représentation impose ses lois. Pour cette raison, le concept de représentation est ambigu.

Chez Foucault, la représentation est un concept trans-épistémique et polyvalent : il ne traverse pas seulement les diverses sciences (comme c'est le cas de la notion de « structure ») ; il traverse les épistémès. La représentation équivaut à l'« être brut de l'ordre » et elle est liée aux « codes » de la culture moderne, donc au signe. Les mutations qui interviennent dans la modalité de la *semiosis* modifient le statut de la représentation. Le tableau que nous avons dressé en parlant du principe de classification des épistémès nous montre clairement que le statut de la représentation change avec les différentes manières de considérer la combinaison des fonctions du langage<sup>13</sup>. L'existence du projet de l'empirisme logique est, avec toute sa généalogie, par ce fait même, un argument contre la définition foucauldienne de la modernité.

2) L'analyse du langage de la science pose davantage la question d'un langage représentatif, si on tient compte du fait qu'elle se veut – elle aussi – une description des « formes structurales » de l'objet. Une réflexion saussurienne sur la science devrait mettre hors circuit les *fonctions significatives* du langage (émotive, conative, référentielle) pour se situer du côté des *fonctions signifiantes* (du code, du message). Il est vrai que l'analyse du langage fait, elle aussi, abstraction de certaines fonctions significatives, comme l'expression et la modification du comportement, et qu'elle donne une

importance particulière à certains aspects relevant de la fonction métalinguistique et de la fonction poétique. La fonction métalinguistique est importante dans la mesure où elle rend possible la définition du vocabulaire et la formulation des règles de formation et de transformation. La fonction « poétique » est également importante puisque la science possède, elle aussi, un « art du langage », lequel est argumentatif et démonstratif, et on peut même parler du *style*, par exemple le faillibilisme ou le vérificationnisme<sup>14</sup>. Mais, par rapport à la langue naturelle analysée chez Saussure, le discours de la science est une « langue bien formée ». Selon Wittgenstein, ce serait un langage qui décrit des faits et dont les énoncés peuvent être facilement identifiés comme vrais ou faux, car ils nommeraient des « objets » qui auraient une signification univoque. Du point de vue sémantique, il s'agirait d'une nomenclature<sup>15</sup>. Dans une langue quasiment « bien formée », la question du rapport entre le signe et la représentation ne peut plus être évitée. Le langage de la science est par excellence bien formé, car il y a tendance à établir une univocité entre le « concept » et l'« objet ». La valeur et la signification sont une seule et même chose, par rapport à la langue naturelle. Pour juger la question de manière comparatiste, comme pour *sheep* et *mouton*, il faudrait placer la question non pas sur le terrain des deux langues naturelles, mais sur celui des deux sciences : par exemple, il faut voir si le mot *structure* a la même valeur en biologie et en linguistique, ou si le mot *homme* a la même signification en sociologie et en psychologie.

### **5. A quoi répond la définition de l'énoncé dans l'Archéologie du savoir**

Pour définir l'enjeu de la théorie du discours chez Foucault, nous tenons compte de deux éléments : 1) en tant que conception du signe arbitraire, l'archéologie se propose de réfuter la thèse selon laquelle le discours de la science est représentation des objets ; 2) en tant qu'histoire de la science, elle doit admettre que le discours scientifique pose un certain nombre de problèmes à la linguistique saussurienne. Plus précisément, si cette linguistique n'est pas gênée par

l'évidence du discours de la science, cela veut dire qu'elle est quelque part d'accord que le signe retrouve la représentation au niveau de la signification. Une théorie des mythologies et des littératures ne suffit pas pour annoncer la fin de la représentation ; il faut montrer que, si la science n'est pas une mythologie et une littérature, il y a pourtant un certain nombre de *règles générales du discours* qui constituent l'archive d'une époque<sup>16</sup>. Si le programme de Foucault a été si blâmé, c'est à cause de cette *dernière* conséquence du structuralisme.

Dans l'*Archéologie du savoir*, Foucault définit l'énoncé en le distinguant de la phrase grammaticale et de la proposition logique. Il dit que « Partout où il y a une phrase grammaticalement isolable, on peut reconnaître l'existence d'un énoncé indépendant ; mais en revanche, on ne peut plus parler d'énoncé lorsque au-dessous de la phrase elle-même, on accède au niveau de ses constituants » (Foucault 1969, 108). Cette idée conteste d'abord contre ce type d'analyse linguistique qui ne veut pas reconnaître la valeur de « signe » aux unités de « deuxième niveau », considérant *la phrase* comme unité maximale légitime. En même temps elle est un réfutation de l'analyse logique qui décompose la phrase (« L'actuel roi de France est chauve ») en « propositions atomaires », afin de trouver un objet x, soit la référence du nom propre ou de la description (« roi de France ») ; la proposition élémentaire est alors description d'un « état de choses ». Foucault dit explicitement que « l'énoncé n'a pas pour corrélat un individu ou un objet singulier qui serait désigné par tel mot de la phrase » (Foucault 1969, 119-120). Par exemple, l'analyse logique des formulations « Personne n'a entendu » et « Il est vrai que personne n'a entendu » met en évidence leur indiscernabilité. Par conséquent, du point de vue du langage ordinaire (par exemple, si on les imagine en première ligne d'un roman) les deux formulations sont des énoncés différents. On pourrait objecter que la science n'est pas un roman et que Foucault ne prend pas en compte la différence entre langage et métalangage. D'une part, cette distinction concerne les langages formels, d'autre part, elle a été proposée pour éviter les paradoxes. Même si pour la

première question il y avait d'autres questions<sup>17</sup>, tant qu'il s'agit (dans l'exemple de Foucault) d'affirmer une affirmation il n'y a pas de danger de contradiction. En même temps, l'idée de métalangage confirme l'idée de Foucault : une proposition Fx formulée dans le langage-objet n'est pas la même chose que sa validation dans le métalangage.

Le problème le plus important que pourrait rencontrer une théorie saussurienne du langage de la science serait celui de l'identification des « signes ». Le problème dont Foucault se rend compte c'est que, si on comprenait par « signe » l'unité minimale de Saussure, et si on disait que le discours des sciences est un vocabulaire artificiel obtenu par la purification de la langue naturelle, alors la sémiologie saussurienne ne pourrait résister face à la dynamique conceptuelle de l'*autre sémiotique* et devrait admettre que, dans l'usage cognitif, les signes sont des représentations. Comme dans les sciences de la nature ils ont acquis de toute façon une fonction représentationaliste, il y aurait une tentation incessante de « naturaliser » des objets qui ne peuvent pas prétendre à la rigueur des sciences formalisées et formalisables. Par conséquent, il faut que le discours des sciences « imparfaites » soit analysable à partir d'une conception sémiologique qui ne réduise pas le « signe » à un vocabulaire. C'est ici l'enjeu de l'analyse du discours des sciences humaines et de la définition de l'énoncé. Mais, à ce niveau, se pose la question de l'identification : il ne s'agit pas d'identifier des mots du langage ordinaire, comme les deux « Messieurs ! » de Saussure ; il faut identifier des énoncés qui ont comme une « valeur » dans la deuxième langue, puisqu'ils sont des événements de longue durée.

Ce problème de l'identification des énoncés est bien connu dans la philosophie du langage de la science. Il a été analysée par Otto Neurath lorsqu'il réfutait l'idée d'un langage phénoménaliste : « chez Carnap (...) nous voyons l'accent mis sur le *Je* que la philosophie idéaliste nous a rendu familier » (Neurath 1985, 229). Carnap avait parlé d'un langage universel de la science constitué à partir d'une « première langue » qui serait « langue du vécu » ou « langue phénoménale » et dont les énoncés n'auraient pas besoin de confirmation. Neurath

entreprenant une critique de cette conception « monologisante » du vécu originaire, qui aurait besoin d'un deuxième moment, intersubjectif, de la « construction logique du monde ». Selon Neurath, un langage physicaliste pourrait mieux résoudre la difficulté (de Carnap) que « les protocoles d'un instant donné doivent pouvoir être insérés dans les protocoles d'un instant suivant » (Neurath 1985, 228). Le fait que Carnap a abandonné sa position est la meilleure preuve que la question de l'« identification » est réelle.

Or, le saussurien ne dispose pas des instruments physicalistes, behavioristes, mécanicistes, et mentalistes pour attaquer la question. Il ne peut parler d'un « *slang* » universel structuré par des « connexions transversales si souvent négligées » (Neurath 1985, 230) ou d'une *lingua franca*<sup>18</sup> qui rende compte du fonctionnement du langage de la science. Par conséquent, il doit expliquer avec ses propres moyens comment la modernité a pensé que « le mot “homme” relié avec “formuler des assertions” doit être défini de la même manière que le mot “homme” qui figure dans les énoncés contenant des mots tels que “ordre économique”, “production” » ; c'est Neurath qui le dit ! (Neurath 1985, 230) Donc, Foucault prend bien conscience que, dans le discours de la science, la question du rapport entre le signe et la représentation devrait se poser, en raison d'une certaine univocité dans l'usage des concepts. Il ne pourrait contester qu'il y aurait tendance à dire, comme chez Bloomfield, qu'« il n'y a pas de vrais synonymes ». Si les sciences de Foucault sont « imparfaites », si elles ne sont pas des langues « bien formées » au sens de Carnap, elles sont au moins quasiment bien formées, au sens de Condillac<sup>19</sup>. Autrement, comment aurait-on pu faire passer l'« expression du sentiment de la vie » pour une représentation ? Il faut y reconnaître au moins la rigueur que Lévi-Strauss attribuait aux mythes, bien que cette rigueur ait des enjeux sémantiques.

Par conséquent, Foucault admettra que l'énoncé a un *corrélat*, que ce corrélat n'est pas un individu, et qu'il fonctionne comme une *structure historique* du discours. Cette hypothèse permet d'expliquer pourquoi il y a *tendance* à annuler la polyvalence sémantique des concepts et à confondre

valeur linguistique et signification discursive ; c'est pourquoi l'exemple de la variation des deux « *Messieurs!* » n'a pas de sens dans le contexte de la science. Dans la science, quand on dit *motus reflexus* deux fois de deux façons, on a changé d'épistémè. Le discours scientifique n'a pas d'auteur, il n'a pas de « public » non plus<sup>20</sup> ; la variation des opinions individuelles n'est consignée que si une de ces opinions est devenue « science ». Il y a donc *tendance* à rendre la terminologie universelle, afin de la traduire de manière plus radicale. On ne traduit pas *L'origine des espèces* comme on traduit *Les misérables*. En ce sens, le discours de la science est une *norme* pour la langue naturelle, tout comme la langue naturelle est une norme pour les autres manifestations du langage.

Or, d'autre part, c'est justement cette idée de *norme* qui permet à Foucault de traiter le langage de la science à partir des principes de Saussure. Si on lui a reproché de ne pas avoir étudié la question des sciences de la nature, c'est qu'on n'a pas compris que, de point de vue méthodologique, il y reconnaît un péril : les sciences formalisables créent de nouveaux concepts, de telle manière que les mots de la langue naturelles sont des simples conventions pour faciliter la communication au niveau « pragmatique » (l'enseignement, le débat, la simplification, etc.) Comme le dit Bachelard, la science crée des « concepts de concepts » qui n'ont plus rien à faire avec le « sens commun », c'est-à-dire avec le système de classification de la langue naturelle<sup>21</sup>. Par contre, les sciences humaines permettent de comprendre le changement de « paradigme » selon la loi saussurienne de la mutabilité et de l'immutabilité du signe linguistique.

Lorsque Saussure parlait de la distinction entre la valeur et la signification, il admettait que la signification peut varier dans la parole, mais toujours entre les limites prescrites par la valeur (de la langue). En même temps (mais sur une longue durée), ce sont les variations des significations qui provoquent l'altération de la valeur. D'une part la signification d'un signe peut varier entre les limites de son *paradigme*, d'autre part, c'est l'*usage des signes* (la signification<sup>22</sup>) qui entraîne le changement de la valeur et, donc, du paradigme. Ce changement de paradigme équivaut à la transformation

d'un champ de relations qui n'est pas contemporain de sa perception ; il n'est repérable qu'au niveau de l'archive. La question de savoir si le changement est une « micro-révolution » ou une longue évolution n'est pas sentée ; quand Saussure parle de *mutation* il comprend que la transformation d'une grandeur discrète ne peut être comprise comme une longue évolution ! La notion d'arbitraire ou le fait que la langue est *norme* veut dire que le « paradigme » est une notion statistique et probabiliste, qui traduit la moyenne des préférences individuelles. Par conséquent, la modification d'une *valeur* et d'une *norme* ne peut se présenter que comme mutation, pour autant que l'idée même d'arbitraire suppose l'usage des valeurs discrètes et exclut les grandeurs continues. Si *la modification d'une norme est mutation*, cette mutation est toujours déjà passée ; elle concerne un champ de relations, n'étant repérable qu'au niveau de l'archive. Sa connaissance est toujours rétrospective, structurale et archéologique.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Si on prend en compte cette conclusion il est possible de mieux comprendre la théorie du discours de Foucault, qui est encore plus « compliquée ». Les deux théories ne sont pas équivalentes, mais elles sont comparables dans la mesure où elles rencontrent presque les mêmes difficultés dans la définition de l'énoncé en opposition avec la phrase. Le texte présenté par Benveniste au Congrès des Sociétés de Philosophie de langue française (Genève, 1967), « La forme et le sens dans le langage » (Benveniste 1974, 215-240) a provoqué des discussions qui ont montré que le public philosophique n'a pas tout à fait compris l'exposé. Les philosophes ont voulu apprendre comment Benveniste situerait l'opposition – banale dans la philosophie analytique – entre la *sentence* et le *statement*. La réponse de Benveniste a été que cette question se situe hors le champ de son investigation il montre que la *phrase* (qui ne relève pas du sémiotique) est un « *énoncé de caractère nécessairement sémantique* » (Benveniste 1974, 231 – nous soulignons). De manière semblable, on a reproché à la théorie de Foucault de manquer de précision dans la définition de l'énoncé par rapport à la phrase, à la proposition logique et au *speech act*.

<sup>2</sup> Sur le statut des phrases toutes faites nous indiquons la position de Benveniste : il n'est pas exclu de produire des phrases tout faites qui ne soient pas des éléments de mon propre discours (Benveniste 1974, 231).

<sup>3</sup> « Nous savons que ce troisième niveau du langage est le niveau du discours » (Frank 1989, 130).

<sup>4</sup> « The breaking of silence, the communion of words is the first act to establish links of fellowship, which is consummated only by the breaking of bread and the communion of food. The modern English expression “Nice day to-day” or the Melanesian phrase “Whence comest thou?” are needed to get over the strange and unpleasant tension which men feel when facing each other in silence. [...] There can be not doubt that we have here a new type of linguistic use – *phatic communion* I tempted to call it – a type of speech in which ties of union are created by a mere exchange of words » (Malinowski 1946, 314-315).

<sup>5</sup> Dans le développement de l' « autre sémiotique », Carnap remarque que tout le métalangage  $L_{n+1}$  utilise le même syntaxe que le langage-objet  $L_n$ .

<sup>6</sup> Jakobson dit par la suite: « Cette fonction ne peut être étudiée avec profit si on perd de vue les problèmes généraux du langage, et, d'un autre côté, une analyse minutieuse du langage exige que l'on prenne sérieusement en considération la fonction poétique. Toute tentative de réduire la sphère de la fonction poétique à la poésie, ou de confiner la poésie à la fonction poétique, n'aboutirait qu'à une simplification excessive et trompeuse. La fonction poétique n'est pas la seule fonction de l'art du langage, elle en est seulement la fonction dominante, déterminante, cependant que dans les autres activités verbales elle ne joue qu'un rôle subsidiaire, accessoire. Cette fonction, qui met en évidence le côté palpable des signes, approfondit par là même la dichotomie fondamentale des signes et des objets » (Jakobson 1963, 218).

<sup>7</sup> Les représentants du Cercle de Vienne se revendiquent explicitement de l'héritage de Russell, Einstein et Wittgenstein, qui sont nommés les « principaux représentants de la conception scientifique du monde ». (Cercle de Vienne 1985a, 147).

<sup>8</sup> Le terme « signification » est la traduction de *Bedeutung*, chez Russell : « denotation », alors que le « sens » est la reprise de *Sinn*, chez Russell : « meaning ». D'autres auteurs ont préféré « référence » pour *Bedeutung*, « sens » pour *Sinn*.

<sup>9</sup> Cette manière de définir la sémantique a été pratiquée par les structuralistes radicaux (Cf. Ducrot 1968, 69-73).

<sup>10</sup> Cette distinction de Jaakko Hintikka a été précédée d'une étude de Jean van Heijenoort sur Frege. Van Heijenoort parlait des deux logiques chez Frege: la logique comme langage, et la logique comme calcul (cf. (Hintikka and Hintikka 1991).

<sup>11</sup> Nous pouvons expliquer de cette manière l'intérêt de Wittgenstein pour la « grammaire ». Merrill et Jaakko Hintikka citent *Grammaire philosophique*, IV, section 46, où il est montré que le terme « grammaire » ne se réfère pas aux règles intralinguistiques, mais aux règles des jeux de langage extralinguistiques : « On a tendance à faire distinction entre les règles de la grammaire qui établissent une liaison entre langage et réalité et les autres. ... la grammaire décrit aussi l'application du langage, ce que l'on pourrait appeler la liaison entre langage et réalité » (Cf. Hintikka and Hintikka 1991, 32). Un passage des *Investigations philosophiques*, semble dire le contraire: « la grammaire ne dit pas comment le langage doit être construit en vue d'atteindre son but ; en vue d'avoir tel ou tel effet sur les êtres

humains. Elle ne fait que décrire, et n'explique en aucune manière l'emploi des signes ». (Wittgenstein 1961, § 496).

<sup>12</sup> Il est de grand intérêt le fait que Foucault trouvait chez Condillac la distinction que Van Heijenoort et de Jaakko Hintikka attribuaient à Frege. L'idée d'une logique comme calcul et d'une autre comme langage se retrouve chez Condillac dans les deux significations du langage : « Condillac n'a jamais dégagé une théorie universelle de l'élément – que cet élément soit perceptif, linguistique ou calculable ; il a hésité sans cesse entre deux logiques des opérations : celle de la genèse et celle du calcul. D'où la double définition de l'analyse : réduire les éléments complexes (...) et chercher la vérité » (Foucault 1963, 117).

<sup>13</sup> On pourrait comprendre ainsi que la loi de fonctionnement du signe à l'époque de Héraclite n'est pas du tout la représentation mais la fonction conative, car l'homme est à l'écoute des dieux, alors que chez les peuples sauvages nous avons cette fonction phatique dont nous parlait Malinowski et qui rend à l'homme primitif l'assurance qu'il n'est pas seul face aux dangers.

<sup>14</sup> Si on veut donner plus de poids aux autres fonctions linguistiques, il faut se placer sur un terrain pragmatiste, comme on l'a vu chez Thomas Kuhn. Foucault lui-même va prendre en compte la fonction conative, quand il va analyser le *pouvoir* de la science de modifier le comportement des individus à travers son instrumentalisation par les institutions.

<sup>15</sup> Dans les théories du langage du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, les langues naturelles étaient considérées « bien formées » parce qu'elles étaient vues comme étiquettes de la réalité, ayant comme fonctions de traduire la pensée, elle-même image fidèle de cette réalité.

<sup>16</sup> « Avant d'avoir affaire, en toute certitude, à une science, ou à des romans, ou à des discours politiques, ou à l'œuvre d'un auteur ou même à un livre, le matériau qu'on a à traiter dans sa neutralité première c'est une population d'événements dans l'espace du discours en général. Ainsi apparaît le projet d'une description des événements discursifs » (Foucault 1969, 38).

<sup>17</sup> « On a souvent dit que la théorie de Tarski ne peut s'appliquer qu'à des langages formalisés. Je ne pense pas que cela soit exact. (...) Il me paraît très important de reconnaître l'existence de toute une série de langages artificiels à divers degrés qui ne sont toutefois pas formalisés, tout particulièrement si l'on se propose de juger de manière philosophique la théorie de la vérité » (Popper 1985, 577). On peut dire que, selon Popper, les discours des sciences humaines seraient de tels langages artificiels.

<sup>18</sup> « Not only the unification of the sociological language is at stake, but a much more comprehensive unification and orchestration, which leads us to a *lingua franca* of unified science » (Neurath 1947, 2).

<sup>19</sup> « La langue bien faite, en laquelle Condillac et ses successeurs voyaient l'idéal de la connaissance scientifique ne doit donc pas être cherchée (...) du côté d'un langage des calculs, mais du côté de cette langue mesurée qui est à la fois la mesure des choses qu'elle décrit et du langage dans lequel elle les décrit » (Foucault 1963, 115).

<sup>20</sup> Sauf si on fait une approche pragmatique, comme chez Kuhn ; mais cette approche pragmatique ne peut être transposée dans la modalité de l'archive.

L'archéologie, en tant qu'histoire des concepts transversaux (à la Canguilhem) ne saurait être une histoire des opinions.

<sup>21</sup> Nous avons déjà signalé que « les deux sémiotiques » sont en effet des théories du signe qui correspondent aux deux traditions épistémologiques et qu'elles se font toutes les deux l'illusion d'unifier le champ du savoir.

<sup>22</sup> En ce sens nous signalons la compatibilité entre la théorie de Saussure et la deuxième philosophie de Wittgenstein. En lisant à partir de Saussure l'aphorisme §43 des *Investigation philosophiques* (Wittgenstein 1961, § 43), nous comprenons que la signification d'un terme est donnée par les *usages passés* qu'on en a fait. Nous lisons le mot « signification » du § 43 comme « signification possible », c'est-à-dire comme « paradigme ». Le « paradigme » saussurien est la règle d'utilisation sémantique établie par les usages passés *et* par les restrictions syntagmatiques. Mais la grammaire est, elle aussi, un produit des usages passés. C'est Hjelmslev qui nous encourage à donner cette interprétation : « l'acte et l'usage précédent logiquement et pratiquement la norme : la norme est née de l'usage et de l'acte, mais non inversement » (Hjelmslev 1971, 85).

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## The Critical Import of the Image: From Freud to Magritte

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### Abstract

In the *Interpretation of Dreams* Freud asks how and if the dream, which is made of images, can express its connective structure, and in particular the negation. This can be made only by interpretation. This question represents the thread to examine the problem of the critical import of figurative arts, by comparing Adorno's and Heidegger's theories. According to Adorno, the artwork is *mimesis*: the capability to express negativity coincides with its autonegation, with its disappearing. For Heidegger, on the contrary, the artwork is first of all a work, and interpretation is the reconstruction of its genesis, or better, the understanding of it as temporal. In the last part of the text the problem of the relationship between negation and image is tackled discussing Magritte's painting «*Ceci n'est pas une pipe*»: the structure of this painting (it is formed by images and words) makes it a rebus (like the dream, according to Freud), the deciphering of which carries a conceptual and interpretative work. Only this interpretation can account for the negation that it, as image, could otherwise not express.

**Keywords:** Adorno, Art, Critique, Freud, Image, Heidegger, Negation

1.

In the *Interpretation of Dreams* Sigmund Freud poses a very interesting problem: in Chapter 6, after having stated that the dream is made of images, he nonetheless denies that it has to be understood as a pictorial composition. Like hieroglyphic writing, it is rather a kind of “puzzle (rebus)” (Freud 2005, 523), where pictures have to be taken in their symbolic function. That notwithstanding, a very radical question arises: after having compared the dream work to an “assemblage” of blocks

of ice, Freud asks, how is it possible in the dream to represent linguistic elements for which there are no possible images?

When the whole mass of these dream thoughts is subjected to the pressure of the dream activity, during which the parts are turned about, broken up, and pushed together, something like drifting ice, there arises the question, what becomes of the logical ties which until now had given form to the structure? What representation do “if,” “because,” “as though,” “although,” “either—or,” and all the other conjunctions (*Präpositionen*), without which we cannot understand a phrase or a sentence, receive in the dream? (Freud 2005, 569)

This limitation regards all figurative arts, from pictures to sculpture, which, unlike poetry, are not able to express such relations.

Here Freud implicitly poses the problem of the relation between representation and understanding, image and thought: the dream can represent only the oneiric content, its material, but not its relations, its conjunctions, what Freud in the original text generically calls “prepositions” (the most syntactical of the grammatical categories). The task of reconstructing these connections, which the dream-work has destroyed, is precisely what is demanded to interpretation.

For a series of reasons, which here I cannot fully explain, but which concern linguistic and ontological questions of very great importance to me, I will in general call “pre-positive” (Chiurazzi 2009) this relational and connective structure, which the image cannot express, and which instead interpretation has to make understandable: these connections are in fact only the objects of understanding: they cannot be seen or perceived. The meaningfulness of the word “preposition” consists in that: it means something which “stands *before*” the position; by this I would suggest that the connective structure, as a pre-positive structure, is the condition of every positivity, or, in other words: the syntactic structure of a language precedes its lexical structure, the sense precedes the meaning.

The different relevance given to these elements distinguishes in my opinion phenomenology and hermeneutics. Phenomenology is founded on vision: its preferred gnoseological medium is then the image, which has its grammatical correlate in the noun, since this refers to the object in the world or to that Freud calls “oneiric material”; hermeneutics, on the contrary, is

founded on understanding: its gnoseological object is sense, which has its grammatical correlate in the “pre-positive” connections between nouns, to which no object corresponds in the world. This difference is particularly relevant in relation to the question posed at the beginning of this essay: how can image express the connective structure of the dream?

The most difficult connection to represent in the dream, Freud writes, is negation, that is, contrast or contradiction. “The attitude of the dream towards the category of antithesis and contradiction is most striking. This category is unceremoniously neglected; the word ‘No’ does not seem to exist for the dream.” (Freud 2005, 579) There is a limit, which is intrinsic to the imaginative representation: to be able only to affirm. The image, as with the nouns, is always positive, a difficulty that has troubled philosophy since Plato: how is it possible to say through images or words that something “is not”?

The image cannot express non-being. A painting of Magritte illustrates—I would say “represents”—this situation well. It represents a pipe under which we read the writing “*ceci n’est pas une pipe*,” “this is not a pipe.” The stratagem of this painting is similar to that which Freud says about some old paintings, in which “little tags were hung from the mouths of the persons represented giving the speech, the expression of which in the picture the artist despaired of” (Freud 2005, 570). The painting of Magritte cannot represent the fact of “not being” a pipe—it must say it. In order to deny being a thing, and thus to affirm being only an image, it must recur to writing, to a *logos*, so becoming, as the dream to Freud, a rebus.

Negation has no figure. That the image cannot express negation means that it cannot express any distance from reality, since negation means exactly this: a distance, a fracture, a separation. Nonetheless, is it possible to confer to the image such a critical import? and if so, how? This question coincides with another one: in which sense is the figurative art critical? The avant-garde has no doubt represented and spread a critical force without precedent, well recognized by authors as Adorno, Derrida, or Vattimo. But there is a difference, in my opinion, in the way this critical capability can be understood. To

this purpose I will refer to two examples: Adorno and Heidegger.

2.

In *Aesthetic Theory* Adorno makes a striking re-evaluation of the image: as Axel Honneth pointed out in a book published in 1986, *The Critique of the Power. Reflective Stages in a Critical Social Theory*, this re-evaluation of mimesis is the result of the radical critique of instrumental rationality Adorno put forward, along with Max Horkheimer, in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Honneth 1993, 57-96). In fact, the mimetic relation is an approach to the world not based on domination: it is rather a way of relation which deliberately avoids the instrumental strategies of the cultural industry, and thus can present itself as a paradigm of liberation, for it leaves out the conceptual, objectifying knowledge of nature. However, in order to have a hold over the real, a minimal mimetic relation with reality is always needed: “The reason that represses mimesis is not merely its opposite. It is itself mimesis: of death. The subjective mind which disintegrates the spiritualization of nature masters spiritless nature only by imitating its rigidity, disintegrating itself as animistic.” (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 44-45) Every image is an image of reality, and when thought severs this link with reality it withdraws into itself, it becomes tautological: “The idea, having no firm hold on reality, insists all the more and becomes the fixation.” (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 157) It becomes ideology.

According to Adorno, art has the task to restore the correct mimetic relation to nature, that is, to restore the natural relation of thought to the real. It does nothing but to replicate, on the level of artificiality, this privileged relation. In aesthetic mimesis, unlike in conceptual mimesis, things are not the counterpart of manipulative processes, but of sensorial processes, which are not subject to any constriction but have the possibility of breaking off in a completely free way. The mimetic relation to nature is the profound essence of very art, which assures the convergence between artistic beauty and natural beauty, where nature is understood as pure manifestation, never as material of work or of life-reproduction,

less than ever as a substrate of science: “Just how bound up natural beauty is with art beauty is confirmed by the experience of the former. For it, nature is exclusively appearance, never the stuff of labor and the reproduction of life, let alone the substratum of science.” (Adorno 2002, 65)

This phenomenological primacy explains at the same time the secondary and derivative role of the conceptual in Adorno, and his suspicion against technique and every pragmatic dimension. The very place of mimesis is neither the concept nor the technique, but the sensation, which follows “naturally” the movement of the object; the concept, instead, dominates the object, and bends it to external purposes: it manipulates the object. Art and technique, therefore, are different just like sensation and concept, renunciation and domination.

Confined to its mimetic and not its technical moment, art is, according to Adorno, more art the less it is action. By re-proposing the analogy between artistic experience and aesthetic experience of nature, Adorno says clearly: “Like the experience of art, the aesthetic experience of nature is that of images. Nature, as appearing beauty, is not perceived as an object of action” (*ibid.*). What confers to the mimesis, and then to the image, this special role of resistance to domination is thus its non-involvement in action, its being pure appearance: the radicalism of the critique to instrumental rationality also ends up striking down action as such (as it often seems to strike down rationality as such) and therefore to turn into a relation in which action is reduced to a minimum, as it is in the passivity of sensation.

*Aisthesis* is, in fact, appearance. The artwork does nothing but to capture the evanescence of aisthesis by objectifying it: “In art something momentary transcends; objectivation makes the artwork into an instant” (Adorno 2002, 84). The artworks are “the persistence of the transient” (*ibid.*). One understands this way why the critical function of the artwork as image, according to Adorno, cannot consist in nothing else than in its self-negation: “The phenomenon of fireworks is prototypical for artworks” (Adorno 2002, 81). In order to explicate their critical force against the existent, they

have to disappear, to explode: “The instant in which these forces become image, the instant in which what is interior becomes exterior, the outer husk is exploded; their apparition, which makes them an image, always at the same time destroys them as image” (Adorno 2002, 85).

The artwork cannot deny the thing-like nature of the objects but by denying it in itself, i.e.: by denying itself. This dialectic thus remains completely closed inside the mimetic relation “thing-image,” in a way which I would define as “speculative,” and which places off limits every practical determination of the artwork as a product, namely, as a work. This way of thinking seems incomprehensible even for a Marxist and in my view shows clearly the Hegelian, namely, speculative character of Adorno’s philosophy. Artworks, in fact, tend more and more to be like what Hegel calls “concept”: something reflected in itself, self-movement. They are not made by humans, they are not the expression of a praxis, but have in themselves the principle of their doing: “Their immanent process is externalized as their own act, not as what humans have done to them and not merely for humans.” (Adorno 2002, 80-81)

The mimetic structure of the artwork risks expelling it completely from history, from the system of productive relations, which are always practical and energetic, namely: from the social relations. We thus understand why Axel Honneth has been able to speak, referring to Adorno’s critical theory, of a paradoxical “repression of the social” (Honneth 1993, 72). We can then ask in which sense the artwork, which as mimesis opposes the world of the things, can also be really a critique of the social relations which structure that world of things. The image cannot express, as we saw, the pre-positional connections, that is, the relations linking words or things, and which in the real world are social relations, between humans and things, and between humans and humans. In order to do this, the artwork should not be thought as mere image: it should carry a reference to these relations, presenting itself explicitly as a part of them. Not as image, then, but as a work.

3.

The difference between conceiving the artwork as mimesis and conceiving it as work is evident in the way Heidegger, unlike Adorno, intends it. In *The Origin of the Work of Art* Heidegger starts from the banal consideration that the artwork is, precisely, a work, that is, the result of a doing: “The workly character of the work consists in its being created by the artist”, so that “it can obviously be grasped only in terms of the process of creation”, in its turn intended “as a bringing forth (*Herstellung*)” (Heidegger 2002, 34). In this way Heidegger refers the artwork primarily to the field of *techné* rather than to the field of *mimesis*: the artwork is not primarily a representation, not an image, but the result of an operation. As such, it is not simply an object: its object-being, however, does not constitute its work-being (Heidegger 2002, 20).

In the field of technical doing, which is a doing based on a specific knowing, Aristotle distinguished two modalities: *poiesis*, the doing which has an external purpose, and *praxis*, the doing which has its purpose in itself. The Aristotelian distinction sets, on one side, the production of artificial objects, artifacts, objects of everyday utility, such as a table or a piece of furniture, but also works of art, such as a statue or a painting; on the other side, instead, there is moral doing, *praxis*, which has its purpose in itself, as its purpose is not an object but the good life.

Heidegger, even though he never again takes up this distinction explicitly, uses it here in order to operate a conceptual shifting, which is extremely important. It literarily shifts the place of the art. In Aristotelian view, in fact, the production of objects consists in giving form to a matter in sight of their possible use. In this respect, the object of *poiesis* is always a tool or equipment: “The equipment’s readiness for use means that it is released beyond itself to disappear into usefulness.” (Heidegger 2002, 39) On the contrary, for Heidegger the process of creation in the artwork is not finalized to an external use, but to the fixation of truth in the figure (*ibid.*), which means: presentification of the event of Being. The artwork is the “setting truth into the work” (Heidegger 2002, 36); it brings forth the event-like character of Being: in front of

an artwork we cannot but realize that it is made; what is important is not who made it, for instance a great artist, neither its utilitarian purpose, but the mere fact that it was made:

The point is not that the created work be certified as a product of ability so as thereby to raise the public profile of the producer. What is announced is not “N.N. fecit.” Rather, “factum est” is what is to be held forth into the open by the work: in other words this, that an unconcealment of beings has happened here and, as this happening, happens here for the first time; or this, that this work is rather than is not (Heidegger 2002, 39).

The artwork shows the mere “that” (*daß*) of the being, its “there is”: but as such, as what, which could not have been.

We can then understand the difference between this conception of the artwork and Adorno’s. Heidegger definitively takes art away from the horizon of *mimesis*; art is poetry (*Dichtung*), because what is prevailing in it is not the figurative aspect as such, but its being a work, which makes it a trace of an event, of a history. The work has a diagrammatic nature, it is a symbol or a “fundamental design (*Grundriss*; Heidegger 2002, 38)” of the event of Being. This shifting from the image to the symbol is the most notable consequence of the shifting from the phenomenological to the hermeneutical conception of the artwork: in it the point is not the mimetic, i.e. aesthetic, moment, but the symbolic, i.e. hermeneutical one. The artwork is thus no longer a “sensible object,” as Adorno claims, but an object of understanding.

In fact, that the artwork has an origin can only be understood, because understanding can go beyond mere presence – that is, beyond sensation – in order to grasp what is not present, something else, something absent. This is a function, not of what Stoics called the *phantasia kataleptiké*, but of the *phantasia metabatiké*: unlike the *phantasia kataleptiké*, the *phantasia metabatiké* can go from the present to the not present, from the *delón* (the manifest) to the *adelón* (the not manifest), and is then the condition of possibility of the understanding of time (Chiurazzi 2010). The negative moment of the image is not its self-destruction in the evanescence of its appearing; it is rather what makes it a trace of an absence,

something which, as it is, refers to what is not, to another time, in which the work was not. In this form, as understanding of time, that is as a negation of the present, the fundamental critical instance appears: what Heidegger calls “ontological difference.”

The Greek temple is art, therefore, not in virtue of its formal aspects, which following Plato’s classification (Plato 1921, *Soph.* 235d ss.) can make it an image more or less similar to given proportional relations; rather, it is art as it sets up a world (Heidegger 2002, 22), that is, a set of relations belonging to historical space and time. In Heidegger’s interpretation of Van Gogh’s portrait representing a pair of peasant shoes, the work is intended as a place where a world is revealed: through the portrait, a whole world is revealed, with its efforts, its moods, its needs and its seasons. Aesthetics here becomes hermeneutics, as Gadamer foretells in *Truth and Method*. More than being image, the artwork assumes in this way a schematic connotation in the Kantian sense of the word: to say that the artwork is image means that one understands it only from the point of view of the result of its genetic process, and not according to the schematic dimension, which constitutes it, literally, as a determination of time.

What emerges from the Heideggerian conception of the artwork, which involves a historicization of the image, is its practical structure. As in the case of the dream, to interpret a work of art means to reconstruct the connections that the images are not able to express, and which gives us back its formative process, its genesis. To understand the work of art as simple *mimesis* means to condemn it to a simply reproductive, and even unproductive, relation, since it involves the negation, the repression (in a psychoanalytical meaning) of the world of production. But this way of thinking condemns art to remain in the conceptual scheme of Plato’s *Sophist*, in which *mimesis* is understood only in terms of its capacity of reflecting, in less or more appropriate way, an external reality. Understood on the contrary as a work, the artwork emancipates itself from this mimetic relation: thanks to its genetic process, it becomes an integral and constitutive part of the world from which it arises; it is no longer a mere thing but an effect. Adorno’s theory

remains enmeshed in the thing-like conception of the artwork precisely by preventing to see it as an effect, as a result of a *praxis*: the only option which remains for the artwork, in order to emancipate itself from the world of things, is thus the suicide of self-negation. Marx's theory of fetishism represents a form of advice against the risk of the works' reification, which become fetishes – or simulacra – the more they are eradicated from the productive process of their genesis. A risk which, I guess, Adorno's mimetic conception also runs, when he writes, as we have already quoted, that the immanent process of the works of art “appears on the outside like their own doing, not as what humans made in them, and not only for other humans.”

4.

The need to destroy the thing-like essence of the image coincides with the need to destroy its positivity, by introducing in it a negation, that is, a conceptual dimension, which is the very essence of the avant-garde and of contemporary art. The death of art meant the death of its preferential medium, which to Hegel was the sensible representation: since then, art also survives, like philosophy, in the form of the concept.

The impact this destruction—which actuates an interpretative work—has on the image is hyperbolically represented by Magritte's painting to which we have already referred: a painting of a pipe with the writing “*ceci n'est pas une pipe*”. Magritte's painting shows the survival of art in the form of a concept, that is, of the understanding, through a complex play of references between images and words, but above all through an understanding of their relations, which configures different meanings and senses.

The painting represents a pipe: but this representation is denied by the underlying writing “*ceci n'est pas une pipe*”. This writing re-establishes the distance between the image and the represented object, sophisticatedly confused by virtue of their homonymy. We have to remember, in fact, that the problem of the image, as an ontological problem, arises in philosophy as a problem of homonymy, or of equivocity. Aristotle makes it clear at the beginning of *Categories*:

Things are said to be named 'equivocally' when, though they have a common name [sc.: are homonyms], the definition corresponding with the name differs for each. Thus, a real man and a figure in a picture can both lay claim to the name 'animal'; yet these are equivocally so named, for, though they have a common name, the definition corresponding with the name differs for each. (Aristotle 1928, *Cat.* 1, 1-5)

The Aristotelian example undoubtedly derives from Plato (Villega-Petit 1991), for whom the painter is the creator of homonymic realities which deceive because they create confusion between reality and appearance (just as the sophist does):

He who professes to be able by virtue of a single art to make all things will be able by virtue of the painter's art, to make imitations which have the same name as the real things, and by showing the pictures at a distance will be able to deceive the duller ones among young children into the belief that he is perfectly able to accomplish in fact whatever he wishes to do (Plato 1921, *Soph.* 234b).

What Magritte's painting could mean in the first instance is that images deceive: an ancient theorem, as we can see. The images betray, for they cause us to confuse the painted pipe with the real pipe. The title of the painting, which till now we have not revealed, and which will grant us further wonder, is actually *La trahison des images* ("The Treachery, or the Betrayal, of Images").

But the structure of the relations between image and concept is in the painting much more complex. If the sentence "*ceci n'est pas une pipe*" is referred to the image of the pipe, it means that the painted pipe is not really a pipe. In this case, the painting stages the falsity of the image. However, it is possible that the sentence "*ceci n'est une pipe*", because of the pronoun "*ceci*", does not refer to the image, but to itself. In this case, it could mean that the sentence itself, "*ceci n'est pas une pipe*", is not a pipe, which cause it to stand out in contrast to the truth of the image of the pipe. The painting would say then that writing is never an object, and therefore that there is always a radical fracture between words and things, as Michel Foucault underlined with different arguments in an essay devoted to this painting of Magritte (Foucault 1993). This ambiguity in the identification of the referent of the sentence

“*ceci n’est pas une pipe*” is due to the presence of the indexical term “*ceci*” (“this”), which, since it is not a noun, has a changeable referent. It is in sum not certain that in Magritte’s painting the sentence “*ceci n’est pas une pipe*” refers to the image of the pipe.

*La trahison des images*, therefore, refers to two levels of betrayal: a first level is that of the image as compared to reality, and this cannot be said by the image itself, but only by the writing “*ceci n’est pas une pipe*”; a second betrayal is that of language, which deceives in its reference: while it pretends to refer to the image, of which it would say its falsehood, it refers in truth to itself, saying to be not a thing.

These two levels are overhung by a further level: the title does not refer, actually, to these particular levels, but to the whole painting, which in turn is an image. *La trahison des images* says then that the whole painting, as image, is deceptive. The entire truth it should carry is therefore challenged, as if the painting were saying: “I am lying”. That is: “what I am saying is false”. And then: “It is false that ‘*ceci n’est pas une pipe*’”; it, therefore, is a pipe. Through the falsity of the whole painting, the truth of the image it contains is paradoxically restored.

This self-negating interpretation of the painting – which perhaps is similar to the function Adorno attributes to the artwork, which in its appearing is destined dialectically to disappear – follows from understanding the genitive in the expression *La trahison des images* as subjective: images betray, even this one, even this painting. But we can intend the genitive also as objective: in this case, the betrayal is not provoked by the images, but consists in betraying the image. The painting does, perhaps, just this, precisely by inserting writing, which is not an image, beside the image. Here we have neither to see nor to read: we have first of all to understand what the painting does. Here emerges the definitive consequence of understanding the artwork just as a work and not as image: it does not represent, it *works*, literally, it performs something, which we can understand by means of images, but not as image. Just like the dream.

One betrays the image when one contaminates it with something other, when one rips out it of the closure of its mimetic relation with the represented thing. This is what “to interpret” means. What the psychoanalyst should do to the dream, according to Freud, is then first of all to betray its nature as image (just as Champollion made with hieroglyphs, disputing their purely iconic nature) and understand it as a rebus, to see it not as a picture, not as a dialectically contradictory and evanescent representation, but as something meaningful, which must be interpreted. Do we not then resume exactly in this title the general function of hermeneutics, and perhaps even of psychoanalysis? It is, in all the senses which we have here tried to make clear, and which Magritte’s painting literally stages, as the dream, according to Freud, would do, a *trahison des images*.

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## **An Aesthetics of Negativity: On the Instrumental Evaluation of Conceptual Art in Eastern Europe**

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### **Abstract**

The contextual interpretation of conceptual art under politically oppressive regimes as a politicized art practice seems dominant in the current revisionist discourse of art history. At a closer inspection, this discourse seems to illustrate Rainer Rochlitz's comments on the use of political criteria for instrumentally evaluating contemporary art, favoring political engagement as a relational artistic value instead of a set of (inherent) aesthetic values. Using art historical analysis of the context of artistic production and reception as well as case studies, I intend to show that what we may praise as being critically efficient conceptual artworks are also aesthetically relevant in a particular sense. The political character they may acquire and the instrumental value attached to it depends on the production of artistic autonomy as a field of semiotic experiments with language and social communication. It is the aesthetic function of that part of conceptual art engaged in useless artistic labor and pointless communication, criticizing the inherent rationality of the modernist project, which obliquely acquires political overtones in times of straightforward ideological engagement of art.

**Keywords:** Conceptual Art, Eastern Europe, Instrumental Evaluation, Aesthetic Functionalism, Aesthetic Autonomy, Negativity, Ideology

### **Art Historical Revisionism and the Political Evaluation of Conceptual Art**

It has become customary to treat the practices of conceptual art developed in former Eastern Europe<sup>1</sup> and Latin America as “subversive” (Dressler 2010) or at least as tactical engagements with social and political life of the time, having

proposed a “didactics of liberation” (Camnitzer 2007). This tendency has also extended to what we could label today as “neo-avant-garde” art practices, or, in other words, the corpus of art produced roughly between 1960 and 1980 that critically expanded the language of modernism while undermining some of its basic presuppositions.

Nevertheless, even if many of these art practices were developed under oppressive political regimes and addressed directly the contemporary social life of the time, it is not obvious what makes a politicized artistic gesture, what artworks may be treated as being “political” and why, and what may differentiate politically engaged from apolitical art. There are several reasons to question this simplistic characterization. First, using an intentional criterion to differentiate among what can be called “political” and “apolitical art”, it may be observed that some artworks may be intended structurally to have a political significance or create a political effect, while others may only acquire these attributes contingently. In accordance with Piotrowski, I will even go on to suggest that, in certain circumstances, apolitical art may be regarded as a politically engaged or significant attitude (Piotrowski 2012, 82-83). Second, there are degrees of intentionality: there may be artworks that were not primarily intended to have a political bearing, but only in a secondary and hence, contingent manner. Third, “political” and “politicized” are different terms, which may be related to the problem of the explicit and the implicit in the reception and interpretation of the artwork. Some politicized artworks may not be political in the intentional sense, but they may contextually be proved to have had a significant impact on social or cultural life, or at least to present political interest in (critically or unproblematically) depicting social life at the time of their production. Thus, the class of the “politicized” artworks is larger than the one embodying properly political gestures or iconography, including those pieces that acquire a political feature or impact under a specific interpretation. The politicized character of an artwork is thus a relational attribute. According to such a perspective, the work acquires such a property in relation to its social and political context of production. The political character may be

pragmatically inferred from the contextual production and reception of the work. Using an analogy with the theory of communication, we might state that the property of being a politicized artwork depends on the context of the “utterance” of the artwork and not on its propositional semantics. The relevant questions would be then when, how and where is the artwork produced and exhibited and for whom?

For instance, some artworks explicitly refer to political motives, including linguistic structures and slogans, or consciously use politicized symbols or mimic ritualistic practices of the Party, especially in Eastern European conceptual art. Mladen Stilinović’s conscious construction of slogans such as the fake quote “Work is a Disease. Karl Marx”, or the production of self-referential political statements such as “Any attack on my work is an attack on the Party” as autonomous artistic pieces are a good example for the first situation. A good example for the latter would be the work entitled “Sing!”, consisting in a photograph of the artist, facing the camera, with a bill on his forehead on which this imperative is handwritten. The urge to sing is associated with the practice of amateur entertainers in the Balkans and around this region, paid by the folks to perform by sticking money on their foreheads. The image also suggest the idea of the artist as an underpaid worker for the State system, alluding to the official songs for the Party more or less unwillingly performed by crowds of workers at a time when communist ideas of solidarity were already bankrupt. Thus, the work may be referring to the opportunistic career of those successful artists in the official system of artistic production and, at the same time, to the exploitation of artistic labor, suggested here by the possibility of supplementing the meaning of the artwork by switching between the equally plausible popular and propaganda songs. Others artworks are only indirectly acquiring a political overtone in relation to certain publicly shared codes, tactic assumptions or set of beliefs which use to regulate the context of its production and reception. This seems to be the situation of many artworks that are reevaluated and given much praise today by the art historians and critics under such an interpretation. For instance, the exposure of the naked body in

the public space acquires such a political overtone. Although not explicit, Croatian artist Tomislav Gotovac's inexplicable outburst of joy in his action from 1978 Zagreb entitled "I love you", in which the artist runs naked on the streets of Zagreb, mimicking on his own the collective behavior of supporters that invade the football arenas after a game that was won by their favorite team, is interpreted as a form of anarchic behavior subverting the socialist and modernist codes regulating public space (Badovinac 1998, 16). Equally telling is the case of Romanian artist Ion Grigorescu whose sequence of photographically documented actions from the 1970's such as "Washing with Light" become obliquely instances of subversive affirmation in relation to the totalitarian political context of the time (Badovinac 1998; Piotrowski 2009) – in this case, relating to the ghostly figure of the artist underlining precarious conditions of living in communism and suggesting the ascetic spirituality denied by the atheist official regime.

Last, but not least, it is problematic what can be recognized as art at a certain moment and by what artworld in the social sense of the term. Not only that our evaluations are historically changing, but the very constitution of the artworld in this case is changing in time. When discussing politicized practices of conceptual art we are usually referring not to those works that explicitly relate to political situations being supported by the official state apparatus, but rather and most often to the unofficial artistic production working explicitly or implicitly to disturb the ideological status quo. It is equally telling that many of the conceptual art pieces in Eastern Europe (or Latin America) were not produced inside the official artistic system, but were creating a parallel artworld and were completely marginal to the official art system. This is one reason why I would be reluctant to call these practices "ideological conceptualism" (Fiz 1972), since they are the very opposite of the ideologically engaged practices serving as illustrations of official state ideology. The other, would be that, according to Piotrowski, it is less ideology than the Ideological State Apparatuses, in Althusser's terminology, that are targeted by the critical lens of conceptual art (Piotrowski 2012, 80-81).

The institutional conditions of these practices are highly relevant, for they explain, first of all, that the political and the artistic system were not autonomous. The artistic system was itself politicized according to the dominant (socialist or communist) ideology, but also to its own internal, aesthetic and representational conventions, as well as by means of different, but inter-related institutional practices. Second, most of the artworks we may label today “conceptualist” are lacking the normal institutional system of production, promotion, distribution and reception that conceptual art practices in the United States and Western Europe benefited from, as well as the art market and even the public of the former (Groys 2008, 29-30; Badovinac 1998, 15-16; Piotrowski 2009, 295; 316-17). Instead, they appear as “non-aligned”, “anti-art” or even as non-artistic practices in relation to the official artworld of the time. Most of them appear in alternative art circuits of “experimental” art such as the “tolerated” practices of conceptual art in Yugoslavia or Poland. In some cases, they are even exhibited in depoliticized public spaces belonging to no cultural realm, such as the artistic activities of the Collective Actions Group performed in the natural fields and forests around Moscow, far both from the eyes of the public and of the censorship.

Therefore, by “politicized” artistic practices I understand, in the large sense that will be used here, not only to the artworks actually or hypothetically intended as political actions or representations by their authors and sanctioned or approved as such by the political system of the time, but also artworks that were not explicitly referring to political motives and were not even appreciated as art at the time, but which, given their marginal position, appear to acquire a political significance if interpreted against a proper socio-political background. That is why, as I will suggest, it is most likely to treat Conceptual Art produced under oppressive political governance as a semiotic activity touching the bureaucratic structures that materialize ideology both in the artistic and the social field at large. Many of these artistic practices were living on the fringes of the official art system and were presenting a subversive potentiality to the current artistic and political

status quo at the time.

One specific reason to relate to those artworks that may appear to bear a political impact under a proper art-historical interpretive framing and to question the evaluative criteria used in their case is the pressing importance of such an entanglement of evaluation and interpretation in the reconstruction and challenge of the artistic canon in rewriting recent art history. In fact, the problem of the evaluation of artworks on political grounds becomes of major importance when confronted with the problem of the reconsideration of the artistic canon of art produced in the former Eastern Europe. While most ideologically laden artworks that used to praise the system such as many instances of socialist realism and many examples of modernist abstract sculpture formerly evaluated under a strict formalist (hence, apolitical) framework of interpretation and appreciation are being entirely discredited under revisionist tendencies in recent art history, subversive or “unofficial” practices become paramount and tend to challenge the canon of modernist art relevant from 1945 to 1989 (Piotrowski 2009; Badovinac 2011). This discourse was shaped in the light of a supposedly synchronic, or at least parallel (Badovinac) development of artistic language on a global scale, which transforms the dominant language of modernist abstraction or social realism in some countries of the former Eastern bloc into a persistence of obsolete forms of artistic communication, hence to of minor artistic value.

This situation seems to echo what Rainer Rochlitz considered to represent a major trend in twentieth century art after the avant-gardes at least from the perspective of its institutionalized appreciation, where political criteria and critical engagement seems to be used as a guarantee of quality in the absence (or the pulverization) of any relevant and universal set of aesthetic criteria (Rochlitz 2008). Often, this can also be translated as a straightforward moral evaluation: official art that illustrated or otherwise supported the communist ideology is morally corrupted, hence, bad art, while oppositional, critical art is morally appropriate, hence, good art.

Nevertheless, reconsidering the cannon of art solely on political (and moral) grounds is in itself a contestable activity.

If rewriting the canon means only the reversal of the official with the non-official, then art becomes nothing but the exemplification of the dominant political ideology – in this case, the ideology of the neo-liberal democracy without challenging its essentially heteronomous condition. Historical revisionism may be criticized as only replacing a dominant ideology with another – in this case, the socialist or communist doctrines with the neo-liberal democracy. For instance, artists and artworks may be praised for their “freedom” of speech, for producing “democratic responses” or for allowing for a democratic participation to the public sphere, that is, for promoting values belonging to the dominant political status quo.

This problem is repeated at the level of the construction of the art historical narrative. According to a politicized historical meta-narrative, some works are praised for their inherent negativity or anarchic character, for their opposition or contesting struggle against dominant political values of the socialist and communist past. In this case, they are being evaluating within a narrative structure of art historical development which superposes on another meta-narrative, that of the victory of the emancipated capitalist West over the tyranny of the communist East. Such artworks become examples of heroic or mythical figures in the new narrative of contemporary art, as instances of negativity or struggle against the dominant narrative, niches or breaches that may offer a glimpse of change and alternative possibilities.

In order to gain recognition, unofficial artworks that appear challenging to the dominant formal structure may also be retrospectively related to previously recognized instances of artworks. In this case, they may be related to the “aura” of the historical avant-gardes and their critical stance. The prevailing logic here is that of discontinuity and “interruption” (Badovinac 2011). Historical avant-gardes are being interrupted by communist or socialist official art in order to be recuperated by what Peter Bürger calls the “neo-avant-gardes” (Bürger 1984, 55-67) of the sixties and seventies, hence, by conceptual art as an illustrious exponent of the neo-avant-gardes. The “anti-art” gestures of many conceptualists from both Western world and Eastern Europe are thus often related back to familiar anti-art

gestures such as Duchamp's famous ready-mades. This historical reference does not actually counter the parallel narrative of political engagement, for it is noticeable that the so-called historical avant-gardes at the beginning of the twentieth century had a marked political program too. For instance, the anarchism of Dada, to which the subversive practices of Marcel Duchamp may be closely related, was channeled against the decadent bourgeois constitution of the artworld at that time (Bürger 1984, 15-30). Such historical connections may also explain the anti-establishment character of the anti-art tendencies of "non-official" conceptual art as a repetition of the anti-establishment tendencies of the avant-gardes. However, according to Hal Foster, the neo-avant-gardes are not only an aesthetical reinterpretation of the previously engaged practices. They may be equally considered repetitions of the suppressed facets of the avant-gardes, which belatedly come back from the collective artistic unconscious in the guise of the anarchic gestures of the anti-modernist, anti-establishment "second" avant-gardes of the late sixties and seventies. If so, we may consider negativity, and, particularly, the pretense of irrationality to be found in Conceptual Art from the former Eastern Europe as an actualization of several avant-garde attitudes and principles that intended to undermine the very foundations of modernism.

### **Extra-Aesthetic Grounds for Appreciating Conceptual Art: Instrumental and Moral Appreciation**

I hope that it has already become obvious by now that the revisionist art historical discourse requires at least a more attentive consideration. For the search for and the use of extra-aesthetic criteria in evaluating conceptual art seems to be the only reasonable possibility when dealing with conceptual art given the very structure and appearance of conceptual artworks, that is, given its marked non-aesthetic character. First of all, it is obvious that the value attributed to these works cannot be only formal (or aesthetic in a larger sense), since conceptual art pretends to give up aesthetic

considerations for the sake of an intellectualized approach valuing information over sensuous pleasure or formal artistic qualities. This pretense is supported by explicit affirmations of landmark American conceptual artists such as Joseph Kosuth, stating that “aesthetics, as we have pointed out, are conceptually irrelevant to art” (Kosuth 2002, 164). As Sol Le Witt also puts it “what the work of art looks like isn’t too important. It has to look like something if it has physical form. No matter what form it may finally have it must begin with an idea. It is the process of conception and realization with which the artist is concerned” (Le Witt 1999, 12).

The anti-aesthetic character of conceptual art also seems to be supported by a number of art critics, historians and aestheticians alike. For instance, Peter Osborne notices that „conceptual art is not just another particular kind of art, in the sense of a further specification of an existing genus, but an attempt at a fundamental redefinition of art as such, a transformation of its genus: a transformation in the relationship of sensuousness to conceptuality within the ontology of the artwork which challenges its definition as the object of a specifically ‚aesthetic‘, that is, ‚non-conceptual‘ or quintessentially ‚visual‘ experience” (Osborne 1999, 48).

Other authors have also pointed out that conceptual art developed in America may be regarded as a critical reaction to the dominant understanding of the aesthetic in the field of art aesthetic formalism (relevantly exemplified by Clement Greenberg’s type of criticism and evaluative criteria). This reaction is most often characterized by a complete rejection of formal qualities of the art object and of the sensuous alike in favor of a cool, intellectual experience (Morgan 1996, 31-38, Wood 2002), based on the analysis of the functions, nature and limits of art. This may be read ultimately as the complete reversal of aesthetic formalism in search of the same purity of art: the elimination of unnecessary conventions, leads, in this case, not to discover color and the flatness of the canvas as essential elements of artistic representation, but to take the problem of representation beyond its purely visual boundaries and to assert the irreducibility of the idea” as the essence of “art” (Colpitt 2004, 36).

It is therefore obvious that we need extra-aesthetic reasons for appreciating conceptual art. If we take a short glimpse at analytical aesthetics, we find out that art may equally be appreciated on moral or cognitive grounds, while conceptual art may be considered to offer valuable moral insights or expand our knowledge in unforeseen ways (Shelleckens 2007). Related to the question of the art historical discourse, one can easily notice that the major evaluative assumption concerning politicized practices in Eastern Europe which is at stake in recent revisionist art historical discourses is actually a moral one: artworks that illustrate the dominant ideology of the party are considered morally repugnant (due to an allegedly opportunistic motivation of their actions), while artworks that challenge the system are morally, hence, artistically worthy. We may thus reduce the political evaluation of conceptual art under oppressive political regimes to a moral problem.

At this point, we may wonder again if the process or art historical re-evaluation is not underpinned and to a certain extent even determined by historically contingent political terms. Nevertheless, there seems to be at least several terms, borrowed from the ethical regime that would seem relevant for many artistic gestures in times of political oppression irrespective of their political affiliation. They relate to norms borrowed from the tradition of humanism that we consider to have a somehow transcendental or at least universal status. For instance, one important evaluative criteria used in explaining the fact that the activity of Moscow Conceptualism was considered to reflect upon and offer a practical response to an existential problem, namely that of “intellectual survival” (Backstein 2005). This problem may be defined as both a moral and practical dilemma, namely, “the survival of the individual in circumstances where it was impossible to do so without losing one’s individual human and predominantly moral character” (Backstein 2005). Conceptual art seems to represent a practical solution to this problem, and it is praised for offering a sort of set of creative solutions in response to a particular historical situation. However, what is at stake here is more or less the Adornian question of an aesthetic negativity proper, in

a larger sense, to all experimental art under socialism.

We may also answer the question of the relevance of conceptual art as a politicized social practice in a functionalist manner: given the previously mentioned considerations of the politicized context of production and reception, it seems logical that conceptual art produced in Eastern Europe, which is also bearing the anti-aesthetic characters pointed out by Kosuth or LeWitt, should be regarded as giving up the function of producing aesthetic pleasure and undertaking the function of creating a sphere of artistic autonomy.

As such, conceptual art is fulfilling at the same time a political and moral function: it is often considered as prompting moral evaluations from its public by disclosing social inequities and instigating political changes. It also offers a guide of moral conduct by inventing possibilities of criticality and resistance to ideological heteronomy. In short, given the pertinence of the idea of freedom and individual autonomy in the beliefs currently shared by the democratic world, politicized conceptual art may be praised for teaching us how to preserve our (individual) autonomy even in conditions of political repression. However, conceptual art in the former Eastern Europe often played a role restricted to the sphere of art itself, in a manner similar to that of its Western counterparts, such as Lawrence Weiner, Sol Le Witt, Joseph Kosuth or Art and Language group. Such names are often regarded as artists who philosophically questioned the nature, meaning and functions of art (Osborne 1999), as well as the limits, the grammar and the possibilities of artistic language in the expanded field of contemporary culture. It is not my interest here to explore this meaning of aesthetic autonomy. I will nevertheless restrict my examination to a line of conceptual art that I consider to be the critique of the inherent rationality of the modernist project – and in extension, the failed practice of modernism due to the misguided (and in some cases, infamous) application or materialization of the communist ideology.

## **Formalist Underpinnings of Moral Appreciations: Aesthetic and Political Autonomy**

As I have already stated, the major evaluative assumption concerning politicized practices in Eastern Europe at stake in the discourse of recent revisionist art history is a (covertly) moral one. Artworks that illustrate the dominant ideology of the party are morally suspect (due to an allegedly opportunistic motivation of their actions), while artworks that challenge the system are morally, hence, artistically worthy. We may restate this evaluative framework as follows: there are artists that behave according to their personal interest and other that perform according to their public duty, even though this would be contrary to their personal interest.

I will not try to defend in the present text neither the relevance nor the irrelevance of such reasoning, although there are plenty of factual reasons for which such a simplistic dichotomy may be proved as being untenable<sup>2</sup>. Neither will I try to defend or refute the moral or the cognitive value of politicized conceptual art, although I agree that its value may be supported on both grounds and that many instances of such works are both morally and cognitively relevant. What I am actually trying to show is that even if we embrace such a moralist evaluation of (retrospectively) politicized practices of Conceptual Art, what we consider to represent the moral probity of an artwork is most of the time dependent on a formal quality of the artworks related to its aesthetic function. The aesthetic regime of communication is a key element for the political success of an artwork. But it is obvious that formalism for its own sake is not to be taken into account in the definition of the aesthetic regime of conceptual art, given the programmatic aesthetically non-interesting appearance of conceptual artworks. It is therefore more difficult to accept without argumentation how exactly the evaluation of the political impact and nature of the artworks is somehow dependent on formal considerations. In other words, it is harder to accept the fact that most of the politically relevant works in terms of their implications are at the same time artistically and

aesthetically challenging to the aesthetic status quo.

The aesthetic quality of the works I refer to is not visual and not related to the pleasure produced to its viewer. These are neither material qualities nor qualities of the experience of reception. Nevertheless, they may be considered to belong to the internal articulation of the artwork, that is, to be artistic properties in the first place. More precisely, the formal quality I am talking about relates to the articulation of the artwork as a linguistic proposition, that is, it belongs to the rhetorical use of the elements of communication composing a conceptual artwork, be them visual or textual. The rhetorical use of the communicative elements transform the ideological function of the normal communicational structures into a mere aesthetic functioning, understood here in the precise sense of useless or dysfunctional objects of pointless contemplation. The performative functioning of conceptual artworks as linguistic propositions is distorting ideological communication in order to produce empty signifiers presented as mere objects of contemplation. Thus expressed autonomy of the aesthetic regime in relation to social utility acquires a second-order political significance. Loosely following Adorno, it is precisely this capacity of the artwork to serve as an instrument of social critique precisely by its non-instrumentalization and differentiation by means of aesthetic pleasure, and to expose the inherent contradictions of the society in which it is embedded (Menke 1999) that I will consider to be the aesthetic quality of at least a significant part of conceptual art in the former Eastern Europe.

The fact that most of the politically relevant works are at the same time artistically challenging to the aesthetic status quo is perhaps easier to prove on mere empirical grounds. It suffices to think that the formal or stylistic components of conceptual art, interested in pointing out relations instead of favoring aesthetic qualities, represents in itself a formal alteration of the official figurative or abstract aesthetic status quo. In this sense, politicized conceptual art represents in itself a radical formal innovation in the use of artistic language. What is perhaps not clear without further argumentation is how the alterations of the dominant aesthetic formats of visual

and communication realized in some instances of conceptual art may be considered as inherently political gestures. This perhaps unusual dependency of the political on the aesthetic (and, as I will try to show, on the particular pointless and useless character of the aesthetic object as marks of artistic autonomy) is actually constituted by two particular conditions of conceptual art in Eastern Europe.

The first condition is the communicative character of conceptual art, inscribed in the linguistic structures of social life. But these structures are at the same time infused with political strategies of exerting control and channeling power. Therefore, under the communist regime, the forms of linguistic communication (hence, of artistic communication) were inherently political. Second, it is also a particular feature of the concept of political autonomy in a completely politicized artistic system which defines art as having a marked social utility. Under such an interpretation, artistic communication offers new possibilities of communication that are impossible in normal circumstances, which makes them politically relevant as critical and emancipating tools. This also supposes that the most efficient artworks as political tools are the ones able to create zones of formal expressive autonomy within the normal communicative structures, even though this does not mean to produce aesthetically pleasant objects of contemplation.

We may restate this relationship in functionalist terms as follows. From a functionalist perspective, artworks may either support the dominant ideology of the Party (which is morally repugnant) or oppose it (which is morally sound), that is, they may work against it in order to subvert and de-structure it, or to circumvent it (by creating an alternative, an outside). In this respect, I plead for a co-alteration of form and social function concerning politicized practices of conceptual art. According to this position, a change in form entails a change in function. Conversely, any change in social function supposes a change in form.

The argument for this thesis could be summarized and re-stated as follows: being “an art of language”, conceptual art is embedded in the ordinary structures of communication. But under the communist regime, the ordinary structures of

communication are themselves infused with ideology. Thus, conceptual art is also inherently inscribed into the linguistic structures of the dominant ideology that serve as instruments of social control by means of their various material structures, representational conventions and institutions. Consequently, the alterations in the forms of communication from the purely rhetorical to the aesthetic entail micro-political transformations in the status and function of the art object. However, as I will try to show, it is rather the inherent anti-rationalism as part of an anti-modernist stance that conceptual art shares with other neo-avant-garde practices (Šuvaković 2003 a) that may contextually justify its often absurd, pointless, or failed communicational structures.

### **Meaning and Embodiment: Conceptual Art as a Semiotic Practice**

These claims about the relevance of aesthetic formalism in the appreciation of politicized art under oppressive political regimes may seem shocking particularly when dealing with conceptual art. At least for the reasons presented when discussing the non-aesthetic character of conceptual artworks, it is obvious that conceptual art cannot be reduced to a mere matter of aesthetic, that is, sensuous or visual appreciation. Moreover, conceptual art seems to be altogether not interested by the material construction of the artwork, favoring instead the ideal processes of thinking and mental entities. Accordingly, the idea of the “dematerialization” of the art object has been proposed as a definition for conceptual art practices of the late sixties taking into account the absence or irrelevance of the art object in the construction and appreciation of the artwork (Lippard and Chandler 1999, 46-52).

In order to explain the implicit relevance of artistic form in the extra-aesthetic appreciation of conceptual art, let me remind at this point the notion of the artistic “embodiment” of meaning used by Arthur Danto in the wake of Hegel (Danto 1998, 195; Danto 2001) in order to distinguish between artworks and the expression of philosophical or other type of ideas (for instance, the political ones) in a non-artistic form. For

Danto, an artwork is something which has the property of being about something (that is, the semantic property of having a meaning) and the one of embodying this meaning or the message it conveys about the world (or a particular aspect of it) (Danto 1998; 195; Danto 2001, xviii). Therefore, even for an obvious cognitivist like Danto, there is an important ontological difference to be made between the material “vehicle” that conveys the meaning (be it an object or the textual statement, the photograph etc.) and the artwork as such. And indeed, as dematerialized as it may seem, conceptual art still has to materially “embody” its meanings. This means that, unlike non-artistic forms and practices of communication, the meaning of an artwork cannot be separated from its sensuous form of presentation.

But what is the particular form of embodiment in conceptual art, which presents itself as an art entirely devoted to meaning? Indeed, the historical peculiarity of conceptual art is the strange artistic articulation of the Hegelian pretense of surpassing altogether the realm of the sensuous in order to place itself in the proper medium of language as the most suitable medium for conceptual matters, that is, for thinking. Art becomes itself philosophy. But even philosophy needs a medium for expressing meanings, which is language. As many noticed, conceptual art may itself be described as the “art of language” (Wood 2002, 6). It may be characterized by taking into account the paramount role language plays in the material articulation of the artworks, which often tend to be reduced to linguistic statements or propositions. The linguistic element may explain the dematerialization of the artistic object in favor of a new semantic structure whose signifiers are conventional and often volatile (Morley 2003, 142) The fact that language tends to favor pure significance and to get rid of the signifier at all may also explain the idea of „dematerialization” supporting the misconception about conceptual art’s physical irrelevance, hence, non-aesthetic quality. In Lucy Lippard’s account, conceptual art “emphasizes the thinking process almost exclusively” which may “be provoking a dematerialization of art, especially of art as object” (Lippard and Chandler 1999, 48).

The linguistic character of conceptual art is supported by empirical traits of most conceptual art practices given their intensive use of written language in their artistic structures. Commenting about this peculiarity in Western conceptualism, Lippard and Chandler note: “When works of art, like words, are signs that convey ideas, they are not things in themselves but symbols or representatives of things. Such a work is a medium rather than an end in itself. The medium need not be the message” (Lippard and Chandler 1999, 49). Language may be used in several different ways: it may be used in order to turn it into an object of visual contemplation; it may replace a visual image by its description; or it may accompany an image in many different ways as a caption, that is, in order to specify, overdetermine, diverge, deflect or complexify its meanings and create a complex relation of multiple meanings (Morley 2003, 144). However, we may consider that it is the semiotic activity rather than the strictly linguistic character of conceptual art procedures which may determine its specificity. The analysis and transformation of signs, codes, fragments of visual culture and their articulation undertaken by the artists seems to become a main interest for what we may retrospectively associate with conceptual art. Thus, conceptual art may include other forms of non-linguistic communication such as gestures, photographs and visual codes without losing its “conceptual” character.

What remains to be noted is the formal articulation of conceptual artworks as linguistic propositions. On a different account, Boris Groys noticed that conceptual art transformed the exhibition space into an installation composed of related elements that may be linked according to political, spatial or social logic of relationships, elements that nevertheless tend to be articulated in a way similar to the linguistic structures presiding normal communication (Groys 2011, 1-3). Visual art presents meanings in a way analogous to verbal propositions. To sum up, conceptual art presents itself less as a material and more like an ideal entity, a mental compound formed from various relations, thus, an essentially relational entity. As it happens in our case, the relation may also be specified as the relation between a sign and its political context of use. The

linguistic structure of conceptual artworks does not explain how they may acquire aesthetic significance. Nevertheless, we may explain this possibility if we distinguish between aesthetic function and aesthetic qualities. Taking into account the anti-aesthetic orientation of conceptual art, Groys also notices a shift from aesthetics to poetics and rhetoric in the use of both visual and textual language (Groys 2011, 3). This means that the anti-aesthetic character of conceptual art should also be understood less as a matter of nature but as a matter of use and functional priorities. Although it may remain aesthetic in some of its features, the aesthetic qualities (where they exist at all) are not primarily intended for their own sake, that is, artworks are not produced in order to be aesthetically appreciated. This interpretation does not preclude that aesthetic qualities may play a rhetorical function in the articulation of the work, or be subsumed to other extra-aesthetic purposes.

Last, but not least, we should also pay attention to the fact that, by its insistence on “ideas” and language, conceptual art is embedded in the everyday-life structures of ordinary, that is, it uses non-artistic communication as a proper artistic language, given the “indifference” of conceptual art towards the (purely) visual and generally, formal aspects of the artworks in a normative and restrictive art historical sense. This assumption may be proved by taking a closer look on the abundant historical and empirical data we dispose of. As far as Western Conceptualism is concerned, Alexander Alberro notices that conceptual art starts using secondary information (the art-critical discourse surrounding art) as primary artistic information, that is, as artistic medium or technique (Alberro 2003, 101-103). Magazines, advertising images (posters) that are usually considered means of distributing information about an artwork, start to become the medium for producing the work, a given form that may support artistic communication. It is also remarkable the obsession with other media of communication such as postcards and telegrams, the telephone or with the media recording information (such as Christine Kozlov’s tape recordings), which may point to the importance ordinary channels of communication play for the articulation of

conceptual artworks in the wake of a new informational paradigm of a technologized communicational society (Shanken 2004).

The linguistic, or rather, semiotic character of conceptual art may also be observed concerning conceptual art in the former Eastern Europe (Beke 1999, 41-42). In this case, the slogan, the poster, the social-realist painting and the illustrated book, not to mention other formats of recording information specific for the work of the bureaucratic language such as the certificate and the planning graphics (visible in the works of the Collective Actions Group and in Illya Kabakov's dysfunctional archives) become paramount aesthetic forms and proper mediums of artistic communication. On the other hand, there are many artworks that chose to comment upon the very failure to communicate (as in some of Jiri Kovanda's performative actions that were photographically documented), or simply to question the logic of the medium, for instance, of painting (as in Horia Bernea's series of paintings).

### **Ideology as a Linguistic Mechanism of Social Control**

If we may concede that conceptual art may be considered to be formally embedded in the linguistic structures presiding social life and ordinary communication, understood here as minimal conditions in which art can take place (Smith 2011), it is still not obvious how these very structures acquire an inherent political significance without a closer inspection of the socio-political context of production (and reception, where it existed). Thus, it is time to explain at this point the second premise of our argument, that is, the idea of the influence of language as an instrument of social control under totalitarian political regimes. For the sake of a clearer argument, let me define ideology as the naturalization of the linguistic production, where cultural products and "ideas" are proposed as natural objects. As Terry Eagleton puts it, ideology may be understood as "the process whereby social life is converted to a natural reality", leading to "the confusion of linguistic and phenomenal reality" (Eagleton 1991, 2).

As far as the ideological, hence, linguistic character of social life under communism is concerned I would relate to the poignant observation of Boris Groys that, unlike the capitalist regime, communist ideology relied on the productive power of language (Groys 2010, 1-32, Groys 2005, 96-125). It is the linguistic reality that determines social transformations and effects and not the power of money or economic interest (Groys 2010, 22-28). Moreover, in communism, language shapes reality: reality is made to comply with the political utopia that needs to be realized, that is, constructed (Groys 2010, 4-14). It is enough to think about the power of political decisions taken in the name of political ideas, such as the construction of gigantic institutions like the infamous Palace of Parliament in Bucharest, which in turn mobilized huge amounts of money and energy in order to be realized. The total planification of social life as an enormous artwork according to a master plan may also explain how communist politics used to infuse all areas of social life and to transform them according to a rationalized plan. Politics becomes itself art, more precisely, the total artwork (Groys 1992). Thus, politics enacts a complete and lethal aestheticization of everyday life (Groys 1992, 33-47), not unlike the one taking place in the West. The particularity of this aesthetics is that rationality, geometrical order – planning - and usefulness become primary aesthetic values.

What is not obvious at first sight is perhaps the subtle way common language and communist aesthetic forms functioned as constraints able to discipline and control social life. First of all, it is enough to think about phenomena like censorship in order to grasp the importance of language for the construction of the communist social reality. Secondly, we may add to Boris Groys's thesis of the linguistification of the society" the idea of the isomorphic relation between language and society, supported by Ekaterina Bobrinskaya "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.

Perhaps it should also be stressed at this point the politically engaged aspect of official art under communism and

the precise control of its aesthetic forms. All official art under communism could be considered to inherit the constructivist impulse of this particular Soviet avant-garde artistic doctrine, praising the importance of applied art in engineering a new society by using design and architecture (Groys 1992). During the (shorter or longer) period of socialist realism, the doctrine of an art serving the realities of the socialist world and the processes of social transformation was considered as the only officially accepted stylistic and aesthetic doctrine. Abstract art was at the time considered a decadent example of the bourgeois, capitalist society. After a period of relaxation, abstract art was tolerated because it did not present any political challenges and because it sometimes served to illustrate the ideals of modernism (Piotrowski 2009).

Last, but not least, the relevance of language as the bearer of state ideology for the control of aesthetic forms of expression may be induced in the predominant use of some forms of expression such as the slogan in verbal language and visually in the form of the propaganda poster, and their frequent use in politicized conceptual art. It is by no means an accident that some key conceptual artists such as Mladen Stilinović or Alexander Kosolapov chose these two forms of expression as favorite aesthetic regimes of artistic communication.

### **Using and Abusing the System: The Rhetorical Production of Aesthetic Autonomy**

The idea of the rhetorical use of language in conceptual art in relation to the language of State bureaucracy, highlighted by Boris Groys (2011, 3), also suggests another important aspect of what we may today label as conceptual art: the possibility that the play with language may be interpreted both at the level of the propositional content and on the level of its pragmatics, that is, of its utterance and contextual meanings. We may also take into account the performative character of many such artistic utterances which are accompanied by gestures and other forms of visual support or documentation, that is, the difference between what an artwork does and what

an artwork says. The contextual interpretation of artworks is favored in the discourse of revisionist art history that considers the political significance of an artwork in the political context of its exhibition and reception. It is the same rhetorical quality of the artworks, that is, the way structures of ordinary communication are subverted and rephrased, that I take to be decisive in the formal or aesthetic appreciation of politicized conceptual art.

What is, then, the purpose of such rhetorical communication? Such a reading of the formal element in conceptual art as a rhetorical articulation of ideologically infused patterns and forms of communication, as well as of signs and quotes contextually infused with ideological meanings, opens up a different understanding of the very concept of “artistic autonomy”. Under this reading, the question of the autonomy of art is essentially a pragmatic and performative question, that is, a question related to the function of art in society. It is obvious that, according to Adorno, artistic autonomy means both social engagement and reflexive capacities which should be concentrated in the form of the artwork, resulting in an intensification of ordinary aesthetic experience (Adorno 1997). According to Adorno, an artwork should remain a part of the social fabric and should never occlude or otherwise mystify its imbrication in the social life, while, at the same time, remaining free to criticize it as a mere representation of it. Facing the pervasiveness of cultural industry and the commodification of the artwork, Adorno was entitled to plead for such a radical engagement of a higher aesthetic autonomy in relation to the aestheticization of everyday life and the commodification of intellectual pleasure.

Nevertheless, in the late sixties, it has seemed impossible to claim in the West that the autonomy of art may still be preserved under the aesthetic regime. On the contrary, as Peter Osborne notices, conceptual artists claim to effect a “separation of two elements hitherto conjoined in the founding conflation of formalist modernism: aestheticism and autonomy” (Osborne 1999, 57). It is thus, obvious, that for many conceptual artists like Joseph Kosuth the idea of non-aesthetic autonomy of art may lead to the rejection of the visual and

formal qualities that may support its commodification, the reduction of the work to “a mere idea” that (allegedly) cannot be sold. As a historical note, for some art historians and theorists, this has soon proved to be a fiction, perhaps, constitutive for the Western conceptual art’s political failure and ultimate reduction to another – rather dull- aesthetic style (Alberro 2003; Lippard 2001; Osborne 1999, 48). Even more drastically, it may have collapsed into an “aesthetics of administration” (Buchloh 1997, 117-120) or to an “aestheticization of logical positivism” (Osborne 1999, 62).

However, the instrumental rationality of administration will play an important part in the articulation of aesthetic autonomy as a critique of this rationality in the former Eastern Europe (including the Soviet Union). Major differences between the cultural policy of conceptual artists living in the West for preserving the autonomy of art and the concept of autonomy developed by the artists living and working in the totalitarian (or at least authoritarian) political regimes of Eastern Europe (and the Soviet World) lie in the very conditions of the market and the “cultural industry”. More precisely, as I have stated at the very beginning, the difference lies in the very absence of the market, and its replacement with a State centralized system of artistic production. As I have tried to suggest, the power of the ideology is expressed by the complete instrumentalization of social life by means of linguistic superstructures. It is also dependent on the criteria of a complete instrumentalization of art as a socially and politically engaged constructivist practice, in relation to which practices producing useless objects of purely aesthetic kind appear as “anti-art”. This leads to a paradox. In times of declared political engagement, artworks that appear as absurd instances of “anti-art” become politically engaged in a critical sense by appearing as aesthetically autonomous, non-functional objects of no particular meaning and importance, a quality which is paradoxically achieved as a result of a rhetorical artistic activity.

In this case, autonomy may mean the performative production of anarchic gestures or linguistic deviations in the very structure of everyday life and political communication, which are aesthetically significant in themselves. Thus,

conceptual artists in the East borrow the ideological forms of communication in order to deflate their power and annihilate their meanings. In both situations, deviations of these doctrines, alteration of their visual or verbal language or interruptions of the official logic by producing non-sense communication or aesthetic alterations become politically significant. The political significance of aesthetic autonomy can be summarized as follows: artists create a zone of individual expressive autonomy, which, given the opposition between individualism and commonality or public reason which prevails in the communist regime, becomes politically significant in itself (Badovinac 1998, 16).

### **Some Practices of Negation: Destructuring the Language of Ideology**

I will consider briefly several examples of artworks that did not address artistic autonomy *stricto sensu*, related to the representational conventions of the artworld, thus maintaining a decidedly apolitical stance, but in an indirect way, by means of a series of semiotic operations on the fabric of ideological codes or social conventions active at a certain moment. In strict art historical terms, some of these artworks may be considered, largely, „post-avant-garde” or „post-modern”, having been conceived in a time when ideological language was already delegitimated, but formally preserved by the dominant structures of power and replicated by other social classes (Šuvaković 2003 b, 94-96). In other words, ideology already became, on a social scale, a collection of empty signifiers.

Work with slogans and the form of the slogan are of particular importance here, given the gap between language and reality this form of communication introduces. For the slogan is true according to the beliefs of the Party and not in relation to any reality. It is a pure performative, meant to produce social reality, and not to adapt to an existing one. In the hands of some artists, it also becomes an aesthetic form in the sense of being turned into disfunctionalized linguistic machinery, reduced to a visual object of contemplation of no particular interest by losing its meaning. The loss of

performative function and meaning means turning a slogan into a collection of empty signifiers. For instance, when Mladen Stilinović uses the declarative forms of the Party ideology to promote his art, he is actually subverting the very logic he pretends to represent by means of tautological statements that require no further empirical confirmation. A similar strategy of annihilation functions in the case of Hungarian artist Endre Tot, who is applying a nihilistic strategy of programmatically emptying any linguistic structure reduced to a mathematical zero, especially when dealing with the logic of the political slogan by carrying signs of (thus futile) protest marked with a series of zeros. Tot's minimal linguistic interventions oppose the overproduction of ideological claims in public space especially by means of slogans, "the chatter of the official discourse in the Communist countries" (Piotrowski 2009, 323). His series of nihilistic affirmations by means of counter-slogans like "I'm doing nothing" or "I'm going nowhere" produced in the 1980's also work to contradict the "productive" activity he mimics, declaring it meaningless and useless.

The alterations introduced by conceptual art inside these very forms, for instance, inside the rules of the figurative language may be best expressed by Sot Art representatives Vitali Komar and Alexander Melamid. Relating to the aesthetic style and visual language of both socialist realist painting (Groys 1992, 68-72) and of the propaganda poster (Backstein 2005, 19), Komar and Melamid reclaim a different use of the symbols, thus liberating an empty space for a different functioning of the visual and verbal signs. For instance, they mix the landmark of the utopian space and a-historical time of (always progressive) communism, the effigy of Lenin pointing to the glorious future with the prosaic gesture of calling a cab near a Mc Donald's in Manhattan, a gesture that leads to the collapse of both ideologies into a prosaic statement with explicit inherent contradictions. The image looks both like a realist socialist painting and a propaganda poster but cannot function as neither of them, or rather, resembles an essentially futile and counter-utopian ideological gesture. One favorite artistic strategy of Komar and Melamid or Alexander Kosolapov, which consists in borrowing and conflating visual and linguistic signs

and meanings into new enunciations that preserve the ideological form of expression, resulting in the subversion of the very form it embraces, may be best exemplified by taking into account the ideological overproduction of meaning in the Soviet world as the main difference among the Soviet and the American social context. Where Pop Art appeared in a society favoring a hyper-abundance of material goods, Sot Art appeared in a society dominated by “overproduction of Ideological Content in any, but especially public statements” (Backstein 2005, 19).

Last, but not least, we may also pay attention to the way language is used to formalize aspects of private life are relevant for the way they may acquire an active transformation of our perception. It is here that the Ideological State Apparatus regains its importance. Relevant conceptual art pieces present themselves by turning attention to the historicized regime of the mundane, the prosaic and the everyday life. But it is the humor and irony of such works that recommends them in the first place as rhetorically – and thus, artistically – exemplary. Ilya Kabakov’s works from the late seventies mock the bureaucratization of ordinary life to its smallest details. The large enamel on masonite tables depict administrative structures regulating daily activities. By painting a schedule for taking out the garbage for the inhabitants of his block of flats, minutely conceived for each day, week and month so that everybody contributes to this routine activity, Kabakov points out the uselessness of this system of planning which pervades social life according to the communist rationalization of “common life” - *Schedule for Slope Pail Dumping* (1980). The same structure is repeated in his painting *Sunday Evening* (1979). 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. 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 as a politics of nothingness, echoing the subsequent activity of voluntary “linguistic incomprehensibility” in Moscow Conceptualism (Weinhart 2008, 70-73). 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, which is prone to subsequent interpretations. Sometimes, the event becomes the interruption of a routine, the suspension of an established order of significant events. Often, 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”.

Among the practices that do not tackle directly bureaucracy, or the alienation of language, but rather the functional instrumentalization of art within the normative aesthetics of Socialist Realism (or Modernism, for that matter), the Fluxus-inspired activities of the Yugoslav neo-avant-garde artistic group Gorgona may be featured as an interesting case study. The notion of “anti-art” describing aesthetically autonomous objects in the context of socio-political engagement helps understand the „assisted” ready-made objects created by Gorgona, in particular, the critique of instrumental rationality operated by one of their most important artists, Dimitri Basicević also known as Mangelos. According to Denegri (2003, 202), Gorgona implemented a radicalization of modernist

methods in art practices, to the extent that they become unacceptable to the criteria of dominant values. Himself a trained art historian, Mangelos creates a poetic language that is at the same time useless and mimics the language of science, mixing theorems and “proofs”, alphabetic system of classification and cartography. Despite their appearance, Mangelos’s objects are emptied of any meaning, while the texts accompanying them are at best absurd or metaphorical. Nevertheless, the language of science that Mangelos mimics was by no means apolitical under the communist regime. On the contrary, it played an active part of the modernist imaginary of the socialist functionalist machine which turned the engineer and the scientist into exemplary figures of progressive and applied knowledge. In his „Manifesto of Manifesto”, Mangelos states that mechanical labor characteristic for advanced modernity has replaced manual labor, thus resulting into an integrated social functionality instead of an emotionally structured one. That is why, according to Mangelos, function replaces meaning (Mangelos, 2003).

It should also be noted that, except for the Collective Actions Group, all other artworks exemplified were produced either under tolerant political regimes in relation to experimental culture (accompanied by the famous Yugoslav „Third Way” Economy and Politics), or those criticized the system from the safe point of the West. Unlike those marginal practices, whose reception was often restricted to a narrow circle of artist-friends, they are, therefore, less prone to a moral evaluation as described at the beginning of this paper, and render such a justification of their value problematic. Nevertheless, they are no less significant in having radically questioned the postulated rationality of socialist ideology as materialized in various semiotic conventions and operations performed at the level of State bureaucracy, as well as the functional and instrumental evaluation of art which was still dominant at that time. By their inherent absurd or pointless character, they were, in other words, instrumental in having exposed the discrepancies between the reality and its ideological description, between the inherent rationality of

socialist modernism as an idea and its various materializations, while preserving, at the same time, their aesthetic autonomy.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> I will speak about the former Eastern Europe despite the obvious heterogeneity of the cultures and institutions from the various countries that composed the politically and geographically defined "Eastern bloc". Although I will not claim that neo-avant-garde art in the region may be described homogeneously and specified according to distinct principles in relation to its Western counterpart, I think that there are various conditions which may mark their particularities.

<sup>2</sup> A body of empiric evidence will be featured in this paper – it deals with those artists that overtly ironized the system either at the time when ideology no longer served its purpose (and ceased to act as an instrument of censorship for that matter), especially in the eighties, either chose to emigrate in the West where they continued to implicitly advocate the superiority of the host socio-economical regime by exposing the flaws of the Communist Utopia.

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## Moral and Political Obligation in “Possessive Individualism”: The Problem of Manners

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### Abstract

Usually, the interpreters of Hobbes and Locke have discussed the two systems of political philosophy from the perspective of liberal political doctrine, meaning the opposition between unliberal absolute monarchy, which Hobbes promotes, and liberal parliamentary democracy, asserted by Locke. However, some interpreters have pointed out that, beyond the political matter, the two philosophies are first grounded in the culture of the 17th century and in the structure of English society. From this point of view, even Hobbes would keep in his concept of state of nature certain schemes of social behavior, which will allow him to reinvent society. Therefore, Hobbes's man is the representative of a special type of society that Macpherson calls „possessive market society”. I analyze the implications of this hypothesis on the problem of moral and political obligation in Hobbes, with respect to those conventions which are called social mores. The status of mores is ambiguous in Hobbes, since they depend to a great extent on conventions and they do not have any direct link to natural law; on the other hand, they can be seen as an expression of attitudes and natural interests (civilization being the sum of mechanisms and social rules by means of which people attain their natural purposes). In the absence of sociability, morals cannot be understood in other way.

**Keywords:** moral obligation, political obligation, state of nature, manners, Hobbes, Locke, law of nature, social mores

Within the paradigm of natural law, the theories of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke are fundamentally different from continental theories. The latter are profoundly grounded in Aristotelian and scholastic philosophy, believing that on the one hand, sociability is written in man's nature and on the

other hand, that human nature can only be defined as rational. The consequences that follow from these assumptions are that society, as a source of humanity, is prior to the individual, and that the individual has the duty of contributing to the perfection of the state by attaining virtue, that the justice of the city and the justice of the individual are inseparable things, and that politics is strictly dependent on the capacity of political man to attain the ideals of wisdom, of moral prudence and of virtue. None of these assumptions are present in the works of Hobbes or Locke, who's moral and political theories are to a great extent empirically oriented, since they are based on the observation of individual behavior and on the inductive assumption that the individual is anterior to society. Consequently, the individual has no *natural* obligation towards society or towards the sovereign, he only has *natural* rights and political obligation, the latter being merely the result of conventions. At the same time, these empirical political theories can be considered from the perspective of their historical and social origins, as the empirical part of the theory of knowledge (particularly in Locke) can serve precisely to legitimate a certain type of moral and a certain type of politics. From this point of view, the epistemological revolution in political theory must be connected to England's political history: in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, political theories have inspired and legitimated political and social transformations. This isn't valid just for Locke, whose *Two treatises on government* constituted the political ideology of the Glorious Revolution in England, it is also valid for Hobbes, whose systematical thinking expressed in the *Leviathan* cannot be understood outside historical events. Numerous interpreters of the works of Hobbes and Locke have pointed out that their political theories were a response to political and social events. One of the most interesting approaches of this type is that of Crawford Brough Macpherson, who has placed the theories of Hobbes and Locke not in the context of the political struggles and movements of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (as most interpreters have done), but in the dynamics of a society defined by a generalized market economy. After referring to the general framework of

Macpherson's interpretation, I will point out, especially regarding Hobbes, how political obligation is justified in the light of a concept of state of nature, which was not the result of a logical hypothesis, but that of an inductive generalization of the social individual's behavior.

Macpherson believes that when Hobbes thought of state of nature as a premise of the absolutist state, he previously included in the definition of human nature a series of elements which rather pertain to social behavior. Hobbes's theory about the psychology and physiology of man is not sufficient, according to Macpherson, to explain how natural man passed from the state of nature to the establishment of the state; in order to do this, the postulate of sociability would be needed. Hobbes – who does not admit sociability, will make a series of implicit observations and descriptions which will point in that direction. We are referring to an ambiguous concept of the state of nature. The main significance of that *natural condition of mankind* that Hobbes speaks of is related to the understanding of *human nature* as an essence which is present in each human individual, knowing that man is through birth an animal dominated by affections and instincts, and that he becomes social only through education and calculation. However, the English philosopher also speaks about "the naturall state of men, before they entr'd into Society" (Hobbes 1983, 49), which indicates an historical meaning of the state of nature (such as we will find in Locke and particularly in Rousseau). According to the historical meaning, the social contract should mark a definitive break with primitivism and savagery, as man finds himself alienated from his initial condition; when the social connection is broken, which happens often enough, man would be unable to return to his previous state, because of the changes that social life has brought about in his inner life (as Rousseau said – this point is not particularly present in Hobbes).

By pointing out that the ambiguity of the state of nature isn't just present in Rousseau and Locke, but also in Hobbes, Macpherson demolishes the myth of the systematic character of the *Leviathan*. He suggests an original way of remedying the fundamental ambiguity of the state of nature in Hobbes. Namely, he states that the state of nature is seen by Hobbes as

the presence, in the natural individual, of some characteristics that actually belong to civilized man. Although it functions as a logical hypothesis, the concept of the natural condition of humanity in Hobbes must be understood from the perspective of its empirico-inductive genesis: „state of nature is a statement of the behaviour to which men as they now are, men who live in civilized societies and have the desires of civilized men, would be led if all law and contract enforcement were removed.” (Macpherson 1962, 22) Hobbes would therefore keep, in his concept of state of nature, certain schemes of social behavior, which will allow him to *reinvent* society. This wouldn't just be limited to the presence, in the concept of the state of nature, of some elements that pertain to man's presence in society, but more so, Hobbes's man is the representative of a special type of society that Macpherson calls „possessive market society”.<sup>1</sup> The individual's behavior in the state of nature implies an overall evaluation of others, of the purposes that they pursue and of the means that they use and, therefore, it also implies the development of some general principles for action. The conduct imposed through *bellum omnium contra omnes* can be separated from the representation of certain instrumental values such as the power of others, the sizing of the means and the measurement of value.<sup>2</sup> For example, the enumeration of the most important forms of power which men can acquire, of what is „honorable” as Hobbes put it, is nothing more than an inventory of the elements that define competition in the market economy: the power that each man possesses is nothing more than merchandise offered up, like all things, for evaluation and trade on the competitive market.

In regard to Locke, Macpherson points out that his interpreters did not resist the temptation of understanding him in the light of certain modern postulates of liberal democracy (Macpherson 1962, 194). Just like in Hobbes's case, Macpherson demonstrates that Locke's theory was purified of its social original and historic content, which lead to a fundamental contradiction. All of Locke's interpreters agree that the state, as perceived by Locke, is “in effect a joint-stock company whose shareholders were the men of property.” (Macpherson 1962, 195) But „who were the members of Locke's civil society?” –

Macpherson asks. If they were only the men of property, how could Locke make the civil society oblige everyone? How could the social contract be an adequate basis of political obligation for all men?" (Macpherson 1962, 195) In order to answer this question, we need to define the state of nature as a commercial state; in fact, when defining obligation, Locke follows Hobbes to the end, as he reduces justice to the definition established by the contacting parties on the market. Thus, the concept of state of nature is a "curious mixture of historical imagination and logical abstraction from civil society" (Macpherson 1962, 209): first, come the commercial conventions of the state of nature, then the conventions which lead to the establishment of civil society through the recognition of a common power. Still, there is nothing in the works of Locke that resembles the description of any means of primitive economy; Locke assumed that relations in the state of nature function along the pattern of social relations based on wage-labor (Macpherson 1962, 215-216). The novelty of Locke's theory of the state of nature, when compared to Hobbes's, consists of the relation between rationality and sociability and of the idea that man's labor is entirely his own; the stake for the *Treatise* was to justify, in that age, the capitalist relations of production and the bourgeois values (Macpherson 1962, 48, 219).

Macpherson's interpretation allows us to see the theories formulated by Hobbes and Locke from a unifying perspective. It puts the two theories in a type of relation which, beyond the divergence of doctrines, can result in common issues. What matters is seeing to what extent the divergences between the two theories can be integrated in a type of reading which allows the highlighting of a common significance, both in terms of politics and in terms of morals. This point brings us back to analyzing the relation between political obligation and moral obligation. From the perspective of Macpherson's interpretation, the two theories are the expression of the liberal *economic* ideology. Usually, the interpreters of Hobbes and Locke discuss the two systems of political philosophy from the perspective of liberal *political* doctrine, meaning the opposition between absolute monarchy, which Hobbes promotes and parliamentary democracy, asserted by Locke. The merits of Macpherson's

interpretation consist of having shown that, beyond the political aspect and the option for monarchy or democracy, the two philosophies are first grounded in the *social structure* of the 17<sup>th</sup> century English society and most of all, in the structure of the generalized market economy. Indeed, most times, analysts concerned with the works of Hobbes and Locke have lost sight of the fact that the contractualist model of society is based on an *economic model* (Foucault 2003, 13-14). Without a doubt there has always been an agreement between men, in relation to different purposes and circumstances, but the contract between two or more parties is a special kind of agreement, regarding the obligations which warrant the trade of goods or services. The “natural right school” was not named as such because man was perceived as having certain „rights”, but because the privileged object of civil right (jurisprudence) actually consisted in the *obligations* which derive from a contract, and perceiving society as a generalized system of obligations justified the idea that basically, *society is a contract*<sup>3</sup>.

Macpherson shares the opinion of Leo Strauss, who designates Hobbes as the first liberal thinker, the founder of individualism, yet, if Hobbes were indeed the first liberal thinker, this is mainly justified by the fact that he thought of power (individual power, not civil power) through the perspective of completely market society. This means that Hobbes’s political theory (and that of Locke as well) is first of all a theory concerning the civil obligations which ensue from the social contract. Without a doubt, the issue of rights is a fundamental one, but once such a foundation is established, Hobbes’s moral and political theory raised the issue of whether obligations ensue from a contract, meaning from the *transfer of right*. However, civil obligation (i.e. obeying sovereign power and laws) would not be legitimate and would hold no meaning if man were not accustomed to the idea of obligation or if this idea was not innate in man. As Locke will put it, the law of nature speaks to men in the language of obligation: „the law of nature obliges every one” and „where there is no law, there is no freedom” (Locke 1980, 9, 32).

Although this axiom of liberal thinking is present in Hobbes’s thought, Raymond Polin believes that Hobbes is not

a liberal thinker: he is rather a philosopher of liberty (Polin 1981, 126). According to Polin, Hobbes has never directly established a theory of political obligation. The central idea concerning the absolute character of sovereignty emphasizes the fact that, in Hobbes, the concept of obligation must not be understood in its modern sense. The term of obligation, used today, was created by Kant according to whom, through his sensibility, man belongs to the natural world of phenomena, and through his reason to the intelligible field of things themselves. While the first field pertains to necessity, the second one pertains to freedom. Kant said that the will of man is not naturally good, since it is subject to the pressures of sensibility and of wishes, meaning that it is a heteronomous will. For this reason, moral action is only possible by compelling volition through reason. The morality of man is therefore conditioned by the compelling of volition through a categorical imperative, but this obligation is still free, since the restriction is not exerted from the outside, but from the inside, and this can only be possible by virtue of the will. Therefore, in Kant, moral obligation is opposed to natural necessity, and is seen as an exercise of free will; moral obligation is not an exterior restraint and can only be achieved by each man individually, through his freedom to choose, therefore through his conscience. This theory is the opposite of Hobbes's.

For the author of the *Leviathan*, man is part of the system of the world, and the world functions according to immutable and necessary laws. According to the classical science of nature, a movement is free when it does not meet an obstacle, and the same goes for volition, which is made up of bodily strength, passions etc. Therefore, freedom and necessity are not necessarily opposed. Spinoza asserted, in the same century as Hobbes, that freedom and understanding necessity is the same thing, which meant that natural law is not incompatible with moral freedom. Hobbes defines natural laws as being „moral” and uses the expression „natural and moral law” often enough, since for him, natural and moral laws define the mores of the state of nature, which are rational. Therefore, obligation and

necessity seem to be one and the same thing, which leads to the conclusion that obligation does not pertain to conscience. It refers to the exterior coercion; this is why Hobbes states that any understanding or convention among men is worthless unless it is warranted by a greater power, namely that of the sovereign.

On the other hand however, there are a series of affirmations about Hobbes according to which „ there being no obligation on any man which ariseth not from some act of his own” (Hobbes 1946, 203); „ for no man is obliged by a covenant whereof he is not author” (149). These passages can be easily understood if we consider the civil state, because it is the only state in which we can speak of stable conventions. These conventions can be of a moral nature (concerning mores) or of a political nature, and the obligation associated with them will be both a moral and a political obligation. It is for this reason why “freedom means something different in society from what it does in nature.” (van Mill, 1995: 458) However, some conventions exist in the state of nature as well, although they are not thought to be durable, and this means that we may speak of moral obligation in the state of nature as well. Such an obligation would be, for example, gratitude and if we consider the gratitude of the children towards their parents, we may say that it is of a permanent nature. According to Warender, the gratitude, which is by definition different from convention, must be also based on the consent, since consent is projected into the future (Warender 1957, 51-52) and it creates an obligation (see also Schochet 1967, 444)<sup>4</sup>. However, we must say that “the relation between obligation and gratitude is quite difficult to analyze because the term of ‘obligation’ has, in Hobbes, an ambiguous meaning” (Bilba 2011, 178).

But the constraint by means of which an individual forces another, in order to obtain something from him, does not constitute an obligation, just like you are under no obligation to submit yourself to the power of a highway man; this is rather the definition of what is *not* an obligation. From what was just said, it can be understood that obligation and necessity are not the exact same thing; you might say that obligation is an *accepted necessity*. The consent given by the person has the

power and the effect of a moral law; but this consent cannot be understood as the self-determination of will in a Kantian way. For example, if a thief threatens me and makes me hand over all that I have, at gunpoint, I obey, I consent; the obligation in this case does not come from the thief's power, nor from my autonomous will; it comes from the natural principle of self-preservation, to which consent is added. The latter is the recognition of the fact that, indeed, the threat made by the thief constitutes a peril, since I do not possess sufficient strength to defend myself. If, on the contrary, I decide not to obey, but to defend myself, since I feel that I am stronger than the thief and might defeat him, the justification of my deliberate act is found in natural law as well, more precisely, in natural right<sup>5</sup>, which allows me to defend myself. The two possibilities, which are both in accordance with natural law, show that natural law is not the object of a prior choice: either I obey, either I do not, but natural law is at no time dependent on my acceptance or refusal; it is necessary and independent from consent. Therefore, the necessity is grounded in natural law, but the obligation resides in my consent. For Hobbes, this consent is not deliberate, in sense of freedom of the conscience; the freedom of my act is grounded in natural necessity. Obligation pertains to necessity to the extent that freedom itself cannot be separated from the latter.

From the above example we can note that, if the issue of obligation involves consent, this consent can be given either in the case of a civil understanding/convention, either in the case of a natural situation, when the obligation ensues from natural law. In general, Hobbes's interpreters define as „political” man's obligation as a citizen or as a sovereign, and as „moral” the obligation which is derived from a natural situation (state). This distinction was necessary since the term of „moral” in use today corresponds, in the works of Hobbes, to both social mores – those relations among civilized people which make up the object of a convention, which however, is not civil, like the habit of drinking tea at five o'clock – as well as the natural situations in which determining volition is done through natural law. The status of mores is pretty ambiguous, since they depend to a great extent on conventions and they do not have any direct

link to natural law; on the other hand, they can be seen as an expression of attitudes and natural interests; civilization can be synonymous to the sum of mechanisms and of social laws by means of which people attain their natural purposes (like the unlimited growth of power), without having to resort to the means of the state of nature. In the absence of sociability, morals cannot be understood in other way.

If this interpretation is correct, it means that Hobbes does not exclude at all the possibility of non-civil conventions among men, which take place by virtue of nature, but not in the state of nature (because they are not durable). The fact that Hobbes did not insist upon this „secondary” aspect of social life was seen as a shortcoming by Locke, who, as we have seen, had to attribute particular importance to those conventions made in the state of nature, first of all in relation to property. At the same time, it is just as true that the premise for dealing with non-civil conventions is found in the Chapter 11 of the *Leviathan*, where Hobbes speaks of manners.

By “manners”, Hobbes does not understand fine (good) manners or “decency of behaviour [...] but those qualities of mankind, that concern their living together in peace, and unity” (Hobbes 1946, XI, 1985)<sup>6</sup>. But, in this case, the title of the chapter *Of the Difference of Manners* is not justified. The first thing that we find out about the variety and about the difference of manners is the inclination, manifested by all men, of gaining more and more power, this being a desire that only ceases in death. Variety then refers to „competition for gaining riches” and to all the other desires to earn honors and prestige, which are common in all men. In fact, Hobbes does not speak about the qualities of individuals; he speaks about the *qualities of mankind*. This implies that he is actually speaking of foundations, of the „bases” for the diversity of manners, which could at the same time be „the bases” of all conventions concerning manners. We know for certain that Hobbes was by no means a stranger to the issue of „manners” as behavior exhibited in society.

In response to the criticisms of a renowned geometry professor from Oxford, Hobbes answers in a text called *Of Manners* that: „it is ill manners, in reprehending the truth, to

send a man in a boasting way to your own errors. [...] it is ill manners to diminish the just reputation of worthy men after they be dead” (Hobbes 1740, 354). Or, in this respect, one could answer Hobbes, using the arguments of Chapter 11 of the *Leviathan* that the diversity of *mores* leaves plenty of space for the interpretation of *manners*. Still, one cannot answer in such a way, because in that particular chapter Hobbes speaks rather of what makes men similar in state of nature, and implicitly, of what could or should reunite them in civil society. But what unites people in civil society is not fine manners, it is fear of the sovereign’s power. As a result, fine manners and all the other conventions are presented as ensuing from the social contract; they do not bear the mark of society, they are a rational artifice which tends to dissimulate human nature in order to leave room for diplomacy and for calculations. “In *Elements* 8.5, Hobbes presents the honors that superior and inferior give one another as a strategic account, for the signs of honor ‘the inferior giveth to the superior’ are strategic responses to the signs of honor ‘from the superior to the inferior’.” (Bilba 2011, 186) „Bad manners” then signify, in the light of the philosophy of the *Leviathan*, lack of civil spirit and braking with civil conventions. We realize that this conclusion is a tremendous error; which becomes all the more obvious since in his dispute with the reputed Oxford professor, Hobbes’s only argument is that the professor has what is called ill-breeding. Going back to the theory of the *Leviathan*, ill-breeding should be interpreted as bad family upbringing, meaning a faulty transition from the state of nature to the civil state. Still, the difficulty resides in the fact that this transition should involve a social time and place for the good or bad upbringing to take place in. You might say that the biggest difficulty of the *Leviathan* resides in the fact that Hobbes does not speak of ill-manners or that he does not leave enough room to discuss those conventions which institute good manners.

Hobbes’s interpreters grant this fact little importance; the difference between Hobbes and Locke has marked the understanding of this matter to such an extent that it is no longer noticeable that in the end, the development of Locke’s theory took place by filling in the gaps left by the *Leviathan*. As

far as we know, Locke is Hobbes's first and last interpreter to see and notice that the issue of morals does not have a solid foundation in the *Leviathan* and that it must be transferred to the effective state of nature in order to gain such a foundation. For Locke, this foundation will be represented by the non-civil conventions that people were able to establish among themselves in the state of nature, by virtue of natural law; this is what makes the hypothesis of sociability necessary. In specialized literature, authors insist a lot on the matter of property in Locke, but it isn't always made clear enough that aside from being a mere doctrine, the theory of property is, for Locke, the solution to a problem. Namely, it is the foundation of mores, of those manners to which Hobbes hadn't granted too much importance and which will form, not in the works of Locke, but in those of his followers, the matter of social civil society, seen as separate from the state. In order to illustrate the way in which the issue of mores has been set aside by Hobbes's interpreters, we will refer to a significant passage in the famous review made by Leo Strauss to the writing of Carl Schmitt, *The concept of the political*. Strauss said: "Hobbes understood the *status civilis* in the sense of the specifically modern concept of culture [...] as the opposite of the *status naturalis*; the *status civilis* is the presupposition of every culture in the narrow sense (i.e. every nurture of the arts and sciences) and is itself already based on a particular culture, namely, on a disciplining of the human will. We will here disregard Hobbes's view of the relationship between *status naturalis* and culture (in the broadest sense) as an opposition" (Strauss 2007, 105). There is, in the case of Strauss, a certain ambiguity concerning the matter of culture, but this ambiguity must be attributed to Hobbes himself: the *Leviathan* is the condition of culture in the restricted sense, but even this work is based on a certain culture, in the broad meaning – let us not forget that the *Leviathan* was called by Hobbes „the artificial man”, a man created by man in his own image, in the image of natural man. Thinking of the cultural status of the state, we realize that this condition should be both cultural and natural (in its broad sense), which is hard to imagine, given the opposition between the two. Therefore, Strauss – which dealt

with the text from the perspective of the natural to the political and who wanted to reject Schmitt's thesis, which saw the condition of the political *directly* in nature (without the interposition of culture) – has to *make abstraction* of this opposition which cannot be qualified by the means devised by Hobbes. Apart from its shortcomings, Hobbes's merit consists, Strauss believes, in his "knowing and seeing against what the liberal ideal of civilization has to be persistently fought for: not merely against rotten institutions, against the evil will of a ruling class, but against the natural evil of man. In an unliberal world Hobbes forges ahead to lay the foundation of liberalism against the – *sit venia verbo* – unliberal nature of man, whereas later men [...] trust in the original goodness [...] of human nature. [...] But—in all fairness to later men – ultimately that dreaming and that oblivion are merely the consequence of the negation of the state of nature, merely the consequence of the position of civilization introduced by Hobbes." (Strauss 2007, 107-8) Ambiguity is once more present: it is not clear enough whether, in Hobbes, the *moment* when nature is denied is equivalent to the assertion of civilization. Locke, who is Hobbes's first successor, was therefore right when placing the foundation of civilization – of mores – within state of nature itself, but we have already seen that his interpretation also has ambiguities. This deviation from the problem of obligation shows us just how difficult – or impossible – a theory of obligation actually is, but on the other hand, to what extent we need political theory to be preceded by a „science of manners“. For Hobbes, there was no such a thing as a theory of manners, or as a foundation of such a theory, since he did not dispose of effective means to make these the object of a science. Mores are not universal, and Hobbes is interested only in that which is universal in moral philosophy (which encompasses both moral science and political science), without the universal being conditioned by the concepts of freedom and conscience which we latter find in Kant. In his work, *De cive*, Hobbes announces that the object of moral science is moral law or the law of nature, which for him are one and the same thing and which constitute the condition for natural justice. If the obligation is derived from natural law, it is an obligation towards nature: in the

state of nature, it manifests itself as the will to preserve one's life. „There is no difference in nature between obligation and desire” (Polin 1981, 159 – my translation), satisfying one's needs in order to live is the result of an obligation of the natural law of self-preservation.

For this reason, in the state of nature, the war of all men against all men is outside the classifications of „good” and „bad”, much like free competition between individuals – in the civil state – cannot be considered as morally negative. In fact, in the civil state, moral obligation also comes from natural law, by virtue of the fear inspired by the sovereign, who guarantees all other conventions. In this sense, *mores* have, as formal condition, the initial contract through which the sovereign gains the power to warrant all the other conventions, and, as efficient condition, the natural desire. Therefore, *mores* pertain, in a negative manner, to a double regimen: not in the sense that they are both civil and natural, but in the sense that they are neither civil, nor natural. At this point, we are faced with the ambiguity of the relation between nature and culture (in the broad sense) of which Leo Strauss spoke. *Mores* are rational strategies for action determined by natural volition; slyness, diplomacy, calculations, competition, desire (for more power) or purpose are just a few of their conditions, conditions which pertain to one of the three faculties which determine action: passion, reason and volition. Volition is nothing more than the sum of desires and of passions; reason consists of the very calculations which make up passions. In a very broad sense, will is determined by reason, the only problem being that reason does not constitute an autonomous reign in relation to nature. Still, determining will by the calculations of passions can be called moral and, in this respect, it makes sense to speak of moral obligation and of right: “moral designates a class of ways of life and actions. The term ‘right’ signifies nothing more than the freedom that each of us has to use his natural faculties, according to just reason” (Polin 1981, 159-160 – my translation).<sup>7</sup> The law of nature is nothing more than the convergence between the game of passions and the calculations of reason: “reason is no less of the nature of man than passion, and is the same in all men” (Hobbes 1840, 87). The laws of

nature are nothing more than reasonings, calculations born of reasoning starting from the premise of self-preservation (meaning the general law of nature); social contract is nothing more than the result of a calculation of our reason, meant to ensure the observance of the laws of nature, which would always be broken were it not for a power higher than any other which binds people to follow them. But this obligation which comes from the outside is in fact the obligation of natural law, since every individual *consents* to submit to the sovereign.

According to Hobbes, all men have the same nature, they possess the same faculties, are therefore equal, and their natural actions are the expression of a need which comes from the natural principle of self-preservation. But although everyone's reason can formulate and understand all the laws of nature which are derived from the principle of self-preservation, these laws remain „abstract”, as Hegel (1995, 167-169) puts it, since the individual acknowledges them in his inner consciousness, yet does not acknowledge, by virtue of these laws, other people's right to freedom. The obligation that ensues from these laws for each individual (to seek and to follow peace, to give up his right and to be content with as much freedom as he would grant others, to follow conventions etc.) are not sufficient in order to achieve morality, since this obligation towards natural law only acts within ourselves. Obligation is constituted through conscience: „the Lawes of Nature had regard chiefly unto Conscience” (Hobbes 1983, 83), but this cannot insure universality, because it is merely an opinion (Hobbes 1946, XXIX, 311), a manner of judging which can prove to be wrong.

Several of Hobbes interpreters have demonstrated that not only moral or natural obligation, but also political obligation should be considered in retrospect to conscience: the Commonwealth must be based on the obligation of conscience (Hood, 1964, 123). If this was the case, it would mean either that human nature is „good”, either that it becomes good in society. Hobbes's favorite example, civil war, shows us that there is no need to interpret the *Leviathan* in Locke's philosophical spirit, and even less so in the spirit of Hegelian philosophy (which deal with universal consciousness). The idea

of conscience in Hobbes is too close to the spirit of mechanisms to understand in such a manner the relation between morality and conscience. Hobbes is not far from Spinoza, for whom being aware of the effects is not the same as being aware of the causes, and man cannot be a primary cause (*causa sui*). In Hobbes, we cannot speak of the freedom of conscience as a free principle of action, even less so of a „political” universal conscience which would lead to the common interpretation of civil laws. According to other interpretations, in Hobbes, conscience is nothing more than an individual arbitrator: „In the state of nature, each individual is the judge concerning the best way to preserve his life, each individual’s judgment and therefore each individual’s conscience involves a natural obligation” (Polin 1981, 162). This affirmation made by R. Polin seems to be pretty close to the spirit of Hobbes, but „natural obligation” needs to be explained. As Michael Oakeshott points out in his famous *Introduction* to the 1946 edition of the *Leviathanului*, “Under the influence of distinctions we are now accustomed to make in discussing questions of moral theory, modern critics of Hobbes have often made the mistake of looking for an order and coherence in his thoughts on these questions which is foreign to the ideas of any seventeenth-century writer. Setting out with false expectations, we have been exasperated by the ambiguity with which Hobbes uses certain important words (such as obligation, power, duty, forbid, command), and have gone on, in an attempt to understand his theory better than he understood it himself, to interpret it by extracting from his writings at least some consistent doctrine.” (Oakeshott 1946, lviii) Talking into account these assignments, we come to the conclusion that the relation between „natural obligation” and conscience is far from resulting in a pertinent formulation of a theory about moral obligation in Hobbes, especially if we take into account the fact that the term „natural” doesn’t just have one meaning. „Natural obligation” can, at the same time, refer to the physical necessity, to the physiological necessity or to the moral one (natural law). That which is added to physical necessity, in order to turn it into a physiological necessity, is the movement of passions, and that which is added to the physiological

necessity in order to turn it into moral necessity is the calculation of reason, the result of which is volition. Hobbes only briefly defines conscience, and most of the time he uses the term as synonym for „consent”. This term allows us to understand that if a man consents to submit to an external coercion or to create a convention together with others, he creates an obligation. When speaking of self-preservation, obligation comes from the physical or physiological necessity, and all that reason does is to search for means of action; conscience is indeed an „arbitrary” arbitrator. Still, formulating the laws of nature is an act that the theory of an arbitrary conscience cannot explain: these laws are only universal *for man*, unlike the („more” universal) principle of *self-preservation*, which is valid for any living thing. This implies that man possesses a universal faculty which allows him to know natural laws; this faculty is called reason. But if there is such a faculty which formulates the universal laws of nature, shouldn't there also be a universal principle which should make their fulfillment possible, at least in theory? We believe here is where the ambiguity of Hobbes's theory lies, concerning human nature: he cannot admit a faculty of action which would be universal ever since the state of nature, since this would make man good by nature. Still, he cannot let go of the idea of knowing natural laws by nature, since this would mean that the social contract is no longer possible. This is the same as saying that society is necessary and that it belongs to human nature as its last consequence. In Hobbes, we can speak of man's „sociable unsociability”: once natural laws become known, natural obligation can be called moral obligation, since the laws of nature assign a certain content for human behavior: to seek peace, to concede right, to follow conventions. Moral law can be identified with natural law only through the fact that it could determine a universal natural obligation. The law of self-preservation tends to become the foundation of morality once we may speak of the self-preservation of all. This may become possible by virtue of reason, meaning of the other natural laws which are derived from the principle of self-preservation. Since these laws are eternal, the obligation which they bring about is also eternal, and therefore also valid in the state of nature, the

difference being that in the state of nature the obligation exists in the conscience, but it is not effective. In order for it to become effective, meaning truly universal, a civil convention is needed. In society, the observance of natural laws is ensured by the positive laws which constitute „a sort of public conscience” (Polin 1983, 162).

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> For the difference between simple market society and fully (or possessive) market society, see Macpherson (1962, 51-60).

<sup>2</sup> „The Value, or Worth of a man, is as of all other things, his price; that is to say, so much as would Worth. be given for the use of his power: and therefore is not absolute; but a thing dependant on the needand judgment of another. [...] And as in other things, so in men, not the seller, but the buyer determines the price. For let a man, as most men do, rate themselves at the highest value they can; yet their true value is no more than it is esteemed by others.” (Hobbes 1946, X, 66).

<sup>3</sup>As Leo Strauss states, the theory of the social contract is only bound to the issue of *natural rights* starting with Hobbes who was the first to raise the issue of legitimate government instead of perfect government. For this reason, Strauss sees in Hobbes the first liberal thinker, the founder of individualism.

<sup>4</sup> “Ultimately, the future consent of the child was probably derived from Hobbes’ fourth law of nature, the law of gratitude” (Schochet, 1967: 433).

<sup>5</sup> „[...] that every man, ought to endeavour peace, as far as he has hope of obtaining it; and when he cannot obtain it, that he may seek, and use, all helps, and advantages of war. The first branch of which rule, containeth the first, and fundamental law of nature; which is, to seek peace, and follow it. The second, the sum of the right of nature; which is, by all means we can, to defend ourselves.” (Hobbes 1946, 117)

<sup>6</sup> We suggested this by using the term „mores”, not „manners”.

<sup>7</sup> See also *De cive* I, 7: “It is therefore neither absurd, nor reprehensible; neither against the dictates of true reason for a man to use all his endeavours to preserve and defend his Body, and the Members thereof from death and sorrowes; but that which is not contrary to right reason, that all men account to be done justly, and with right; Neither by the word Right is any thing else signified, then that liberty which every man hath to make use of his naturall faculties according to right reason.” (Hobbes 1983, 47).

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## **Der Junglehrer und seine Erziehungskonzepte zur Disziplin und Macht. Eine Diskursanalyse**

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### **Abstract**

#### **Novice Teacher and Concepts of Education on Discipline and Power: Discursive Analyses**

This article deals with the first part of beginning teachers, as actors of education in the school environment. Discipline plays a role in the procedural and personal control activities beginning teacher. Defining discipline is based on the concept of power and power elements, combined with the perception of educational situations in the school setting themselves actors - teachers. The second part introduces to some selected discourses indicators and outlines opportunities for further work with the concepts of discipline.

**Keywords:** novice teachers, discipline, data analyses, discourses analyses, Foucault

### **1. Einleitung – Abgrenzung der Grundterminologie**

Die Bildungstätigkeit des Lehrers in der Klasse ist ziemlich gut zu beobachten. Wenn wir in die Klasse hineinschauen, sehen wir, dass der Lehrer verschiedene Tätigkeiten macht: er erklärt den Lehrstoff, stellt Fragen, klassifiziert Schüler, gibt ihnen Instruktionen, wie sie bestimmte Aufgabe lösen sollten. Kann

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man auch die Erziehungstätigkeit des Lehrers beobachten? Man kann sehen, dass der Lehrer zu manchen Schülern streng ist, zu manchen nachsichtig. Es ist zu sehen, dass der eine Lehrer in der Klasse eine eher freundliche Atmosphäre bildet, der andere hat zu den Schülern eine kalte Stellung. Man kann sehen, dass der Lehrer belohnt und bestraft, seine Stimme sinkt oder geht nach oben, er bemüht sich, eine gute Beziehung zu Schülern zu bilden, er leitet den Unterricht und führt die Schüler zur Entwicklung ihrer Fähigkeiten. Diese sichtbaren, sich nach außen auswirkende Tätigkeiten des Lehrers realisieren sich auf Grund davon, was nicht auf den ersten Blick sichtbar ist. Es geht um „die individuelle Konzeption der Erziehungstätigkeit des Lehrers“.

Der Lehrer spricht über seine individuelle Konzeption der Erziehungstätigkeit meistens nicht. Deshalb bleibt dieser Teil seiner professionellen Ausstattung unbemerkt. Trotzdem spielt er aber eine wichtige Rolle, weil er im bestimmten Maß die Art und Weise, wie der Lehrer unterrichtet, beeinflusst, er partizipiert an dem Verlauf, mitbestimmt den Charakter des Unterrichts und so auch seine Ergebnisse. Im Geiste seiner Konzeption vorbereitet sich der Lehrer für den Unterricht und dann organisiert er seine Tätigkeit und die Tätigkeit der Schüler in der Klasse. Auf Grund dieser Konzeption interpretiert der Lehrer für sich selbst auch die vorgeschriebenen Unterrichtsziele, verarbeitet den Lehrstoff, wählt Unterrichtsmethoden und tritt zu den Schülern zu.

Bildlich gesagt, man kann sich die Lehrerskonzeption der Erziehungstätigkeit als eine bestimmte Quelle von Erziehungsstrategien<sup>1</sup> vorstellen, welche sich der Lehrer angeeignet hat und im Unterricht benutzt. Aus dieser Quelle wählt der Lehrer solche Verfahren, Prinzipien und Regel aus, welche er gerade für seine Erziehungstätigkeit, für die Aufrechterhaltung der Disziplin und für das Modifizieren des Schülerbenehmens braucht, dies alles in der Vorrealisierungsphase des Unterrichts (Vorbereitung für die Unterrichtsstunde), bei der Realisierung des Unterrichtsprozesses und nach der Realisierungsphase des Unterrichts. Der Lehrer kann aber seine Konzeption der Erziehungstätigkeit auch in weiteren Situationen benutzen. Er kann mit

Hilfe von dieser Konzeption pädagogische Gegebenheiten bewerten, die außen von seinem Unterricht liegen und die er in der Edukationsrealität nicht explizit bemerkt.

Damit der Pädagoge seine Erziehungstätigkeit ausüben kann, braucht er eine gute Kenntnisbasis (Kenntnisse), viele spezielle Fähigkeiten und Fertigkeiten, aber auch Erziehungsmittel, die ihm geeignet machen, diese Aufgabe zu erfüllen. Zu solchen Erziehungsmitteln gehören auch Planen, Aufrechterhaltung und Kontrolle der Disziplin in der Klasse.

Die Disziplin (wir meinen die schulische Disziplin) wird von Bendl definiert: „...als eine bewusste Beachtung der Schulordnung und der von dem Lehrer und anderen Schulangestellten festgelegten Regeln.“ (Bendl 2001, 121)

Die Disziplin wird als die Art und Weise der Erhaltung von bestimmten Regeln und von dem System der Tätigkeiten, die in Zeit und Raum verlaufen, verstanden. Sie ist also ein Set von Systemen der freien Eigenschaften, die uns ein entsprechendes Maß von (Selbst)Regulation und (Selbst)Kontrolle ermöglichen. Bei der Erziehung ist die Disziplin ein sehr wichtiges Bauelement, das feste Regel bildet, das den Mensch in den Prozessen der Sozialisation und Personalisierung und in der Beziehung zu anderen Menschen, Sachen und Mitteln formiert, die zum Leben in der Gesellschaft erforderlich sind. Persönliches Engagement und Diszipliniertheit helfen dem Menschen, seine Vorstellungen und Träume in der Wirklichkeit zu realisieren, ermöglichen ihm, seine Fähigkeiten und innere Kraft zu nutzen. Es geht also nicht um den Prozess der Unfreiheit, wie es auf den ersten (laienhaften) Blick scheinen würde. Es geht um einen freien Prozess, der zu der Orientation des Menschen in der Gesellschaft hilft und „führt“ ihn aus dem Chaos und der Unsicherheit seines Geistes und des Milieus aus. Die Disziplin bildet eine Voraussetzung für das Funktionieren der Gesellschaft. Das Funktionieren der Einzelnen in der Gesellschaft ist von gegenseitigem Verständnis, Partizipation und Pflicht, Verantwortlichkeit, aber auch Aktivität und Freiheit der Entscheidung, abhängig.

Das Thema der Disziplin ist kein neues Phänomen in der pädagogischen Literatur, Theorie oder Praxis. Es ist ziemlich gut ausgearbeitet, es werden Forschungsaktivitäten realisiert

(Siehe z. B. Bendl 2003, 2004; Vališová 1999, 2005; Střelec 2004, 2005; Vacek 2000). Es wird aber fast keine Aufmerksamkeit den Mechanismen der Planung, Realisation und vor allem Kontrolle des Erfolgs gewidmet. Die Tätigkeit von Planung der Disziplin ist wichtig und unumgänglich nicht nur für die Aufrechterhaltung der Ordnung in der Schulklasse, sondern sie beeinflusst auch die Bildungs- und Erziehungstätigkeit des Lehrers. Mit der Problematik der Planung, Realisation (Aufrechterhaltung) und Evaluation der Disziplin treffen sich die Lehrer alltäglich. Es ist nicht wichtig, wie lange sie im Beruf tätig sind. Es ist wahr (obwohl es durch eine Forschung noch nicht bestätigt wurde), dass mehr erfahrene Lehrer, auf Grund von mehreren praktischen Erfahrungen, bessere Ergebnisse mit der Planung und Aufrechterhaltung der Disziplin in der Schulklasse haben. Das Reflektieren von dieser Problematik ist schwieriger (auch praktisch ergreifbar) bei den Junglehrern (novice teacher) oder bei den Studenten des Lehramtsstudiums. Diese Gruppen haben zwar eine gute theoretische Basis – Kenntnisse, aber Fähigkeiten sind noch nicht der Edukationsrealität adäquat<sup>2</sup>. Sie haben die Strategien und Methoden der Arbeit mit der Disziplin nicht praktisch erprobt. Sie können die Faktoren, die wichtig für die Aufrechterhaltung der Disziplin sind, nicht beschreiben. Sie können den Verstoß gegen Disziplin (Undiszipliniertheit) nicht bewältigen.

Einen sehr wichtigen Teil in der Reflexion der Berufsleistung des Junglehrers spielt auch die Entscheidung, welche Strategie und wann soll er benutzen. Gleich wichtig in der geforschten Problematik scheint auch das Phänomen zu sein, welches das Maß der Entscheidung bestimmt, und zwar die Tendenz des Menschen, die Macht und Machtmittel im Prozess der Schöpfung der Disziplin zu benutzen. Es geht um das Erfassen der Beziehung zwischen der bestimmten Handlung und dem Ergebnis des Ereignisses, welches zum Begreifen der Macht als einer spezifischen Äußerung der Disziplin dient. Die Junglehrer beschäftigen sich mit dieser Problematik nicht gezielt, sie tritt bei ihnen nur unterbewusst auf, bzw. beim Lösen einer konkreten Situation, wann sie sich z. B. folgende Fragen stellen: Welche Entscheidung werde ich in der gegebenen

Erziehungssituation treffen? Warum entscheide ich mich gerade so? Was erwarte ich von dieser Entscheidung, in dieser Situation, wie wird sie sich in meiner Lösung, in meiner Edukationstätigkeit widerspiegeln? Habe ich eine adäquate Form der Macht gewählt, um die Disziplin zu erreichen? Wie haben meine Schüler reagiert? Was kann ich tun, damit ich bei der nächsten Lösung nicht so direktiv bin, oder umgekehrt, nicht so nachsichtig? Mit solchen Fragen treffen sich die Junglehrer in vielen Edukations- und Erziehungssituationen. Wer ist das also, der Junglehrer?

Die Definierung der Grundterminologie in der pedeutologischen Ebene der pädagogischen Wissenschaften ist eine sehr komplizierte Aufgabe, im Unterschied von der Definierung der Disziplin (siehe oben die Definition nach Bendl). Verschiedene Kriterien, verschiedene Aspekte, verschiedene spezifische Eigenschaften vorbestimmen den Charakter der theoretischen Abgrenzungen. Viele Forschungen überprüfen die Professionalisierung und den „Übergang“ von den Schuljahren in die Professionsjahre. Die Professionsebene und die Kunst, die Erziehungstätigkeit zu schaffen, vorbestimmen auch die theoretischen Abgrenzungen in Zusammenhängen von Psychologie, Soziologie, Philosophie und anderen wissenschaftlichen Disziplinen. In den letzten Jahren werden im Rahmen der Bildungspolitik im Zusammenhang mit neuformulierten Bildungszielen<sup>3</sup>, Paradigmen der lernenden Gesellschaft und mit der offenen Bildung auch die Fragen des Lehrerberufes diskutiert. Diese Diskussionen spielen sich auf der imaginären Mikroebene ab, die man als die Ebene des Lehrers nennen kann. Fragen, die am häufigsten zu hören sind, sind mit der Professionalisierung, Karrierewachstum oder mit ökonomischen Anzeigern<sup>4</sup> verbunden. Die Persönlichkeit des Lehrers wird in einem langen Prozess geschöpft und transformiert. Dieser Prozess wird als die Schaffung der Professionsidentität definiert. Die Identität ist kein fertiges Produkt. Sie ändert sich in der Zeit, in sozialen, psychologischen und anthropologischen Zusammenhängen, die mit dem Mensch und seiner Entwicklung verbunden sind. Absorbieren von neuen Erlebnissen, Lernen von neuen Situationen und Transformation der Entwicklungsetappen der

Sozialisation und Personalisation ändern ständig die Struktur der Professionsidentität des Lehrers. Die Ebene der Berufskarriere schneidet sich mit der Persönlichkeitsebene über und so schöpfen sie einen imaginären Knoten der sozialen Beziehungen, die durch die Berufsleistung spezifiziert sind. Viele Zutritte (Švaříček 2007) zeigen Möglichkeiten, wie die gegebenen Prozesse qualitativ zu entdecken und beschreiben. Als Grundgliederung halten wir die Professionalisierungsphasen, in den Bedingungen unserer Demographie beschreibt sie z.B. Špendla (1974) in fünf Phasen als:

1. Orientierungsphase – wird als die Phase vor dem Berufsstart charakterisiert;
2. Vorbereitungsphase – wird durch die Fachbildung des Lehrers charakterisiert;
3. Adaptationsphase – wird durch die erste Arbeitsstelle und erste Schritte im Beruf charakterisiert;
4. Integrationsphase – wird durch die Ausprägung der Lehrerpersönlichkeit charakterisiert;
5. Stabilisierungsphase – wird durch die Ausgewogenheit von den Professionstätigkeiten und der Leistung charakterisiert.

Ähnlich sieht die Problematik auch Průcha (2002), er hat die Karriere des Lehrers folgenderweise geteilt:

1. Berufswahl – Motivation zum Studium;
2. Berufsstart;
3. Berufsadaptation – erste Schritte im Beruf;
4. Berufsaufstieg – „die eigene“ Karriere;
5. Berufsstabilisation;
6. Berufskonservativismus – Prozess des „Burn-out“.

Diese Teilung akzentuiert die Gesichtspunkte vom Management und weist auf eine zu große Administration und Erfassung des Berufes aus der Sicht der Standardelemente hin, die für andere Berufe charakteristisch sind. Für eine komplette und für diesen Text inhaltlich am meisten bündig halten wir die Teilung der Lehrerkarriere von Brüdern Dreyfus. Diese Sicht arbeitet mit dem Aspekt der Entwicklung der Fähigkeiten und so gibt sie genug Platz für die Teilung der einzelnen

Phasen. Das Model besteht aus fünf Phasen (in Klammern führen wir auch das englische Äquivalent an):

1. Junglehrer (novice teacher);
2. ein erfahrener Anfänger (advanced beginning teacher);
3. ein kompetenter Lehrer (competent teacher);
4. ein Fachmann (proficient teacher);
5. ein Expert (expert teacher).

Die oben beschriebene Teilung der Phasen der Lehrerkarriere wird von mehreren Forschern und Autoren, die sich dem Lehrerberuf widmen, übernommen (Day 1999). Mehrere Autoren bemühen sich, diese Teilung noch zu spezifizieren (Dreyfus 1986) und auch die Zeitebene unter den einzelnen Phasen auszudrücken. Die Voraussetzung ist, die bestimmten Ein- und Ausgangskriterien einzuhalten<sup>5</sup>.

## **2. Basiselemente des Diskurses der Disziplin als ein konzeptuelles Fundament der Erziehung zur Disziplin**

Die Disziplin im Schulumilieu, in der normativen Auffassung und beim Reflektieren der pädagogisch-psychologischen Theorien, ist eine bewusste Beachtung der Schulordnung und der Anweisungen des Lehrers. Sie leistet den Sicherheits- und Schutzgefühl. Sie strebt nach der Erhöhung des Schülerpotentials und hilft der Arbeitseffektivität (Bendl 2004; 2005). Die Disziplin, in der Reflexion auf oben genannte terminologische Auffassungen, ist eine mehrgeschichtete interdisziplinäre pädagogische Kategorie, die partiale Kategorien, wie z. B. Inhalt, Schuldisziplin, Selbstdisziplin usw. einbezieht. Man kann sie, aus der Sicht der pädagogischen Kategorien, folgenderweise ausdrücken:

- a) als einen Erziehungsziel,
- b) als eine Methode der Erziehungstätigkeit,
- c) als eine Form der Erziehungstätigkeit,
- d) als einen Mittel der Erziehungstätigkeit,
- e) als eine Theorie und Strategie der Erziehungstätigkeit<sup>6</sup>.

In explizit ausgedrückten Diskursen über die Disziplin bei Junglehrern wird die Disziplin präsentiert als: Konstrukt der hypothetischen, idealen, abstrakten Strukturen, die mit dem

affektiven System verbunden sind. Sie ist keine deskriptiv verankerte pädagogische Kategorie (außer dem Begriff Disziplin), sie scheint eher ein Modell zu sein, das sich aber in der gegebenen pädagogischen Situation ändert und auch der emotionellen Ebene der Teilnehmern der Interaktion unterliegt; eine instrumentale Kategorie, die durch ihre Funktionen ausgedrückt ist, die verschiedene Formen im Sinne der Einstellung zu einer Sache, Persönlichkeit oder Handlung gewinnt, und das in der kognitiven, emotionalen und konativen Ebene; ein Set von bestimmten spezifischen verbalen, physischen und mentalen Tätigkeiten. Diese Tätigkeiten binden an sich an, sie sind innerlich strukturiert, inhaltlich gestuft und was die Bedeutung betrifft, an das Lernprozess angebunden. Sie sind die Reaktion auf die Tätigkeit der Schüler in der gegebenen pädagogischen Situation. Die Reaktion des Lehrers (Disziplinierung der Schüler) ist ein Mittel der sozialen Kontrolle in dem bestimmten Milieu, wo sie einen formalen Charakter (Beachtung der Schulordnung und der Regeln, Kontrolle der Normeneinhaltung) oder einen informalen Charakter (verbale Äußerungen des Lehrers) gewinnt.

Die Junglehrer benutzen diese Tätigkeiten und Verfahren (die Art und Weise des Erreichens der Disziplin – Benutzen der sozialen Macht) wiederholt, sie halten sie in dem Lehrerberuf für selbstverständlich, für Anhaltspunkte und fundamentale Mittel im Prozess der Sozialisation der Schüler während des Unterrichts. Die soziale Macht ist ein untrennbarer Bestandteil der Gesellschaft. Sie erscheint als Haupt- und Nebenthema von vielen soziologischen Theorien (entweder klassischen oder postmodernen), z. B. der Handlungstheorie (Bourdieu 1993). Sie ist mehrmals kategorisch, inhaltlich und durch ihre Beziehungen definiert. Die Grunddefinition für die soziologische Theorie, aber auch für die Erziehungstheorie und für diesen Text<sup>7</sup>, ist die Definition von Weber, der sie so definiert: „Macht bedeutet jede Chance, innerhalb einer sozialen Beziehung den eigenen Willen auch gegen Widerstreben durchzusetzen, gleichviel worauf diese Chance beruht.“ (Weber 1956, § 16, 28) Wenn also die Macht ausgeübt wird, wird sie zur Handlung anderer Leute gerichtet. In der

Fassung von Foucault ist es so verstanden: „Förderung, Beeinflussung, Herabsetzung oder Beschränkung, die mehr oder weniger wahrscheinlich, in extremen Situationen verboten, das Handeln des Subjekts und Objekts in der gegenseitigen Interaktion macht.“ (Foucault, 1994) Im Zusammenhang mit der Macht und ihrem Ausüben bietet Foucault, im Rahmen der Erklärung des Begriffs „die Macht“, noch den Begriff „Gouvernementalität“ (Governmentalität). Diesen Begriff kann man als Regieren übersetzen. Die Macht ist also nach Foucault eng mit dem Regieren verbunden und ist nicht nur mit der herrschenden Klasse und mit den politischen Strukturen der Gesellschaft profiliert. Die Benutzung des Begriffs auf der allgemeinen Ebene evoziert auch das Benutzen des Begriffs Beherrschung<sup>8</sup>. Das Konzept der Gouvernementalität kann man, in der Bedeutung „beherrschen“ auch im Sinne der Definition von Barker verstehen: „Gouvernementalität ist eine Art und Weise der Regulation durch eine soziale Ordnung (Norm), dank der der Einzelne den bürokratischen Regimen und Formen der Disziplin unterliegt.“ (Barker 2006) Beherrschen ist also als die Art des Disziplinierungsprozesses des Einzelnen verstanden, als eine gewisse Aufsicht über die richtige Kategorisierung der Gesellschaft. Dieses Kategorisieren hat einen regulativen Charakter und ist mittels Bildung, Sozialpolitik, Medizin usw. zerstreut. In der Aufsicht über den Einzelnen kommt auch die Dominanz eines anderen zum Ausdruck. Die Dominanz ist nach Foucault ein weiteres Merkmal der Machtbeziehungen, „Dominanz ist eine asymmetrische Beziehung der Macht, die der untergeordneten Person einen kleinen Manövrierplatz bestimmt. Die Freiheit wird durch die Konsequenz der Macht limitiert.“ (Hindess 2001) Der dominante Einzelne bestimmt die Handlungsregeln und greift in den Entscheidungsprozess bei der untergeordneten Person ein<sup>9</sup>. Weil die Macht in jeder Beziehung und in jedem Milieu enthalten ist, ist es klar, dass es sie auch in dem Lehrer-Schüler-Verhältnis im Schulumilieu gibt. Dem Lehrer wird oft die dominante Rolle und Position in diesem Verhältnis zugeschrieben<sup>10</sup>. Der Klient – der Schüler ist also in der untergeordneten Rolle. Aus dieser Voraussetzung kann man hervorgehen, weil Foucault die Macht nicht definiert

hat, sondern stellt nur die Frage: „Wie und von wem wird die Macht ausgeübt?“<sup>11</sup> Auf Grund der gestellten Frage ist es nötig, die Merkmale der Macht zu bestimmen<sup>12</sup>. Sie waren von Autoren dieses Textes, im Einklang mit Foucault, als Gouvernamentalität und Dominanz definiert. Diese Merkmale gewinnen in Interaktionen der Einzelnen verschiedene Formen der Macht<sup>13</sup>. Foucault führt als ein Beispiel die Beziehung der Macht und der Erkenntnis an – sie ist durch Kontrollsysteme der Macht und der Kenntnisse spezifisch, die man nicht trennen kann – power/knowledge<sup>14</sup> und die Hirtenmacht<sup>15</sup>. Dieses Konzept ist in dem Edukationsmilieu nicht in der Theorie bekannt, es erscheint aber in der Schulpraxis, vor allem auf den niedrigeren Stufen der Schulen, z. B. bei Lehrern auf der Primarstufe.

Die Machtbeziehung power/knowledge ist, aufgrund der Foucaults Beziehung zu dem wissenschaftlichen Kennenlernen, durch (die soziale Ordnung) die Norm charakterisiert. Diese Norm ist wissenschaftlich abgegrenzt. Die Erkenntnis ist nicht neutral und drückt die Machtanforderungen aus. Jede Entwicklung der Erkenntnis hilft, spezifische Formen der Macht zu entwickeln und umgekehrt, die Macht und ihre Verbreitung verlangen die Zunahme der spezifischen Formen der Erkenntnis. Die Macht und Machtbeziehungen sind also produktiv und sind nicht die Reflexion der Repression und des Negativismus. Macht und Erkenntnis in der gegenseitigen Beziehung sind die Beziehung der Produktion. Die Mechanismen der Macht produzieren neue Erkenntnisse, neue Typen von Fähigkeiten und Kenntnissen. Sie erhöhen die Kapazität denen, auf welchen die Macht angewendet wird. Durch das Ablehnen der Machtneutralität des Erkennens entstehen eigentlich die Mechanismen der Kontrolle (Foucault 2000). Diese Mechanismen wirken sich in der Form der Strategien und Konzepte der Kontrolle, wie z. B. Disziplinierung und Normalisierung sind, aus. Sie gehen zugleich aus dem Erkennen aus und durch sie wird die Macht geübt und gehalten.

Das Institutionalisieren der Macht durch Erkennen ist in allen öffentlichen Institutionen sichtbar, wie z. B. in Krankenhäusern, Schulen, Universitäten, Institutionen der

sozialen Dienstleistungen u.Ä. Die Macht ist nicht auf den Staat und die herrschende soziale Schicht (die Regierung) begrenzt, sondern sie stabilisiert die Macht der bestimmten Gruppe vor einer anderen, die gerade durch das Machtinstrument der bestimmten Gruppe ausgeschlossen ist, die die Macht ausübt.

Die Hirtenmacht ist durch die Beziehung des Hirten und seiner Herde charakteristisch. Es handelt sich um eine Machttechnik, die ihre Wurzel in historischen Zusammenhängen der christlichen Tradition hat. Diese Technik wird von dem gegenwärtigen modernen Staat übernommen und im politischen Apparat integriert. „Es ist die Form der Macht, wo der Einzelne nicht nur die ganze Kommunität beherrscht, sondern beschützt auch die Einzelnen in der Kommunität.“ (Foucault 2004) Das Verstehen von dieser Technik der Macht in dem prozessualen Rahmen ist wie eine Aktivität, die sich zum Begleiten der Einzelnen während seines Lebens richtet. Zum Ziel der Macht wird, das Wohl dem begleiteten Einzelnen zu sichern (ein bestimmtes Lebensniveau), Gesundheit, Schutz usw. Der Hirte sorgt also um die Herde und diese Sorge ist ständig. Ständig ist auch die Verantwortlichkeit für den Einzelnen und für die Herde als Ganzes. Für die Sorge wird die Gehorsamkeit verlangt. Sie wird als eine Tugend verstanden. Die Herde zu führen und zu richten ist der Grund, so wie die permanente Gehorsamkeit der Herde. Es ist also klar, die Herde kann ohne den Hirten nicht existieren, und der Hirte ohne seine Macht auch nicht. Die Sorge des Hirten und seine Kontrolle über die Herde verlangt jedoch das Erkennen. Dies wird in der Form von Erkenntnissen über die Einzelnen, ihre Bedürfnisse, Spezifika, über die Herde als Ganzes, über die Zusammensetzung der Herde und über Schwächen, die die Einzelnen haben, explizit. Der Hirte bemüht sich, die Schwächen zu sichern. Die Hirtenmacht in der heutigen Zeit unterscheidet sich von der Hirtenmacht in der traditionellen mittelalterlichen Kirche dadurch, dass die Macht an die öffentlichen Institutionen übertragen wird<sup>16</sup>. Auch die gegenwärtige Schule und ihr Funktionieren erfüllen diese Elemente der Hirtenmacht. Verschiedene Managementmodelle in der gegenwärtigen Schule, Reformen und ihre

Auswirkungen, einbeziehen die „politische“ individualisierte Institutionsmacht, die auf der einen Seite durch die Normen der Staatsmacht<sup>17</sup>, der Institution an sich<sup>18</sup> und auf der anderen Seite durch die Bemühung um die Sorge um die einzelnen Schüler geltend gemacht wird. Die Einzelnen – die Schüler sind nach im Voraus bestimmten Systemen, Theorien und Bildungs- und Kontrollestrategien gesteuert zu in Voraus verlangten Standards und Charakteristiken oder Zielen, die gesellschaftlich<sup>19</sup> und individuell<sup>20</sup> bestimmt sind.

### **3. Der Abschluss**

Durch die Zusammenfassung beider Spezifikationen der Formen der Macht definieren die Autoren den Diskurs der Disziplin bei dem Junglehrer in der Form der Macht, als das Erreichen der bestimmten Ziele mittels des Handelns anderer Leute. Bildung und Erziehung, als eine experte Tätigkeit, ist die Sache nicht nur des bürokratischen Apparats, sondern auch der informalen Fachsubjekten<sup>21</sup>, die sich außer der Staatsmacht bewegen. Zum Ziel der Schule in dieser Form der Macht wird zu erziehen und zu bilden, nach einem Konzept der Erziehung und Bildung. Die Schule muss im Rahmen dieses Konzepts auch die Kontrolle zu behalten und die Bedürfnisse der Benutzer der angebotenen Dienstleistungen – der Schüler – zu sichern. Dies geschieht durch erlernte und angeeignete Erziehungsmuster als Produkte der Edukationstätigkeit. Zugleich wird den Schülern auch die Vorstellung über Regeln, die sie einhalten und annehmen, gezwungen. Dazu dient der Schule die Disziplin als eine spezifische Form der Kontrolle, wie die Macht mit Hilfe von dem Lehrer aufrechterhalten wird. Die Macht der Schule wird an die Lehrer delegiert, die sich bemühen, mit den Machtelementen die angegebenen Bildungs- und Erziehungsziele zu erreichen.

#### **ANMERKUNGEN**

<sup>1</sup> Mit der Strategie meinen wir eine bestimmte geschlossene Gruppe von Schritten (Methoden usw.), mit welchen der Lehrer plant, hält sich und leitet sich während des Unterrichts.

<sup>2</sup> Siehe z.B. Forschungen, die das Benehmen von Schülern und die Autorität des Lehrers geforscht haben, z.B. in Vališová 1999.

<sup>3</sup> Siehe Dokumente zur Schulreform, z. B. sog. Weißes Buch – Nationalprogramm zur Entwicklung der Bildung in der Tschechischen Republik, Schulgesetz – Gesetz Nr. 561 aus dem Jahre 2004, Gesetz über das pädagogische Personal – Gesetz Nr. 563 aus dem Jahre 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Autoren des Beitrages beschränken sich beim Definieren des Begriffes nur auf die Phasen des Starts ins Berufsleben und der Adaptation der Berufstätigkeiten, auch mit Hinsicht auf die Länge des Beitrages.

<sup>5</sup> Wir nehmen an, dass das genaue Bestimmen der Alterszusammenhänge nicht ganz möglich ist, auch in Hinsicht auf verschiedene Aspekte der Entwicklung der Persönlichkeit in dem konkreten Beruf, deshalb spielen sie bei der Schaffung des Diskurses nur eine Seitenrolle der Täter.

<sup>6</sup> Diese Kategorien können den Grund des Diskurses der Disziplin und ihrer Konzepte in der Erziehungstätigkeit des Lehrers bilden.

<sup>7</sup> Auch deshalb, dass in diesem Text dieser Begriff für einen beigeordneten und Hilfsbegriff gehalten wird, führen wir nur die Grunddefinition des Begriffes an, die sich auf die ausgewählte Ideenrichtung und seinen Repräsentanten konzentriert.

<sup>8</sup> Foucault sagt: „Beherrschen bedeutet, das mögliche Handeln anderer Einzelnen zu strukturieren.“

<sup>9</sup> Die Dominanz ist in der Geschichte sichtbar und ist konstant, in vielen Ritualen und Prozeduren verankert, die dem Menschen Recht und Pflicht zwingen.

<sup>10</sup> Siehe Erziehungskonzepte, z.B. Herbart, oder normative Abgrenzung der Erziehung und Bildung.

<sup>11</sup> Foucault weicht die Frage aus, was die Macht ist, und ähnlich ausweichend spricht er über die Ziele der Macht.

<sup>12</sup> Die Merkmale der Macht bilden den Referenzrahmen des Diskurses. Manche Autoren der Diskurse und der Diskursanalysen führen auch die Gitterpunkte, Auftauchpunkte usw. an.

<sup>13</sup> In dieser Auffassung kann man über die Formen der Macht auch als über Beziehungsrahmen der Macht oder über Machttechniken sprechen.

<sup>14</sup> Power/knowledge kann man als Erkenntnis-Macht übersetzen, im Tschechischen benutzt man den Begriff Wissen-Macht.

<sup>15</sup> Die Hirtenmacht wird als eine biblische Metapher charakterisiert. Zum Ziel der Hirtenmacht wird, das Wohl des Einzelnen zu sichern. Der Hirte sorgt für den Einzelnen und zugleich kontrolliert die Herde.

<sup>16</sup> Es ist nicht nur die politische Macht, sondern auch die gesetzliche und individualisierte Macht, die als Macht der Familie, der Bildung oder der Medizin übertragen wird.

<sup>17</sup> Für die Normen der Staatsmacht halten wir z.B. das Schulgesetz oder andere legislative Dokumente, die von dem Ministerium für Schulwesen, Jugend und Sport herausgegeben werden und für den Errichter der Schule verbindlich sind (Gemeinde, Kreis).

<sup>18</sup> Für die Normen der Institution halten wir die Schulordnung und andere spezifische Abgrenzung der Macht aus der Sicht des Schulmanagements der konkreten Schule.

<sup>19</sup> Das gesellschaftliche Ziel der Erziehung wird im Erziehungskonzept enthalten und im Diskurs über Erziehung und Bildung spezifiziert, z.B. humanistisches, funktionalistisches u. w. Ziel.

<sup>20</sup> Individuelle Ziele der Erziehung können z.B. in individuellen Plänen der Studenten, in Fortschrittskarten in den alternativen Schulsystemen u.a. enthalten werden.

<sup>21</sup> Gemeinnützige Organisationen u. a., die sich auf die Formen der Erziehung und Bildung spezifizieren.

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# **Critical Review**

## Kein systematischer Baustein des Denkens – philosophisch belanglos

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**Title:** *No systematic element of thought – philosophically irrelevant*

**Keywords:** Heidegger, Black Notebooks, history of Being, Antisemitism

Als philosophischer Hauptmitarbeiter an der Gesamtausgabe und als einstiger Privatassistent Martin Heideggers in dessen letzten Lebensjahren gebe ich eine knappe *korrigierende* Stellungnahme ab zu der Manuskriptengruppe der sog. „Schwarzen Hefte“ oder „Arbeitshefte“.

Der jetzige Herausgeber der „Schwarzen Hefte“ wurde von mir lediglich als *Text-Editor* nicht aber als *Text-Interpret* empfohlen. Von seinen international vorgetragenen Auslegungsversuchen, die mich ihrer inneren Unwahrheit wegen tief enttäuscht haben, muß ich mich um des Denkens Martin Heideggers und der Wahrheit willen *strikt distanzieren*.

Die „Schwarzen Hefte“ *begleiten* lediglich das um 1930/31 einsetzende Seins- oder Ereignisgeschichtliche Denken Heideggers, d. h. den zweiten Ausarbeitungsweg der Seinsfrage. Sie haben daher einen rein philosophischen Inhalt, sind aber den großen Arbeiten des seinsgeschichtlichen Denkens *neben- und nachgeordnet*. Deshalb ist der philosophische Gehalt ihrer immer wieder neu einsetzenden Aufzeichnungen nur aus den grundlegenden Zusammenhängen der gleichzeitig verfaßten Abhandlungen nachzuvollziehen.

Die im Verhältnis zu den 34 Heften ganz wenigen, in keinem größeren Kontext stehenden Textstellen, die sich auf das Judentum beziehen, sind philosophisch für das Denken

Heideggers völlig *belanglos* und somit überflüssig. Vor allem bilden sie *keinen gedanklich-systematischen Baustein* des Seinsgeschichtlichen Denkens. Das bezeugen alle gleichzeitig verfaßten Vorlesungen, Vorträge und Abhandlungsmanuskripte, die *nichts Antisemitisches* enthalten.

Das Judentum und dessen alte und große Geschichte gehört für Heidegger nicht in die Geschichte des Seins, die nur das abendländische Denken von den Frühen Griechen bis zu Hegel und Nietzsche und die neuzeitlich-gegenwärtige Wissenschaft und moderne Technik umfaßt, welche letztere für Heidegger charakterisiert sind durch das „*rechnende Denken*“, in dem Martin Heideggers Denken eine große Gefahr für die Menschheit sieht.

Der vom Herausgeber unscharf und mißverständlich geprägte Begriff des „*seinsgeschichtlichen Antisemitismus*“ in bezug auf die wenigen Sätze über die Juden, führt zu der unheilvollen *Verwirrung, daß das seinsgeschichtliche Denken als solches antisemitisch sei.*

Heidegger hat auch nicht „eine Zeitlang so gedacht“, wie der Herausgeber formuliert, nämlich so wie in den auf das Judentum bezogenen Sätzen. Wenn man derartig pauschal formuliert, meint der Leser und Hörer, Martin Heidegger habe in der Zeit dieser Sätze auch in seinen philosophischen Abhandlungen ‘so’, also antisemitisch gedacht, was völlig unsinnig ist. Daß das seinsgeschichtliche Denken in seinem inneren Gefüge und Aufbau überhaupt nichts von einer antijüdischen Haltung einschließt, bezeugen die sieben großen seinsgeschichtlichen Abhandlungen von 1936 bis 1944, die mit den *Beiträgen zur Philosophie* beginnen und mit den *Stegen des Anfangs* enden.

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# **Book Reviews**

## **The inherent purpose of ontology in ecology: The immutable use of Hans Jonas's works**

Raluca Deleanu  
Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi

Theresa Morris, *Hans Jonas's Ethic of Responsibility: From Ontology to Ecology*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press (SUNY Series in Environmental Philosophy and Ethics), 2013, 236 p.

**Keywords:** ethics, philosophy of nature, technological revolution, earth's future, ontology, biology

Hans Jonas (1903-1993) was one of the greatest German-Jewish philosophers of the XX-th century. Like his great friend Hannah Arendt, inspired by his wartime experiences and the rapidly expanding technological developments of the era, offered a powerful critique of the modern age. Yet, Jonas has never achieved stardom status like some of his peers. Theresa Morris's book is an attempt to make his works known to a larger audience, making sure that none of his words are omitted.

The environmental values – these seem to be the latest trend in the XXI-th century. We became aware of the humanity's progress, still, one of the latest challenges is to find answers to the increasing technological demand, that can be based on obsolete ethics. New concepts like “philosophy of nature” or “ethics of responsibility” are forced to be born, whether we realize it / accept it or not.

Therefore, concepts such as moral philosophy or ethical theory are considered weak, even though they are more or less used since Socratic times. Nowadays, the main discourse is based on what it is called “modern science”, a concept that becomes stronger and stronger by the day. This “medical age”

claims to have its own ethics that provides moral truth for each individual. In fact, the only thing provided by the new ethics is bringing only threats that lead to climate change, loss of biodiversity, resource depletion (exhaustion), pollution from the manufacture of goods or ancillary accumulation of waste products. We realize that the future health and viability of our planet and its living beings are put in danger, yet the solutions seem to be superficial, or even less, nonexistent.

In all this obsolete disambiguation, one of the greatest German philosophers of the twentieth century seems to be able to elaborate some valuable theories that reconstruct the ethics of responsibility and philosophy of nature. According to Hans Jonas, what it is called modern science and technology has undermined philosophy and ethical theory. The basic idea is very simple: due to the way humanity's relation to nature from Greek antiquity to the present times changed, it is clear that the development of science and technology in modern times has mostly become favorable for exploitation, which is the source of depletion in every way possible (whether we refer to natural resources or morality). Jonas's ontology of man describes the responsibility not only for the generations to come but also for the biosphere, two entities that make a whole. This kind of ontologically-grounded ethics seems to be the right approach to the contemporary challenges, or more specific, to the environmental crisis.

The whole text is a righteous outlook to the writings of Jonas, a strong attempt to relieve his impact on environmental ethics, therefore becoming an introductory text to his lifetime work. The author's work unifies all the subjects found in his works about philosophy of biology, the scientific and technological revolutions and how these two can be unified, rendering all these issues fluid and easy to be assimilated. Like any initiatory book, its introduction summons the right keys when it comes to Jonas's philosophy, Morris associating his life's main events with his *pensées* (reflections) on environmental ethics. Consequently the reader becomes aware about the philosopher's war experiences correlated with the post-war technological developments that gave him the opportunity to create, along with his great friend Hannah

Arendt, a critique of his age. Considering these great life experiences, the foreground of his almost utopic philosophy doesn't seem so frail anymore.

The three main parts of the book conclude a natural course beginning with the *Origins* (referring to the *problems*), the *Groundwork* (that notices the *threats*) and *Potentialities* (providing the solutions). Hence, the ecological crisis is noticed, then follows a short description of philosophy of nature and moral philosophy, and lastly, the ethical critique becomes some sort of response to the increasing power of technology that seems to overtake the planet, replacing its own development.

The innermost of Morris's book focuses on the reconstruction of Jonas's philosophy of nature and ethics. Henceforth, it is necessary to be mentioned over and over again that he considers the separation of ethics and ontology as being the modern world's fundamental problem; nature is losing its purpose and intrinsic value and the human alone seems to take these values surreptitiously. The unary idea is to admonish this whole movement and its power which created a new nihilist view of the world, a trend that became unstoppable. The book tends to be as compelling and persuasive as Jonas's arguments, the ideas are being systematically brought together. It's not to be omitted that for Jonas all organisms become entities, even the most insignificant living being holds an inner *telos* that exposes it to both physical and metaphysical interpretations. Thus the nature persuades through its own intrinsic value, rather than through the value imposed by humanity, which becomes an urged one. He claims that the injustice committed against nature is one against the being itself and only the understanding of life can clear the way. The author's claims become as contentious and continuous as Jonas's, making the text gain its own almost musical obsessional rhythm.

The reader is offered a systematic re-construction of the philosopher's claims based on analogies with the triad Kant - Aristotle - Heidegger, thinkers with whose works he was very familiar with and were very influential to him. The author is highly perceptive and shows a deep understanding by explaining how Hans Jonas must be cited every time when the imperative of responsibility demands attention to the Earth's

future. A continuous pendulation between micro and macro-cosmos is crafted by powerfully arguing that we must plan beforehand using every single resource. Only then our concern for the future will become solid and will receive a strong reason. Every sentence written by Morris is filled with prudence and adequately explained, offering guidance in avoiding harm or endangering the planet, without being too dramatic or boring.

Theresa Morris is making Hans Jonas's ethics and philosophy of life easier to digest by analyzing his main ideas that seemed lost in the darkness, inaccessible due to the language barrier or because he did not publish much of his work in his lifetime or maybe just because we are too focused on our transitory interests to realize the importance of metaphysics when it comes to nature, which is the only key when it comes to providing a solid ontological foundation for ethics.

Morris unwinds a wire that is leading the reader into really discovering the importance of Jonas's works but she's not taking away the possibility of subjectivity (that is why she used biographic facts), even more, she creates a bond between the two (Jonas and the reader) that encourages the reader to reflect and assimilate. This profound introduction becomes equally useful to the initiate that aspires to broaden his knowledge base and to the seeker who tries to find the right answers when it comes to ethics.

Even though the book seems a machinery of precision, a new key (whether we talk about a new interpretation, inspiration or just a fulfilling lecture) can only be found in Jonas's ethics and philosophy of life: let not this present text become a chafed reality. His philosophy must be regarded as a real acme of value and Theresa Morris persuades in treating it as it should.

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## Reading the self and the other

Anamaria Andreea Ursache  
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*International Yearbook for Hermeneutics / Internationales Jahrbuch für Hermeneutik*. Volume 12: Focus: Reading. Ed. by Günter Figal, 2013. 264 p.

**Keywords:** reading, literature, Nietzsche, Heidegger, truth, interpretation, poetry

The problem of reading reduced to the appeal for *reading thyself!* is not an actual reduction, but the openness of the meaning surrounding the reading problem itself. Not using *read thyself* (as it appears so frequently in this journal), but *read one's self* proclaims this reader's (my own) point of view to be a distant, rather general regard on the things to be discussed here. In a few words, the title intends to be a way of understanding the principle of the hermeneutical circle in a radical manner.

*The International Yearbook for Hermeneutics / Internationales Jahrbuch für Hermeneutik* has been published annually since the year 2002, under the watchful care of the German philosopher Günter Figal, who is currently professor at the Albert-Ludwig University of Freiburg. The topics addressed so far in this publication list as follows: the problem of language; humanism; the understanding of art; Plato and hermeneutics; the hermeneutics of religions; literary hermeneutics, historical hermeneutics and hermeneutics of art; word and writing; hermeneutics and phenomenology; an anniversary number – 50 years since the first publication of

*Wahrheit und Methode*; hermeneutics in the ancient times; the problem of reading; philosophy as literature.

The volume 12/2013 refers to the problem of reading and is divided into two sections, the first entitled *Lesen (Reading)*, the second *Beiträge (Contributions)* which includes no less than fifteen very interesting articles. The contributors to this volume are: Heike Gfrereis, Bernhard Zimmermann, John Sallis, Luca Crescenzi, Ben Vedder, Dennis J. Schmidt, Daniela Vallega-Neu, Gert-Jan van der Heiden, Nicholas Davey, David Espinet, Andrea Kern, Alexander Schnell, Enrique V. Muñoz Pérez, Csaba Olay, and Eberhard Geisler.

The underlying variations on the same topic – i.e. the reading problem – interfere to the point where it is difficult to group them. Read in order, the articles seem to take away from each other, operating as stand-alone analyses. However, taken as a whole, then grouped by their common assertions, they seem to become communicating vessels, which urges us to read them following a logical order, customized, this approach bringing with it the need for re-reading them in parallel.

Since the volume focuses on the problem of reading, I choose to appeal in this presentation to the following type of reading: firstly I identify some conclusions arising from the hypotheses considered by the authors, and secondly I try to identify the ideas that bind the current volume, those ideas that make reference to what occurs beyond it, a kind of *Ausgangspunkt*, a starting point, an *incipitus* of the reading as interpretation.

The article written by David Espinet – *Read thyself! Hobbes, Kant, und Husserl über die Grenzen der Selbsterfahrung* lies within a discourse related to phenomenological hermeneutics, but also makes a common core with a series of articles that fall within the topic of *sich lesen*, that we will recall later. Also the article by Luca Crescenzi (one of the two authors that are to collaborate for the editing of this volume, the second being John Sallis) – *Sich wandelnde Wahrheit und selbstkritisches Lesen. Nietzsche Variationen* – falls as well into this area of how to read someone else's writings as if those were your own (*sich selbst wiederlesen* – to re-read; *sich kritisch mit sich selbst auseinandersetzen* – self

criticism as the deal with oneself). The focus on *the problem of reading* is part of a special kind of analysis that is not limited only to the nature of a text and the ways the reader is exposed to the text, on the contrary, it leads to a radical hermeneutics of reading, which occurs unexpectedly (see Daniela Vallega-Neu, *At the limit of word and thought. Reading Heidegger's Das Ereignis*, 77-92). We can say that the element of surprise of a writing is the reading itself, that is always a miracle, a revelation, a crucial meeting. Reading stands always under the auspices of an unrepeatable time, it is the *momentum*.

In the article mentioned above, Heidegger's analysis over the ratio *thought - po(i)etical language* (from *Das Ereignis*) is eloquently presented. We can identify a first common idea on the peculiarity of poetry (the speech being this time brought in the area of literary hermeneutics and in that of the philosophical critique of art). This issue will be reinstated later, within the last article, *Hölderlin und die Gabe* by Eberhard Geisler, from a new perspective of understanding, one that doesn't see Heidegger as a main actor, but instead as an interpreter of Hölderlin's writings. Further, Eberhard Geisler will combine Heidegger's and Adorno's interpretations of Hölderlin's writings with the vision of the relationship between *giving* and *receiving* as it appears in the gift economy of Derrida. It is full of interest, within the volume considered, to see in which way the same passage or the same author cited in various ways and under various pretexts meet within the same interpretative frame. It can represent for the reader an excellent opportunity to see within a literary or a philosophical text, not the finality, but the novelty and its availability for being perpetual actualisation of certain new possibilities of understanding: it will be read differently, in a new key, depending on other time and history, as Hölderlin himself said in one of his correspondences. For Hölderlin himself, poetry is a form of intoxication, a divine language through which the truth really shines. In *Andenken*, the poet is the one who gives the measure of what is eternal, and universal.

The second common idea is that of *sich lesen*, the stake being here, from the perspective of the philosophy of language, the postulate which underlies the entire history of writing: from

the stoical logos to the authenticity of Dasein, passing through the modern subjectivity, the purpose of the every writer is that of being read, and this is an universal truth. As Heike Gfrereis says, within the first article of this volume (*Nicht-Lesen. Die Entzauberung einer alter Vorstellung*, 1-12), every literary work has in its core the interaction between its own structure and that of its receptor. The understanding of oneself is now formulated as the interpretation of a written text that begins with a prefiguration of what is going to be read; in other words, *das Lesen* is revealed here as the intention to foresee that signification-event which has not yet occurred. If writing is to obey a set of rules that define language, specific structures such as morphology or syntax, speaking and reading implies a much more freedom, a way of preparing for hearing not only the voice of the other, but also our own voice. Naturally, *sich lesen* is always done by looking at the intentionality of someone else, but this someone else can be the language itself (as Derrida says). Writing is a first form of access to my own self, granted by an external action; this is the easiest form of externalization, except the speech of course, but we must also take into account that writing offers the opportunity to analyse his/her own consciousness. If talking with someone always involves a double censorship, writing remains a genuine form of access to oneself. In *Doubly slow reading*, by John Sallis, *sich lesen* is defined in respect to Nietzsche, whose preface to *Morgenröthe*, published five years after the publication of the book, is presented as a significant event not only for the writing, but for the author itself. After reading the preface, it's obvious that it is not the same thing to simply read Nietzsche and to read Nietzsche after reading Nietzsche read by himself. This point could be seen as a general strategy for understanding the entire art of reading. The volume opens a reflection upon the experience of reading as the most familiar and most foreign thing possible, the close-distant, comprising the thinking and the unthinking and even the doubtful (*das Bedenklichste*). However, in our modern times, finding a common ground where the problem of reading can be announced as a problem of understanding is no longer enough, because reading presupposes the displacement of the reader, who is simultaneously here and there: here where

reading begins and there, where understanding takes place. This calls for a radical experience of reading that has to encompass the truth, the self and the distance from oneself to another (the being, the language).

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