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XXI/82-83, November 2012

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***Selected Essays
in Contemporary
Italian Philosophy***

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**Selected Essays
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Italian Philosophy**

Edited by Jurij Verč
Ljubljana, 2012

EDITORIAL

The canonical timelessness of philosophical research can not entirely relinquish the study of the subject of contemporaneity or its corresponding phenomena; for only by confronting the topical object does the researcher experience the necessary self-inquiry. From the subject (contemporaneity) to the researcher (contemporary philosophy), a reflection takes form through self-objectification of one's place and role, the result of the research being continually questionable, as is the permanence of historical and social conditions.

If we continue to try to classify and understand the present within the framework of the so-called postmodern project of pluralism, we must take the intermediate evaluation of the past decades of integration, expansion and globalization of every sphere of daily life both as a cue to reconsider the development of the philosophical thought, its fate in new or emerging geographical dimensions as well as a cue to reconsider its behaviour in newly emerged implications between the global and the local. In this the field of knowledge is not excluded.

The awareness of the destructive logic of monological interpretations and various centralist tendencies has revived, (at the least) in the field of knowledge, the hope of liberation from the recent patterns of marginalization and the appropriations within the separate cultures. This has undoubtedly been aided by not only symbolic, but predominantly political and technological opening of borders and contacts with different 'explanations'. The encouraging aspect of globalizing the sphere of knowledge, which has on one hand narrowed the distances and created new areas of encounters between different horizons of

interpretation, has on the other hand also gradually lessened the differences between the horizons themselves.

Connecting globally does not eliminate the logic of uniformation, the same as striving for global interconnectedness does not guarantee plurality as such. While the uniformation of knowledge does not necessarily follow the aggressive patterns of subordination of the other fields of knowledge, the so-called Information Age given its own tendencies of expansion demands choice or selection (of equality). Selection through the canons, both written and otherwise, gradually narrows or 'defines' the field, the guideline of the definition simultaneously leading to its impoverishment and the principle of monosemy to deprivation of the dimensions of its sign. The philosophical sign, with its problematic abundance of non-redundancy likewise contracts in its own self-reference. So does philosophy itself, while operating with this sign, lose contact (and the advantage of the contact for further reflection) with its own, as Deleuze would put it, territory. All the while, specificity and difference, the two main criteria for the rebirth of plurality and the emergence of diverse areas of reflection, are being lost. To imagine the diversified field of philosophy as a homogenous reality does not add to a better quality of life in a world that at first glance paradoxically appears to be simultaneously both increasingly localised and increasingly globalised. We would benefit from viewing the diversity of cultures and cultural products as an area of exchange or one of diverse views that are in certain instances shared, in others contradictory.

The presentation of the diversified collection of the Italian thought, at the same time so near to us yet so distant due to 'our Mittel-European tradition' was, because of its independent development of numerous aspects of contemporary philosophical currents, a logical choice to open and shatter aforementioned moulds. In search of a different kind of a highlight into the modern times and considering the Italian (and global) situation we, on such an occasion, started with three interrelated phenomena (representation, virtuality and democracy) and based on those set three related thematic sets:

a) The mediatisation of politics, the unstoppable expansion of the society of the spectacle and the complexity of placing democracy within the framework of genuine representation are phenomena that the reflection of present times finds difficult to avoid. However, their danger does not only lie in the increasing form of virtualisation of the everyday and with it the parallel shrinking of areas of political participation (certainly worth critical thinking in itself). It would seem that the crisis of politics is merely a reflection of a much wider

crisis of subjectivity: the space of consciousness as the space of reflection and criticism is gradually running out of resiliency. They lack the ability to resist not only the *Techne* capable of forming and guiding the subject's desires, but also the form of technics that is progressively merging with the world and is weaving the space originally intended as the space of realization of the subject's sovereignty.

Within these frameworks of shaping the space of the subject's realization we must redefine the relationship between responsibility and subjectivity. How can we today shape the thought of sharing, caring or hospitality? How to answer to others and for others in an epoch, where the distinction between private and public, between the economic sphere and the political one, between a self-interested act and a collective one, oriented towards building a common place, simply seems impossible and unimaginable?

b) The image revealing itself to us puts philosophy before a task of rethinking, re-evaluating, and designing the idea of reality; not only social reality, but reality as such (*tout court*). This does not necessarily compel us to fall under obscurantism of those that through the presentation of a world composed only of its images and infinite possibilities of their interpretation merely tear apart former 'readings' of the world and reality. This sort of 'obscurantism' actually abandons the whole history of intentions and concentrations on each individual project of emancipation and with it the placement of the subject within it.

Are we then regressing and returning to a renewed albeit thoroughly deconstructed metaphysics? If we here refer ourselves to a recent debate that began in Italy over the *new realism*, it would be sensible to ask ourselves, which is to be the role of the philosophical thought in the time of a renewed crisis and a renewed expectation of epochal changes. Which is to be the role of philosophy summoned by the multitudes to 'enlighten them'? With this in mind it would be useful to recollect that we are dealing with the same multitudes, which simultaneously prefer to turn away and look for shelter in outlived, perhaps even archaic ideas and explanations of the world, when faced with philosophy's polysemous answers.

How then is philosophy to confront the present crisis, be it of economic and/or 'spiritual' nature? Should it remain faithful to crisis as *krisis* as judgement – separation – choice or should today's crisis be read and accepted as an extreme situation, in which we see doubt as an unacceptable luxury, making us choose a more pragmatic approach? In short, which is the fate of the philosophical thought? Are we to return to the superior, ivory position that remains

removed from everyday happenings and is because of it short-sighted and deluded by its own luxury of contemplation? Are we (again) to opt for 'changing the world'? Are we not facing a (renewed) paradigmatic juncture that compels philosophy to thoroughly reflect on its own rules of the game?

c) Where do we dwell? This is the question with which we wish to thematize the entanglement of the local, the global and the virtual. With it we do not intend to overlook those connective elements that join us into a collective, although polysemous idea of European tradition; a tradition that is still present today – even if perhaps only behind the scenes – in shaping our understanding and practice of philosophy.

Considering what we have in common, which should the coordinates of our thrownness and historicity be today? Which should be the framework of our belonging? How can the bond between the (interconnected) owned, possessions and possessing be analysed today?

8 Last but not least, if we take into consideration the entanglement of the 'philosophical writing' and the language, what does it mean in this day and age, to philosophise 'in Italian'? At first glance, the answer seems predictable, when read in the hegemony of the English language, imposed – and enhanced – by new methods of evaluating scientific work. However, the meaning of the question is directed elsewhere: what kind of a relationship should philosophy have today towards the centre – periphery dynamics, or towards the mechanisms that organise cultural production in general? Is it true that the philosophical discourse is transforming into one of the goods the media offers, seeing that media as such is not by any rules bound to critical thinking?

On this occasion, I would especially like to thank Giovanni Leghissa and Dean Komel for their help with the content and technical design of this collection.

Translated by Špela Gnezda

THE ETHICS OF RELATIONS

1. Philosophy between past and present

9

Philosophy is not always and not necessarily, as in Hegel's well-known statement in the *Preface* of the *Philosophy of Right*, «its time apprehended in thoughts». In order to develop, philosophical research must leave daily urgencies and the surrounding political and social situation to one side. Philosophical discourse is not merely a dialogue with the present, it is also, and above all, a confrontation with those thinkers from the past who dealt with the same problems in an analogous way. When the philosophers' thought turns to the present, they must construct this confrontation; they must consider what are the basic problems that thought deals with. In a word, they must step back from the times they live in and consider them from a distance, as did Schopenhauer when in 1848 he observed the revolutionaries' barricades through his telescope.

But this is only one aspect of the question. We have to be careful not to carry this detachment too far. As I have said, the detached gaze of philosophy – achieved through elaborating specific basic problems and through comparison with great thinkers – is concerned with the present. It does not get tangled in abstractions from the past. Instead, it takes advantage of what tradition offers, to understand what is underway in the present.

So, the present interests philosophy, but not in a closed fashion, clinging to its short-lived novelties or simply attempting to explain it. Quite the opposite: philosophical research endeavors to open up the possibilities in the

present; it wants to apply its viewpoint, that comes from the past, to show that daily events cannot be the prime interest of philosophy. And this explains its detachment.

Thus, philosophy sets itself up as *critique of the present*. It does not place itself at the same level as the present. Instead, it questions it. In other words, by addressing the present, philosophy finds its cue for reflection. But it goes beyond actualities and contributes to the maturation of all occasions, ideas, hopes that actuality contains in its bosom.

2. The specificity of Italian philosophy

10 Recent Italian developments in philosophy have to be considered from this double perspective, that looks towards the past in order to understand the present as well as to open the way to the future, from a strange viewpoint where the present is always seen from the standpoint of what is not the present. The contingent themes of society and politics have certainly influenced these developments and have of course stimulated them, at least in the contributions from those thinkers who are less constrained by strictly academic work. But even if the philosopher does sometimes write in the papers, it does not make him or her a journalist; even if he or she takes part in a television show, it does not make him or her a media personality. I must repeat: philosophy is not a gloss on reality nor a pastime towed along by actuality. Although it may enhance one's (short-lived) success or notoriety, such an interpretation of philosophical activity would lead to abandoning every connection with the history of thought and its fundamental questions.

Where the Italian question is concerned, the difficulty resides in maintaining a balance between attention towards the present and adherence to the problems dealt with in the tradition. The difficulty lies in discerning the particular, the detail, in the light of a universal structure without this detail being swallowed up by the universal; moreover without the attention for the latter (the detail) eliminating the necessity of referring to the former (the universal). Again, today it is difficult to leave enough space for an autonomously conceived philosophical formulation: mainly because today the sciences believe they can answer (in a different manner from philosophy) those very problems that over the centuries philosophy has devoted itself to.

It may be true, as was observed in a recent book, that in comparison to developments in philosophical research in other parts of Europe and in America,

Italian philosophy has become in a sense isolated¹. Over recent decades it has not joined – unlike during the 1900s, first with German thought, then French, and later with the so-called analytical philosophy – in a creative elaboration of influential reflections able to open up new ways of seeing the world in other geographical contexts too. And – although this may have the ring of a consolation – it may perhaps be equally true that this isolation has protected Italian philosophy from making those mistakes and from experimenting those extravagancies that have been a feature of certain results of philosophical enquiry on both sides of the Ocean. For example let us think of the results of a certain type of post-structuralism philosophy or the exasperated reductionism of some positions in the area of analytical philosophy.

The reasons behind the delay, be it fortunate or otherwise, are perhaps due to a certain temptation towards gregariousness in Italian philosophy, emerging in particular after the second world war. The need – more than welcome – to finally shed autarchic idealisms, like that of Croce or Gentile, had justly given rise to an opening-up towards what for decades had been developed in other traditions of thought. However, in many cases this opening up was seen as an assumption on the part of Italian philosophy of themes and styles elaborated elsewhere, rather than an opportunity to develop truly autonomous reflections, beginning from these.

Added to this was a not always effective promotion of Italian culture by the Institutions whose business it was to do so. Unlike in France and Germany, there was a lack of effective support in exporting the thought elaborated in our country (even to countries where the Italian Language and traditions are a significant presence, due to generations of immigration). Instead it was chosen to undertake a vast activity of translating books from abroad. This, among other effects, obviated the need to learn the language they were written in, in order to read them.

In short, far too often, Italian culture has turned inwards on itself. It has not travelled abroad beyond its own confines. But in many cases has accepted colonization as its destiny, on the understanding, however, that the colonizers speak Italian. This has come about in spite of the fact that Italian thinkers had elaborated during last years some original perspectives: perspectives that were not simply fruit of adaptations from concepts developed elsewhere. Except that the majority of these thinkers, most of whom were beyond the mainstream of predominant philosophical conceptions, received little recog-

1 R. Esposito, *Pensiero vivente. Origini e attualità della filosofia italiana*, Einaudi, Torino 2010.

dition in the international philosophical debate. Let us think, for example, to Emanuele Severino's thought.

3. The predominance of theory and its problems

All this is true, especially for researches that have developed in the form of theoretical elaboration. Principally, I mean enquiries into the theory of knowledge, developments in ontology (both in the hermeneutical and the analytical meaning of the term)² and questions concerning logic and the philosophy of science. Frequently, in these cases, Italian philosophy spoke another language, or even modeled its own language – I mean Italian – on the language of reference, by using terms coined from literal translations. Let us just think of the Italian translations of many works by Heidegger.

12 Reflections in the sphere of ethics and politics (taken in its widest sense) are a different case. In Italy, partly because of the particular cultural situation due to the active and deeply-rooted presence of the Roman Catholic Church, as well as the political scenario – in many respects anomalous compared to the rest of Europe over the last two decades – several themes concerning in particular these two areas of research have come to the attention of the masses and have been openly the object of close examination. Thus, unlike what might have been offered within the bounds of pure, abstract philosophical enquiry, the inspiration and questions to be examined were provided by concrete daily situations. So, the structures of philosophy could be tested in fact by its tackling these situations.

I am referring in particular to themes connected to applied ethics. These are chiefly questions concerning bioethics and the ethics of communication. I also mean the various ways in which political action can be orientated in a commonly shared manner and the consequences, as well as responsibilities concerning the use that technologies are put to, especially those that not only entail interaction but also the integration of human beings and the machine, as well as the claim of public or private bodies of controlling the various aspects of people's lives and experiences. But chiefly, I am referring to what *motivates* the adoption of certain forms of behavior, triggered by these concrete circumstances. To know is not enough: action must be taken. But it must be taken with an eye to other possible scenarios, considering these before making a choice.

These are in general themes in urgent need of confrontation. In Italy, this confrontation has been heated, due both to the cultural context that I have

2 M. Ferraris (ed.), *Storia dell'ontologia*, Bompiani, Milano 2008.

already referred to, peculiar to this country, and to questions arising from our recent political history, that have contributed to fuelling strong contrasts. However, although this passion for urgent matters in the present can unquestionably be a source of discussion, it does not offer instruments to justify its correctness. This applies too to those Italian philosophers who, believing themselves absolved from all argumentational obligations, and required to take sides, became supporters of the latest ideology. As I remarked at the outset, they became the spokespeople of contingency.

Instead, the problem is once more to set a thought to work that responds to the requirements of current times by referring to the language and basic themes elaborated in philosophical tradition. On the one hand, not descending to the level of current affairs, but also, on the other hand, not uninterested in current events, though it must make the (always necessary) effort towards abstraction, in order to think. Let us not forget that the Platonic philosopher, after emerging from his cave and contemplating true reality, returned to its darkness to denounce the illusion of the images projected on the walls of the cavern.

If we are to satisfy these requirements of linking concrete situations and the fundamental problems of philosophizing, and in order to motivate adequate behaviour in the living world, we must first of all carry out a thorough reckoning with the predominantly theoretical setup of philosophy. A unilateral theoretical approach has characterized much of Western thought and still predominates in what remains of the phenomenological approach, as well as in the many-faceted area of analytical reflection. In fact, it has been the identification of philosophy with theory that in many cases has condemned philosophical research in the Italian language to a subordinate position in comparison to reflections elaborated elsewhere. Therefore, to abandon an exclusively theoretical approach could lead not only to a closer adhesion of our thought to the urgencies of the open debate in our country, but also to the possibility of developing independent and original ideas and putting them forward in the global philosophical context.

But what do I mean by “theory”? I mean the idea that philosophy, being the expression of a desire for knowledge, only develops in the best way to satisfy this desire through the knowledge of things, the explanation of their processes, the project of their overall representation, more or less open to revisions. This is what the sciences have been doing successfully, for some time. Philosophy, on the other hand, has continued with its observations, analyses, deconstructions and reconstructions of those phenomena that have caught its attention.

These phenomena may concern the many areas of human experience (for instance, the arts, sciences or religions) or the dimension itself of that thought that theory develops (as in epistemology and logic).

And theory implies the idea that the whole world is a stage where the play is before the eyes of the onlooker and the onlooker is he who is expected to be at the same time both inside and outside the play. Outside: because he is detached and judges it. Inside: because in watching it, he becomes involved and either marvels at it or is frightened. Just as happens in our present-day »Society of the Spectacle«.

In a nutshell, theory is the style of thought that reconstructs the spectacle of the world that philosophy intends to watch. But while carrying out this duty, theory is unable to provide an answer to the question of *why* that which it is reconstructing should be the way it is, *why* it is like that and not otherwise. When I say this, I am not referring to the abundant explanations that this philosophical model, or the various sciences, may propose. I mean something quite different. I am referring to those criteria that are able to guide us in our daily life.

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In fact, accepted that what we say and think is true, we do not understand *what sense all of this can have*. Therefore, we do not know for what reason it should interest anyone and make him or her take suitable action. In a formula: in the various shapes it can assume, *theoretical knowledge is unable to involve, it is unable to motivate*. Not even in the adoption and exercise of the theoretical approach itself and that attitude towards observation that animates it. It happens therefore that this attitude becomes sterile and ineffective on the plane of action. Of course, I repeat, it is able to describe the action, reconstruct it, detect its conditions, context and objectives. But it is in no way able to direct it or guide it, give it sense, direction or a future.

On the whole, when philosophy is seen and practiced only as theory, it discovers itself to be utterly useless. Its results are simply matters of fact, pointless and incapable of making sense of our lives. This sort of philosophy ends up by being irrelevant even to the present that it inevitably interacts with. Whereas science offers much more effective solutions. So, in the end, we can manage without this abstract theory.

4. From theory to ethics

But philosophy is not only theory. Philosophy is an initiative that is applied – is put into practice. And its putting into practice is motivated by referring to

something able to give meaning to its way of proceeding and other experiences connected to it.

By highlighting this side of philosophical investigation, we can alter our perspective. It enables us to pass from theory to ethics. But we must not think of ethics (as happened and still happens in analytical thought) as a form of theory. Ethics is more than analysis of the words that we use when judging value; it is not the explanation of the behaviour that we adopt nor the abstract definition of the concept of “good”. In a word, it is not just meta-ethics. Rather, and above all, *it is the implementation and promotion of good relations*. Certainly, these relations have to be specified, precisely because they are defined as being “good”, but in the area of ethics, they are promoted in their concrete realizations. Only by referring to the performative aspect of relations – relations that are not merely contemplated and described but that arise among people and in the world – can the senselessness that belongs to theory be overcome.

Primarily, we have to recover the independence of ethics from theoretical formulations. And only after we have recognized that ethics is able to respond to the requirement of motivation and sense that theory does not satisfy, will it be possible to make it interact once more with theory. In other words, we have to graft ethics on to theory, so that the latter can find its own motivation and realize it. I have named this new link that binds these two thought experiences together “TeorEthics”.³

To say it in other words: beyond knowledge, and fundamental to it, is an intent. To be precise, this intent is to know, to find out. But this intent must have a motivation. And this is what theory is unable to do. It is unable to motivate itself. At the most, it can refer to the will to activate intention, as has happened over the last two centuries. We see this will in Schelling and Nietzsche, so, it is placed first⁴. Indeed, it wants, and wants itself to be the principle. But in this manner, will, placed first, is conceived as something arbitrary. It must answer to nothing but itself. But the consequence of will seen as arbitrariness is the insensateness of action.

However, things are not at all like this in our concrete experience. Because there is always something behind will that directs it. In other words, will too is something that is motivated. Perhaps even by the intention itself to act arbitrarily. So, in our thought and actions, we are unable to escape the presence of a meaning. A meaning in action. A meaning that involves us.

3 A. Fabris, *TeorEtica. Filosofia della relazione*, Morcelliana, Brescia 2010.

4 It is the reading that Heidegger gives of both these thinkers. See, for example, *Nietzsche*, 2 voll., Neske, Pfullingen 1963.

5. The principle of the relations and its universal character as fundamental to ethics

But it is precisely at this point that another aspect of the question arises. How are we to shape this principle when it is at the same time theoretical and ethical? A principle that is able to motivate our actions? We have said that it is not something that is absolute or self-subsistent, meant only to be contemplated. We have said, if it is to have meaning it must be thought and lived in a relational context. So, if this is the situation, the state of things, the true principle, the motivating principle can only be the relation itself. The relation enacted. In other words, it is something that is, and that we do as, a relation.

The relation is not enacted later or arbitrarily by something that, foremost and in isolation, is able to assert itself. On the contrary, *in the beginning is the action itself*. Only in this way are we able to avoid the senselessness of both theoretical explanations and will as arbitrariness. In fact, if we place the relation as the principle, it works by involving, reconfirming itself and making sense of our actions.

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Moreover, this principle of relation is not something that in turn can be fixed, once and for all, for it to be contemplated. Rather, it is in fact a relationship that is enacted, a dynamic relation. The characteristic dynamics of the relation is that of extension, of progressive enlargement. The relation involves and produces other relations. In other words, its dynamics is capable of expanding universally. The universality of which I am speaking, however, must be correctly understood. I must repeat: the universal principle is not something that can be fixed and that, once fixed, can be contemplated. It goes beyond theory: it is a principle of ethics, that is beyond any theoretical fixing. It is so by virtue of the relational dynamics that animates it, that in fact ethics is required to actuate and express. We are not looking once more, at a principle that in its universality is in contrast with the particular so that it may be applied to the selfsame particular. Quite the opposite. Insofar as it is a relation able to involve, capable of universal expansion, it is, then, realized through those particular elements that in the present we live in, that we find related. It is therefore from this manner of thinking of the relation of universality and particularity that we must begin if we are to envisage the relation between general ethics and special ethics. We shall see this more clearly in a minute.

The universality of which I am speaking can therefore be more precisely defined as “universalisability”: as potential sharing, as growth in a common space, as a dynamics of diffusion and growth of the particular element in its

relations with other particular elements. We must therefore give the term “universal” a definition that is partly different from that attributed to it throughout the history of thought, from Plato onwards. In fact, Plato conceived universality above all from the theoretical point of view so eventually fixing and hypostatizing it.

Instead, the idea of universality that I am developing here, by conceiving it as “universalisability”, can only be developed because the universal principle can already be found in some way in the various aspects particular to the world. If this were not so, the particular element in its turn could not be placed in a relation with other particular elements, it would not be universalisable. That which impels towards relations must be made to emerge in the particular element. It must be demonstrated how this relational aspect, that urges and disturbs the particular element, is a condition of its universalisability. And once again, this must be done not simply by thinking of this condition but above all, by putting it into practice.

And this is in fact what ethics, understood as a specific discipline of philosophy, does: it *studies* and *realizes* the forms of a good relation. The formula that expresses the specific character of ethics as a discipline of philosophy is the formula where the condition for a good relation is expressed. The effectuation of ethical behaviour is in fact the sign of an opening, of the dynamics. By defining this type of behaviour we are able to establish very precisely what, on the plane of content, can be properly defined as ethical and what cannot. It follows that the formula is: If the term “ethics” indicates a field of relations, and intends to promote relations that can be defined as “good” and involving, then specifically, *ethics is that relation which results fecund for other relations*. That potentially may spread infinitely. In other words, the ethical relation works in a self- extending way. So it is inclusive. And only in this way does it *make* the universal.

From this perspective, the fundamental concepts elaborated during the history of thought to express the domain of our behaviour can be re-thought. Among these is the notion itself of action, the dimension of choice and the condition of liberty. We are unable to discuss these concepts in depth here, but even so we may repeat that a close examination of moral concepts must be carried out only bearing in mind two aspects: the developing of our relations, able to extend wider and wider and involve, and a reflection concerning them, the latter too, considered as a particular form of relation. Only in this way can a thought that makes sense and is able to give sense be put into effect. Only in this way is TeorEthics attained.

6. The ethics of relations and Italian philosophy

In the last few pages, I have developed a general discussion during which I have attempted to reflect on some themes basic to philosophical thought, sometimes in a dialogue with, and on occasion in contraposition to, authors from the past and the present. Now, to return to what I observed at the outset, I have to demonstrate how this general discussion can be connected in a balanced way to the concrete situation in which it develops and on which it may even have an effect. The final part of my journey will be an examination of the possibility, in present day Italy, of connecting the past and the present, universality and particularity, theory and ethics. And how this can come into effect correctly. In this way, perhaps what Italian philosophy has to offer today to other traditions of thought may also emerge.

18 In the Italian context most of the problems raised that philosophy has to deal with are the very same urgent ones as in contemporary international reflection. These problems concerns the domination of a thought model that refers to developments in the exact sciences, their increasing capacity to control the phenomena of experience, the illusion for the human species of being able to live in the world in a simple and safe way thanks to the use of old and new technologies. In the face of this thought model the necessity of a philosophical debate with it arises on several different grounds, for instance, that of ontology (inasmuch as the use of new technologies alters our concept of “reality”), or morals (inasmuch as it is necessary to think in the perspective of responsibility of the consequences of this demand to control us), politics (inasmuch as politics appears to be unable to govern the developments in technological progress and seems merely to identify itself with a series of strategies in order to gain and maintain power, through massive use of the media). Philosophical enquiry can play an important role in this confrontation.

Specifically speaking, over recent decades however, Italian debate regarding these problems has seen the influence of two elements peculiar to it: the active presence of the Roman Catholic Church, with its particular attention to themes concerning the manipulation of human life, and an equally widespread control of communication resources by certain political forces. I have already referred to this elsewhere. Interventions by the Roman Catholic Church – that has a greater influence on Italian society (albeit extensively secularized), than on other areas of Europe – have concentrated mainly on questions of bio-ethics. Problems connected with unilateral control of mass communication media have concerned themes more closely related to deontology and the ethics of

communication. Both cases, as can be seen, involve questions concerning what is called “applied ethics”. A good use of philosophy in this context is that which enables us to clarify which questions have to be dealt with, starting from general principles truly able to guide human beings in making concrete choices.

In reality, this has not always been the case in Italian public debate. Often, opposing theories, even if upheld with strong feelings, were not sufficiently well argued. Often, too, argument was unable to inspire public opinion towards motivated agreement. For this reason it was chosen to turn to the instruments of rhetoric or to appeal to dogmatically imposed principals. But, since in either case the strategy used was that of imposition through varying degrees of violence, its lack of sense was soon perceived. And obviously, in the end, the result was anything but the creation of that shared dimension, of ideas and practice that politics in action can carry out.

And for this reason it is once more advisable to retrieve reflection on the relation between general principles that philosophical argumentation must be able to justify and specific situations. The duty of philosophical enquiry is also to justify the ways and the conditions of this relation in itself. Otherwise it will remain merely a space for ideological discourse.

To this end, the change of paradigm that I have illustrated above, from theory to ethics, in the link that is characteristic of these two forms of human experience, and the development of an ethics of relations, that offers concrete realization for this link, will perhaps be able to provide a constructive contribution. Above all, this can come about because in this way it is possible to overcome the divides between explanation and motivation, between elaboration of fundamental principles and their practical application, between universality and particularity. The assumption of these divides, in fact, threatens to make concrete action blind, on the one hand, and, on the other, make philosophical reflection itself irrelevant. If the problem, even in the case of the examples that I have gathered from recent Italian debate, is how to motivate a philosophical understanding of contemporary situation and, at the same time, of justifying and promoting good actions in the present, then the development of an authentic link between theory and ethics may prove useful. In Italy and not only in Italy.

From this standpoint moreover, philosophical enquiry is able to recover that function of inspiration in the field of politics that since antiquity has been one of its primary tasks. But this is not politics in the technical sense of government or manipulation and control of ideas in order to gain consent. It is the possibility of once more experimenting the correct links among ideal questions, that can inspire shared action, and the historical context, that

changes from time to time, in which it is possible to realize this action. Here too, the change in mentality offered by the TeorEthics can help in creating better social cohabitation in the shared real space that is in common. Indeed, this can be realized in the prospect of universalisability: in the patient construction of a common dimension where everyone has the right to make a contribution and join in.

Ugo Volli

THE TWINS OR THE REASONS OF CONTEMPORARY ITALIAN PHILOSOPHY

A very paranoid, but also very pushing, single and double ghost, naturally a bit of a Marxist one, is wandering in Europe – or rather in the sky above it, where the alchemical wedding of Philosophy and Ideology is celebrated. *It is* at least a hundred years old, only in its last incarnation (maybe there were others before), but it still carries very well its age. Its very masculine name is “Plan”, but someone else has seen it even in the female dress of “Techne”. Perhaps Techne is Plan’s mask or perhaps Plan Techne’s. We do not know. They are opposites, but they are also one, in the strictly structural meaning of occupying the same place in the Mendeleev’s table of contemporary demonic creatures. In fact both of them drive, determine, give shape to human life and society, without giving way to will and individual responsibility. Both are held responsible for that state of openness and mobility, which many persist in defining “postmodern”, even though modernity persists in surviving its posterity. Both make people unaccountable, make reality unreal, or contrariwise give the appearance of solid reality to what is only interpretation and will to power. Both serve the purpose of saying that the surface of the world does not correspond to its essence – but, for heaven’s sake, without any metaphysical implications. Both in fact are not what they seem, or rather, they do not seem to be of great reality, but that is exactly why they are.

21

If the ghost wears Plan’s mask, it has a will, an interest indeed. It works for someone’s sake, for someone’s interest. Or rather: people exercise their unspeakable interest through him. The Plan is usually secret, it is a trick, a conspiracy, an unspoken rule that one can only see by its effects – if one’s eyes are

penetrating enough to see such things, as happens with philosophers. So, for example, for decades its main avatar has been that “capital plan”, to which many still refer even in this terrible economic chaos. The “Capital Plan” is the worthy heir to the old but still alive “Protocol of the Elders of Zion”, as they both concern the global finance and the evil puppeteers who move it. Also, Plan’s plan is to take over the world (or maybe just keep leading it) pretending to provide goods and services and to make investments. But actually these are mere fictions. Its real purpose – or perhaps the Elders’ (of whom Plan is the mask) – is only to oppress, to enslave, to impoverish. It seems economy, but it is domain: Economy’s domain on Policy, or on the affairs of politicians and their servants. And to do this easily, the Plan can subvert the reality or rather its absence (or even convince us that there is an objective reality, no matter what).

22 If those who are enslaved by the Plan, or who should be considered enslaved in the eyes of those who can see it, do not feel like servants at all, if they even think they are free and live better, this should be read merely as further evidence of the Plan, of its dangerous hegemonic power. Hegemony is someone’s capacity to convince opponents that his interest is their reason, too. The Plan does this in a very natural way, thanks to its fundamental disguise; to unmask it and instead pursue a counter-hegemony, one will need appropriate officials, able to show the harmful character of the Plan to those who believe they benefit of it. This is the craft of the Wisest, or at least of those who would like to be such and therefore prefer to manage Wisdom instead of Economics: the clerics of Hegemony or Philosopher Kings.

Sometimes a shadow opponent to the Plan comes in the light, so to say. It is a sort of Counterplan, which is a plan indeed, but opposite to the previous one. The private nature of its model is changed within it into a public one, and therefore its wickedness capsizes in goodness. In fact it is public not only because it declares itself so, but above all in the morally superior sense of public ownership, public interest, collective decision. But it is public also because of the public statement, of the policy opposed to the secret of what is private, which is by etymology missing. The Counterplan is not only good for nature, but also loves to shine, as opposed to Heraclitean nature and to its own model that always lurks: once those who practice it or control it, that is the New collective Princes and their intellectuals, get a hold of power, they proclaim it joyfully as Five-Year Plan, Economic Planning, social Engineering.

This is the most important tool for the (public, of course) Party Power, and thus the aspiring Philosopher Kings’, i.e. the ideologues or Hegemony Officials who inspire it (inspiring, advising, guiding – not the risky ruling, according

to the same ambitious weak thought with which the fly-coachmen pretend to drive – führen – history's patient ox). With the Counterplan they resist not only the capital's evil plan but also the widespread petty Individual Interest, eternal row matter for any private Plan, large or small it may be. Instead, the counterplan is the powerful shape of the General Will. This was born from the creative philosopher's walks in the ancient woods, where blood and soil mix. It was developed then by the philosophers' new relationship with the twentieth-century power, which makes him not a scientist by vocation but a committed Hegemony clerk, an enrolled militant, a revolutionary by profession who is not satisfied with the old task of understanding reality, leaving that to the scientists' calculating reason, but wants to gloriously transform the world following the good fairy tales of ideology.

This counterplan had a glorious but transient triumph in Russia and Italy in the Twenties, during the Thirties in Germany, and in China during the Fifties: well, Russia *and* Italy *and* Germany *and* China, in forms not too different from each other, whose common model was the concentrated sociality of the concentration camp. After that the Counterplan has unfortunately lost between '45 and 89 about all of its action field. For the Philosopher King almost nothing was left but the old role of agit prop, of unheard prophets, of time and manners regretter, of moralists in permanent, effective service, of painful or angry protesters against the factuality of the facts, of gatherers of uneven and unequal Multitudes, albeit the Hegemony clerks work for unifying them by the hatred of the Plan of Capital and maybe of the Elders of Zion who perhaps produce it. This is now the most noble task of philosophy. Belongs to this heroically unlikely strategy, though usually adopted in comfortable university departments, the denial of reality (but, if there were one, of its conceivability and, if it were thinkable, of its communicability). With a gesture opposite but symmetrical to Protagoras' one, who apparently liked the democratic assemblies and saw at the gates the enemy Plato (or the Spartans, or Philippon, no matter), for fifty years on the aspiring Philosopher Kings declare acerbic the grapes too high for them; and therefore not existing the Kingdom that does not let them to play their role of consultant and advisor.

2.

Of this *weakness strategy* it is also part the discovery of the other ghost, the female but grim *Techne* (whose optimistic alter ego, revered long before its public demonization by contemporary philosophy, has been celebrated for

centuries under the again mainly name of Progress). It is a Fate, a Greek Parca, indifferent to the will of humans, who relentlessly follows her logic: she cuts the threads of individual and collective lives, knotting them at her pleasure, making with them multicolored fabrics that draw senseless shapes, indecipherable texts: no one can make anything about it. She has no purpose but her growth, so she is literally the Author of her own texture or text, but in this growing process overwhelms everything, every plan and counterplan, leaving us humans to play only the role of impotent microbes or worms used as yarns to be woven. She is not at our service, but we are in hers; it is not matter on which we operate, but we stuff for her actions.

24

If the regimes of counterplan sooner or later lose their supreme guides, their Führer, their Dear Leaders, their presidents, their Ayatollah (even if they did not let themselves be guided by the buzzing of the Philosophers dethroning them if necessary also from the honors of university Rector); if God, or rather only “a” god in lower case and indeterminate article, who is told to be the only possible escape to the darkness of our time, refuses to turn up; if existence is no longer prefigured in view of its end as it should, lacking indeed any goal; if the revolution that should makes progresses everywhere in the world mysteriously withdraws or becomes clerical and Islamic, compelling the poor Hegemony officials to the bitter-sweet sacrifice of praising those who – if they only could – would kill them right away, for homophobia or anti-communism or pure dislike for the chatterer class, which not only MPs but even more chattering intellectuals... if, in short, everything goes a bit wrong, albeit with the consolation and Shadenfreude a few economical crisis from time to time... the guilt cannot come out of an error in the very exact calculations – better, not in calculations that are the elected instruments of the Plan, but in the very precise and sublime thoughts of candidates Philosopher King who know the laws of history. Since all that is real is rational, or rather as the being has a story that only it knows and language and thought are its home and, in short, the whole cannot end badly and be incomprehensible, this should be held unshakably firm: history is destiny, and therefore its appointments are quite fixed, although they may be delayed. Calculations or, better, thoughts are perfect, and, if reality does not match with them, it is its fault, not theirs.

But the error can not be for sure neither the result of the particular will of individuals who failed to make themselves crowd or class and to recognize the leadership of the Party or the value of the race and then the leadership of the would-be Philosopher King leading them to become what they are: we know that the class’ consciousness or racial awareness should never be identified

with the vulgar, realistic, sociological belonging to such sublime entities, are not an empirical fact, but occur only as effects of the Guide of the Party and of its mobilization ability and thus from the Officials of Hegemony work – even if they can go wrong, if corrupted or misled by the circumstances.

Therefore, one should analyze the circumstances, what in reality or in the lack of reality lets go wrong projects, cultivated with so much passion and so much blood in the last century, of similar but opposite Utopias or Reich or Soviet republics: here we find our phantom of Techne. The fault of the very little utopian and even less planned direction towards which the world went after the end of atheistic religions of the twentieth century, must be of a dark force, that is overbearing, irrationally rational, (i.e. rational in its means, and precisely in its being pure means, but irrational because it lacks reasons), insensitive to the purposes, in fact pure mean, deaf to the arguments and the prophecies of the Philosopher Kings, impossible to drive because not aiming anywhere: the identical opposite of Progress, that hovers where it wants, as the Spirit does, unintelligible, that just do not want anything except himself – as the Spirit does. It is our phantom in its female mask of Techne. It is subtle and unnoticed: while Philosophers look around for gestures of the Zeitgeist, very difficult to read because as everyone knows it does not affirm nor deny anything but only hints – Techne produces dishwashers and birth control pills, reversing the age-old relationship between the sexes; televisions and mobile phones, going beyond the sense of place; cars that change the space and medicines that delay the anticipation of death and low cost flights and supermarkets and scooters that defiantly ignore the laws of the Class, Race and the Spirit, which would certainly be true if only this horrible invasion of tools due to the equally horrible profit and designed by calculating thought, had not shaken the crystal-clear landscape of Necessity.

Let's say that: how *incredibly convenient* is this peculiar position of Techne for those who invented it – though it is rather difficult to reconcile with the concrete history of technology itself. Just open a handbook in this field to see how many wastes, swings, misunderstood inventions, what's the prevalence of economic or political power over mere expansion of the productive forces. But these details are good only for historians and social scientists, absolutely negligible for Hegemony officials looking for the Being (and power) or for Philosopher Kings willing to fall into the pits in order not to look how the soil of history is made.

Actually, this thought makes it possible to justify every atrocity or stupidity or inhumanity blaming them on the implacable illogical logic of Techne

walking forward (pro-gredi), that equally tramples men and vineyards – not anyone’s fault. What is the difference, from the so abysmal height of the ideological point of view of an excellent hegemony officer, among a death camp and the mechanization of agriculture? Or among electrification and the dictatorship of the proletariat? So convenient opinion, especially if one has sung without repentance the beauty of reeducation and Red Booklet, if one has been enrolled, and maybe on some level one has tried to advise, guide, to become the Philosopher King supervising hegemony in one of the parties which have established Lager or Gulag, technically planning the destruction of a class or of a unwelcome “race” – alas, without success, perhaps because the technique was leaning, blindly supporting societies ruled by Capital Plan and housewives looking for sex without generation or for fun without Culture.

26 The technique has given, the technique has taken off, dust we are and dust we will return, possibly gunpowder or oil which feeds the Great Techne Machine: please no one will complain or ask for responsibility. Woe to judge on the ontic level the ontological drama; woe to seek individual liability where the Being, the time, the Nothingness, the Technique and similar paper-mache giants are acting.

3.

One might ask, at this point, why pretending that Techne (or its father Progress) and Plan (and perhaps behind him the Protocol) are the same ghost. They seem to be opposites, the one is all will to power, the other without emotions and will, as automatic as an avalanche. The reason is essentially moral, has to do with their being Other, hidden entities that can not be controlled but only hated and feared. About them it is not possible any theory, there is no science, just intuition of plots and conspiracies. There is a project that would include them, they are beyond the control and even beyond the field of the human: they plot against our nature, make even ourselves post-human.

The objection that perhaps they doesn’t exist, that they are just gigantic excuses or alibis, can not be accepted by honest hegemony officials, albeit now almost unemployed. In reality they are ghosts, that is sensibly supersensible entities: therefore they do not fall within the scope of empirical sciences. The claim to verify their existence falls within the same discourses of technology or in the plans of the Plan and should certainly be rejected. Only contemporary philosophy, albeit weak and non-metaphysical, has eyes insightful and suspecting enough to perceive them.

Philosophy, indeed, does not want to be any more meta-physical in the sense of narrating the foundation of physical reality; it realized gradually after Hegel to be too weak to compete with the world descriptions of science, even if this is part of its offspring and have a lesser claim about reality as a whole. After trying to measure the sciences with the balance of the court under the pretext of polish its mirror; having being obliged to given up this project if only for the incompatibility of the two metaphors crossed, philosophy has reversed its telescope: instead of staring at the starry sky – from bottom up – it tried to look down from the top, but not for the moral law – certainly for lack of confidence in the “me” that had to contain it – but on the City. From meta-physics has tried to get metapolitics. No longer contemplating the world, it has worked to change it. Or rather, to fit for being with those who tried to change it with weapons. The keyword of this benevolent attitude of contemplation of the geometric power of liberating violence, be it the Algerian killing an European and so freeing himself and also the corpse, or the intimate truth and greatness of National Socialism (the encounter between global technology and ‘modern man, another time an epiphany of Techné) was the Commitment, i.e. the historical process of a people which meets its historical Destiny. The words explain clear mind of what it is: in Italian “impegno” has the same construction of the French or English “engagement”, involving a pledge given to someone, an enrollment that has an economic content; the same idea is incorporated in the English “commitment”, which alludes to a mission taken together with others, giving oneself to a company, similar to the feudal relationship of “comites” – counts – to the lord, who then become accounts or of the Italian “compagni”, camerades who eat the same bread.

Europeans ghosts have grown up in the last century swallowing copious amounts of blood and flesh burnt in the ovens, but in a different way. Plan ghost was fed mainly by its enemies, through its dialectical reversal in counterplan. Millions of human beings were imprisoned, deported, killed on suspicion of being servants of the Plan (Capital) and wasteful or dangerous for the counterplan, as variously active or potential bourgeois, not ideological, rich peasants, suspicious cosmopolitan, Class or Race Enemies. On the contrary Techne has made itself worker and fighter and has been worshiped since the first Steel Storms a century ago, to the Total Mobilization that followed, up to and Stakanov to Sputnik. As long as it seemed to push towards the regimentation of the masses and thus towards the reconstruction of a Gemeinschaft albeit under the pale light of Metropolis, it was greeted with joy in the little convenient albeit not so technical Biedermeier salons of the Hegemony offi-

cials, who have always adopted a middle-class furniture (and sexuality), just moderated by the use of hills vacations cabins or by speeches of proletarian or völkisch heroism. When the *Techne*, apart from guns and radio from which one could hear the Leaders and Duci, began to produce cars and televisions, it ceased to appear fated.

But at some point, be it a matter of economics (the Plan) or technique (*Techne*), the cruel power of ghosts softened in marketing and design, Revolution and assertiveness were reduced to communication, also the War became predominantly Terrorism that is not naked power, much less a “geometric” one, but rather its communication, the symbol of a possible collective insecurity. The great movements slowly dissolved, apart from the old religious corporations, which had always training systems and civil service antithetical to philosophy. All this should have prompted the Philosophers to remake the move of Aristotle after the failure of Plato in Syracuse: maybe to keep selling themselves as tutors for the powerful but on the basis of an entirely lucid empirical competence; preferring analysis to myths, classification to utopias, limit to vision. Dismissing the royal claims but also the most unpleasant and humble habit of party functionary. This happened exaggerated and often blindly, but only in part, in the environment that defined itself as “analytical”. Outside the laborious lawyer style of the clumsy Wittgenstein heirs, the prophets and their reverent children have continued to cultivate the old ghosts, even the ghosts of ghosts.

28

If the Plan was dissolved into anarchy and inability to control the markets, it was described to the former king in home exile as even more mysterious and dark; hence it needed to be countered with counterplans verbally inspired by ramshackle criticism of political nineteenth-century economy, or, at least, by anyone who rebels against the “state of things existing”. If the technique from standardizing mistress of the great masses, became road and shop window seduction, just one of the dimensions of marketing or “aestheticization of everyday life”, which is basically flattery or prostitution, as Plato says, in the same measure as the *nouvelle cuisine* or cosmetics mass or the visual rhetoric – it was viewed by critics as irresistible “cultural industry” and mass Kitsch, for which regret the good old socialist realism and the empty shop shelves. Human relations have appeared in the pale light of archeology molecular sheer power, the thought has thought himself only as deconstruction and negative – while maintaining the old habit of courting sympathy for tyrants and potential murderers of its authors.

This has happened particularly in the broad European philosophical theater, now tempered by a couple of decades with increasing degree of self-dep-

recating wise humor. In the small Italian vaudeville, confidence in ghosts was proportional to the self declared weakness. The more one wanted explicitly useless and empty the philosophical thought, the more one was inclined to see in the skies above Europe ancient ghosts and to buy them for good. The parable of a good share of the Italian philosophy in recent decades is all here, in this desperate and irresponsible masochistic credulity.

ON ETHICAL REVOLUTION IN PHILOSOPHY

By articulating their voices, first human beings exchanged words for the first time. The world of representation was then actually born. Hominid populations had previously devoted billions of years to build lithic tools. Such work had modified in the ages the peculiarities of our land, our vision, our brain circumvolutions, our general body posture and so on. In the collaborative action, what George Herbert Mead called “gesture conversation” started to consolidate and to enlarge. Giambattista Vico had already talked about the “body’s action” and an original native, social link expressing primitive passions such as astonishment, fierceness, imagination and fancy.

31

The speech is a self-reflected and self-referential sign made possible by the peculiarities of our voice. It echoes for everyone, even for who utters the sounds, who associates to it common replies. He can talk to himself, acquire a conscious knowledge of his action and learn to answer as the others do, becoming, really only now, the real member of all the beings the voice gives life to: being everybody being one of the whole. The utterances corresponding to our verbal gestures set up our first wealth and the first common treasure of mankind. Such patrimony won’t cease to increase any more organizing the world in objects and reflecting men’s conscious projects into human conscience. This patrimony, besides, is with us even now drawing representations of the world and forms of individual and collective self-consciousness.

However, since the origins of life, verbal speech was characterized by mingling with what we are used to call writing. Studying the forms of language in the abstract is linguists’ task; bringing the speech back to the substance of its

expression, to the objective situation evoking and communicating is philosophers' task. Since the origins, as Vico had perceived speech talks in our body and to the body that is to say is one thing with its emotions and expressions. The word is a whole with gesture and rhythm, it is a sort of dance and music (what the Greeks called *mousiké*). The interior representation deriving from it inspires new writings which already use the body as a support of graphic signs: tattooing, colouring the skin, ornaments, clothes and so on. Such writings of a body lengthening in another one outside the living body itself are the permanent secret of science and technique: nothing mysterious and opposite, as is often, on the contrary, misunderstood, to human beings' nature and to what is called spirit. The whole process of human knowledge is nothing but a work (the ideal prosecution of the time manufactures the hominid produced). Such work is the making of remains according to which living experience is articulated, translated, manipulated, generalized and transcended.

32

In this way writing means producing virtual effects: written stuff production, unlike voice, remains there as a possibility of infinite incarnations, and new contextualizations. Besides, as I supported in my book *L'Uomo, la macchina, l'automa* (2009) this is the deep reality of the automaton: what moves starting from ourselves. The automaton is, in this way, the entire process of human culture with its machines extending outside the living body: a walk, we might exemplify, which goes from papyrus to computer, from the book to what Charles Sanders Peirce called world-sheet. Their walk starts from the effects produced by writing infinite virtual realities which coincide with the living body projection (Husserl would say the *Leib*) we call human spirit: epic of a planetary civilization and of its history.

Understanding this process, getting rid of superstition and prejudice, coincides with the political and social destiny of democracy, not by chance triggered by that particular kind of writing represented by the alphabetic writing created by the Greeks and the Romans. Thanks to the alphabet, knowledge does not belong to professional closed ranks and to aristocratic minorities any more, but ideally and potentially to everybody. Anybody can become aware of his own personified biography and translate it into the autobiography of the collective story, origin and destiny. The issue is however complicated and needs specific closer examinations.

Treasuring the studies of the so-called "oralists", particularly those by Eric Havelock, it is possible to show the deep differences between cultures which do not know the use of a language capable of reproducing words and the so-called "historical" cultures originated by the spreading of the Greek alphabet. It is not

a question of simple transcription of the spoken language into the written one, as it is commonly thought. The silent voice that appears in the alphabetical writing is not the same voice of the so-called oral communication (Derrida too remained blind on this matter).

Oral culture is obviously unaware of being such, as orality is a notion which is the simple reflection of the practice of alphabetical writing applied backwards. The so-called oral voice speaks in a context always affected by life practice, which includes – as we have already said – gestures, the body etc. Here knowledge is preserved by means of the living memory and the formulary of mottos, proverbs, epic poetry etc.

In such cultures no critical subject is to be found: truth coincides with tradition, therefore it is true what it has always been believed and because it has been believed. Things are reversed in the world the alphabetical practice has opened. The repeated antiquity of a belief is not necessarily evidence of its truthfulness. The very notion of truthfulness and subject are deeply modified, the same happens to the idea of justice: just is not anymore what the aristocratic tradition, interpreter of the Gods' words, has always stated; just is giving every-one his due, with the evident emerging of "every-one", i.e. of the subject democratically meant.

The alphabetic practice, we've said, does not translate spoken language into written language. It works isolating and distracting the voice from its 'pathic' experience therefore depriving it from its global sensible body and coating it with the conventional body of letters. The alphabet neither imitates nor reproduces the voice into something visible, how could it? The alphabet classifies because of its simultaneous act of stripping and conventional covering. This way, the letter takes the meaning of a sign that applies to every and each "a" or "b" etc. This way, mental abstraction was born, making possible the experience of the reader, his capability of analytic control over the enunciation and original forming of new enunciations. This way the western subject was born, endowed with critical mind and universalistic vocation. The universality of the written truth is the same truth of the logic, i.e. of the *logos as it is written* and of its ultra-sensible voice, and this is the foundation of the rising of European science: grand cultural project that is nevertheless prone to misunderstand the meaning of its social work, taking its efficiency for an absolute truthfulness of things. Alphabetical culture does not become aware of the fact that producing universal, which is precisely its way of writing, is the consequence and the expression of a cultural peculiarity and not the perfect embodiment of truth. Simultaneously, the same dual character of the alphabetical writing (prearranged signs to convey pure

meanings – what Plato called ideas) imposed the dualism of body and soul, matter and spirit, “*res cogitans*” and “*res extensa*” (“*mental reality*” and “*physical reality*”) in the Western world. This dualism still troubles not so much the very scientific practice born from the Galilean revolution – which was based on mathematical writing – as a widespread scientific mindset, incapable of getting rid of its Cartesian prejudices (see *Etica della Scrittura*, 1992).

My studies on the alphabetical practice have triggered a wider reflection on the very notion of practice. The “thought of practices” has permeated my mature research and is still permeating it. Its premises are certainly in Hegel and Marx’s notion of praxis, in pragmatist idea of habit and in the urgency with which Peirce pointed to practical consequences as mark of the truth, in Husserl’s idea of theoretical praxis, in Nietzsche’s perspectivism and in Wittgenstein and Foucault’s discursive and linguistic practices.

34 What characterizes the subject is its being always caught by the concrete exertion of a practice of life and abilities. In general terms: being able to do, being able to say and to write. Long before being the subject of a practice, the subject is subject to a practice, actually to a web of numerous practices that define and also condition him.

The symphonic orchestra conductor, for instance, is totally involved in his own conducting practice: the music execution is, so to say, the “transcendental” aim of his action. Such action couldn’t be exercised without the “empirical” concurrence of the motor skills of his adult body; likewise, the orchestra players could neither exercise nor conceive themselves without the practices which forged their instruments and governed their long studies, or without the writing practices and the paper mills which made their scores possible and by them the birth of a written and polyphonic music thought. Equally without the practices which produced chairs, microphones, the sound proof hall, the orchestra, the audience seats, the organizing and economic steps that regulate the life of public concerts and so on.

Talking about the sense of a music composition or of an execution regularly forgetting what mentioned above is a very idealistic abstraction. At the same time there is always a guiding practice which, thanks to its intentional interest centre, subdues other practices to its own “material” condition in a movable net of senses and occasions. One thing is the director’s practice, another one is the music critic’s and one more is that of the company organizing seasonal concerts and so on.

The figure of the subject is always internal to the becoming of practices. In fact a subject itself does not exist outside every practice of life and knowledge. The same must be said about the figure of the object: there are no things in

themselves outside practices. The reflection on this issue aims at setting the subject free from its objectivistic ideologies (back again into fashion today as “new realism” or so). These ideologies are mostly triggered, as Wittgenstein knew, by the superstition of speech: the continuous referring to the world by the verbal exercise makes us believe that behind the words there are corresponding things making us blind to the complex, ancient work of interpreting verbalization interwoven with given practices of life and knowledge. As a matter of fact, things walk into words and words walk into actions producing things in an inseparable and every time located weaving. The dogmatic claims of metaphysics and science appear, on the contrary, totally unaware when they think to be able to make clear experience on the basis of questions like; “What is matter?” “What is psyche?” “What is life?” “What is man?” and so on. Actually the things we are talking about and we deal with are always results and internal functions of defined practices always in motion. Inside the running concreteness of practice, lies the peculiar objectiveness of the thing, measured by the same criteria of the practice under dispute. Extracting such things from the concrete exercise of their practice and making them assert even outside the practice itself, as things in themselves, leads to the dogmatic paradoxes which trouble established knowledge. There is no “real being” generally speaking, unless as just particular object of a generalizing practice: for instance the logical definition, the constitution of lemma in a dictionary and similar things.

The thought of practices aims at freeing the subject from its objectivistic illusion, urging him to a genealogical work of reflection on his own constitution. Such always seeing oneself as subject “to” his own practices and not simply “of” his own practices, this repeated living the threshold of one’s own constitution of sense does not restore the dominion of the subject on praxis, also because the genealogical work inspired by the thought of practices is, in its turn a particular praxis defined by its concrete clothing and by its assumptions (first of all by the tradition of philosophy and its conceptual language); it is not a sort of super-practice which would be able to tell the truth about the other practices. The thought of practices is an exercise whose nature is basically *ethic* it is a way to be aware, in theory and knowledge, that theory is a praxis too, a concrete interpreting the world starting from the assumptions of our own history or our own origin: assumptions once more interpreted according to the concrete demands of disengagement.

I call disengagement the occurring of the threshold one belongs to, the way the figure of threshold happens; this way this figure shows an active representation of the subject.

All that brings to the need of a great ethical transformation of philosophy and in broader terms of knowledge. Obviously, this transformation radicalizes the Socratic demand whence the philosophical tradition was born. It is not only the case of thoughtfully urging the established types of knowledge through that *ironic* conscience figure which “knows to know nothing”, it is still before and more deeply the case to make us aware of what our “know to know nothing” is. In other terms, it is a matter of laying the genealogic issue down, that teaches the acting subject (who asks the way Socrates asked, or doubts the way Descartes doubted) is already always inscribed in a complex web of obscure or forgotten types of knowledge, handled in an atmosphere of pre-thoughtful and unaware obviousness; types of knowledge, however, essential and in their way decisive to make possible the practice of asking, doubting, defining etc. Types of knowledge that silently move inside life and speech practices, causing that *common sense* Vico already considered the foundation of human experience and Husserl tried to thoroughly and systematically investigate with his theme of *doxa* and of pre-categorical.

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Ethical demand puts philosophic practice to the furthestmost boundary of its current possibilities. As already Nietzsche said, it must decide for an ‘experiment’ with truth: what is the sense of philosophic propositions? In what sense would they be true or truer than others? True of what, for whom and considering what? These questions and their hypothetical answers are primarily crucial; they are therefore unavoidable for any further knowledge – scientific, religious, historic, psychological etc. Crucial whether one knows that or not.

Ethical demand at the same time criticizes both the easy and superficial relativism of ‘weak’ hermeneutics (there is not a truth, there are as many truths as there are interpretations) and dogmatic call for a ‘strong’ truth (the figure of the metaphysical being, revelation and religious tradition, scientific naturalism). The issue of truth has no solution if it is not suitably recognized the structural difference between exercising interpretative practices (which suffer from a coessential metamorphic movement) and the disengagement of their event. In such an indivisible relationship, the experience of truth acts in two directions: on the one hand it is individualized in accordance with the *figures* of its practices of interpretation and transcription. In the other hand, nevertheless, it is an uninterrupted encounter with its absolute destiny, i.e. with the being’s undeclinable occurring to the world of the living and operating subject. In the first sense the figures of truth coincide with their structurally being mistaken about their occurring event (which they would like to fix once for all); in the second sense this being mistaken is the same experience of the occurring of

truth, of its being constantly case of threshold and metamorphous precipice.

This dual writing of truth can be exemplified with the image of the world-sheet (see *Teoria e pratica del foglio-mondo*, 1997). The figure that stands out on the white of the paper is either held up by its backdrop or vanishing in it as transitional and fortuitous feature. The world-sheet both exemplifies the always open possibility of world representation and its boundless and incessant unfallibility. The world is either the event of its representation on the sheet, or its always laying at the brink of it and beyond it. In fact white and figure, event and meaning are not opposing things or facts, but the intrinsic interweaving of absolute and relative, of eternity and time, of truth and mistake.

These joined relationships show boundless distance and congruity between the truth of the different types of knowledge and the truth of life. Any shape of knowledge, as each specifying of thought (philosophic, scientific, religious, mythic, revealing etc.) is a *matter of transcribing* the meeting of world into those prosthesis that flowing voiced words are.

Representations which become virtual effects in the extensions to the prosthesis of writing and so on. All these transcriptions of writings and knowledge proceed ahead precipitating in their destiny of figures of the living threshold. Figures which are yet at a distance that can't be filled from the provenance of their own event; at a distance and mistaken in respect to the same world which is life eternal transit. In their way figures represent the indeclinable transit of eternal life, transcribed in the circle of knowledge (see *Transito Verità. Figure dell'enciclopedia filosofica*, 2012). This does not mean human knowledge is inadequate or insufficient. Who claims to draw coincidence of knowledge and matter, even though in an infinite walk, consider them in such way. Once drawn such supposed coincidence would be, in reality, the deletion itself and the cancellation of every "experience of truth". Knowledge receives the transit of eternal life in the only way it can and must do it: dissipating in the end in its own comprehension. Such dissipating is the creative work of death whose inscrutable selection and choice create, effectively, signs and occasions for the future, i.e. renovating transits of life.

We have to take into account the political task of the ethical revolution brought in philosophy by the thought of practices. A task which cannot proceed stating universal principles, inalienable rights and so on; this route, covered with obstinacy, brings to nothing concrete. It paves the way to mere rhetorical formulations and leaves, in reality, the field to prejudice and violence. The ethical revolution imposes not to appeal to principles (stated by whom? and according to what?) but to practical consequences. It does not mean, as

they insist on supporting, to impose the dialogue between cultures, beliefs, traditions and so on. Dialogue is a practice and like every practice is not innocent and pure at all. It has its premises, its preconditioned and imposed rules. Of course dialogue is to be preferred to recourse to strength, but only if it is really accompanied by listening. Listening too cannot be imposed to whom does not understand it. What can be done is showing our “own” listening and exhibiting at the same time the capacity which characterizes us for our “critical” culture, to show us in our exercise of autobiography, or genealogy: a genealogy capable of exhibiting consciously our limits and our peculiarities. Exhibiting oneself in an exercise of truth, precisely absorbed in an experiment with “our own” truth, can suggest desire of imitation by other cultures. In such way we exhibit ourselves, according to the beautiful image by Plato, as mimes of truth; we exhibit ourselves, meanwhile, as the only beings capable of so much courage and generous radicalism. If so, in the end, it will be only good and therefore shareable consequences that will derive to move any other culture towards an ethic of listening, constructional and peaceful collaboration.

THE PERCEPTION AND JUDGMENT OF FLAVOR SOME EXAMPLARY CASES AND SOME APORIAS *

ελαττωσι [...] εινε¹.

Plotino, *Enn.*, IV, 3, xviii, 4-5

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Il faut se prêter à autrui et ne se donner qu'à soi-même².

M. de Montaigne, *Essais*, L.III, C.X

An einen Lichtfreund

Willst du nicht Aug' und Sinn ermatten,
Lauf' auch der Sonne nach im Schatten!³

F.Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*
("Scherz, List und Rache", n.11)

Presented here are some reflections on the issue of gustatory judgments. Several questions will be addressed in the present paper: are these judgments something unique in their genre, or can the process of meaning-making which forms the basis of these judgments – which we will examine shortly - be analo-

1 * Many thanks to Flavia Gasperetti for her help in this translation. »The need of deliberation goes with the less self-sufficing intelligence; craftsmen faced by a difficulty stop to consider; where there is no problem their art works on by its own forthright power«.

2 »A man should lend himself to others, and only give himself to himself«.

3 »To a Friend of Light. If you want to spare your eyes and your mind, / follow the sun from the shadow behind«.

gous to the way other sensorial judgments, particularly visual and auditory, but also to a lesser degree olfactory and tactile, are formed? And would this include even those judgments that, being concerned with the perceived 'states of affairs,' might involve something akin to the feeling by a form of life? In short, what kind of truth - if there is one - underpins these sensorial judgments, and gustatory judgments in particular⁴?

The literature that has examined so far the formation of gustatory judgments, though certainly not extensive, has isolated at least two properties which make them somewhat unique, compared to all other forms of sensorial judgments: the first is the reliability of gustatory judgments in the individual's subjective certainty⁵; the second property is the weak and undefined value of these judgments from a cognitive/intellectual perspective and their being, as it has been argued, essentially unadorned or devoid of language⁶. To put it succinctly, on the one hand their perceptual immediacy and on the other, their inability to develop into 'accomplished' forms of judgment, as in the case of other more intersubjectively reliable forms, such as those associated with (and/or depending upon) sight, hearing, olfaction and touch which, according to Condillac, are able to make us certain of the world's exteriority⁷.

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4 Before we move forward into the subject of this paper concerning the specificity of gustatory judgments, it seems appropriate to clarify the relevance of the term 'judgment' that here occurs several times, both in reference to gustatory judgments and to other forms of sensorial judgments. We say, therefore, that we are using the word 'judgment' with no reference to the *moral* connotations that have often been attributed to it. It is therefore used not in *evaluative* terms (where we always find lurking a more or less implied *generalization* of predication), but to describe an act of *subjective discrimination* - something akin to 'reflective judgment' as outlined in Kant's third *Critique*, as far as its 'subjective' nature is concerned - but without the cumbersome 'natural finality' which is, in the Kantian perspective, an integral part of his argument.

5 Aside from all conjectures and suppositions of both phylogenetic and ontogenetic order, the case of *the wild boy of Aveyron* is exemplary. His 'linguistic education' was unsuccessful and it had to surrender to the *evidence* of the facts. Even though Victor was incapable of uttering in a loud voice any judgments concerning flavors and smells that were proposed to him in the course of these educational experiment, he was nevertheless capable of recognizing and appreciating them (cf. H.Lane, *The Wild Boy of Aveyron*, Harvard, Harvard Univ. Press, 1976 (ed.it., Padova, Piccin 1989, p.44, 66).

6 This refers to the meticulous observations of A. Leroi--Gourhan in *Le geste et la parole*, 2 vols., Paris, A. Michel 1965 (ed.it. Torino, Einaudi, 1977, II, pp.341-43), which I have discussed in "Del problematico rapporto tra forma e funzione, a partire dal Gusto", in A.Martone, Ed., *Sensorialità, Sensibilità, Linguaggio. A partire dai 'sensi minori'* (28-29 maggio 2012, Napoli), in print.

7 Cf. E.B. de Condillac, *Traité des sensations* [1754], Paris, A.Fayard 1984.

Even within this frame, mentioned here very succinctly but exhaustively, we advance the following hypothesis: the basis of gustatory judgments could rest on its status as a belief, as perceived both by the issuer of said judgment and by those who accept it and, therefore, on the credibility of the issuer, i.e. the expertise possessed by the person/s issuing the judgment. Expertise that is believed to be such, regardless of the reasons that create and nurture said belief.

We shall map out, therefore, the modalization of six different kinds of gustatory judgment⁸, regardless of the credibility they enjoy (or not enjoy) among a particular audience. Secondly, we shall consider the issue of credibility, wherever applicable. Finally, we shall try to consider, moving from their credibility, whether such judgments can extend to, or affect, judgments of a different kind, such as other sensorial judgments or judgments that concern 'states of affairs', and the feeling by a form of life. Lastly, we will not lose sight of the issue of truth, assuming there is one, raised by these kind of judgments, and of gustatory judgments in particular. In conclusion, we will take our leave presenting a small number of instances that exemplify, but in a non precisely focused way, the introjective/ingestive practice of flavor.

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Here, therefore, are the six Tables of modality:

TABLES OF MODALITY OF TASTE/FLAVOR

- a.1 Tom tastes x and finding it too spicy (says) he does not like it
- a.2 Eva tastes x and finding it to be not spicy enough (says) she does not like it
- a.3 Mike tastes x and finding it too salty (says) he does not like it
- a.4 Mary tastes x and finding it to be not salty enough (says) she does not like it

- b.1 Tom tastes y (which could be x, but he does not recognize it as x) and finding it very (or not enough) spicy (says) he likes it

8 We refer here to modalization as it, according to Greimas, specifies to the very abstract level the *competence* of the subject, a competence that articulates itself in the forms of *vouloir*, *devoir*, *pouvoir* and *savoir* of which the latter, in these Tables, is the most important and is assumed to be, if possible, of the *same level* among the subjects in question. As it is pointed out in this regard: «[...] the importance of the modal values of the *vouloir*, *devoir*, *pouvoir* and *savoir*, is evidenced by the fact that these four modalities constitute a group of predicates that are common to many languages» (F.Marsciani–A.Zinna, *Elementi di semiotica generativa*, Bologna, Esculapio 1991, p. 95; our transl.).

- b.2 Eva tastes y (which could be x, but he does not recognize it as x) and finding it very (or not enough) spicy (says) she likes it
- b.3 Mike tastes y (which could be x, but he does not recognize it as x) and finding it very (or not enough) salty (says) he likes it
- b.4 Mary tastes y (which could be x, but he does not recognize it as x) and finding it very (or not enough) salty (says) she likes it

- c.1 Tom tastes x (which he now recognizes as x) and finding it very spicy (or not enough) (says) he likes it
- c.2 Eva tastes x (which he now recognizes as x) and finding it very spicy (or not enough) (says) she likes it
- c.3 Mike tastes x (which he now recognizes as x) and finding it very salty (or not enough) (says) he likes it
- c.4 Mary tastes x (which he now recognizes as x) and finding it very salty (or not enough) (says) she likes it

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- d.1 Tom tastes y and finding it too spicy (says) he likes it
 - d.2 Eva tastes y and finding it not spicy enough (says) she likes it
 - d.3 Mike tastes y and finding it too salty (says) he likes it
 - d.4 Mary tastes y and finding it not salty enough (says) she likes it

 - e.1 Tom tastes y and finding it very spicy (or not enough) (says) he does not like it
 - e.2 Eva tastes y and finding it very spicy (or not enough) (says) she does not like it
 - e.3 Mike tastes y and finding it very salty (or not enough) (says) he does not like it
 - E.4 Mary tastes y and finding it very salty (or not enough) (says) she does not like it

 - f.1 Tom tastes x and finding it very spicy (or not enough) (says) he does not like it
 - f.2 Eva tastes x and finding it very spicy (or not enough) (says) she does not like it
 - f.3 Mike tastes x and finding it very salty (or not enough) (says) he does not like it
 - f.4 Mary tastes x and finding it very salty (or not enough) (says) she does not like it
-

These Tables may only convey the oddity, i.e. the volatility or volubility of this kind of judgments, and therefore of human feeling in general; indeed what happens in the a, d., c. and f scenarios, in particular, is a case in point. An oddity which, evidently, can appear strange, even harmful, being intractable, in our everyday practices, in our more or less socially constructed life. We shall investigate the aporetic nature of such oddity later.

There could, of course, be other possible combinations of perceived taste/flavor of a dish (whether it is in fact the same dish or a different one), on the one hand, and judgments issued by Tom, Eva, Mike and Mary, intersubjectively or not, on the other- and these judgments could be shared by the issuers or, as exemplified in the Tables, not.

What these Tables clearly illustrate, despite all possible intersubjective agreements or disagreements (and intrasubjective agreements or disagreements) is that a flavor, which cannot obviously be separated from smell, or the appearance of the dish, from its tactile consistency, and even from its history – is converted into a judgment. Such judgment can form the basis for the evaluation of similar (or different) tastes/flavors, or, and if forgotten, can contradict or deny the ones previously issued in different, similar or even in the same circumstances: a taste/flavor is thus converted into a judgment, a judgment that is not in any way comparable to intellectual knowledge, but that is, and still remains, a feeling.

And nevertheless, when Tom tastes x and finding it too spicy says he does not like it (a.1), what kind of 'knowledge' does his judgment demonstrate? What cognition does this knowledge possess about another knowledge, stating an obvious and repeated association between tasting and knowing⁹? This

9 In Italian the association is between *sapore* (here *taste*) e *sapere* (here *knowledge*) – an association based on a peculiar assonance in Italian, does not find correspondence, and is therefore lost, in English. This association has been visited several times among others by R.Barthes who, in a memorable text, also very well known, said: «I undertake therefore to let myself be borne on by the force of any living life: forgetfulness [...]. Now comes perhaps the age of another experience: that of *unlearning*, of yielding to the unforeseeable change that forgetting imposes on the sedimentation of the knowledges, cultures and beliefs we have traversed. This experience has, I believe, an illustrious and outdated name, which I shall venture to appropriate here, without inhibition, at the very crossroads of its etymology: *sapientia* – no power, a little knowledge, a little wisdom and as much flavor as possible». (R. Barthes, *Leçon inaugurale de la chaire de sémiologie littéraire du Collège de France, prononcée le 7 janvier 1977*, Paris, Seuil, 1978; *Inaugural Lecture*, in *A Barthes*

knowledge, the former, knows about itself and must, therefore, leave a trace, insofar as it knows that what it has felt (tasted) is certainly connected to a judgment of some kind. It is irrelevant whether such a judgment is shared or not by other forms of knowledge that come from the same sensorial field, nor if its judgment is contradicted or denied by another judgment completely dissimilar, as in the case where such a judgment is issued by another person or where it is issued by he who had, perhaps in other circumstances, judged the same flavor in a different way.

In order to make explicit the material basis of this knowledge, based on taste, it is necessary to consider that this sensorial knowledge is simply a knowledge amongst others, but it is also important to remark that it is primarily an endocorporeal knowledge, which sets it apart from all other sensorial forms of knowledge. After all, the constitutive matter of such knowledge, namely the flavor, reveals itself only this way, by penetrating and pervading the areas that are located half way between the senses and sensibility, structuring our memory, imagination, fantasy and linguistic interaction.¹⁰

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A gustatory judgment, therefore, because of its inextricable link with flavor, has to be, before being 'subjective', but also after that (*de gustibus non est*

Reader, ed. S. Sontag, New York, Hill and Wang 1982, p.478). With such an 'experience' that assigns to knowledge a conscious and perhaps more refined sensorial explanation (particularly when it comes to flavor), and states the *sapientia of unlearning* entrusting to *flavor* the role of leading the game (tasting is not knowing as it is *unlearning to knowing!*), the present paper is in full agreement. It is less in agreement whenever such an 'experience' is interpreted as a 'knowledge' born and raised elsewhere and considered able to legislate, as well as on everything else, also on the relation, uniquely and irreducibly gustatory, of an *endocorporeal knowledge*. with the 'metaphysical' projection of such knowledge over the endocorporeal one, on the contrary, this paper does not intend to establish any complicity.

10 It is not easy to draw a dividing line between these two 'semantic fields', that of *imagination* and that of *fantasy*, which are the product of historically layered cultural notions. For an examination, both conceptual and terminological of these fields in the Modern age, cf. M.Fattori-M.LBianchi, *Phantasia-Imaginatio*, Roma, Ediz. dell'Ateneo 1988. Limiting ourselves here to a simple etymological analysis, it should not be to overlook that *imagination* is connected to the 'imago' and thus is concerned with the act of *seeing*. *Fantasy* on the other hand is anchored to *phainestai* or the act of *showing*, which is what happens with all the hypotheses, assumptions, inferences that such an act makes possible, and do not concern just 'seing' but also *feeling* in general. Also, we must not forget that G. Vico, led perhaps by similar inferences when it comes to conceptualise instances of physiological feeling, does not speak, as is well known, of imagination but of *fantasy* which is, even more than *wit* and *memory* which also share with fantasy an 'embodied' knowledge, the 'mythopoeic' faculty *par excellence*.

disputandum - as the old saying, one of the most pernicious and misleading adages of our long-lived Modernity, has it) more than anything, certain of itself and does not care to agree with the (inter)subjectivity of Tom, Eva, Mike or Mary, nor with its own subjectivity – so what follows?

This certainty of itself, before and after Hegel, who considered it to be the litmus test of an ascent of Subjectivity towards more ambitious goals, such as Objectivity and the Absoluteness of the Spirit, has remained blurred as if bewildered by its own purely subjective nature, as if the ‘immediacy’ of such certainty were not worthy of attention, but rather vulnerable to suspicion and distrust towards a knowledge so poor and devoid of...absolute-ness. We shall not dwell on this ‘symptom’ or ‘syndrome’ of suspicion, of this suspicion, even though its immediacy, its innocence, would be worth further reflection.

Having said that, could we have here, in a gustatory judgment, the template of all forms of judgment? If a gustatory judgment (a judgment which is related to flavor) reveals, on the one hand, the ‘necessary’ certainty of itself and, the other, all its ‘contingent’ groundlessness, based as it is only on such certainty, what is, then, the nature of all other sensorial judgments?

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When I state that a particular thing is pleasurable/unpleasant to my sense of smell, beautiful/ugly to the sight, smooth/rough to the touch, melodic/cacophonous to the ears, or light/heavy or easily/dangerous for my form of life, and, for this reason alone I like it (or I do not like it),¹¹ am I doing anything different from establishing a simple connection between a judgment and a sensorial perception?

It has been said before, and it will be repeated now: the knowledge derived from a gustatory judgment finds its material basis in flavor, an entirely endocorporeal matter. The value of this judgment, because of its specificity, is not translatable, does not have a ‘literal’ translation in other sensorial judgments, and this could be because the material basis of these other judgments,

11 This does not mean, obviously, that the opposite is not also true, at least *ceteris paribus*, and that this thing I smell, see, touch, listen, interact with, is not also fragrant/stinky, beautiful/ugly, smooth/rough, melodic/cacophonous, light/heavy or easy/dangerous (to my form of life) *just and only because I like it* (or *not like it*) bringing into play once again something that is very similar to the *association of a judgment to a sense*.

their matter of the expression,¹² is different: olfaction, sight, hearing, touch, or the acceptance or rejection by a form of life do not possess the same penetration capacity and pervasiveness of a gustatory judgment. Nevertheless, the difference between these sensorial judgments, this ‘impossible’ intersemiotic translation,¹³ does not efface the common quality they all share: they are all connected to a sensorial perception and/or depend on it.

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- 12 In the sense of *Prolegomena to a theory of language* [1943] by L. Hjelmslev (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press 1963), where he states: «The terms *expression plane* and *content plane* and, for that matter, *expression* and *content* are chosen in conformity with established notions and are quite arbitrary. Their functional definition provides no justification for calling one, and not the other, of these entities *expression*, or one, and not the other, *content*. They are defined only by their mutual solidarity, and neither of them can be identified otherwise. They are each defined only oppositively and relatively, as mutually opposed functives of one and the same function» (p.60). Each one of these planes (*expression plane* and *content plane*) is in turn articulated into: *expression-form*, *expression-substance* and *expression-purport* (in the case of expression) and in: *content-form*, *content-substance*, and *content-purport* (when it comes to content).
- 13 The existence of an *intersemiotic translation* or ‘transmutation’, together with both *intra-linguistic* and *inter-linguistic*, was introduced, as it is well known, by R. Jakobson (“On linguistic Aspects of Translation” [1959], ed.it. in *Saggi di linguistica generale*, Milano, Feltrinelli 1966, pp.56-64) who did not, however, discuss it as a specific subject. It has only recently become the subject of an in dept examination (N.Dusi-S.Nergaard, Eds., “Sulla traduzione intersemiotica”, in *Versus. Quaderni di studi semiotici*, 2000, 85-86-87). Bearing in mind Jakobson’s distinction, which makes intersemiotic translation «an interpretation of verbal signs by means of non-verbal sign systems», it is worth remarking on how here ‘verbal signs’ are assumed to have *primary role*, considered as the only ones susceptible of ‘transmutation’ by the non-verbal signs, assumed therefore as signs of the semiotic system *par excellence*. This ‘supremacy’, albeit involuntarily or unconsciously established by Jakobson, of ‘linguistic’ or ‘verbal’ signs has led to a theoretical neglect of those semiotic systems which are to be considered *linguistic* nonetheless, even if they are *not verbal*, like sign-languages – in respect to which the translation process (or ‘interpretation’ as it is called by Jakobson) is accomplished not only by converting a system of linguistic (‘verbal’) signs but also from a system of *linguistic but non-vocal signs* into linguistic and vocal signs. This is also true of those translation acts concernend with expressing sensorial perceptions, such as flavor and taste, through a specifically linguistic system (vocal or non-vocal as in the case of Signs languages), converting them into linguistic signs (vocal or not-vocal), and thus ‘transmuting’ (or *translating?*) the sensorial experience in question. Putting aside the issue of the ‘supremacy’ of the linguistic (‘verbal’) system (as the *vocal* linguistic system was called after Jakobson) – which has been elected, in homage to the structuralist tradition, by many as the one true *scientific* system, the most complete and accomplished semiotic system – well, putting aside this kind of methodological *a priori*, it is possible to seriously consider the questions concerning a sensorial system such as taste, both in itself and in all matters relating to its ‘transmutation’ (or *translation?*) into linguistic system *tout court* (whether vocal or signed).

And what about the truth? Does such a judgment ('this is true/false/fake') have any links with the senses? If I state that something is true/false/fake, which of my senses, if any, will be involved in this statement?

If I stop to consider any of the judgments listed in the Tables mentioned above, eg. "Tom tastes x and tasting it too spicy (says) he does not like it" (a.1), there are two possibilities: either Tom is silent on what he has just felt, so nothing happens intersubjectively (although for him what he has just felt remains something he has experienced nonetheless); or else Tom, after tasting x and finding it too spicy, opens his mouth and says he does not like it. In this case, Tom is implicitly assuring that what he is saying is true, that it is not false nor fake (he could be lying, of course, but even if this were the case, Tom is nonetheless expecting that his statement will be taken as true). Tom is, therefore, implicitly claiming or expecting to be believed. Whether he is lying or not, he demands or expects his pronouncement to be taken at face value.

And so, where truth is concerned, whenever we are considering the truth of a judgment, is there any other possible way to proceed aside from taking someone's word for it? And if this is the case, are we doing anything different from establishing a link between a judgment and a sensorial perception?¹⁴

And if Tom, or anyone else, were to declare that he believes that the gustatory judgment he has heard, issued by Eva, Mike or Mary, is true, whatever the reasons attributed to Eva, Mike, or Mary, is he doing anything different from simply taking their word? Is Tom doing anything different from the establishing a link between a judgment and a sensorial perception?

14 F.Nietzsche, perhaps more than others, has repeatedly stated that this was just the case, and that 'the truth' was nothing more than the result of an «unconscious disguise of physiological needs»: « Every philosophy which puts peace higher than war, every ethic with a negative grasp of the idea of happiness, every metaphysic and physic that knows a finale, an ultimate condition of any kind whatever, every predominating, aesthetic or religious longing for an aside, a beyond, an outside, an above all these permit one to ask whether sickness has not been the motive which inspired the philosopher. The unconscious disguising of physiological requirements under the cloak of the objective, the ideal, the purely spiritual, is carried on to an alarming extent, and I have often enough asked myself, whether on the whole philosophy hitherto has not generally been merely an interpretation of the body, and a misunderstanding of the body. [...] in all philosophising it has not hitherto been a question of 'truth' at all, but of something else, namely, of health, future, growth, power, life» (F.Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* [1882], Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press 2001, pp.5-6).

The truth game is a game of mirrors, where he who declares that *p* is refracted by them *ad infinitum* until someone interposes himself in this game, and interrupting it, takes responsibility for this judgement, shoulders the burden and interrupts that infinite game of 'reflections'. But he who, like Tom "tastes *x* and tasting it too spicy (says) he does not like it" expects his word to be taken at face value, without second thoughts or retractions or denials. In the same way, anyone who interposes himself in this game, expects his word to be taken at face value, plus, by having interrupted the infinite game of mirroring judgements, he has performed an act of testimony¹⁵.

The game of truth comes up against an unsolvable aporia or, at least, one that cannot be solved by using the yardstick of the observations made so far: if Tom claims or expects his word to be believed, this is also true of Eva, Mike,

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15 It would be interesting, would it not lead us to stray from the present topic, to introduce here a thorough meditation on a particular perspective, running through our cultural tradition, that has posited the existence of a natural form of intelligence, as opposed to the rational - an intelligence that relies exclusively on 'reason' or 'reflection' and is entrusted with the duty and the honor of deciding precisely about the 'truth' of this or that proposition, of this or that statement, of this or that judgement. As we have seen, the Plotinian quotation placed here in *exergue* is, on the contrary, expressive of the naturalness of intelligence. The permanence of this tradition is still very noticeable in G. Vico, according to which «*homo non intelligendo fit omnia*». This lack of reflection («not intelligendo») in turn, is linked to the notion of common sense which is: «un giudizio senz'alcuna riflessione, comunemente sentito da tutto un ordine, da tutto un popolo, da tutta una nazione, o da tutto il genere umano» (*Principj di una scienza nuova d'intorno alla comune natura delle nazioni*, cpv. 142; 342). The notion that 'intelligence' is determined in some measure by sensorial perceptions, rather than relying entirely on 'logic', is clearly present also in Nietzsche, and especially in *The Gay Science*. In this text, he observes how «The course of logical thought and reasoning in our modern brain corresponds to a process and struggle of impulses, which singly and in themselves are all very illogical and unjust; we experience usually only the result of the struggle so rapidly and secretly does this primitive mechanism now operate in us» (*Ibid.*, pp.111-12). To bring this perusal of Nietzschean ideas on natural intelligence to an end, see also «I fear that the animals see man as a being like them who in a most dangerous manner has lost his animal common sense - as the insane animal, the laughing animal, the weeping animal, the miserable animal» (*Ibid.*, p.145), and then: «They are disagreeable to me, those men in whom every natural inclination forthwith becomes a disease, something disfiguring, or even disgraceful. They have seduced us to the opinion that the inclinations and impulses of men are evil; they are the cause of our great injustice to our own nature, and to all nature! There are enough of men who may yield to their impulses gracefully and carelessly: but they do not do so, for fear of that imaginary 'evil thing' in nature! That is the cause why there is so little nobility to be found among men: the indication of which will always be to have no fear of oneself, to expect nothing disgraceful from oneself, to fly without hesitation wherever we are impelled [...]» (*Ibid.*, p.167).

or Mary, as they too can make the same claim and have the same expectation. And if Tom has experienced that particular taste too often, and this has made him too confident or too familiar with it, then he won't be willing to re-evaluate his knowledge, the knowledge of that flavor, and to believe whatever Eva, Mike, Mary consider to be the truth about that same flavor.

On the one hand, therefore, the subjective certainty, exposed (and represented) in all its 'necessity' by the immediate, invincible and inescapable knowledge of a flavor; and, the other, its 'contingent' but arrogant entrenchment on a form of knowledge that is intangible, invisible, inaudible: if the subjective certainty exposes itself, then it also exposes, by the same token, its own defensive entrenchment, which can be made porous and penetrable only by relinquishing its own self-exposure, which would be equal to going back on its his own word – a double bind in which the gustatory judgment seems to expose, more than any other sensorial judgment, the one who issues it. As a judgment of taste, more than any other, is based on the word given and received – on the credibility of the giver and the testimony of the receiver.

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There you have it: the connection between a judgment and a sense, that of taste in this case, is an incontrovertible act of testimony, the most indisputable of all, as such sensorial certainty (a certainty at the same time unique and unrepeatable) cannot be re-evaluated, withdrawn or denied: it is certain in as much as it is unfounded, and its incontrovertibility will be guaranteed by nothing else but the given, and received, word.

And then: this association between a judgment and a sense, that of taste in this case, does it not serve as the template for all forms of judgment? If a gustatory judgment (a judgment related to taste and depending on it) shows, on the one hand, the 'necessary' certainty of itself and, on the other, all its 'contingent' groundlessness (as it is based only on such certainty) does it not follow that perhaps any judgment displays the same certainty and the same groundlessness?

To conclude on this point, if Tom, after having found *x* too spicy, says he does not like it, what evidence could ever be invoked to support this judgment and to substantiate it outside of his own word? And even if he could provide any evidence drawing from his consummate skill or expertise, what would be the worth of such arguing if not merely to support and substantiate his own

word? Whether we share or not Tom's expertise, wouldn't his judgment ultimately still be a case of his word against mine? Sure, I could let myself be guided by his expertise but, regardless, on what else could his expertise be based on except...itself?

In short, there can be such things as competence, authority, performativity to a judgment that is able to show credibility and testimony, but only so far as other competences, other authorities, other performativities do not come to undermine it. At this point, it might be instructive to look back to those earlier examples contained in the Tables, those that assumed as stated in the Note, an equal level of knowledge – as long as such a hypothesis is credible – amongst all the subjects. It is, after all, such knowledge that exposes the aporetic condition of such plural and subjective certainties: insisting on keeping one's word determines, sooner or later, a gradual erosion of its credibility. Likewise, maintaining that credibility will involve, sooner or later, the attenuation or the progressive fraying of the word given.

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What will follow will be argued within the framework we have defined so far. Nothing that follows will have to be considered as external to the constitutive aporeticity that each tasting act entails, and this will mean moving away from an interpretation that is not quite reconciled and satisfied with itself, in spite of the many scenarios, sugar-coated and 'ideological', within which the world of flavor and taste, and therefore of food, is often represented and communicated nowadays. What follows, therefore, is only intended as an offering of additional themes to be placed within the framework we have so far put... on the table.

What has been discussed so far has concerned the circuit of flavor, rather than the circuit of the word¹⁶, that short-circuit created by 'inside' and 'outside': introjecting and ingesting flavors (food) vs. expelling and externalizing words.¹⁷ Viewed in this light, the good rule of etiquette don't speak

16 The reference to this 'circuit of the word' is in the *Cours de linguistique générale* by F.de Saussure.

17 The L. Marin's book, *La parole mangée* (Paris, Klincksieck 1986, pp.47-49, 125-40) presents interesting scenarios of such a short-circuit; other very relevant and effective places of these scenarios are in D. Cecchi *Cibo, corpo, narrazione* (Milano, Mimesis 2010, pp.109-26). On these questions I refer also to my essay "Lingua del Gusto e Gusto della Lingua", in *Estetica. Studi e ricerche*, 2011 (2), pp.203-23.

while you eat (or drink), would be much better understood if it also stated don't eat (or drink) while you speak, which indeed remains an implicit rule, unspoken.

To put it clearly: the circuit, the channel that passes through the mouth can only do one thing at a time: either eat or speak, either introject/ingest (flavors) or expel/externalize (words) - if the circuit works in both directions simultaneously, then it becomes a short-circuit: the air, the breath that is so useful both to utter words and to the savor food, chokes, languishes or runs out.

That is why, perhaps, nothing is more profitable than eating alone or, if in company, at least in silence - an advice that is not offered only as a way to avoid the aforementioned aporias but just to avoid, more than anything else, that embarrassing short-circuit between the introjection/ingestion on the one hand and the expulsion/externalization on the other. Which raises the following question: how did it come to be that the pleasures of the table have become so closely associated with convivial socialization?

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There could be two possible answers: (a) conviviality of the table is seen as the opposite of the heavy and pompous dialectic of everyday life, as it possesses the levity of conversation that serves no purpose (the Kantian 'disinterested interest'), while the opposite is true of the dialectic of everyday life (which also often serves no purpose, but away from the table this dialectic is cloaked with heaviness). This creates a mood, at the table, that favors the alternation between inside and outside: here we converse without purpose and, usually, in turn, when the mouth is empty and, vice versa, we eat when we have nothing to say; (b) through conviviality of the table, the array of flavors on offer (and their reception) takes on the role of creating a mood where conflicts of opinion can be resolved. This obviously would hint at the existence of a purpose, though possibly hidden, diverted or deflected, which denies or deviates from the role of conviviality as imagined in (a).

Eating alone or as if alone, in silence, allows us to assimilate food to prayer, an act which, as performed by any believer (the diner, after all, also believes in what he is feeling and wants or expects to be believed), is done softly, quietly, or just in silence: this kind of prayer, however, does not necessarily (or even by chance) entail neither the recognition of a teleological design that has led

to this moment,¹⁸ nor the expression of gratitude to those who made this meal happen. And if one really feels drawn to express gratitude then one is likely to express it towards the certainty of that particular feeling and the uniqueness of the moment, when one is alone with oneself, or as if alone, in silence.

And here we see a force, an almost ‘illocutionary’ force that flavor possesses (through the act of introjection and ingestion), unlike sexual love, which is based on a misleading notion of reciprocity: introjection and ingestion of flavor, convivial and shared as they may be, remain an intimate, endocorporeal, intransitive affair, a prayer that does not require, or at least not necessarily (unlike sexual love) sharing, completion, supplement or complement: the flavor alone, embodies this sharing, this completion, this complement/supplement.

Flavor, which is alone and for this reason, as we have said, suffices to itself, is the song that elevates the animus towards unknown paths – paths of experience, knowledge and cognition,¹⁹ that no act of sexual love could equalize, as

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18 On the field of teleology is played an important match, from an epistemological point of view: the relationship between *form* and *function* of an organism, an organ or sensorial perception (respectively, in this case, that of the mouth, the tongue and gustatory perception). On these issues, which go far beyond the suggestions outlined above, see: A.Martone, “Del problematico rapporto tra forma e funzione, a partire dal Gusto”, cit.

19 This ‘song’ can be appreciated, and this is in fact what happens, in spite of the reluctance displayed by some ‘beautiful souls’, with full awareness of the existence of ‘additives’ (both in the sense of the *complement* and *supplement*), indeed it can be appreciated all the more intensely *because* of such awareness. The fact that food, and therefore flavor, undergoes a process of ‘manipulation’ that starts well before cooking, is not a discovery of Modernity, and those who state the contrary speak either in bad faith or out of ignorance. See on this subject: M.Mariani-S.Testa, *Gli additivi alimentari. Indagine su conservanti, edulcoranti, coloranti, addensanti e aromatizzanti*, Macro Ed., Cesena 2011. Here we find examined with a great degree of analytical accuracy many of the basic manipulation processes that have always been essential ‘completion’ of flavor. The following instructive passage might appear off-topic, as it concerns sight, but it can be seen to apply to taste as well: «Colouring agents are designed to satisfy the eye, improving the appearance of the product and hence its palatability. These are substances against which we often hurl accusations of damaging our health, but then it so happens that, on the shelf, artificially coloured orange juice has a greater commercial success than those less striking in appearance, for the same reason we are convinced that everything that tastes like mint, for some reason, must be green and that is why we find the green colouring used even in toothpaste» (*Ibid.*, p.9; our transl.). This passage is instructive because it shows our attachment to some *habits*, to a product’s certain *communication style*, or to some stereotypes. What is important about such ‘communication’ is not so much the illusion of ‘immaculate virginity’ (according to which a product desirable in as much as it is presented as ‘natural’) but the notion of a product’s potential *harmfulness* or *dangerousness*. And it is this aspect to which the

sexual love is doomed to tiring repetition, triggered as it is by the repetitive nature of the 'charm' exercised by each seduction.

Flavor too seduces, of course, but only insofar that I am willing to listen to its siren song, to let myself be pervaded by it, and from that moment on it offers no resistance: it bows before me, but only insofar as I make space for it, I welcome its invitation in my animus, and the full measure of this act is the result of our encounter: is it, or is it not, for me? The outcome of this encounter will always depend solely on my (never its own) agency, for better or for worse, in joy as in sorrow, in pleasure as in disgust.

In sexual love, on the other hand, the real measure of the seduction taking place remains, at the best of times, unknown, uncertain, always repetitive. In the worst case scenario, the measure of this encounter appears asymmetrical, unbalanced, leaving behind in its wake the monumentality of one subject – too self-satisfied and smug, too full and too sated to be believable – and the destruction of another, left bewildered and incredulous, delivered to his/her own impotence.

The consumption of the body, that no act of sexual love is entirely able to avoid or safeguard, has nothing to do with the introjection/ingestion of flavor: the former being full of imaginary reciprocity while the latter is the locus of an intimate intransitivity.²⁰

Authors appropriately draw attention. Knowing that the flavor of a tomato or ginger as been manipulated (a fact which should always be communicated more effectively rather than being kept secret) does not in any way alter the 'palatability' of that flavor and, in as far as it is detectable, contributes to make it such.

20 M.Ferreri's movie »La grande bouffe« (1973) still constitutes an exemplary illustration of these issues. Aside from its condemning and derisive view of the excesses of a society seen as in a state of decadence, this masterful movie illustrates in fact the following aporia: In what conditions could someone enjoy both sex and food until he dropped? In short, is it possible to *die of enjoyment* or *even enjoy death*? And if this movie is still 'current', it is certainly not so much for the first reason but for the second one, as it is revealing, perhaps today more than yesterday, of how much more than sex, (which none of the characters in the movie is able to 'resist' though they often lose interest in it) it is food, its introjection/ingestion, the main instrument of each character's death. The act of introjection/ingestion subverts the notion of 'masculinity' that these characters seek to embody, as they have been, to an extent, *playing seriously* with a 'mask' (acting as 'real men'). But this mask reveals itself to be just that, a cover-up, and it is their 'femmininity' (as defined, once again, from an exclusively male perspective) that is represented in the movie. This 'femmininity' lies in the desire to be penetrated...by food and its flavors. And it will be the female character,

Passing through the ‘narrow door’ that is the elementary nature of flavor – the elementary nature of these ‘cases’ which reveal how flavor is essentially an intransitive practice, rhythmic, ritual, religious – would require, of course, getting rid of many cumbersome ‘philosophemes’, such as the most cumbersome of all, the existence of a ‘qualitative’ difference between animality and humanity. A matter that, on the one hand, is not dwelled upon by those who theorize an essential superiority of man, as they consider it too patently obvious. Whilst, and on the other hand, the more critical voices, the ‘deconstructionists’, to say nothing of ‘animal rights’ theorists, have inspired a spirited and lively debate in which, nevertheless, the wisest could not help admitting that by looking at the matter from an exclusively theoretical and critical perspective, the question of this alleged and intrusive difference would remain as it is, unchanged and undisturbed, in short, just a ‘philosopheme’ among others.

54 Without delving further into the issue of this constitutive difference, as this would force us to confront it again and again as a theoretical and critical question, we will content ourselves here to suggest the opportunity of putting aside all the aforementioned philosophemes, not just to repeat the late or outdated Feuerbach motto - *der Mann ist was er ißt* - which is itself also a philosopheme among others, but because in the ‘cases’ we have considered here we only intended to suggest a practice – and not, therefore, another demonstrative or deconstructive theory. A practice which, being essential, elementary, and perhaps even rudimentary, does not attempt to draw boundaries and barriers between worlds or even to subvert their scope, but moves from the observation that the perception of flavor is and remains, in all possible ways, a constitutive and ineliminable feature.

And if after all it is still considered necessary to question the specificity of sensorial judgments – whether they are or not a purely human affair, exclusive of and excluding other species - that door, however ‘narrow’, will always remain open and available to be crossed, with the aid of always new philosophemes.

Andrea, the one to restore a notion of the ‘feminine’ untainted by this ‘masculinity’ vision, as the one who proves able to ‘resist’ that penetration, for no other reason that this ‘masculine’ perspective does not concern her in anyway.

DIE NATUR DES GEISTES

1 – Die Technowissenschaften des Geistes

55

Ich möchte mit einer empirischen, ja vielleicht sogar trivialen Bemerkung anfangen, die aber meines Erachtens sehr gut veranschaulicht, wie sehr und in welche Richtung sich die Darstellung der Technik in der letzten Zeit verändert hat. Um die Mitte des 20. Jahrhunderts, als die kritische Reflexion über die Technik in der europäischen Philosophie ihren Höhepunkt fand, waren die *Naturwissenschaften* das epistemische Korrelat der technischen Entwicklung, während die *Geisteswissenschaften* kaum eine Rolle spielten. Das erkennt man schon an den problematischsten Erfindungen, die in der kritischen Literatur immer wieder zitiert wurden – etwa die Atombombe oder die ersten Weltraumflüge. Selbst bei diesen Erfindungen geht es offensichtlich darum, die Kräfte der äußeren Natur zu kontrollieren. Deshalb konnten sie damals noch als unheimliche Geschöpfe des alten Traumes der Moderne gelten, die Natur der Vernunft – und somit dem Menschen – zu unterwerfen. Natürlich sorgte man sich um die Auswirkungen der Technik auf das *menschliche* Leben – und das taten ja die Philosophen und Geisteswissenschaftler in erster Linie. Diese Ängste rührten jedoch gerade daher, dass sich die neuen Wissensformen – zumindest auf der Ebene der Erkenntnis – auf *alles andere* als den Menschen richteten. Dadurch drohte der Mensch, in eine fremde Dimension katapultiert zu werden, „in deren Zeitraum – so schreibt Heidegger – allein die modernen Maschinen und Apparaturen sein können, was sie sind“ (Heidegger 1959, S. 165). Dies hatte zur Folge, dass die kritische Debatte über die Technisierung

des Lebens außerhalb jener Wissensbereiche stattfand, in denen die Technisierungsprozesse de facto erfolgten. Schließlich konnte man von der Atomphysik nicht verlangen, dass sie über eine Theorie des Menschen verfügte, oder von der Raumfahrttechnik, dass sie die Auswirkungen ihrer Anwendung auf den gesellschaftlichen Bereich in Frage stellte. Heideggers Wort „die Wissenschaft denkt nicht“ gehört beispielsweise in diesem Zusammenhang: Dadurch wird kurz und klar ausgedrückt, dass die neuen Wissenschaften zwar als Gegenstand einer philosophischen Besinnung gelten können, auf keinen Fall aber als gleichberechtigte Gesprächspartner.

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Will man heute diese Debatte wiederaufnehmen, könnte man von der Beobachtung ausgehen, dass sich schon in jenen Jahren die ersten Anzeichen eines ganz anderen technologischen Paradigmas bemerkbar machten, das sich im Lauf der nachfolgenden Jahrzehnte entfalten sollte, bis zur Entstehung dessen, was ich als neue *Technowissenschaften des Geistes* bezeichnen möchte. Damit sind jene Disziplinen und Forschungsbereiche gemeint, die zwar einerseits die enge, für die Naturwissenschaften typische Verbindung von Wissenschaft und Technik aufrechterhalten, ja noch verstärken, sich jedoch zugleich mit einem Gegenstand beschäftigen, der früher den Geisteswissenschaften vorbehalten war, ja sogar deren eigentlichen Forschungsgegenstand darstellte: *die spezifischen Fähigkeiten und Möglichkeiten, die den Menschen als Menschen ausmachen*. Man braucht nur an Gehirnforschung, Genomik und Psychopharmakologie auf einer Seite, Künstliche Intelligenz und Kognitionswissenschaften auf der anderen Seite zu denken, um zu erkennen, dass eben diese Orientierung heute das Bild der Technik prägt, wobei es weniger um die Kontrolle der äußeren Natur geht, als vielmehr um die Steuerung, die Manipulation und die Optimierung der *menschlichen* Natur. Grob gesagt, sind wir also von den Technowissenschaften der *Natur* auf die Technowissenschaften des *Geistes* übergegangen und die erste Frage lautet: Wie ändern sich eigentlich der soziale, der politische und überhaupt der Lebenssinn der Technik im Zuge dieses Übergangs?

Zunächst einmal ändert dieser Paradigmenwechsel nichts an der tiefen inneren *Zweideutigkeit*, die schon Heidegger für den entscheidenden Grundzug der modernen Technik hielt und die er mit Hölderlins Versen erläuterte: „Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst / Das Rettende auch“. Diese Zweideutigkeit hat sich ja extrem zugespitzt, denn die neuen Forschungsrichtungen stellen zum ersten Mal die konkrete Möglichkeit dar, all die biologischen, kognitiven und kommunikativen Fähigkeiten des Menschen gleichermaßen in *potentielle Res-*

sourcen zu verwandeln, deren *optimalen* Einsatz die Technik quantifiziert, programmiert und jeweils den Erfordernissen des Marktes und der Flexibilität der Produktionsformen anpasst. Es ist vielleicht kein Zufall, dass der Ausdruck „menschliche Ressourcen“ in den letzten zwanzig Jahren so stark an Bedeutung gewonnen hat: Die neuen Technologien versprechen nämlich, die „menschlichen Ressourcen“ so lange zu erweitern, bis sie sich mit der menschlichen Existenz in ihrer Gesamtheit decken. Es wäre andererseits naiv, bloß auf die Ausbeutungs- und Entfremdungsaspekte der Technik hinzuweisen, ohne zugleich ihr Faszinationspotential zu erkennen. In der Tat wird zugleich dem Individuum die Perspektive eröffnet, *unbeschränkt* auf sich selbst zugreifen zu können und so seine eigene Identität völlig frei zu konstruieren und zu modifizieren. Man braucht nur an das Thema der Transsexualität oder an das jüngste Beispiel von Oscar Pistorius zu denken, dem körperlich behinderten Leichtathleten, der mit Hilfe von zwei Prothesen aus Titan sprintet, um sich die unerwartete Überschneidung zwischen den Interessen der großen wirtschaftlichen Konzernen einerseits und dem individuellen Freiheitswunsch andererseits zu vergegenwärtigen, die gerade für das kritische Denken unerwartet kam, da es bisher von einem Interessenkonflikt der beiden Pole ausgegangen war.

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Zweideutig bleibt also die Technik nach wie vor. Dabei hat sich kaum etwas verändert. Was sich aber meines Erachtens bei dieser Entwicklung wirklich ändert, ist die Tatsache, dass man sich heute als Philosoph nicht mehr drauf beschränken kann, über die Auswirkungen der neuen Wissensformen zu reflektieren, ohne sich zugleich mit den Theorien auseinanderzusetzen, die heute die Technisierung des Lebens bestimmen und die – wie wir gerade gesehen haben – das Grundthema und die Fragestellung der philosophischen Anthropologie weitläufig teilen. Dabei meine ich eine zwar *kritische* aber nicht bloß *polemische* Auseinandersetzung. Es mag nämlich schon sein, dass die Wissenschaft immer noch nicht denkt. Dass sie sich trotzdem mit spekulativen Fragen über die Natur des Geistes auseinandersetzt, kann aber nicht nur für die Wissenschaft selbst interessant sein, sondern auch für das Denken.

Das leuchtet umso mehr ein, wenn man bedenkt, dass sich alle wesentlichen Gebiete der Technowissenschaften des Geistes im Grunde auf ein gemeinsames Forschungsprogramm zurückführen lassen, das Dretske (1995) unter dem kurzen Stichwort „*Naturalizing the Mind*“ zusammengefasst hat. Dabei geht es offensichtlich in erster Linie darum, das Spezifische am Menschen und der menschlichen Vernunft „naturalistisch“ zu erforschen, d. h. so, dass die alte metaphysische Spaltung zwischen Natur und Geist endgültig überwunden

werden soll. In zweiter Linie wird aber gerade dieses Spezifisch-Menschliche mit dem Wort „*Mind*“ bezeichnet, das in der Regel das individuelle psychische System bezeichnet – und dieses System deckt sich in dieser naturalistischen Orientierung hypothetisch mit dem menschlichen Gehirn, wie man an der Formel *mind/brain* sieht, die in der wissenschaftlichen Literatur üblich geworden ist.

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Gegen den ersten Teil des Programms – ich meine: den Entwurf, die metaphysische Spaltung von Natur und Geist zu überwinden – kann die europäische Philosophie kaum etwas einwenden, denn der gleiche Entwurf wurde von den größten Denkern des vorigen Jahrhunderts geteilt. Die Schwierigkeiten konzentrieren sich eher auf den zweiten Teil des Programms, und zwar nicht so sehr wegen der Identifizierung von *Mind* und *Brain* und wegen des damit verbundenen *Mind-Body-Problem* (das eigentlich schon seit mindestens einhundert Jahren als Scheinproblem verharmlost wurde) sondern vielmehr wegen der im englischen Wort „Mind“ schon enthaltenen Reduktion des Geistes auf die individuelle Seele – eine Reduktion, die heute (vor allem in der amerikanischen Debatte) oft als selbstverständlich betrachtet wird, während sie in der europäischen Tradition der Moderne immer stark bestritten wurde, wie die bittere Kritik von Autoren wie Husserl und Frege an dem *Psychologismus* sehr einleuchtend verdeutlicht. Zwei verschiedene Momente sind also bei der Naturalisierung des Geistes zu unterscheiden: Erstens die Reduktion des Geistigen auf das Psychische, also auf die individuelle Seele, und zweitens die Identifizierung der Seele mit dem Gehirn. Hier wollen wir nur den *ersten* dieser zwei Momente in Frage stellen.

Worum geht es nun eigentlich in dieser einmal so wichtigen und heute fast vergessenen (oder vielleicht verdrängten) Unterscheidung von *Geist* und *Seele*? Wir finden diese Unterscheidung bereits in den antiken Quellen der modernen Geistesphilosophie, z. B. bei den Stoikern oder bei Paulus. Hier wird das Wort *psyché* – wie bei allen griechischen Autoren – nicht bloß dem Menschen angewandt, sondern allen Lebewesen. Insbesondere bei Paulus wird die enge Korrelation von allen psychischen Erlebnissen mit Körper und Trieb mehrmals betont. *Geist* dagegen offenbart sich *nur* in den Worten und den Taten der Menschen, und zwar gerade und nur wenn Sprache und Handeln die Korrelationskette Fleisch-Trieb-Seele überschreiten. Das geschieht zwar nur selten und in Ausnahme-Fällen. Meistens hat also das menschliche Verhalten an sich nichts „Geistiges“. Die *Möglichkeit* aber, vom Geist inspiriert und „begeistert“ zu sein, kennzeichnet den Menschen als solchen und insbesondere

die spezifisch menschlichen Fähigkeiten, von denen wir mit einer modernen Formulierung sagen können, dass sie gleichermaßen *Sinnträger* sind und zur Konstitution des *Sinnes* beitragen - also eben: Sprache und Handeln.

Auf diese antike Tradition zurückgreifend, hat die moderne antipsychologische Philosophie in Europa – und vor allem in Deutschland – mit dem Wort *Geist* tendenziell wohl nichts Innerliches, Individuelles oder Privates, sondern eine *unpersönliche* und *öffentliche* Dimension bezeichnet, die sich zwar in erster Linie in dem individuellen Verhalten der Menschen offenbart, aber eben in dem, was dieses Verhalten an *nicht*-Individuellem an sich hat. Mit den Worten von Gilbert Simondon (1989) zusammenfassend: Es geht hier darum, wie das *vor-individuelle* Potenzial des geistigen Lebens eine *trans-individuelle* Sinndimension eröffnet.

Eben in diesem Sinne erklärt Frege (1919) gegen den Psychologismus, dass Aufgabe der Logik nie und nimmer die Analyse der psychischen Prozesse sein kann, sondern eher die Erforschung des Geistes – und er stellt fest: „des Geistes und *nicht* der Geister“. Damit ist gemeint, dass etwa der Sinn des Satzes des Pythagoras - d. h. das, auf Grund dessen der Satz wahr oder falsch sein kann - gar nichts damit zu tun hat, was im Kopf des Pythagoras hat stattfinden können oder im Kopf von all denen, die jetzt noch den Satz wiederholen. Analog dazu hatte schon Kant argumentiert, dass der Sinn einer Handlung - wenn diese Handlung wirklich einem praktischen Gesetz gehorcht, wenn also nur deshalb so gehandelt wird, weil es *gerecht* ist, so zu handeln - dass dieser Sinn von Trieben und Wünschen und von allen psychischen Prozessen völlig unabhängig sein muss. Was also beide Beispiele zeigen sollen, ist, dass Worte und Taten der Menschen, sobald sie als *Sinneinheiten* betrachtet werden, eine Art *reflexive Verdoppelung des Subjektes* mit sich bringen, so dass an der Seite des empirischen Subjektes (das *in der Welt* spricht und handelt) ein transzendentes Subjekt auftritt, von dem Wittgenstein sagen würde, dass es „die Grenze der Welt“ markiert – und diese Reflexion soll wesentlich zur Sinnkonstitution gehören, also zu dem, was die Sprache und das Handeln des menschlichen Tieres spezifisch und ausschließlich kennzeichnet. Eben diese dem sinnstiftenden Subjekt nötige Verdoppelung äußert sich in der kategorischen Unterscheidung von *Geist* und *Seele*, die in der heutigen *Philosophy of Mind* dagegen völlig verloren geht.

Natürlich könnte man mit Recht auf die Gefahr hinweisen, dass ein solcher Ansatz gerade zu jener metaphysischen Spaltung führt, die den menschlichen Geist von der restlichen Natur trennen möchte. Eine Gefahr, die sich auf

politischer Ebene reproduzieren könnte, sobald das transzendente Subjekt etwa mit einem Volksgeist identifiziert würde, dem die einzelnen empirischen Subjekte unterworfen und geopfert werden. Ein solcher Einwand wäre völlig berechtigt, wie die Geschichte und der Untergang der modernen europäischen Kultur leider überdeutlich zeigen. Es ist aber nicht gesagt, dass eine im weitesten Sinne antipsychologische Auffassung des Geistes nicht auch einen besseren Ausgang haben könnte. Im Folgenden möchte ich ja die Hypothese testen, dass ein solcher Ansatz durchaus einer „naturalistischen“ (wenn gleich nicht reduktiv-naturalistischen) Erforschung der Natur des Geistes förderlich sein könnte. Wenn das stimmt, dann hätten wir eine alternative Forschungsrichtung, die mit dem *Neopsychologismus* konkurrieren könnte, der die heutige Technisierung des menschlichen Daseins bestimmt, und es wäre zu hoffen, dass der Vergleich der beiden Denkrichtungen auch ein neues Licht auf die Zweideutigkeit wirft, die der Technisierung nach wie vor anhaftet.

60 Nun, zwei Forschungsrichtungen zu vergleichen heißt, beide einer gemeinsamen Fragestellung gegenüberzustellen, die sie unterschiedlich zu lösen versuchen. In unserem Fall soll diese gemeinsame Fragestellung offensichtlich mit der anthropologischen Grundfrage nach *der Bestimmung des Menschen* zusammenhängen, also nach dem, was den Menschen als solchen kennzeichnet. Beim Vergleich wäre aber zu beachten, dass die Moderne diese Frage so gestellt hat, dass es von Anfang an vorausgesetzt wird, dass die *Freiheit* eben das ist, was den Menschen von allen anderen Lebewesen unterscheidet. Denn gerade aus dieser Unterscheidung zwischen der *Notwendigkeit* der Naturgesetze und der *Freiheit* des Geistes entsteht die metaphysische Spaltung, die es heute zu überwinden gilt. Die Natur des Geistes zu erforschen heißt also in erster Linie, die faktischen Tatsachen und empirischen Evidenzen anzuerkennen, die bis heute als Grundlage dafür galten, dass der Mensch – und *nur* der Mensch – im spezifischen Sinne *frei* ist; Zugleich aber diese Tatsachen so zu interpretieren, dass die spezifisch menschliche Dimension dadurch in keiner Weise von der restlichen Natur getrennt und dadurch *unbegreiflich* gemacht wird. Meines Erachtens stellen nun die Betrachtungen von Noam Chomsky über die *Kreativität der menschlichen Sprache* ein gutes Beispiel für einen solchen Versuch dar und bilden einen idealen Ausgangspunkt für unseren Vergleich. Deshalb werde ich zunächst zu veranschaulichen versuchen, wie die Frage nach der Kreativität der Sprache bei Chomsky grundsätzlich ein Versuch ist, den modernen Begriff der Freiheit von seiner metaphysischen Herkunft zu befreien. Dabei wird sich noch zeigen, dass gerade die neopsychologische Auffassung des Geistes in erster Linie dafür verantwortlich ist, dass dieser Ver-

such am Ende doch scheitern muss. Ganz am Schluss möchte ich dann noch kurz zu den Technowissenschaften des Geistes zurückkommen, um ihre innere Ambivalenz wieder zu hinterfragen.

2 – Von der Freiheit zur Kreativität – und zurück

Dass Chomskys Sprachtheorie zugleich ein Versuch ist, den modernen Freiheitsbegriff neu zu denken, lässt sich kaum bestreiten, denn in der *Cartesianischen Linguistik* (1966) greift er direkt auf die moderne Tradition zurück – von Descartes bis zu Humboldt –, um zu zeigen, dass sprachliche Kreativität immer schon als Hauptmerkmal der Freiheit galt, die die menschliche Natur kennzeichnet und den Menschen von allen anderen Lebewesen unterscheidet. Die moderne Auffassung von Freiheit wird aber bei Chomsky nicht bloß wiederholt sondern radikal *naturalistisch* uminterpretiert. Dabei ist zu beachten, dass diese naturalistische Interpretation bis heute als bahnbrechendes Vorbild für alle Versuche dient, innerhalb der Kognitionswissenschaften den Geist zu „naturalisieren“, obwohl sein Autor diesen Versuchen gegenüber meistens distanziert und misstrauisch blieb. Verwunderlich ist jedoch, dass bei all diesen späteren Versuchen – die mit den Technowissenschaften des Geistes direkt zusammenhängen – gerade das Thema der menschlichen Kreativität kaum weitergeführt wird und dass Chomskys tiefste und denkwürdigste Einsichten zu diesem Thema nicht wirklich bestritten sondern eher ignoriert und übergangen werden. Ich vermute, dass die Ursache für diese Verdrängung eben die neopsychologistische Auffassung vom Geist ist, die schon bei Chomsky vorhanden und mit der inneren Zweideutigkeit der heutigen Technowissenschaften eng verbunden ist.

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Chomskys Verfahren lässt sich *in zwei Schritten* zusammenfassen.

Der erste Schritt besteht darin, dass die allgemeine Frage nach der menschlichen Freiheit auf das viel engere Phänomen der sprachlichen Kreativität konzentriert wird, das, wie gesagt, schon bei Descartes als deren wichtigster Ausdruck galt. Dabei geht es nicht bloß um eine harmlose lexikalische Verschiebung von „Freiheit“ zur „Kreativität“. Man darf nämlich nicht vergessen, dass nach dem klassischen Ansatz der Moderne, wie er in der *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* sein Paradigma findet, Freiheit nur in striktem Gegensatz zur Natur überhaupt zu denken ist. Die Freiheit des Menschen musste deshalb jeder empirischen Forschung prinzipiell fremd und „völlig unbegreiflich“ erscheinen (Vgl. Kant, A 14). Der Begriff „Kreativität“ hingegen soll nun gerade

einen *empirischen* Tatbestand darstellen, der im sprachlichen Verhalten der Menschen objektiv feststellbar ist: es geht nämlich um die allgemeine menschliche Fähigkeit, auf einen äußeren Reiz mit unendlich vielen neuen und unterschiedlichen sprachlichen Äußerungen reagieren zu können, die nicht nur grammatikalisch korrekt, sondern auch sinnvoll und dem Kontext angepasst sind (*diversity; appropriateness; capacity to innovate*). Diese empirische Evidenz kann man (und *muss* man sogar) im Prinzip genauso zu erklären versuchen wie alle anderen empirischen Tatsachen. Das hat allerdings dazu geführt, dass gerade das Argument, das seinerzeit zur Spaltung von Natur- und Geisteswissenschaften geführt hatte – dass nämlich nur Menschen „frei“ bzw. *kreativ* sein können – nun zum Wegbereiter für den Naturalismus wird. Denn zugleich will Chomsky gegen den Behaviorismus (und im Grunde gegen die ganze Sprachwissenschaft des 20. Jahrhunderts) Descartes Behauptung wieder aufleben lassen, wonach Menschen offensichtlich wohl „angeregt“ aber nie *gezwungen* werden können, etwas Bestimmtes zu sagen. Das sprachliche Verhalten der Menschen ist in dem Sinne „frei“, dass es über alle möglichen, inneren und äußeren Reize hinausgeht und sich auf keine bestimmende Ursache zurückführen lässt. Unter dem Stichwort der Kreativität wird also das „transzendente Faktum“ der menschlichen Freiheit, wie Kant es damals festgelegt hatte, durch diesen ersten Schritt als empirische Tatsache uminterpretiert und so der wissenschaftlichen Untersuchung zugänglich gemacht.

Der zweite Schritt besteht darin, dass zwei Modelle oder Stufen der Kreativität unterschieden werden: Die Kreativität „im engeren Sinne des Wortes“ – die Kreativität der Dichter und der Ausnahmefälle, bei denen die Sprachregeln wirklich gebrochen und neu gestiftet werden; und eine allgemeine und gewöhnliche Kreativität, die als ein Grundelement der menschlichen Sprachfähigkeit anzusehen ist und höchstwahrscheinlich schon auf biologischer Ebene in der menschlichen Natur wurzelt. Deren Hauptmerkmal ist die allgemeine menschliche Fähigkeit, gemäß der Syntax der Sprache unendlich viele neue Sätze verstehen und erzeugen zu können. Während Ersteres ein so komplexes Phänomen ist, dass es einer wissenschaftlichen Annäherung kaum zugänglich zu sein scheint und deshalb wahrscheinlich noch lange eher ein Geheimnis als ein Problem bleiben wird, ist die gewöhnliche Kreativität ein derart wesentlicher Zug der menschlichen Sprachfähigkeit, dass jede ernstzunehmende Theorie der Sprache dazu gezwungen ist, sich damit auseinanderzusetzen und Hypothesen für eine mögliche Erklärung aufzuwerfen. An einer solchen Erklärung hat Chomsky in den folgenden vierzig Jahren weiter gearbeitet. Dabei haben

sich die Grundzüge seiner Theorie im Lauf der Zeit um einiges verändert. In den neuesten Schriften wird die gewöhnliche, allgemein-menschliche „*rule-governed*“ Kreativität zwar immer noch als Versuch dargestellt „von endlichen Mitteln einen unendlichen Gebrauch zu machen“, nach dem Spruch von Wilhelm von Humboldt. Der Kern dieser Fähigkeit wird jetzt aber in erster Linie auf die rekursive Anwendung der Operation „Merge“ zurückgeführt (zusammensetzen, verbinden: *logos*) – einer „geistigen“ Operation, die natürlich in dem *mind-brain* stattfinden soll.

Kreativität als psychischer Mechanismus soll also der menschlichen Sprachfähigkeit angehören, die selbst als unabhängiges und modularisiertes psychisches Vermögen gedacht wird, das mit dem kommunikativen Handeln der Menschen kaum – und in jedem Fall nur äußerlich – verbunden ist (vgl. Hauser, Chomsky, Fitch 2002). Dadurch aber, dass die Beziehung zwischen Sprache und Handeln auf diese Weise verschwindet, entstehen verständlicherweise Schwierigkeiten, denn Kreativität im üblichen Sinne des Wortes – genauso wie Freiheit – scheint das menschliche Handeln nicht minder zu kennzeichnen als die menschliche Sprache. Noch verstärkt wird die Trennung von Handeln und Sprache in Chomskys späteren Schriften dadurch, dass der Rahmen der wissenschaftlich analysierbaren Kreativität jetzt sehr viel enger erscheint. Er schließt nicht nur die außerordentlichen Leistungen von Dichtern und Genies aus, sondern auch die Kreativität „in der Verwendung der Sprache“, also das faktische kommunikative Verhalten der Menschen überhaupt. Dieses ganze Komplex soll jetzt insgesamt ein Geheimnis bleiben, weil das einzige der Wissenschaft zugängliche Problem die interne Arbeitsweise der syntaktischen Regeln ist. Da sich diese syntaktische Regeln im Grunde aber darauf beschränken, angeborene sprachliche Elemente nach angeborenen Prinzipien zusammensetzen, muss man sich fragen, inwieweit der Begriff „Kreativität“ hier noch zutreffend ist. Unter dieser Prämisse wird deutlich, warum die orthodoxe Kognitionswissenschaft dazu neigt, die Frage zu liquidieren. Hier gilt nämlich die vermeintliche Kreativität von Sprache und Handeln bloß als *Illusion*, denn es *gibt* – so wird argumentiert – prinzipielle Ursachen für das menschliche Verhalten, die sich allerdings auf Grund ihrer Komplexität wissenschaftlich nicht erforschen lassen. Die Frage hört auf diese Weise auf, ein Problem zu sein, und wird zum *Geheimnis*. Eben deshalb wurden die Vertreter dieser Denkrichtung, wie Chomsky selber oder Colin McGinn, in den letzten Jahren öfter als *New Mysterians* bezeichnet. Die Benennung klingt ja witzig, denn „New Mysterians“ war eigentlich in den Sechzigerjahren eine nicht sehr bekannte Garage Band. Sie ist aber treffend, denn

hier werden eben alle klassischen Grundfragen der alten Philosophie als *mysteries* vom Gebiet der sinnvollen Probleme ausgeschlossen. Und der Witz ist gerade, dass ein so konsequenter Naturalismus am Ende doch den Ansatz der alten Metaphysik wiederholt. Die traditionelle Spaltung von Natur- und Geisteswissenschaften wird nämlich *de facto* wiederhergestellt, mit einem einzigen Unterschied: Die Geisteswissenschaften werden nun deklassiert, indem man ihnen den einstigen „wissenschaftlichen“ Status abspricht und sie nunmehr als „Literatur“ betrachtet.

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Zum Schluss möchte ich ganz kurz wieder auf das empirische Gebiet zurückkommen, um zu zeigen, wie sehr die Frage nach der menschlichen Kreativität nicht nur die Theorien, sondern auch die Praxis der TW beeinflusst und insbesondere ihre Zweideutigkeit bestimmt hat. Bei den TW des Geistes hat die Frage nach der Kreativität in der Tat schon immer als Anreiz zur Innovation gedient, und war doch vielen zugleich auch eine Art Stachel im Fleische. In der künstlichen Intelligenz musste sich z. B. der Traum von einer denkenden Maschine von Anfang an dem Einwand stellen, eine Maschine sei unweigerlich durch ein „mechanisches“ (und das heißt ein dummes – weil eben *nicht-kreatives*) Verhalten gekennzeichnet. Der so genannte „Turing-Test“ war der Versuch, diese Frage und die darauf möglichen Antworten auf einer weniger abstrakten Ebene zu vergleichen. Und tatsächlich führte etwa zwanzig Jahre später eben dieser Traum von einer Maschine, die imstande wäre, „originelle Ideen zu haben“ (Rosenblatt 1959, S. 449), zu den ersten Entwürfen neuronaler Netze. Dieses Projekt rief einen Konflikt zwischen dem „symbolischen“ und dem „konnexionistischen“ Paradigma hervor, der das ganze 20. Jahrhundert hindurch ein Thema bleiben sollte. Der Konflikt zwischen den zwei Modellen hat heute seinen Reiz weitgehend verloren und die Forschung orientiert sich nun vielmehr an „gemischten“ Systemen, die die Vorteile beider Ansätze zu nutzen versuchen. Dennoch ist auch diese Synthese weit davon entfernt, ein „kreatives“ Handeln auch nur annähernd zu erzeugen.

Desgleichen waren die ersten Schritte der Psychopharmakologie eng mit der Absicht verbunden, die Grenze der menschlichen Kreativität zu erweitern, wie etwa die Erfindung und die Ausbreitung des LSD in den 60er Jahren zeigt. Sobald aber psychische *Bedingungen* zu bestimmenden *Ursachen* für kreatives Verhalten erklärt wurden, war damit der Weg frei für Kontrolle und Disziplinierung. Der Fall Ritalin veranschaulicht eben diese Zweideutigkeit, denn das Medikament wurde in den Neunzigerjahren hyperaktiven Kindern und Jugendlichen großzügig verschrieben, bis man anhand von Studien feststellte,

dass das gleiche Medikament unter Jugendlichen als Droge konsumiert wurde.

Im Grunde steckt die Ambivalenz schon in dem Begriff *Steuerungstechnik* – und das ist eben der ursprüngliche Sinn des Wortes *Kybernetik* (weshalb dieses Wort Heidegger in seinen letzten Jahren so sehr beeindruckt hatte). Das griechische Wort „kybernao“ (lat. *gubernare*) heisst nämlich etwas (z. B. ein Schiff) steuern, lenken und regieren, aber es wirft zugleich die Frage auf, wie so etwas wie *Selbst*-regierung und Selbstbestimmung – also: *Freiheit* – überhaupt möglich sei, für einzelne Individuen wie für politische Gemeinschaften. Wie sehr die *Regierung des Selbst* und die *Regierung der anderen* von der Antike bis heute ineinander verstrickt sind, war bekanntlich Hauptthema der letzten Vorlesungen von Michel Foucault (vgl. insbesondere Foucault 2008). Dort wird gerade vorgeführt wie die technischen Mittel, durch die sowohl individuelle wie politische Subjekte jeweils die Fähigkeit der Selbstbestimmung erwerben (und die sogar das *Selbst* dieser Selbstbestimmung überhaupt erst erzeugen), die gleichen technischen Mittel sind, die eine „Regierung“ als Kontrolle, als Disziplinierung, ja sogar als Züchtung der menschlichen Herde sichern sollen, in Platons Mythos des Hirtenkönigs wie in der heutigen Biopolitik. Foucault äußert sich eigentlich nicht direkt über die TW, die damals noch ihre ersten Schritte taten. Dass man sie aber als aktuellste Evolution einer Regierungstechnik mindestens *auch* bestimmen kann, lässt sich kaum bezweifeln. Chomsky und Foucault haben sich nur einmal getroffen, 1971 in Eindhoven. Themen des Gesprächs waren dabei die menschliche Natur und die politische Gerechtigkeit – und es ist anzumerken, dass sich die Frage nach der menschlichen Kreativität dabei als Angelpunkt und als gemeinsamer Nenner der beiden Themen herauskristallisierte. Denn gerade in diesem Punkt scheinen die zwei Seiten einer kybernetischen Steuerungstechnik – Regierung des Selbst und Regierung der anderen – die höchste Verstrickung und zugleich die höchste Spannung zu erreichen. Man könnte also mit Hölderlin und Heidegger sagen: Hier wachsen sowohl die Gefahr wie das Rettende.

Geht man davon aus, dass die psychischen Bedingungen die bestimmenden Ursachen der Kreativität sind, dann werden die Kontrolle dieser Ursachen und die Optimierung des Verhaltens automatisch zum natürlichen Zweck der Forschung genauso wie in den modernen Technowissenschaften der Natur. Postuliert man hingegen die Kreativität als Moment der Sinnstiftung, dann sieht die Sache gleich anders aus. Denn sinnstiftend werden die psychischen Leistungen der Menschen erst im Rahmen komplexer kommunikativer Prozessen, gesellschaftlicher Netze und institutionalisierter Erwartungen, und eben das war es, was die deutschen Philosophen mit „Geist“ meinten. Bei diesem Modell ist an-

zunehmen, dass die einzelnen Subjekte nur reflexiv das eigene „Selbst“ bestimmen können und dass die Reflexion wie eine Art Unschärfeprinzip gegen alle Versuche wirkt, den gesamten kreativen Prozess durch eine lineare Ursache-Wirkungskette zu erklären.

Um die Zweideutigkeit der heutigen Technik zu erhellen, wäre es meines Erachtens notwendig, den Vergleich zwischen den zwei Forschungsansätzen weiter zu führen, der hier nur grob skizziert wurde: „Naturalizing the Mind“ als neopsychologistisches Programm einerseits und „die Natur des Geistes“ als Focus einer philosophischen Kritik des Psychologismus andererseits. Diese Aufgabe obliegt gleichermaßen der Philosophie wie den neuen Wissenschaften. Es wäre wünschenswert, dass sie bei dieser Gelegenheit endlich lernten, einander zuzuhören.

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A NEW REALIST APPROACH TO HERMENEUTICS¹

The clash of intuitions

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Diego Marconi has very aptly described the dispute between realists and antirealists as a clash between two intuitions. The first, realist, intuition holds that there are things (for instance the fact that there are mountains more than 4,000 meters high on the Moon) that do not depend on our conceptual schemes. The second (which Marconi calls “hermeneutic”) holds rather than even the fact that there are mountains more than 4,000 meters high on the Moon is no independent of our conceptual schemes or even merely of the words we use (“Could we really say that there are mountains on the Moon if we did not have the concepts or the words “mountain”, “Moon” and so on?”). Marconi rightly observes that the hermeneutic intuition might also be called “Kantian”, and it from this point that I wish to set out in this talk, aiming first of all to show what is wrong with the hermeneutic intuition and why, for reasons I come to, I propose to call it “constructionist”, and in the second place to illustrate the place that the constructionist intuition has within a realist outlook, thus overcoming the clash between intuitions and settling a perpetual peace between realists and constructionists.

The argument underlying the constructionist intuition, namely the fact that “in some sense” (a turn of phrase that is very dear to constructionists) even the existence of mountains more than 4,000 meters high on the Moon depends on

¹ For further informations on New Realism see M. Ferraris, *Manifesto del nuovo realismo*, Rome, Laterza 2012, and <http://labont.it/rassegna-nuovo-realismo>

our conceptual schemes (or on our language), is of clearly Kantian inspiration, because it is an application of the principle that “Intuitions without concepts are blind”. This is the principle that leads constructionism to antirealism in three moves: 1. Transcendentalism: what there is (ontology) is determined by what we know (epistemology): “Intuitions without concepts are blind.” 2. Pragmatism: nothing transcends conceptual schemes, which are to be identified with our life practices: “There are no facts, but only interpretations.” 3. Postmodernism: these schemes are in turn determined by other schemes (traditions, texts, habits, customs) in an infinite regress: “There is nothing outside the text.”

It is worth considering what can have induced philosophers to take so risky (and troublesome) a path as constructionism. The hypothesis I offer is that, in line with the first move just mentioned, the whole thing began with a confusion of ontology and epistemology. For this reason, I have proposed to call the confusion in question “the transcendental fallacy”, in that it is at the heart of Kant’s transcendental turn which has informed much philosophy over the last two centuries. Starting here is thus not to take too long a run-up, though the fallacy in question has a prologue in Descartes.

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The transcendental fallacy

“It is a rule of prudence not to repose full trust in those who have betrayed us even on a single occasion”. Thus, in the opening page of the *Meditations*,² Descartes proposes to teach us not to trust the senses, those unworthy servants that, in his view, have misled us and that we would therefore do well to distrust systematically. Consistently with his starting point, Descartes maintains that certainty is not to be sought outside, in a world full of sensible errors, but within, in the *cogito*, the seat of clear and distinct ideas. This choice depends on the fact that, in general, Descartes demands too much, namely 100% certainty: “All science is a certain and evident cognition, and he who doubts of many things is no more learned than he who has never thought of them,” asserts the second of the *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*.³

2 R. Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641) trans. in vol. II of J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, D. Murdoch and A.J.P. Kenny *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* (3 vols): Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1985, 1984, 1991. I develop this point in “24 modi per dar torto a Cartesio” in *L'identità empirica* edited by I. Bianchi and U. Savardi, Angeli, Milan 2005, pp. 138–46.

3 R. Descartes, *Rules for the Direction of the Mind* (1628) trans. in vol. I of J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, D. Murdoch and A.J.P. Kenny *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* (3 vols): Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1985, 1984, 1991.

It is still to be argued that demanding so much is the right move, given that, in the place of certainty, what we get is an incurable doubt: if we require experience to meet the same standard as science, we will end up not being certain of anything. The proof of this is to be found in Hume, who became a skeptic, just like Descartes, considering that inductive arguments based on experience can never be 100% certain. And given that, for Hume, all knowledge comes from experience, the real abyss is not between 100% and 1% probability, but rather between 100% and 99%, it follows that all our knowledge is founded on slippery terrain that offers no guarantee of safety.

The reasoning that underlies the transcendental fallacy is thus:

- (1) the senses deceive (they are not 100% certain);
- (2) induction is uncertain (less than 100%)
- (3) science is more secure than experience;
- (4) therefore experience must be resolved into science (it must be founded on science or, in the worst case, be shown up by it as the “manifest image” and a snare).

Now, what is wrong with the fallacy? My hypothesis is that we have to do with a confused knot of elements, which don't have much to do with each other. In particular:

(1) the fact that I sometimes mistake a firefly for a lantern (occasional sensory error);

(2) the unjustified conclusion that, in that case, I ought systematically to doubt all my experiences, including that I have two hands (methodical doubt: I might be dreaming, I might be mad, I might be the victim of a deceiving demon);

(3) the fact that sooner or later bulbs blow (the empirical nature of objects: it may be that there is an eternal bulb, but I act as if there is none);

(4) the unjustified conclusion that the principle of causality, empirically founded on the law “if I switch the switch the light goes on”, should be regarded as a mere datum of habit, because soon or later the bulb will blow.

(5) Thus the fallacy undermines the primitive and unreflective certainty with which we relate to the world (I am certain, for instance, that the world carries on behind my back – but here I could begin doubting it), but it does not offer some other certainty in return. The uncertainty about knowledge – the ultimate unreliableness of the senses and of induction – is conceived of as freighted with ontological consequences, as if it were able to dismantle the structures of reality.

(6) For this reason, with what we might call an abreaction, Kant proceeds to adopt an apriori epistemology, that of mathematics, to found his ontology: the possibility of synthetic apriori judgments is the possibility of fixing an otherwise fluid reality by means of certain knowledge. Instead of founding science on experience, Kant reverses the terms and founds experience on science and in particular on physics. At this point the world is guaranteed by experience, or is so to the extent that it is constructed out of laws that find their origin in the "I". The transcendental philosophy transfers constructionism from the field of mathematics to that of ontology. The laws of physics are mathematics applied to reality and, on Kant's hypothesis, they do not represent merely the excogitations of groups of scientists, but they are rather the way in which our minds and our senses work. Hence, in the move that is characteristic of all the subsequent constructionisms, we must ask not how things are in themselves, but how they must be made for them to come to be known by us.

70 (7) This is where my basic claim comes in. Following and radicalizing Kant, the constructionists confuse ontology with epistemology, what is (which does not depend on our conceptual schemes) with what we know (which does depend on our conceptual schemes). These two things are obviously not equivalent given that knowing that a certain key will allow me to open my front door (epistemology) does not allow me to open my front door if I have lost the key in question (ontology). But his point is lost on those who assume as an unreflective dogma the idea that the world "out there" is a chimera, and that our relations with the world necessarily pass through conceptual schemes.

The problem is not negation, but construction!

In this way, ever since Kant, we have all been Junior Physicists and Junior Chemists, bent on constructing experience, just as experiments are constructed in the laboratory. This fallacy represents the path taken by the overwhelming majority of philosophers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. To name one's own revolution after Copernicus, which is to say the man who – at least in modern perceptions – taught us that the Sun does not really set, is to adopt as one's point of view not what we see but what we know, and above all, to conclude that encountering an object and knowing it are ultimate the same thing. The consequences of this are many and, taken together, determine the stage on which the modern or postmodern constructionists operate: they make what we see depend on what we know; they take it that conceptual schemes are ev-

erywhere mediating; and they claim that we never have any relation to things in themselves, but always and only with phenomena.

It is worth observing a point that is central to contemporary developments in this area. Unlike the ancient skeptics, the postmodernists do not throw the existence of the world into doubt; they claim that it is constructed by our conceptual schemes, and hence that in itself it is amorphous and indeterminate. This is where the constructionist adventure begins. For, from this point on, existence comes to depend on knowledge, which in turn is a construction in which the world depends for its form though not for its matter on the mind. This explains why the postmodernists claim that they have never denied the existence of the world. Indeed, they have not denied this openly, if only because, with their politically motivated subjectivism (which is a particularly paradoxical form of solipsism), they studied such things as barracks, hospitals, the mass media or simply their own departments or their homes. They went no further than to say that the external world is smoke and mirrors until it is given form by our constructions.

What this amounts to nevertheless – for those who have identified being and knowing – is precisely a denial of the world, except that it is just a little more modest. If Kant trusted the construction to an impersonal operator, mathematics, things take on a different hue when, from Nietzsche and the pragmatists onwards, knowledge is regarded as determined by our vital interests, our aims and goals. It is at just his point that “Intuitions without concepts are blind” turns into “There are no facts but only interpretations” and then into “There is nothing outside the text”. What gets lost is any public and shared image of the world, or any chance of distinguishing reality from fantasy.

The real is naked

But is this really how things stand? It certainly is not and it is not hard to cry out, like the boy in the Andersen story, that the real is naked, that is, it is not all dressed up in the thick web of conceptual schemes with which the constructionists suffocate it. This can be illustrated with what I have called the “slipper experiment”, which goes as follows.

1. *Men.* Let us take a man who is looking at a carpet on which there is a slipper; he asks someone else to pass him the slipper, and the other usually does so without particular difficulty. A banal interaction that shows nevertheless that, if the external world really depended even a little, not so much on interpretations and conceptual schemes as on neurons, the fact that the two

men do not have *the same* neurons would make the sharing of the slipper impossible. It might be objected that the neurons do not have to be numerically identical nor even by way of the relative positions of the synapses; but this not only weakens the claim but also contradicts a obvious and hard to refute fact namely the banality that differences in past experiences, culture, and brain structure and power can make for significant differences at a certain level and lead to disputes about opinions. But the slipper on the floor is another thing: it is external to and separate from us and our opinions; and for this reason it has an existence qualitatively different from what we encounter when we reason about the standing of such questions as futile medical care or preventive declarations of war. In other words, the sphere of facts is not so very bound up with that of interpretations. It is only when an evaluative element is in play that dialogue can be important: to establish that some behavior is legitimate or not, it is better to listen to a variety of opinions and talk the thing over; but to establish that the slipper is on the carpet, I look and I touch, and in any case discussion doesn't help much.

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2. *Dogs*. Let us now take a dog that has been trained. It is told, "bring me the slipper". Again, it does what it is told without difficulty, just like the man above, even though there are enormous differences between my brain and its, and its understanding of "bring me the slipper" can hardly be compared with a man's: the dog would not wonder whether I was really asking it to bring me the slipper rather than quoting the sentence or being ironic, while at least some humans might do so.

3. *Worms*. Let us now take a worm. It has neither a brain nor ears. It does have ears and it is much smaller than the slipper. It has only the sense of touch, whatever that might mean exactly. Anyway, we can hardly ask the worm to bring the slipper. All the same if, in moving across the carpet, the worm meets the slipper, it can choose between two strategies: either it goes round or it goes over. In either case, it meets the slipper even if not in the way that I do.

4. *Ivy*. Then we take an ivy plant. It has no eyes or anything else, but it climbs (this is how we express it, treating the ivy as if it were an animal and attributing to it an intentional strategy) up the walls as if it saw them; or it slowly shifts if it encounters a heat source that does not suit it. The ivy either goes round the slipper or it goes over it, just like a man, even though it has neither eyes nor conceptual schemes.

5. *The slipper*. Finally, let us take the slipper. It is even more insensitive than the ivy. But if we throw another slipper at it, it meets it just like the ivy, the worm, the dog and the man. Thus, we cannot see in what sense we can accept

even the most reasonable and minimalist version of the claim about the supposed ontological intervention of the perceiver on the perceived. After all, we could equally well not take the second slipper, but simply imagine that the first one is there in the absence of any animal observer, in the absence of any plant or other slipper interacting with it. Might there not be a slipper on the floor in that case? If the slipper is really there, then it must be so even if nobody sees it, as follows logically from the sentence, “there is a slipper”; otherwise we might say, “it seems to me that there is a slipper” or, more correctly, “I have in myself a representation of a slipper” or even “I have the impression of having a representation of a slipper”. Making the existence of things depend on the resources of the my sense organs is no different from making them depend on my imagination, and when I claim that a slipper exists *only* because I see it, I am really saying that what I am having is a hallucination.

Ontology and epistemology

What does this experiment tell us? Basically this: there is no doubt that we do interact with the world by way of conceptual schemes: anyone who can read these lines must have learnt the alphabet and acquired a language. But that does not mean that the world is determined by our conceptual schemes. I can know or not know anything whatever: the world remains what it is. I can know that there is water in the glass, and that its chemical formula is H_2O ; or I can not know that: the properties of water stay the same. It is crucial not to confuse epistemology and ontology. Otherwise the principle “There are no facts but only interpretations” would hold good, and someone could say that Cardinal Bellarmine and Galileo were both right or even that the Cardinal was more right than Galileo who therefore deserved what he got and got what he deserved.

This is a clear sign that if we abandon reference to an external world that is stable and independent of schemes, then everything is possible, given that this decision will interfere not only with theoretical issues, but also with practical, moral and political decisions. The constructionist claims that if fire burns and water is wet that depends on our conceptual schemes. Clearly it is just not so. It depends on the fact that fire burns and the fact that water is wet. These are ontological features. One might well say that the fact that water is H_2O and that Hitler invaded Poland on September 1, 1939 depend on our conceptual schemes. But from there to saying that these schemes are relative is a long step indeed. Because it is *true* that water is H_2O and that Hitler invaded Poland

on September 1, 1939. Or is it otherwise? And it is *true*, whatever conceptual schemes we appeal to that, a few years after invading Poland, he decided and put into action the Final Solution. Or is it otherwise?

At this point, the constructionists tend to respond by saying that facts and data are a myth. In less mythological terms, they could draw our attention to the way that ontology is suffused with epistemology. Which they are perfectly entitled to say. But to which I reply by saying that, while it obvious that *to say* that water is H₂O I have to have theories, conceptual schemes and a language; but it is not at all true that that apparatus is called for to drink a glass of water or to notice that water is wet and transparent. This second kind of experience is much less conditioned by conceptual schemes than what happens in the case of scientific research, in such a way that the Kantian claim that intuitions without concepts are blind is very hard to apply in wide swathes of ordinary experience.

In any case, precisely because the confusion of ontology and epistemology is banal, the theoretically interesting move cannot be to say that there is no distinguishing them (as those who think that data are as mythical as Pegasus would claim) but, on the contrary, to stress how and in how many ways, epistemology and ontology are to be distinguished. We may summarize these in the following table.⁴

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EPISTEMOLOGY	ONTOLOGY
Emendable (what can be corrected)	Unemendable (what is not subject to correction)
Inner world (= internal to conceptual schemes) Paradigm: <i>the conceptual scheme</i> . It is in the head but refers to the world	Outer world (= external to conceptual schemes) Paradigm: <i>everything that is not emendable</i>
Science Linguistic Historical Free Infinite Teleological	Experience Not necessarily linguistic Non-historical Unemendable Finite Not necessarily teleological
Social objects (depend upon conceptual schemes)	Natural objects (independent of conceptual schemes)

4 This reproduces, with minor variants, as do the other schemes in this chapter, those presented in *Il mondo esterno*, cit., pp. 89, 159, 160.

Emendable and unemendable

Let us proceed to the first essential distinction overlooked by constructionists and those who think that matters of fact are a myth: that between what is emendable and what is unemendable. As we have seen, I may either know or not know that water is H_2O , but I will get wet all the same, and I cannot save myself from getting wet merely by thinking that hydrogen and oxygen are not of themselves wet. In line with the slipper experiment, this also applies to the dog, which has different conceptual schemes from mine, to a worm or even to an inanimate being like a computer, which, without knowing anything about the chemical composition of the water could suffer irreparable damage if a glass of water were tipped on the keyboard.

I have proposed to call this fundamental feature of reality “unemendability”, which is the fact that what is in front of us cannot be corrected or transformed by mere appeal to conceptual schemes, as the constructionist hypothesis would predict. This is not just a limitation, it is also a resource. Unemendability tells us of the existence of a world that is external not only to our bodies (which are themselves parts of the external world) but also to our minds, and more specifically to the conceptual schemes with which we try to explain and interpret the world.

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Unemendability amounts essential to a phenomenon of resistance and contrast. I can have any theory of knowledge I like; I can be an atomist or a Berkeleyan, a postmodernist or a cognitivist; I can think, with Paolo Bozzi that what we perceive is the real world or I can follow the Vedantist doctrine that the perceived world is all false. What remains is that what we perceive is unemendable, it cannot be corrected: sunlight is blinding when there is the Sun; the coffee-maker’s handle is scalding if we have left it on the ring. No interpretation can get around these facts; the only options we have are sunglasses and an oven-glove.

If philosophers have amply discussed the idea of a “background”, I would like to draw attention to a much less prominent matter, namely the fact that this background is often in conflict without our theories or at least does not constitute their obvious presupposition, given that experience can be discordant or surprising. The point is more important than it might seem. Science is, in Aristotelian terms, the grasping of *regularities* and, in empiricist terms, the *repeatability* of experiments. We find some of these features in experience, but we still have to take account of *surprise*. Something unexpected can always happen that breaks the regularity. The empiricists had understood how much

this circumstance is at odds with the image of science as regularity, and, as we have said, they found surprise to constitute an insuperable obstacle to the reliability of induction. Nevertheless, if nothing ever happened to break the run of our predictions, we would never be able to distinguish real experience from imagined experience.

But surprise itself would not be worth much if it could be immediately corrected. Yet one of the features of experience is the fact that in very many cases it is there and it cannot be corrected; there is nothing to be done about it; there it is, it does not go away and it does not change. This is what unemendability is and, insofar as it is persistent and not casual, it presents itself as a fundamental trait of reality. If we allow that a fundamental requirement for objectivity, including scientific objectivity, is invariance under transformation, then the same applies in spades for the independence of objects from the subject's conceptual schemes and from epistemology in general as an even more powerful criterion of objectivity. This is just what unemendability is: I can look at a fire and think that it is a process of oxidization or the action of phlogiston and caloric, but, unless I have asbestos gloves on, I cannot not burn myself if I put my hand into the fire.

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Wittgenstein offers what I have often said is the key notion of unemendability: "If I have exhausted the justifications, I have reached bedrock and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: 'This is simply what I do.'" But unemendability can be applied not only to the sphere of perception, but is manifest on a grand scale in the irrevocability of past events, which appears to be a necessity that we recognize after the fact. In this sense unemendability is perhaps the clearest and most powerful expression of material necessity.

Internal world and external world

My proposal is to locate everything that I call the "External world", in the sense of external to and immune to conceptual schemes, within the sphere of what is unemendable. The characteristic of this is that it includes not only or merely the realm of natural objects, as some people suppose, but rather the set of everything that is not emendable, and hence the physical part of social objects, all ideal objects and the sum of definitively true propositions. *Deus, sive veritas*. For, as I have said unemendability is not just a negative principle. Viewed positively, it is precisely the condition of the possibility of an External World, where unemendability manifests itself in the autonomy of esthetics relative to logic, the antinomy of esthetics relative to logic and the autonomy

of the world relative to our conceptual schemes and perceptual apparatus. Let us look more closely at these features.

The autonomy of esthetics relative to logic. Let us return once more to Descartes' condemnation of the senses: the senses fool us and we should not trust those who have fooled us even once. In this way, he treats the senses as if they were persons, with their own intentions, inclinations and characters. But the senses do not have intentions or characters; if anything, they show a firm tendency to disappoint, to not give us what we hoped; and this might be a sign of that very lack of character that is often described as a "bad character"; nevertheless, it is quite contrary to a will to mislead.⁵ Here we encounter the independence of perception from conceptual schemes or, to put it more positively, the existence of non-conceptual contents. These contents show up precisely in the traditional dissatisfaction with perception considered as a source both necessary and untrustworthy.

The antinomy between esthetics and logic. If it were true that thought constitutes reality, unless we were masochists, we would see only what we like, and we would never be surprised. Yet, whatever one does, one cannot help seeing things that he does not want to see or could not not see, even when they are things that he has reason to think are not so or are not as they are seen to be, as in the case of optical illusions (which are called "illusions" precisely because the eyes are supposed to be a support for science and the truth). I can have all the wild philosophical convictions I like (and, more significantly, I can have no philosophical convictions at all), but the senses will continue to do their work. My appeal to sensibility is thus antithetical to sensism: where the sensist promotes the epistemological role of the senses and regards them as a knowledge-gathering instrument, I promote their ontological value, insofar as they resist our conceptual schemes. It is from this antinomy that we arrive at the world's autonomy, its transcendence of thought.

The autonomy of the world relative to conceptual and perceptual schemes. Reality possesses a structural and structured connectedness that not only resists conceptual and perceptual schemes and thus establish unemendability, but that also precedes them. For precisely this reason, the concept of "external world" should be understood as "external to our conceptual schemes and to

5 As Husserl writes: "The not true, the not existent, is already eliminated in passivity" (*Analysen zur passiven Synthesis, aus Vorlesungs- und Forschungsmanuskripten 1918–26*), and this is thanks to the benefits of disappointment: "'Now I see that it was an illusion' is itself a mode of evidence" (*Aktiven Synthesen: aus der Vorlesung "Transzendente Logik" 1920–1*).

our perceptual organs". Such a world exists, otherwise we would not be able to distinguish knowledge from dreaming. I can, and in certain circumstances must, doubt the *truth* even of all my experiences, without thereby having to doubt the fact that there is something in general. We may investigate this with the third distinction.

Science and experience

78 There is a crucial distinction between having experience of something, talking about our experience and doing science (for instance, between having a headache, describing it to someone and formulating a diagnosis about it). In the case of *speaking* about an experience, and all the more so in doing science, we have to do with an activity that is linguistic (scientists speak), historical (their activity is cumulative), freely chosen (one may not do science), infinite (science does not come to an end) and teleological (it has a purpose). Aware that it is because they do not distinguish between science and experience that postmodernists have been able to claim that nothing exists outside the text, language or some form of knowledge, we may look into these features.

It would be hard to doubt the importance of *language* and writing in science as an intrinsically social phenomenon. There is no doubt that scientificness has to do with documentality, with a system of communication, inscription, attestation, codification, deposit and patent. While there is no difficulty about imagining experiences that come about without language and without writing, it is an indispensable condition of science to communicate and register discoveries: if "publish or perish" is an academic aberration when applied to the individual researcher, it is a categorical imperative for science as a whole, which, considered as a collective and progressive enterprise, necessarily requires written and spoken communicative exchanges and the deposit and traditionalization of discoveries. None of this holds for experience, which can happen without any communication, any registration or any need to be put in linguistic form.

The intrinsic *historicity* of science is just an extension of this consideration. We have science insofar as each generation can make use of the discoveries of all the preceding generations. Is for this reason that we can speak of sciences that are more or less young, by which we mean that they have a biography, a growth and a development, which derive from the possibility of inscription and documentation, while it is senseless, or at best metaphorical, to speak of "young experience", where this must mean youthful experience, what happens to young people.

As regards *freedom*, it is quite clear that science is a deliberate activity. At a certain point in the intellectual history of European people (if at least we assume the prevailing scheme, according to which science is not a universal form of life, though it may be universalizable), scientific activities took off and evolved freely, even if they responded to the pressure of practical needs. This genesis could have not happened, as we can see from the fact that other civilizations have not undergone the development of science and yet others have elaborated sciences different from ours. Again, the comparison with experience is revealing, because experiences are to a great extent constant across cultures and do not appear to be the upshot of deliberate choice. I am referring not only to perception, once we have got over the legends that suppose that the Inuit see more shades of white than we do. I have in mind strongly structured elements, such as myths and the basic family relations. In short, what is universal to humans is not science (which is merely universalizable), but experience.

Proceeding then to *infinity*, the most prestigious sciences are precisely those that can boast a long past and have before them a long future, which is to say that they respond most closely to the idea of knowledge as unending development. Nothing of the kind can be said of experience, which not only does not project itself as infinite (after all, it cannot last longer than a human life), but it is not even progressive. By this I mean not only that the project of refining the senses makes little sense (at most we can remedy defects, with eyeglasses and hearing aids), but also that the idea of progress makes very little sense in relation to the practices and the techniques of lived life. While everyone would prefer to be treated by a doctor of 2211 rather than one of 2011 and would be terrified of the treatments – especially the surgery – of a doctor of 1811, the prospect of eating the bread of yesteryear or wearing unglobalized textiles might be rather attractive. Furthermore, while the idea of unending progress in the sciences is fairly uncontroversial, it is hardly more than a poor joke to think of infinite development of new techniques for doing up one's shoe laces, knotting one's tie or making one's bed.

Finally, regarding *teleology*, the point is very simple. Science is a deliberate activity and in this is like many techniques, which in turn are a half-way house between science and experience: making one's bed does not seem an activity that can make infinite progress (at most, elasticated sheets make a step forward), though it is certainly deliberate. And this goes all the more for science. Someone who went to a laboratory without an end in view would have difficulty doing science, while someone who without a motive feels a sensation of heat, sees a certain color or has a toothache would have no reason for denying

that those were his experiences. And though the history of science loves the serendipity of someone who has basic intuitions in the bath or under an apple tree, when we move from folklore to evaluation, intentionality comes to count heavily. Typically, Fleming's discovery of penicillin, which was in large part luck because of a mold that grew in refrigerator that had been left open, seems like a less meritorious discovery because less deliberate than others.

Social objects and natural objects

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All three of the differences that I have highlighted and that follow from the distinction between ontology and epistemology tend to show the fundamental misunderstanding in constructionism: thinking that reality has no form without the action of conceptual construction and that the given is a myth. But there is an obvious commonsensical objection: am I wanting to deny that, for instance, a cadastral tax is socially constructed? Or, worse, am I wanting to say that the cadastral tax is unemendable in the relevant offices? Obviously not. The distinction I have proposed aim at avoiding the two complementary sillinesses of saying that nothing, not even a cadastral tax, is socially constructed, and that everything, including tuberculosis, is socially constructed, this latter being the claim, if taken seriously, would suggest that we suspend medical research, given that we have already discovered quite enough diseases. Within the distinction between ontology and epistemology, then, there appears to lurk a fourth distinction that the postmodernists (unlike their constructionist predecessors) have not drawn, and in the absence of which everything is topsy-turvy, given that it is the premise for postmodernism's wildest and most extreme claims.

The distinction I have in mind is that between social objects and natural objects. The former, unlike the latter, are *constitutively* subject to the action of epistemology, because things like marriages and debts exist only because there are persons who know that they do. There is an essential difference between being ill and not knowing it (even if we do not know, the disease takes its course) and being married and not knowing it (if we do not know, and nor does anyone else, then it is exactly like not being married at all). This is another of the typical omissions of the postmodernists, who are so ready to think that nothing exists outside the text. Likewise no one, not even an old-style or new-style realist would want to deny that reality is constructed when it comes to preparing a courtroom oration. But to suppose that the reality to which the speech refers is constructed or conversely that it is not constructed, but never-

theless need not be taken into consideration in fabricating the oration, would be a philosophical justification of lying.

Here is my suggestion: unemendability is the salient feature of natural objects, but we have to think of a different family of objects and draw a distinction that hermeneutics has overlooked with disastrous consequences. It is not enough to distinguish ontology from epistemology; we must furthermore distinguish within ontology as a theory of objects at least three classes:

1. natural objects, which occupy positions in space and in time and do not depend on subjects;
2. social objects, which do occupy a positions in space and in time and do depend on subjects, though they are not themselves subjective;
3. ideal objects, which do not occupy any position either in space or in time and do not depend on subjects.

With this in hand, it is no longer sustainable that natural reality is constructed by scientists' theories, as the postmodernists claim. It also becomes very difficult to assert that without conceptual schemes we have no relation to the physical world, as the less extreme philosophers have claimed, not considering that, unlike social objects, natural objects exist independently of subjects and hence of conceptual schemes.

Nevertheless it becomes possible to pick out a field in which conceptual schemes and epistemology impose their necessity, namely the world of social objects. As to the role of conceptual schemes, I would like to stress that, in the social world, any experience whatever is impossible without conceptual schemes and more or less elaborate theories. Consider these two propositions:

Mountains, lakes, beavers and asteroids depend on our conceptual schemes; and

Bank notes, diplomas, debts, prizes and punishments depend on our conceptual schemes.

To claim that mountains and rivers are thus and so because there are humans that have sense organs made in a certain way and categories of a certain sort calls for a certain courage. In point of fact, mountains and rivers are what they are all on their own, and, if anything, are *known* by us through the specific forms of our senses and our intellect.⁶

6 For sure, a particularly subtle philosophy might want to re-write (1) as the proposition: "The fact that mountains, lakes, beavers and asteroids are subsumed under the concept (ontological category) of *objects* depends on our conceptual schemes". But in either case there is the collapse of being on knowing, because at this point one may as well re-write (1) as "The fact that mountains, lakes, beavers and asteroids are subsumed under the concept

Let us now put the matter in terms of social objects. For sure someone might say that marriages and divorces, mortgages and chess games, debts and seats in parliament are thus and so because our (human) senses and our intellect are made in a certain way. And this would not be a surprising thing to say. We can be reasonably sure that, for a beaver, there are no mortgages or divorces, though there are mountains and lakes.

Once we have recognized the distinction between ontology and epistemology, and that among the classes of objects, the way is open to the rehabilitation of the Kantian intuition in a sphere different from the one that it was invented for, namely in connection with social objects. The basic idea is that the claim “intuitions without concepts are blind”, which we have seen is hard to apply to the natural world, gives a splendid account of our relations with the social world, which is made of such things as money, roles and institutions, which exist only because we believe that they do

82 As we have seen, social objects depend necessarily on subjects and in this framework, we elaborate the constitutive law: *Object = Inscribed Act*, which implies of necessity the intervention of subjects, of acts and of intuitions endowed with concepts. What I propose is thus a weak textualism, insofar as it assumes that inscriptions are decisive in the construction of social reality but – unlike what I call “strong textualism” – it does not entail that inscriptions are constitutive of reality in general. Weak textualism is therefore a weakening of Derrida’s thesis that “there is nothing outside the text”, which is transformed into “there is nothing *social* outside the text”. This allows a sort of constructionism, but only a moderate version of it, which is not in conflict with the realist intuition. In conclusion, I would like to highlight how this approach leads to what I would call “peace between the intuitions”, a settlement that allows for a perpetual peace between the constructionist and the realist intuitions, giving to each its due sphere of competence.

Treaty of perpetual peace

The treaty can be summarized in six points, as follows.

Natural objects are independent of epistemology and are what the natural sciences are true of.

Experience is independent of science.

(ontological category) of *objects* depends on the fact that there is someone about”. In one sense, this is true enough, but it is irrelevant to the ontology of mountains, lakes, beavers and asteroids.

Science is different from magic (and in particular is more true).

Social objects depend on epistemology without being on that account subjective.

“Intuitions without concepts are blind” holds in the first instance for social objects (where it has a constructive value) and in the second for an epistemological approach to the natural world (where it has a reconstructive value)

The realist intuition and the constructionist intuition thus have equal legitimacy, each in its own realm of application.

There may of course be border disputes, typically in ethically and politically sensitive cases, such as the beginning or end of life, or human rights. But the most effective way to block any negotiation is by embracing pan-constructivism. This is what history teaches: Feyerabend is Ratzinger’s closest ally in line with an implacable law of politics which, by the way, teaches that even in the field of human affairs we have to do with astonishing regularities.

REALISM IN TWO PIECES¹

Who's afraid of interpretation?

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There is a quote by Richard Rorty that has never seemed more pertinent, and it goes like this: “Take care of freedom and truth can take care of itself.” All this big talk about realism, either old or new, that has been going on in the last few months, seems to be a lot less concerned with taking “care” of truth than doing that for reality – a difference in expression that might merit a bit more attention. Try for example switching “truth” for “reality” in the New Testament phrase “the truth will set you free”. Are we really all the more free the more “realistic” we become, or is the other way round, inasmuch a realist harbors no illusions, accepts things as they are and perhaps even stops fighting against the apparent imbalance of forces in the world? We should recall that it was Kant who founded no less than the existence of God on the observation that in the real world evil generally wins over the good; but if that was the whole story, our real and moral lives would make no sense, forcing us to postulate Someone who will, at the end, make virtue coincide with happiness. Our neo-realists making such a great fuss today certainly do not want to promote the world as an all-out battlefield, but would rather present themselves as the true defend-

¹ This article on the subject on new realism consists of two parts. The first part *Who's Afraid of Interpretation?* (It. *Chi ha paura dell'interpretazione?*) is a text first published in the daily newspaper *La Stampa* on 22nd November 2012. The second part, titled *The Return of Reality as a Return to Order* (It. *Il ritorno della realtà come ritorno all'ordine*) reproduces Professor Vattimo's letter to Professor Umberto Eco.

ers of morality. But does “reality” truly need to be defended? Defended from what or from whom? They say that from Nietzsche, the dangerous revolutionary for whom there were “no facts, only interpretations”. But who is so afraid of interpretation? And once more: try and exchange “truth” for “reality” in so many of those phrases we could never do without. “To tell you the reality...”, for instance, or: “Realistically, I tell you.”, or even “They were ready to die as martyrs for reality...” When we think about it carefully, the whole difference between the two lies in the fact that truth is always something one tells, while reality is simply there to begin with and that is that. And here is where both Kant and interpretation make their reappearance: to be told, truth needs a subject who tells it. But the one telling the truth is the one who describes “things as they are”, hence reality as such. Is that true? We know that a map identical to the territory it describes would be useless: it would simply coincide with the territory. To be of any use, the map has to choose a scale, a point of view, a type of things that it wants to show (elevation, for example, or differences in climate). Is that not an interpretation? Very well, some would reply, but the things shown by the map “are out there”, the map has not made them up on its own. That may very well be, but should we consider this “being out there” as a fact that exists beyond all interpretation? And is it possible to claim that without referring again to a particular interpretation? Is there any such thing as a “non-interpretative” map, whose reference would be a conventionally accepted fact that could avoid infinite re-referrals? For the map of the metro – the actual metro existing in Paris; for the time zones – the Greenwich meridian, and so on. You find that shocking and disturbing? But should we really be distrusting measures of length or longitude and latitude just because they are based on a convention? The fact that these conventions work appears to mean that they are “founded in reality”. But is there really any such thing as a zero meridian out there? We think of these measures as “founded” merely because they function, just as any hermeneutical disciple of that evil old Nietzsche still takes trains, planes or elevators without a doubt in the sciences and technologies that constructed them. The question is: why does everyone seem to want me to say that my taking planes and trains also implies my belief in science telling the truth, i.e., reflecting “reality” as it is?

Let us return to the question of who and why might be afraid of interpretation and would feel this need to defend truth-as-reality. There is good reason to suspect that Rorty was right and that beneath this (unnecessary) defense of truth-as-reality there lies a fear of freedom. Dear God, there is nothing sacred, as Arbasino would have put it on this point. If we can no longer refer to

a certain and unshakeable fundament, everything is permitted, as Dostoevsky feared in the case of God's non-existence. It seems that without a final "objective" truth (whatever that might mean) which everyone could or should concede to, neither true morality nor a true struggle against the lies of propaganda or superstition are possible. Yet every stubborn hermeneutic taking trains and planes is still able to distinguish the true from the false without needing to refer to absolute standards or touch first-hand that which goes-not without saying. He contents himself with the Paris metro and the Greenwich meridian, at least until someone tries to tax him for a different measuring standard. It is when this happens – when we are hit (not only financially) by bad measure – that we begin to search for a more certain and more fundamental criterion to refer to. This is also and above all true in the case of laws governing communal life. But, do we really have to refer to natural law and human essence to avoid running a red light? Of course not. We start asking questions about the fundament in cases such as assisted reproduction or social rights: within the realm of ethics. In this domain, trying to act according to a truth-as-reality doesn't make any sense or should have merely the sense of forcing us to "realistically" accept things as they are. We have, then, not strayed far in our suspicion that this thirst for the currently circulating (neo?) realism is essentially a mere call to order, a sort of appeal to technicians to flee the confusion of democratic debates along with their tedious pace. Some have suggested digging up the old Kantian distinction between the natural sciences, "science", that is, and the sciences of the spirit (ethics, politics, religion, etc), leaving the realm of the "true", experimental truth to the former, while the second one sticks to interpreting. A nice idea (originally proposed precisely by Kant) if it weren't for the fact that no one has so far been able to answer the following question: who is it that is supposed to draw the dividing line between the two fields?

The Return of Reality as a Return to Order (Letter to Umberto Eco)

Dear Umberto, I would like to begin in medias res (ouch! Right to the things themselves!) to discuss your essay on "negative realism". Two things first. Number one: does any one of these new realists actually think that a postmodernist would use a screwdriver to clean out his ears or his writing desk in order to get from Milan to Agognate? Paradoxical examples are all too often taken too seriously, ending up as caricatures it would be best to get rid of. Number two: do you remember Proudhon? One summer quite a few years ago someone sud-

denly dragged out Proudhon of all people into the open and started an inconclusive debate that dragged on for a while before dwindling to nothing. This new realism seems to me a similar phenomenon even if it threatens to go on longer, which probably has something to do with the general climate of “return to order” and its most vivid expression in the current government of “technicians”. So what are the reasons behind this “return to reality” aimed against the “postmodern binge”? Who is it that cares so much about “returning to reality” and warding off Nietzsche’s thesis’ which claims “there are no facts, only interpretations and even this is an interpretation”? You will of course immediately respond by saying that this is an improper question: that we ought to be concerned only with the truth or falsity of the thesis and not with who happens to like or dislike it. But you should also admit this immediately forces Nietzsche into accepting that there is such a thing as that famous objective truth he had disputed. Thus, it seems that what these new realists hold as the objective truth is the “fact” that “postmodernism has failed”. But is this failure really a fact and not an interpretation? The strength of Nietzsche’s thesis – particularly for someone who is not willing to give in to the world as it is and identify every being-of-things-as-they-are with the good and a norm to be “respected” – lies entirely in interrogating every utterance on “who says so?” Marx’ concept of ideology, as well as the whole so-called “school of suspicion” (Marx, Nietzsche, Freud) should have taught us something by now. Alright, you’ll say, but Marx attacked ideology precisely in the name of an objective truth. But for him this truth was the proletariat as the owner of assets (“who says so?”), not being-itself, identified as that which cannot be thought otherwise – that which you call “the world” with its “facts”. The “facts” do not speak on their own: even pointing to them with a finger is already an act of linguistics. Realism (the old one, I guess: why should we call it new?) has always fed on the “fact” that there should be something out there, a “piece of data” limiting the interpretation, as you say, which does not depend on the interpreter. Not even the most fanatical postmodernist believes that “things” are simply created by the one looking at them. If it rains, I get wet, if I run into a wall, I hurt my nose. So? Is that what we are supposed to call the immovable base of being? Heidegger constructed a whole philosophy starting from his dissatisfaction with “metaphysics” as that which identifies being precisely with such an immovable base. And his dissatisfaction stemmed not from the discovery that being is no “base” at all, but mere hullabaloo or thin air, but from the impossibility of taking freedom seriously in a world made up only of immovable, base stuff, identified simply by always staying the same... The question of “who says so?” also

has an obvious ethically-political charge. The new realists (ever reproaching me for Heidegger's Nazism) should explain why one of their prophets should be John Searle, honored by Bush as the US' greatest philosopher. Will some of them be receiving similar recognition from the government of Monti and Napolitano? Of course, it's a fact (!) that the new realists have found a welcoming ear in public opinion (at least the one getting published) of the mainstream as they respond to the request for restoring "true" values and, ultimately, social discipline. Even you yourself still concern yourself with assuring "guarantees" for proposing interpretations that will be acceptable to others. "The others" is putting it right on the mark. Precisely because there are no facts, only interpretations, the only "base" I might bump into and which I should be taking into account – no guarantees possible – are the interpretations of others. I have no "objective" guarantee in order to convince them: only certain shared values, certain common experiences, certain readings we had all done, certain – something I have only become aware of now – class distinctions. The entire peril of hermeneutics lies in the following: it teaches us that the only interpretation which is definitely false (the limit of interpretation!) is one that does not recognize itself as such, that pretends to speak from the point of view of God and thus refuses any negotiation, believing it possesses the only real truth. But even the truth of a scientific proposition can keep claiming its status only if others, those who repeat the experiment, come up with the same results. Is this where the immovable base and the impenetrable wall will make their reappearance? But where would that be, if not in these very interpretations?

Translated by Izar Lunaček

QUI A PEUR DES *CULTURAL STUDIES*?

SUR LA POLITISATION DES SCIENCES HUMAINES ENTRE ANTHROPOLOGIE ET ONTOLOGIE DE L'ACTUALITÉ¹

L'objectif que je poursuis dans le présent expose est d'éclaircir l'enjeu théorique posé par une confrontation entre la tradition continentale des sciences humaines et la tradition anglo-saxonne des *Cultural Studies* (CS). Après un bref aperçu historique sur la tradition des *Cultural Studies*, je voudrais passer en revue les critiques auxquelles les CS s'exposent si on les met en relation avec la richesse de la réflexion sur la différence culturelle menée dans l'Europe continentale (et notamment en France et en Italie) dans le cadre de disciplines comme l'anthropologie culturelle ou la philosophie. Le bilan que j'offrirai des CS sera cependant positif, dans la mesure où les CS, si on les utilise de façon critique, peuvent contribuer à une politisation des sciences humaines prises dans leur ensemble.

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1. Stuart Hall et la naissance des *Cultural Studies*

La naissance, l'essor et le développement des CS sont liés, en premier lieu, à la figure de Stuart Hall, figure d'intellectuel «diasporique» qui va incarner plusieurs éléments que l'on retrouve dans la structuration théorique des CS. Né en 1932 à Kingston, en Jamaïque, (en outre-mer dirait-on en français), il quitte son pays natal pour étudier à Oxford. Tout de suite il établit des liens avec le milieu de la nouvelle gauche anglaise et dirige de 1959 à 1961 la revue «New

¹ Publié dans *Geisteswissenschaftliche Traditionen und Kulturwissenschaftliche Situationen*, Idea Publishing House, Sofia, Bulgarie, 2009.

Left Review». Parmi ses amis on peut évoquer Raymond Williams (sur lequel nous reviendrons plus tard), Perry Anderson, Edward Thompson ou encore Charles Taylor. C'est en 1964 qu'il commence sa collaboration avec le *Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies* de Birmingham, qu'on pourrait bien définir comme le véritable berceau des CS anglaises. En 1968, il prend la direction du Centre, qu'il dirigera jusqu'en 1979. De 1979 à 1997, il est Professeur de Sociologie à l'*Open University*, une institution très singulière qui a été l'une des premières au monde à promouvoir l'enseignement à distance. L'esprit innovateur et anti-académique qui caractérise les CS est aujourd'hui rattaché à l'*Open University*.

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La première donnée qu'il faut souligner est le caractère excentrique de ce parcours intellectuel. Une première forme d'excentricité concerne l'origine «creole». Stuart Hall lui-même n'a pas manqué d'évoquer la signification et l'importance assumées par cette origine: c'est grâce à la couleur de sa peau qu'il a développé très tôt une sensibilité très aigüe pour la question de la différence culturelle. Dans les écrits plus ou moins autobiographiques qu'il a consacrés au sujet de l'épanouissement des CS, même s'il a évité de se poser comme celui qui a donné naissance à une nouvelle école ou à une nouvelle façon de pratiquer la critique sociale, Stuart Hall a toujours voulu mettre en relation la donnée biographique avec une question que j'appellerai la question du lieu de la théorie: c'est à partir d'un intérêt, à partir d'une localisation spécifique, à partir de quelque chose qu'on ne peut pas dominer seulement d'une façon théorique, c'est donc à partir d'une impureté essentielle qu'on peut approcher la mise en question de toute discursivité qui a fonction de légitimer le statut identitaire d'un sujet ou d'une collectivité. En se refusant d'être considéré comme le père fondateur d'une nouvelle discipline, mais en même temps en mettant sans cesse en question la prétendue neutralité de l'activité théorique, Hall a su ainsi élaborer à sa manière – et dans le contexte spécifique dans lequel il s'est trouvé à agir – une des questions les plus importantes pour les sciences humaines, à savoir la question de la contamination entre pratique théorique et pratique tout court. Il s'agit ici d'un trait que Hall partage avec autres auteurs qu'on compte normalement parmi les représentants les plus significatifs de la vague postcoloniale, comme Edward Saïd ou Gayatri Spivak – le premier étant un arabe chrétien d'origine palestinienne, la seconde d'origine indienne. Pour Hall – comme pour Saïd ou Spivak – c'est l'expérience de la marginalité qui, d'une part, déclenche une interrogation radicale sur le statut du sujet du discours suppose être légitime à parler au nom de l'autre et au lieu de l'autre: le fait de provenir de la province de l'Empire fournit les coordonnées à partir desquelles

on peut mesurer la distance entre le discours dominant et la prise de parole par le domine. D'autre part, cette interrogation ne peut laisser intact le sujet qui en assume la responsabilité – sans cette assumption de responsabilité on tomberait dans cette forme de «fondamentalisme» théorique qui fait dire que seuls les colonisés ont le droit de parler de la question coloniale, fondamentalisme qui se rapproche de cette forme du fondamentalisme selon lequel seules les femmes ont le droit de parler de la question féminine. Je reviendrai sur cette circularité, parce qu'il s'agit ici de la question première à laquelle est confronté quiconque se pose devant les sciences humaines pour interroger leur statut épistémique – et aussi parce que la façon dont Stuart Hall a articulé cette question donne à son entreprise théorique tout l'intérêt que nous avons pour elle.

La deuxième forme d'excentricité qui frappe celui qui considère l'histoire intellectuelle des CS anglaises et celle de leur fondateur concerne la localisation disciplinaire des CS. Le *Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies* de Birmingham – aussi que l'*Open University* aujourd'hui – ne sont pas des institutions intégrées au milieu académique au sens classique. À leurs débuts, les CS ne sont pas reconnues par les sociologues, qui leur ont toujours reproché d'être dans un lien de filiation avec la théorie littéraire. Richard Hoggart (né en 1918), celui qui a fondé le *Centre* de Birmingham, a commencé sa carrière comme *Professor of English*, même si son ouvrage capital, *The Uses of Literacy*, paru en 1957,² offre une analyse de la culture de masse destinée à poser les fondements d'un intérêt pour ce thème qui caractérise les CS jusqu'à aujourd'hui. Par ailleurs, les CS ne sont pas reconnues par ceux qui cultivaient d'une façon plus traditionnelle les études littéraires – c'est à dire par ceux qui étaient encore habitués à considérer la «culture» comme synonyme de «Bildung». J'évoque ici cette attitude qui consiste à faire coïncider «culture» et «Bildung» parce que, justement, l'autre grand ouvrage qui a inspiré le travail de Stuart Hall, à côté du livre de Hoggart déjà mentionné, c'est précisément *Culture and Society*, de Raymond Williams.³ Dans ce livre, Williams reconstruisait de façon magistrale le lien entre la possession de la «culture» – au sens de la «Bildung» – et l'appartenance aux classes aisées, c'est à dire le lien entre construction d'une identité de classe et la construction d'un discours accessible seulement à une petite minorité de personnes bien éduquées (bien «ausgebildet»).

On a ainsi déjà une première esquisse de la situation dans laquelle Stuart Hall et ses sympathisants ont commencé à travailler: d'une part, des sciences

2 R. Hoggart, *La culture du pauvre*, Editions de Minuit, Paris 1970.

3 R. Williams, *Culture and Society*, Chatto&Windus, Londres 1958.

sociales encore peu pretes a se confronter avec la realite sociale, c'est a dire avec la complexite d'une societe de l'apres-guerre traversee par des nouvelles formes de conflictualite et de plus en plus stratifiee, une societe ou la question de la difference de classe commencait deja a se poser en termes de difference culturelle. D'autre part, des etudes litteraires encore enracinees dans la tradition d'un humanisme qui voyait la culture comme embellissement de l'esprit, comme vehicule de valeurs quasi transhistoriques.

Dans un pareil contexte, on peut bien mesurer la portee des innovations introduites par les CS. On pourrait dire que les CS ont fait souffler un vent nouveau dans la reflexion anglaise sur la complexite sociale. En premier lieu, le groupe qui travaillait autour de Stuart Hall en est venu a lire des auteurs alors peu connus en Angleterre: Max Weber dans le domaine sociologique, et, dans le domaine philosophique, les auteurs de l'ecole de Francfort, Althusser et Gramsci (traduit en anglais). Grace a ce travail considerable de reception et de mediation, ce qui se modifie c'est le regard sur le fait social. Ce nouveau regard entraine une attention aigue portee sur l'entrelacement entre dimension culturelle, entendue comme expression des enjeux identitaires, et relations des pouvoirs, entendues comme conditions de possibilite soit de la hierarchisation sociale, soit de la mobilite qui peut affecter, en cas de conflit, cette hierarchisation meme.

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En second lieu, les membres du Centre de Birmingham, a cause de leur marginalite par rapport au systeme academique anglais decrit ci-dessus, ont concu leur propre travail de recherche comme le produit d'une discursivite qui ne se laissait reduire a aucun champ disciplinaire. Ici encore, il s'agit d'une question theorique qu'on s'est posee tout d'abord de facon tres empirique: qu'est-ce que c'est pratiquer les CS, si elles ne sont assimilables a aucune discipline reconnue par l'institution dominante? Mais a partir de la, Stuart Hall a developpe tres tot une reflexion de portee plus generale sur l'institutionnalisation de tout discours autorise a dire la verite sur une formation sociale donnee. Encore une fois, il s'agit ici de la question du lieu: a partir de quel lieu parle le sujet d'un discours qui se veut a la fois critique – ce qui veut dire eloigne de son propre objet – et en meme temps capable d'introduire, en vertu de son propre positionnement, des modifications a l'interieur de la formation sociale ou on agit comme chercheur et comme citoyen? Puisque il s'agit d'une interrogation qui rappelle bien celle de Foucault sur l'entrelacement du savoir et du pouvoir, il faut ajouter ici que la reflexion de Stuart Hall sur ce theme s'est developpee avant la rencontre de Hall avec la pensee de Foucault. S'il va sans dire que dans le panorama actuel des CS la figure de Foucault joue un role primordial, au

debut de son parcours intellectuel c'est surtout grace a la confrontation avec le marxisme de Althusser et de Gramsci que Stuart Hall a aborde la question de la mise en place institutionnelle des CS – question que j'aime formuler comme la question de la discipline,⁴ ou encore comme la question du lieu du sujet de la science, c'est a dire la question de la position du sujet du discours soit par rapport au champ discursif ouvert par une conceptualite donnee, soit par rapport au champ institutionnel qui gere la circulation de cette conceptualite.

Si nous essayons de definir l'enjeu theorique qui caracterise les CS actuelles – ou on aurait du mal a poser une distinction trop nette entre CS, *Postcolonial Studies* et *Gender Studies* –, ce qui frappe d'emblemee c'est l'effort pour lire et interpreter la position des individus ou des groupes au sein des formations sociales donnees, de maniere a ce que cette position se laisse analyser comme le resultat d'un entrelacement ou se croisent la difference de classe, la difference de culture et la difference de genre. Or, cette conscience selon laquelle le sujet construit son identite a partir d'un positionnement specifique et local – ce qui veut dire aussi modifiable – par rapport a l'articulation de la difference, n'est pas quelque chose qui marquait au depart la pratique de recherche au *Centre* de Birmingham. Comme Stuart Hall l'a souvent souligne, c'etait une presence de plus en plus importante, d'une part de jeunes chercheuses et d'autre part de chercheurs (et chercheuses) provenant des pays colonises qui avait conduit toute l'equipe du *Centre* a reflechir sur la necessite de meler une perspective visant la question de la difference de classe a une perspective de recherche attentive aux questions des differences culturelles et au genre.

Encore une fois, on constate ici dans cette facon de proceder que ce sont les conditions empiriques de travail qui orientent la direction de la reflexion theorique. «De la pratique vers la theorie et retour» : ceci pourrait bien etre la devise qui resume la teneur des CS anglaises. Tout cela a influence aussi la methode didactique partagee au *Centre*. Je rapporte a ce propos deux exemples que Stuart Hall luimeme nous donne pour caracteriser la phase qu'on pourrait definir heronique des CS (exemples que je tire d'un essai ou Hall trace l'histoire du mouvement). Dans cette phase heronique, au cours de laquelle le nombre des etudiants et des enseignants etait encore tres reduit, il etait impossible de maintenir la distinction traditionnelle entre corps enseignant et eleves: «In this context, it was impossible for us to maintain for very long the illusion that we were teaching our graduate students from some established body of knowled-

4 Sur cette question, voir aussi les contributions contenues dans J. Boutier, J.-C. Passeron, J. Revel, *Qu'est-ce qu'une discipline?*, Editions de l'EHESS, Paris 2006.

ge, since it was perfectly clear to them that we were making it up as we went along: we were all in the game; we were apprentices to cultural studies trying desperately to keep just one step ahead of them.»⁵ Mais la specificite la plus interessante de l'activite du *Centre* consistait a lier l'integralite du travail de recherche a la vie reelle de la societe anglaise de l'epoque: chaque etudiant qui postulait pour un doctorat etait invite a choisir son sujet de these non seulement a partir de ses propres interets, mais surtout a partir de ce qui l'irritait le plus, c'est a dire a partir de ce qui, dans le domaine social, etait percu comme ce qui contrastait le plus avec un certain ideal de justice sociale. Hall formule aussi les questions posees alors aux eleves: «What are you interested in? What really bugs you about questions of culture and society now? What do you really think is a problem you don't understand out there in the terrible interconnections between culture and politics?»⁶

2. Les noyaux theoriques des Cultural Studies

96 Apres avoir esquisse brievement le parcours intellectuel de Stuart Hall, je me focaliserai dans ce qui suit sur les enjeux principaux des CS. En premier lieu, il faut concentrer l'attention sur la forme particuliere de marxisme developpee par Hall. Bien avant sa rencontre avec la pensee de Gramsci, Hall avait pris ses distances avec toute forme orthodoxe et dogmatique de marxisme presente dans le milieu politique ou intellectuel anglais des annees cinquante. Dans le domaine de la recherche sur les phenomenes culturels, le premier pas consistait a mettre en question le rapport mecanique pose par la theorie marxiste traditionnelle entre structure economique et superstructure socioculturelle. Par rapport a cette problematique, l'analyse accomplie par Raymond Williams dans le livre deja mentionne, *Culture and Society*, a ete decisive. Williams avait adresse de lourds reproches aux theoriciens marxistes qui n'etaient pas capable de comprendre que la sphere culturelle constituait une sphere relativement autonome, dont on echoue a saisir les articulations internes si on la lit comme le simple reflet d'une sphere economique sous-jacente. Mais a cette reduction du culturel a un simple element super structurel, s'ajoutait un autre aspect, que Williams critiquait aussi. Si les marxistes devaient definir la «culture», ils ne trouvaient rien de mieux que de recourir aux definitions du concept qui

5 S. Hall, «The Emergence of Cultural Studies and the crisis of the humanities», in *October*, 53, 1990, p. 17 (tr. fr. S. Hall, *Identites et cultures. Politiques des Cultural Studies*, Editions Amsterdam, 2007, p. 64).

6 *Ibidem*.

remontent au XIXe siècle, selon lesquelles la «culture» coïnciderait avec les productions intellectuelles d'un esprit éclairé capable d'utiliser les codes de l'art, de la littérature et de la philosophie. La proposition de Williams allait dans une autre direction. Selon lui, la culture devait être entendue comme «*a whole system of life*», comme un système de vie autosuffisant, comme un processus social général.

Plus tard, quand Hall est revenu sur cette question, il n'était pas satisfait de la définition donnée par Williams, mais il faut souligner bien clairement que si les CS ont pris pleine conscience du caractère dynamique et relationnel des phénomènes culturels, c'est essentiellement grâce aux travaux de Williams – et non, ce qui pourrait être surprenant, grâce aux travaux des anthropologues anglais de l'école de Manchester, comme Max Gluckman ou Victor Turner (mais on pourrait aussi évoquer le nom d'Edmund Leach), qui, dans la même période, ont pourtant travaillé d'une façon très innovante sur l'entrelacement entre phénomènes culturels ou religieux et conflictualité sociale.

Stimulé par les analyses de Williams, à partir des années soixante, Hall a commencé à se confronter à la pensée de Althusser. Grâce au structuralisme antihumaniste d'Althusser, Hall a trouvé une façon de se rapprocher de phénomènes culturels où il n'était pas nécessaire de se poser de question sur le sujet qui s'exprimerait par la culture – une question, celle-ci, qui continue à voir la culture comme l'expression de quelque chose qui lui serait sous-jacente. En insistant sur le fait que l'idéologie a besoin de plusieurs appareils pour son fonctionnement,⁷ le structuralisme althusserien a permis à Hall de concevoir les phénomènes culturels comme des champs mobiles, articulés en eux-mêmes, qu'on pouvait par principe analyser même en l'absence d'une référence directe à quelque structure économique. Dans ce qu'on appelle culture, ce qui se laisse percevoir c'est le sens commun, qui est partagé par tous les membres d'une formation sociale donnée. Le renvoi au caractère inconscient des dynamiques sociales signifiées par le sens commun est ici décisif, parce qu'il permet d'expliquer comment la production des signes et des significations partagés n'est pas seulement le résultat de l'interaction consciente entre individus et groupes, mais aussi ce qui interpelle les individus en tant que sujets pour les positionner au sein des hiérarchies sociales.

Le but poursuivi par Hall en utilisant la philosophie althusserienne était de montrer comment la totalité composée par toutes les pratiques sociales était une totalité mobile, qui par principe ne peut remonter à un seul moment

7 Cf. L. Althusser, « Idéologie et appareils idéologiques d'État », in *La Pensée*, 151, 1970.

generateur. Dans ce contexte, le lieu ou la culture se place concide avec l'ensemble des mecanismes qui servent a articuler les echanges et les liens entre les domaines de la production, tant materielle que langagiere. Isoler le moment ideologique dans un contexte culturel specifique signifie alors focaliser les pratiques sociales qui permettent a un sujet de se positionner a l'interieur d'un champ discursif specifique, regle par un ensemble donne de codes de reference, qui sont a leur tour lies a une conjoncture historique localisee et localisable. Hall envisageait par la une reformulation du probleme originairesment pose par Marx, c'est-a-dire le probleme de la formation de l'ideologie, qui ne consistait pas a se demander comment l'ideologie voilait la realite, mais plutot a se demander comment l'ideologie etait la facon selon laquelle le sujet pensait sa position a l'interieur d'une formation sociale donnee.

98 Mais c'est grace a la notion gramscienne d'hegemonie que Hall a pense pouvoir susciter un programme de recherche capable d'articuler le rapport qui relie la dimension culturelle a celle du conflit social. Meme lorsque Hall aura etendu l'horizon de ses references, grace notamment a une confrontation avec la pensee d'auteurs comme Foucault ou Derrida, la notion d'hegemonie demeurera toujours centrale dans l'articulation de son discours theorique. Pour Hall la notion d'hegemonie rend possible en premier lieu la pensee de la place de l'imbrication de codes culturels donnees, disponibles grace a l'interaction sociale, avec les representations du monde social qui sont produites par les individus et les groupes d'une facon consciente – problematique qui n'aurait pas pu etre abordee avec l'aide du structuralisme althusserien. En second lieu, la notion d'hegemonie explique pourquoi la culture n'est jamais un champ conflictuel qui refilete d'une facon automatique et mecanique les appartenances de classe. Ce que Hall vise en utilisant la notion d'hegemonie c'est l'ensemble des operations qui permettent d'organiser et gerer le consensus, de forcer le conflit entre interets sociaux opposes de telle facon que les interets de ceux qui detiennent le pouvoir puissent etre percus comme les interets de la collectivite – et tout ca sans recourir a la propagande occulte ou a des moyens de coercion, mais seulement en determinant l'agenda de ce qui est pertinent, utile, opportun. On peut alors definir comme hegemonique la position qui reussit a encadrer les representations partagees et a exclure les alternatives possibles ou a presenter ces dernieres comme des variations internes de l'agenda hegemonique. Cela dit, il en ressort que la notion d'hegemonie n'a pas la fonction d'expliquer comment une classe exerce son pouvoir sur l'autre; plutot, elle explique grace a quel reseau d'alliances et de strategies un ensemble donne de significations (un discours donne, pourrait-on dire en utilisant l'expression foucauldienne) sert a

legitimer une relation de domination. Mais ce qui interesse surtout Hall c'est la mobilite des alliances, des strategies et des articulations qu'on peut envisager en utilisant la notion d'hegemonie.

Etant donne que la notion d'hegemonie ne sert pas a determiner d'avance comment le conflit social se developpera, elle n'est douee en apparence que d'un faible pouvoir heuristique. Toutefois, la position gramscienne de Hall n'a rien a voir avec une theorie de la societe qui aboutirait necessairement a une explication deterministe de l'action sociale. Rien ne peut assurer la reussite d'un mouvement de lutte dont le but est de tirer profit de la relative mobilite de l'ordre symbolique qui gere les representations collectives. L'invention des nouvelles strategies identitaires par des groupes minoritaires en fournit un bon exemple. Cette strategie peut utiliser des modeles racialisés qui ont ete crees par le discours dominant et que les groupes minoritaires plient vers une constellation de significations nouvelles, ou ce qui porte la marque de la marginalisation et de l'exclusion se renverse pour devenir signe d'authenticite voire d'orgueil. Mais si cette constellation peut d'une part ramener a une volonte d'auto-affirmation, dont le but est de parvenir a une meilleure integration (integration a entendre comme acquisition des droits auparavant nies ou comme possibilite d'accéder aux ressources), elle peut, d'autre part, envisager la creation d'un espace separe, qui temoigne plutot de la volonte de s'opposer d'une facon radicale a ce qui est percu comme un geste imperialiste, violent, expression toujours identique d'une culture euroamericaine qu'il convient de refuser globalement. Hall ne cache pas son penchant pour la premiere forme de strategie identitaire – dans ses analyses on ne trouvera jamais aucune prise de position assimilable a celle de ceux qui voient dans les groupes minoritaires en tant que tels les porteurs de valeurs *per se* alternatives a ceux de la culture dominante. On dirait alors que la reussite theorique des CS se joue entierement dans la possibilite de fournir une topographie de la mobilite des strategies identitaire – ce n'est pas grande chose, si on veut, mais c'est suffisant pour mesurer la portee d'un mouvement de pense qui est surtout ne pour montrer comment les individus essayent de transformer leur position en articulant les codes symboliques qu'on appelle habituellement «culture».

Après avoir situe les CS par rapport a la tradition de ce que Perry Anderson a appelle le «marxisme occidental», il faut voir maintenant dans quelle mesure les CS ont partage la reception de la «French Theory» qui a commence a se developper dans le milieu intellectuel anglo-saxon a partir des annees soixantedix. Il est bien connu que les Etats-Unis se sont montres tres accueillant envers tout ce qui venait de France – notamment ce qui relevait de ce qu'on a appelle

ensuite la «*postmodern theory*». En Angleterre, par contre, on a opposé une fière résistance à l'introduction dans le milieu intellectuel de la French Theory (une opposition qui, dans le milieu académique, relève de la présence très forte de la tradition analytique). Les raisons qui ont amené Stuart Hall à s'opposer à la « vague postmoderne » étaient plutôt de nature politique. Pour Hall, une théorie du pouvoir comme celle de Foucault aurait eu du mal à expliquer le changement social: le pouvoir dont Foucault parle, lui apparaissait comme un monstre tentaculaire à quoi il est presque impossible d'échapper. L'opposition à la pensée de Derrida était, si tente que cela soit possible, encore plus accentuée. Derrida n'aurait été que le champion d'une théorie qui avait désormais renoncé à toute forme de critique, étant donné – selon cette interprétation – que la déconstruction ne se donne comme objectif que le démontage d'un corpus textuel ou l'on trouve réfléchi la totalité du monde, mais qui a perdu toute référence à la dimension de la praxis. Ce qu'on trouve dans cette façon d'interpréter d'une part la pensée de Foucault, de l'autre celle de Derrida, est la trace des malentendus très répandus ailleurs. Mais à partir des années quatre-vingt-dix (et même avant par rapport à Foucault) le rapport de Hall avec la philosophie française de la différence se modifie sensiblement. On peut ici bien parler d'un revirement. En ce qui concerne la pensée de Foucault, Hall en utilise tous les éléments dont il a besoin pour articuler une réflexion sur ce que les sujets mettent en œuvre pour négocier leur position identitaire. La recherche de Foucault s'est toujours efforcée de poser la question suivante: «Comment le sujet peut-il dire le vrai sur lui-même?»⁸ Et c'est pour répondre à cette question que Foucault a interrogé les différents régimes de vérité par rapport auxquels le sujet se place – placement du sujet qui peut aussi assumer la forme d'un déplacement dans le cas où le sujet réussit à gérer d'une façon qui lui est favorable le positionnement de la frontière (réelle, imaginaire ou langagière) entre les structures de pouvoir et le lieu habité par le sujet même. Or, si Foucault a toujours dirigé son attention plutôt vers l'entrelacement des formes de rationalité et des pratiques de domination, Hall essaie de voir comment les sujets peuvent s'introduire eux-mêmes entre les interstices de cet entrelacement. Deux expressions souvent utilisées par Hall nous permettent de comprendre le sens de ce que Hall envisage ici. La première expression est celle d'«*articulation*». Par là, Hall entend la suture entre les discours qui ont la fonction de produire les positionnements spécifiques en vertu desquels les sujets seront placés dans la

8 M. Foucault, « Structuralisme et poststructuralisme », in Id., *Dits et écrits II. 1976-1988*, éd. par D. Defert et F. Ewald, Gallimard, Paris 2001, p. 12 69-70.

hierarchie sociale, ou classes a l'interieur de tel ou tel ordre du discours, et les pratiques qui produisent les sujets en tant que cibles d'un interet institutionnel – ou mieux d'une prise en charge institutionnelle, je dirais, pour souligner ici le fait qu'il s'agit d'un ensemble de pratiques qui visent a la «formation» de la subjectivite. Cette suture est le lieu ou l'identite se met en scene, se deploie, se donne a voir comme structure performative qui garantit le fait que le sujet peut etre reconnu ou identifie. Tout cela permet de concevoir l'identite comme performance, c'est-a-dire comme acte langagier ou comportemental qui fixe l'identite posterieurement (*nachtraglich*) a sa mise en scene par le sujet. (Et on peut bien s'apercevoir ici du fait que Hall a su mettre a profit la lecture de Foucault accomplie par Judith Butler). Et si l'identite est quelque chose qui survient apres, c'est-a-dire en consequence d'un acte qui lui donne le lieu pour venir a l'expression – ou, plus simplement, qui lui donne lieu – alors l'identite cesse d'etre la marque que le sujet porterait gravee sur lui meme en le rendant reconnaissable une fois pour toutes. Pour exprimer tout cela avec d'autres mots: c'est qui est toujours donne, selon Hall, c'est l'ensemble des representations collectives qui, sous forme d'annonces autorises, delimitent l'espace ou le sujet peut «se mouvoir», peut etendre son rayon d'action ; en meme temps, ce qui n'est pas donne une fois pour toutes, c'est la facon selon laquelle le sujet s'approprie telle ou telle constellation identitaire donnee.

Il y a une autre notion qui nous aide a comprendre l'utilisation creative de l'heritage foucauldienne mise en ŷuvre par Hall. C'est la notion d'«agency» – un mot anglais que l'on peut traduire par «capacite d'agir». (Il faut rappeler le fait que la notion d'agency a connu une expansion tres forte a l'interieur des sciences humaines de langue anglaise, et que, a chaque fois, elle s'est enrichie de nouvelles significations, devenant de plus en plus «dense»). L'«agency» ne decrit pas simplement l'importance de la dimension subjective de l'action – pas plus qu'il ne s'agit d'une notion dont l'utilisation vise a restaurer la centralite du sujet (ecrit avec un «S» majuscule) en tant que pole de reference de l'analyse sociale. En traitant la question de l'«agency» Hall met plutot en evidence la possibilite qu'il y ait dans l'espace d'action du sujet de la place pour la resistance, pour un contre-mouvement oppose a la logique dominante. Toujours interesse par la description de la dimension conflictuelle de la societe contemporaine en tant qu'espace d'opposition entre groupes subordonnes et groupes dominants, Hall place le lieu du sujet dans une dimension dont les frontieres sont mouvantes, selon que le sujet peut negocier son rapport avec les representations collectives qui ont la fonction de gerer les differents positionnements subjectifs au niveau symbolique. Etroitement liee a la notion de «negotiation»,

la notion «d'*agency*» suggere alors qu'il y a toujours la possibilite, pour les acteurs sociaux, de mettre en question la cage qui les enferme en empechant une utilisation mobile et creative de leur positionnement identitaire.

102 Par rapport a Derrida, il faut dire que Hall, dans la derniere phase de sa reflexion, se montre plus proche des buts poursuivis par la deconstruction. Meme si Derrida n'a jamais voulu renoncer au caractere specifiquement philosophique de son travail, il n'en est pas moins vrai que la deconstruction se voulait effectivement une facon de questionner l'opposition recue entre theorie et pratique. Le resultat est connu: l'integralite du travail conduit par Derrida sur le marges de la textualite philosophique s'est de plus en plus configuree comme une pratique d'écriture, dont le but etait de permettre au texte philosophique d'heberger un desir de justice qui doit etre concu comme la condition de possibilite de toute action ethiquement plausible. Ayant alors compris que la thematisation du jeux de la difference n'avait rien a voir avec une quelconque apologie de l'indifferencie, Hall a bien utilise la notion derridienne de difference pour doter de consistance historique – ou d'épaisseur historique – les representations collectives en vertu desquelles a lieu soit le positionnement identitaire des sujets, soit la negociation des memes structures identitaires. Inaccessible a soi meme selon une pleine transparence, le sujet se rapporte a un ensemble donne des representations qui sont de part en part traversees par la difference. Pour comprendre cet aspect, il faut eviter de comparer l'enracinement du sujet a l'interieur d'une tradition culturelle ou historique avec l'appartenance a un lieu donne ou sont heberges des significations qui peuvent etre cataloguees ou classees. Le sujet habite le lieu qu'il definira comme son lieu «propre» plutot selon la forme d'un deplacement, et cela releve du fait que ladite «appartenance culturelle» n'est que l'effet d'un systeme de couples de significations opposees. Un positionnement qui implique l'identification avec la «culture» hegemonique ou dominante est en meme temps le resultat d'une exclusion par rapport a ce que la position hegemonique place dans son exterieur. Inversement, l'utilisation positive des modeles culturels marques comme subordonnes presuppose toujours une contamination par la «culture dominante». En d'autres termes, il n'y a pas de «purete» dans les enjeux identitaires qui jalonnent la lutte pour la reconnaissance dans les societes contemporaines: ce que Hall s'efforce de decrire est un mouvement d'allers et retours entre les constructions identitaires qui se veulent fixes, ou au moins fixables, et l'alterite qui hante le lieu percu et nomme comme «propre».

Pour conclure, si la thematisation foucauldienne du rapport entre formes de rationalite et formes de domination a ete declinee par Hall de facon a pouvoir

être conçue comme théorie de la négociation identitaire, c'est grâce à Derrida que Hall parvient à concevoir comme forcément limitée l'espace de manœuvre dont le sujet dispose pour se déplacer en tant que porteur d'une identité reconstruite comme propre.

3. A-t-on besoin des *Cultural Studies*?

Dans cette dernière partie, je voudrais attirer l'attention sur les limites théoriques que les CS présentent si on les considère à partir d'une perspective que l'on pourrait appeler «continentale».

J'ai déjà souligné l'importance du rôle joué par les CS dans le contexte anglo-saxon, qu'il s'agisse de la façon d'utiliser la notion de «culture», ou en tant que facteur d'innovation par rapport à une situation que l'on pourrait bien qualifier de provinciale – au moins pendant les années soixante. Mais si l'on confronte les résultats obtenus dans d'autres contextes sur les mêmes enjeux théoriques, on peut douter que les CS puissent constituer le début d'une nouvelle ère en termes de réflexion critique sur le fait social. Il s'agit d'un doute qui est partagé par tous ceux qui s'opposent à une introduction sans réserve des CS dans le milieu académique de l'Europe continentale. Il s'agit d'un doute d'une certaine mesure légitime, dans la mesure où les porte-paroles des CS se sont lancés dans une croisade qui a l'air d'être d'autant plus provinciale qu'elle est conduite au nom du renouvellement des disciplines traditionnelles. Deux exemples: dans plusieurs instituts de littérature on enregistre la tendance à introduire dans les curricula l'expression «études culturelles» à côté – ou en substitution – de l'expression «études littéraires», comme si la fonction institutionnelle – ou, pire, historique – des vieilles disciplines littéraires était épuisée, comme si faire l'histoire de la littérature en questionnant l'évidence du «canon occidental», ou en questionnant la position féminine dans l'œuvre littéraire qu'on soumet à l'analyse était déjà suffisant pour quitter le lieu institutionnel délimité par l'expression «histoire de la littérature». La situation n'est pas différente dans ces départements des études sociales où l'on se pose souvent en opposition à la sociologie traditionnelle tout simplement en affirmant la tendance à conduire un travail qualitatif ou une approche fortement marquée par la question du genre ou par la question postcoloniale est considérée comme suffisante pour faire changer le statut de la discipline à l'intérieur de laquelle on travaille. Mais je reviendrai à la fin sur cette question de la frontière disciplinaire et sur le statut du travail théorique qui relève de cette frontière – et c'est par là que je formulerai la question de la véritable utilité des CS.

Avant cela, je voudrais d'abord considerer serieusement les reproches faits aux CS par ceux qui pensent que leur introduction dans la discussion continentale n'est qu'une mode. Je commence par l'observation suivante: plusieurs themes de recherche qu'on trouve dans l'agenda des CS etaient presents depuis longtemps en Europe continentale. A partir de 1962, annee de parution de *L'opera aperta*, Umberto Eco a commence a travailler sur la culture de masse, en lui dediant ensuite d'autres ouvrages qui ont jete les fondements d'un parcours de recherche qui reste encore fortement inspire par ces travaux paradigmatiques. En ce qui concerne la problematique de l'ideologie, on avait la possibilite de trouver, dans les nombreux ouvrages de Ferruccio Rossi Landi dedies a cette thematique a partir des annees soixante, une facon de traiter l'entrelacement entre production materielle et production langagiere qui rassemble bien a celle adoptee par Hall – mais je dirais cependant que la philosophie de Rossi Landi,⁹ qui a voulu se presenter comme une reflexion generale sur les moyens de reproduction sociale qui utilise a la fois la pensee de Marx et les outils theoriques de la semiologie et de l'analyse du langage de provenance anglosaxonne, possede un degre de rigueur qu'on chercherait en vain chez Stuart Hall. Mais la chose la plus frappante, pour celui qui adopte l'Italie comme point d'observation exterieur sur les CS anglaises, c'est la presence tres forte en Italie de la thematique d'origine gramscienne du rapport entre culture dominante et culture subalterne – et la aussi, deja a partir des annees soixante. Il s'agissait d'un theme qui traversait plusieurs domaines disciplinaires et milieux culturels, et qui trouve l'expression la plus haute dans les oeuvres litteraires et cinematographiques de Pier Paolo Pasolini.

La discussion a ete declenchee par les travaux d'un anthropologue, dont la pensee avait connue une certaine audience meme ici en France puisque ses livres principaux ont ete traduits en francais. Il s'agit de Ernesto De Martino. Comme l'historien des religions Raffaele Pettazzoni, avec lequel il etait lie non seulement d'amitie, mais aussi d'une profonde affinite intellectuelle, De Martino avait pratique en meme temps deux disciplines, a savoir l'histoire des religions et l'anthropologie culturelle – deux disciplines qui ne se laissent pas effectivement separer, et ce pour des raisons epistemologiques bien eclairees, soit par Pettazzoni soit par De Martino. Le champ de travail de De Martino en tant qu'anthropologue etait constitue par la societe paysanne du Sud.¹⁰ Grace

9 Cf. F. Rossi Landi, *Il linguaggio come lavoro e come mercato*, Bompiani, Milano 1968; Id., *Semiotica e ideologia*, Bompiani, Milano 1972.

10 Cf. E. De Martino, *Le monde magique* (1948), Synthelabo, Paris 1999; Id., *Italie du Sud et magie* (1959), Synthelabo, Paris 1999; Id., *La terre du remord* (1961), Synthelabo, Paris 1999.

a plusieurs sejours en Basilicata, il a pu etudier de pres une formation sociale ou la resistance a toute modernisation etait le symptome d'une condition de subalternite presque absolue. Inversement, l'approche de De Martino presente des traits qui marquent tres nettement la distance entre sa position et celle des autres auteurs qui travaillaient dans les science sociales a cette epoque. Il n'avait pas de nostalgie romantique pour un monde perdu, marque par l'authenticite et qui aurait ete porteur des valeurs alternatives par rapport a la culture dominante, et il ne se rapprochait pas non plus de la «culture subalterne» avec l'attitude du «civilisateur». S'il avait toujours plaide en faveur d'une integration des «cultures subalternes», il l'avait fait en remarquant que «integration» voulait dire pour lui acces aux ressources, et d'abord a la ressource premiere qui est la liberte d'agir selon un plan de vie choisi librement – une ressource qui est niee d'une facon absolue si on vit sous des conditions de degradation totale comme les paysans du Sud des annees cinquante (mais la situation n'est pas tres differente pour les «subordonnes» d'aujourd'hui). C'est surtout dans le domaine methodologique que la reflexion de De Martino se montre interessante: en se rapprochant des mondes subalternes pour les etudier, De Martino a toujours remis en question sa propre position comme chercheur dont l'origine est celle du monde privilegie, bourgeois. A partir de la, il a developpe une methode d'observation, qu'il a appele «ethnocentrisme critique», dont le but etait de permettre un mouvement d'oscillation entre le niveau de l'observation et le niveau partage par l'observateur meme – c'est-a-dire le niveau ou l'anthropologue se pose comme sujet du discours sur l'autre. Bien avant les discussions declenchees par *Writing Culture*,¹¹ De Martino avait soutenu la these selon laquelle la seule objectivite possible pour l'anthropologue consistait a meler, dans sa propre ecriture ethnographique, ce qui releve de son positionnement comme sujet du discours et ce qui constitue l'irreductible alterite de l'«objet» soumis a l'observation.

Meme tres bref, ce resume de la pensee de De Martino devrait etre suffisant pour expliquer les raisons de ceux qui ont du mal a accueillir sans reserve tous ce qui vient d'Outre-Manche. Mais, a ce point, il faut pourtant se poser la question suivante: s'il est vrai que De Martino a etendu et enrichi les considerations gramsciennes sur les subalternes d'une facon tres articulee, et s'il est vrai que De Martino a montre qu'il possedait une conscience methodologique tres avancee pour tout ce qui concerne la question de la position du sujet auto-

11 J. Clifford, G.E. Marcus, *Writing Culture: the politics and poetics of ethnography*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1986.

rise a parler au nom de l'autre, en évoquant son nom dans une discussion dont l'objet sont les CS ne risquons-nous, au moins d'une façon subreptice, d'avoir une prétention qu'on pourrait bien définir anachronique – c'est à dire la prétention qui consisterait à reprocher à Stuart Hall et aux autres membres du Centre de Birmingham de s'être limités à lire Gramsci et de n'avoir pas pris en considération le travail théorique de celui qui plus que tous les autres auteurs qui travaillaient dans le domaine des sciences sociales a su tirer le majeur profit de la dialectique entre culture dominante et culture subordonnée énoncée par Gramsci? J'ai évoqué le risque d'être aussi incorrect envers Stuart Hall, pour mettre en évidence un autre risque, qui n'est pas moins grave. Il s'agit du risque lié au fait que en allant à la recherche des positions théoriques qu'on peut rapprocher parmi celles qui sont partagées par les CS anglaises, on oublie la spécificité même de CS, spécificité qui relève du fait que les CS anglaises n'ont pas été – et ne sont pas – quelque chose qu'on pourrait comparer avec une nouvelle discipline. C'est bien au niveau disciplinaire qu'on peut comparer différentes traditions de recherche, parce que c'est seulement à ce niveau là qu'une distinction entre méthodes et présupposés théoriques acquiert sa pleine signification. Les disciplines ont une histoire, c'est-à-dire un enracinement institutionnel, et la comparaison se fait toujours entre les différents enracinements historiques d'une discipline. Les CS ont plutôt constitué l'apparition d'un nouveau regard sur la complexité sociale, un regard dont la fonction première a voulu être celle de contraindre les sciences sociales à considérer que toute interprétation des conflits sociaux serait bien incomplète si on oubliait que les sujets impliqués dans le conflit sont toujours de sujets qui se constituent en tant que tels à partir d'un positionnement spécifique par rapport à la différence de classe, à la différence culturelle et à la différence de genre. Et si on mesure à cette aune la portée théorique de ce regard, les CS cessent de paraître seulement comme une anthropologie batarde des mondes contemporains, pour devenir un champ discursif où toutes les sciences humaines peuvent trouver des nouvelles racines.

D'abord, il y a la question postcoloniale en tant que questionnement du sujet moderne. Nous avons d'une part le discours de l'anthropologie, discipline qui n'a pas seulement contribué à éclairer le fait qu'il n'y a pas de formations identitaires qui puissent prétendre à une pureté essentielle (et je ne pense pas seulement ici aux travaux de Fredrik Barth, mais surtout à ceux de Jean-Loup Amselle), mais qui a su tirer de cela une conclusion très importante, c'est-à-dire qu'une impureté nécessaire, constitutive, marque le lieu du sujet qui parle au nom de l'autre. D'autre part, toutes les autres disciplines qui ont pour objet

les formations sociales contemporaines persistent à penser que l'on peut pratiquer un discours scientifique sans mettre en question la position du sujet qui parle. En se conduisant d'une telle façon, elles partagent *de facto* un préjugé qui est bien répandu dans la tradition occidentale moderne et qui consiste à dire que les catégories par lesquelles la modernité réfléchit sur son propre statut historique et culturel sont des catégories qui peuvent être utilisées pour décrire l'humain en général. Une perspective postcoloniale pourrait bien montrer que chaque catégorie issue de la modernité réfléchit le lien entre l'auto-affirmation accomplie par le sujet moderne et, au même temps, le processus de colonisation qui l'accompagne cette auto-affirmation. Or, cela n'aboutit aucunement à une relativisation des catégories qu'on utilise dans l'analyse du fait social ou historique. Non, ce qui est en question ici est plutôt une politisation de la pratique théorique, politisation qui a pour but la mise en question de la prétendue évidence avec laquelle on utilise les concepts fondamentaux des sciences humaines. Adopter une position relativiste veut dire détacher l'universalité des concepts qu'on utilise pour décrire l'histoire ou la société contemporaine. Il s'agirait d'une opération contradictoire, parce qu'on ne peut conduire aucune opération historique ou de critique sociale sans presupposer l'universalité des concepts mis en place pour définir le champ discursif au sein duquel on travaille. Cela dit, nous pouvons approcher la position postcoloniale d'une façon tout simplement plus correcte. Il s'agit de mettre en relation l'universalité des concepts utilisés par les sciences humaines – universalité que personne, je le répète, ne pourrait mettre en question – avec leur caractère local, avec leur historicité en tant que concepts issus de la tradition de la modernité occidentale. Mais il faut faire attention: il ne s'agit pas par là d'étendre tout simplement la portée de l'autoreflexion qui fonde le discours des toutes sciences humaines, au moins à partir de Dilthey. L'enjeu ici pourrait plutôt être exprimé par les questions suivantes: comment faire pour que mon action théorique puisse rendre compte du caractère politique de son propre geste? Comment faire pour rendre visible le lien entre la pureté de ma réflexion et l'impureté de l'enjeu institutionnel qui en surdétermine la mise en place? Et même si c'est d'une façon pas encore tout à fait satisfaisante, les auteurs qui travaillent à partir de la question postcoloniale ont précisément essayé de pratiquer une réflexion sur la contemporanéité qui veut tenir compte de tout ça.

En second lieu, il y a la question postcoloniale en tant que programme doué de pertinence à l'intérieur de ce qu'on appelle la «politique culturelle». Par cela, on envisage le problème constitué par le manque de diffusion d'une conscience postcoloniale au sein du discours public. Les travaux significatifs sur les for-

mations identitaires contemporaines en tant que formations identitaires qui se sont constituées à l'intérieur du rapport de domination colonial ne manquent pas – ce qui vaut aussi bien pour la tradition européenne ou nord-américaine, que pour «le reste du monde». Toutefois, le débat public a du mal à s'approprier les résultats issus de la recherche dans ce champ. Ce qui reste à faire ici c'est un énorme travail d'élaboration du refoulement. On peut se douter que les étudiants allemands éprouvent de l'horreur pour le génocide des Herero accompli au début du XXe siècle – étant donné que l'histoire coloniale allemande n'est pas vraiment présente dans les curricula scolaires d'aujourd'hui. En Italie, la discussion sur le colonialisme italien et sur sa brutalité (camps de concentration dans les colonies, réduction des populations en état de semi-esclavage, utilisation de gaz pendant la guerre coloniale de 1936–37, pour limiter la liste à l'essentiel) pourrait se baser sur les recherches très exhaustives accomplies par Angelo Del Boca¹² – et, depuis dix ans, sur les travaux d'autres historiens qui ont contribué à étendre le champ d'analyse. Mais il s'agit d'un champ de recherche qui n'a pas eu aucune résonance dans le domaine du débat public. En France, la persistance du modèle républicain empêche d'une part la diffusion du multiculturalisme, qui se pose comme une forme d'éthnicisation – ou même de racialisation – de la différence culturelle: selon le modèle multiculturaliste, il faut placer la valeur des différentes « cultures » devant tout autre processus historique de différenciation et cela à partir de la présupposition selon laquelle chaque « culture » n'est qu'une manifestation spécifique de la même attitude humaine face à la « nature ». Mais, d'autre part, c'est précisément cette persistance du républicanisme qui empêche une discussion portant soit sur le passé colonial français, soit sur l'entrelacement entre différence de classe et différence culturelle dans la France d'aujourd'hui. Comment les travaux recueillis par Blanchard, Bancel et Lemaire le montrent très bien,¹³ l'idée républicaine cache un versant obscur, qu'il faut nécessairement porter à la lumière sans craindre d'aboutir par cela à quelque « tyrannie de la pénitence ».¹⁴ Il en va de l'avenir même de l'idée républicaine, à laquelle il faudra bien encore revenir si l'on veut poser la question de la différence culturelle sans renoncer à l'universalisme de la raison.

12 Cf. son dernier livre: A. Del Boca, *Italiani brava gente? Un mito duro a morire*, Neri Pozza, Vicenza 2005.

13 Cf. P. Blanchard, N. Bancel, S. Lemaire ; *La fracture coloniale. La société française au prisme de l'héritage colonial*, La Découverte, Paris 2005.

14 Cf. P. Bruckner, *La tyrannie de la pénitence. Essai sur le masochisme en Occident*, Grasset, Paris 2006.

TECHNICS, NIHILISM, TRUTH

I am honored to introduce some central features of my philosophical discourse.¹ Before I begin, two caveats are necessary. What is the relevance of a discourse that is *mine*, that is to say, the theoretical product of “someone,” of an “individual” – or even a social group? What *truth* can it carry? Further, is the meaning that our culture attaches to “truth” and its denial really unarguable? I would also like to add that the “main features” of a philosophical discourse always refer back to its *basic features*, which, however, at this meeting will remain in the background. 109

The Age of Technics

We often hear that ours is the age of technics.² Yet, we are rarely made aware of what lies at the foundation of such a statement. The key cultural currents

1 This lecture was delivered at the Italian Embassy in Moscow, on December 11, 1998 and published by “Annali di Italianistica. Italian Critical Theory”, vol. 29, 2011, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, USA.

2 The Italian pair *tecnica/tecnologia* and the German *Technik/Technologie* carry a distinction that is nowadays absent in English, since both pairs are usually translated as “technology.” Yet, in order for the reader to follow the author’s hints and references to *techne*, we have used “technics” for the technical domain at large and “technology” for the specific combination of techniques, technical apparatus, and the sciences in the modern age. Heidegger himself, in his “Die Frage nach der Technik,” in the words of his English translator points out that “*techne* is the name not only for the activities and skills of the craftsman, but also for the arts of the mind and the fine arts” (*The Question*, 13) so that his *Question* was *Concerning Technics* at large rather than limited to *Technology*. For an explanation on the breach between English and other European languages on the term *technology*, see Schatzberg (*Translator’s note*).

of today's Western tradition aim at using technics to achieve their ends. This is the goal of capitalism, democracy, communism, and Christianity – after all, charity has now a worldwide quality; it reaches out to the poor all over the Earth and therefore cannot but make use of technics. All these cultural currents share in the belief that modern science-guided technics are simply a tool. It has become sort of a cliché to say that the tool is good if well-used, and bad if misused. Technics, per se, would have no end goal: it would receive it from the outside. Yet the belief that we use technics as a mere tool is illusory.

110 The cultural currents of the Western tradition still alive today are in conflict with one another. Until the time when capitalism, democracy, and Christianity had a common enemy, namely, the Soviet Union's real socialism, the dissent among these temporary allies remained in the background. Since the collapse of real socialism, however, the conflict among these cultural currents has finally come to the fore: capitalism refuses to be hindered by the principles of Christian solidarity and democracy; democracy opposes unruly capitalism and attempts by the Churches to turn religious dogmas into the State's laws. The Catholic Church, in turn, opposes a capitalism aiming at profit rather than at society's "common good", and a democracy in which "freedom" is separate from "truth"; this is clearly shown by the Roman Pontiff's latest encyclicals.

But precisely as a result of this conflict, each of these cultural currents is forced to preserve and increase the power of the tool it uses to prevail over the other, that is, each of them is forced to preserve and increase the power of the technological apparatus it controls. In a sort of paradoxical consequence, each of these cultural currents must prevent its own values and aims from hampering and weakening the power of the technological tool through which it plans to realize them. When this happens – and this is exactly what is happening today – the cultural currents of the Western tradition are on their way to giving up, more or less explicitly and consciously, the achievement of their aims, for now their primary aim becomes the lower-growth of the technologies at their disposal. From being a means, technics becomes the end goal; vice versa, the goal of the cultural currents of the Western tradition becomes simply the means.

Capitalism and state socialism have used the scientific-technological apparatus to prevail one over the other. Marxist philosophy, however, has hampered and weakened the power of the technological apparatus available to state socialism far more deeply than capitalism ever did. In order to survive, Marxism was thus eventually compelled to set out to save its tool (which was and still is well stocked up in a nuclear arsenal capable of destroying the planet). State so-

cialism, that is, had to relinquish gradually itself in order to survive: the might of that technological tool that today allows Russia and the other former Soviet Union republics to be among the privileged countries in the World, despite their economic straits, has become the goal of these countries.

Yet the fate of real socialism is also shared by capitalism, democracy, Christianity, and not only them. In different forms and at different times, each of these cultural currents will have to relinquish itself to survive in the battle against its opponents. It will have to take as its goal the unlimited increase of power of the scientific-technological apparatus it manages. Technics, on the other hand, does not lack its own goal; its end is precisely the unlimited growth of its power. Humankind's supreme aim is therefore becoming the end goal technics holds for itself, which is not the achievement of a particular aim at the exclusion of others (a capitalist world, for instance, excludes a Christian world), but the unlimited growth of its capacity to achieve end goals. This unlimited growth is bound to become man's end goal. Technics, however, can become Western civilization's highest end only because *truth* fades out, and with it disappears the truth of the end goals.

The Law of Episteme

The Greeks were the first to think of the truth in terms of indisputable knowledge, which imposes itself on every event and every becoming and which, for its ability to impose itself, they call *episteme*. *Steme* is coined on the verb *histasthai*, "to stand," "to impose oneself". *Epi-steme* means *epi-histasthai*, that is, to stand "upon" (*epi*), to impose oneself on every becoming, "on" every time and "on" every event. *Episteme* is the supreme Law: everything must conform to it and nothing can escape it, not only everything that exists, but also everything that does not yet exist and does not exist anymore. It is, first of all, the truth of the episteme that says to each being, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." The truth of the episteme shows the indisputable, irrevocable, immutable Meaning of Everything. Throughout Western history, all the Immutables are fashioned within this truth as well as every shape of the divine and the eternal.

But because the episteme of the truth imposes itself on the becoming of the world and dominates it, it becomes the first form of unconditional *acknowledgment* that Becoming exists. Beginning from the Greeks, and for a good part of Western history, although in different contexts and manners, Becoming gets to be thought of and lived as the emerging of things from nothingness and

their returning to nothingness. In Western culture, the becoming of beings, thus understood, starts soon enough to be acknowledged as the fundamental and indisputable evidence. The episteme of the truth intends to combine the evidence of the Becoming with the evidence of the eternal.

The episteme of the truth is, therefore, soul and foundation of the entire Western tradition: not only of its philosophical tradition, but also of its entire cultural tradition, and thus of Christianity, of Western artistic expression, and even of the way modern science from Galilei up to the nineteenth century has configured itself. The episteme of the truth is soul and foundation of the social, political, and economic institutions of Western tradition. Every aspect of Western tradition, whether action or thought, makes reference to the settled, indisputable meaning of the wholeness of Being and to its articulation in the eternal laws that rule the becoming of the world.

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As long as the truth lives on – and man's actions aspire to conform themselves to the truth – it is impossible for technics to become man's highest end goal. The means is indeed governed by the aim, and is modifiable and replaceable; if truth did have its own aim outside itself, it, too, would become just a means, that is, something controlled by the non-truth, something modifiable and replaceable, and therefore it would not be the truth.

Yet the truth of the episteme fades out, inevitably, and, thus, inevitably the traditional civilization of the West fades out as well, and with it, the greatness and richness of its content. For this reason, Nietzsche speaks of the "death of God". Western tradition has entrusted the truth with the task of making thinkable the becoming of the world and making bearable the pain and anguish generated by the Becoming. The immutable knowledge of the immutable is the first great form of cure devised by the West. The other is modern technics. But truth – and the eternal stated in it – eventually makes the very becoming that lies at its foundation unthinkable, and therefore eventually causes the existence of man to be even more riddled with anxiety. The cure, Nietzsche will say, was worse than the disease.

It is the philosophical discourse of the last century and a half that has brought about the collapse of the episteme of the truth. According to the philosophical tradition, the evidence of the becoming implies the *existence* of the eternal. Modern philosophical discourse, by contrast, shows that the evidence of the Becoming necessarily implies the *non-existence* of any form of the eternal and of episteme. Yet only seldom is the philosophical discourse of our time conscious of its invincible strength. It can be compared to a man swaying a sword without being aware of its power. If we really wanted to comprehend the

nature of such invincibility, we should dig into the substratum that lies at the foundation of such discourse. Today, however, we will be able to highlight only its basic structure.

The substratum of modern philosophical discourse, in its essence, speaks thus: the episteme is the supreme Law. Not only each thing that exists, but also all that is still nothing and all that is now nothing must conform to it. Not even the nothingness can escape this Law. The things that are in the nothingness, too, are subjected to the Law, for they too, while beginning to be or trying to be, are subjected to it and cannot inhabit a place where the Law of the episteme is no longer of value.

This means that the truth of the episteme *anticipates* the being of every event, it predicts the being of every new event, it fills every blank, it fills the blanks of that nothing from which things come and to which things return. The truth of the episteme *nullifies the Becoming* – that very Becoming which the truth of the episteme has hailed as irrefutable evidence and of which the episteme itself is first evidence and key acknowledgment in Western history. From the very beginning, the West comes to view Becoming as the process by which things come from and return to nothingness. The Law of the episteme, however, turns nothingness into a mere listener, so to speak, and a servant of Being; by filling the blank of nothingness this Law ends up denying the very Becoming of which the Law itself is the primary acknowledgment.

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By contrast, the basic substratum of modern philosophical discourse shows a *radical loyalty* to the evidence of the Becoming, and therefore denies every episteme, every eternal, and every immutable, which, in an effort to grant meaning to Becoming and make it bearable, ends up nullifying and denying it. Although for the episteme Becoming is absolute and fundamental evidence, the episteme ends up making Becoming unthinkable and sheer appearance. And the unavoidable denial of every episteme is, at the same time, the repudiation of every political and ethical praxis, which aims at conforming man's action to the truth of the episteme. In its basic substratum, the philosophical discourse of our time is therefore the unavoidable repudiation of every type of absolutism and totalitarianism. The defeat of absolutism and totalitarianism that takes place at a practical level is made possible by their being unthinkable and by the more or less guarded manifestation of this unthinkability.

On the other hand, although the truth of the episteme is impossible, its decline is still an ongoing process. This truth, and the civilization that developed around it, is a large dead leaf, which, however, is still hanging from the branch of the Western tree. Christianity seems to be growing stronger today, but it has

transcribed the form and content of the truth of the episteme in its modalities of faith. (The Christian concept of a creation out of nothing would be unthinkable without the Greeks' reflections on nothingness; the God of Christian tradition would be unthinkable without the Greeks' notion of the eternal. The "certitude," the "unquestionable," and the "truth" of the Christian faith are all categories Christianity inherited from Greek thought.)

With the decline of the truth of the episteme, the cultural currents of the past and of the present retain only their practical power, despite their attempt to portray themselves still as absolute truths and to present their end goal as the conforming of the human praxis to absolute truth. But cracks in the cultural currents of the past are beginning to surface. The worth of a cultural or social current is no longer based on its truth, but coincides with the degree and strength of its power, that is, its practical ability to prevail over the other forces and force its aim upon them. Modern science, too, no longer presents itself as an absolute truth, but as a hypothetical-deductive knowledge open to the modification and transformation of its conceptual bylaws.

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Today the supreme form of power is science-guided technics. It is, therefore, inevitable that the face of every other past and present power should exhibit signs of its essential failure to present itself as the absolute truth. And it is also inevitable that when these past and present forces use technics as the most powerful tool to prevail over the other, they end up, because of their will to prevail, subordinating their end goal to the power of technics. Technics, that is, the unlimited growth of the scientific-technical power to achieve aims, becomes the highest goal of Western civilization and now of the entire planet. Capitalism and democracy, too, are destined to become subordinates of technics. We are moving towards a time when technics will no longer be used to create a profit or to preserve the democratic set-up; instead, we create profit or promote democracy to ever increase – that is, until the tool works – the power of technics.

Technics is "inhumane" only when we understand it narrowly. Every cultural form of the West has viewed man as a core force capable of coordinating means in light of the production of end goals. Yet this is also the essential ability of technics, a fact underlined by its physical-mathematical character. To the Western mind, man *is* technics.

Technics is the present form of man's salvation. Today man seeks his own salvation from technics. When a man turns to a savior – God or technics – his aim is his own salvation and he uses the savior as a means. But then, this very same man realizes that since the savior is just a means he owns, the savior is

weak, for He or it partakes of the very same weakness as those who want to be saved. So eventually man identifies his end goal with the savior's power, and his will becomes subordinate to his desire that the savior's will be fulfilled. By now, however, the will is no longer that of a God, but is the will of technics.

The Roots of Anxiety

Neither God nor technics, however, can save man from the nothingness and anxiety that spring from the becoming of the world. The conviction that man and things emerge from and return to nothingness is at the root of Western civilization altogether; it is that civilization's predominant idea. Christianity believes in the immortality of the soul and in the resurrection of the flesh. Yet this victory over nothingness is a free gift from God, who can just as freely annihilate man for, by his nature, man is nothingness ("for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return"); free divine creation alone can turn this nothingness into a being. In the resurrection, indeed, we will be presented with a new world, but the old world – the world where we live and which is at the center of our interests – will be forever obliterated for it will be transfigured into another world. Christianity's optimism and comforting feature are patent. Christianity is also a faith, and a faith is by its very nature subject to doubt. Finally, the destiny of Christianity is intrinsically bound up with the destiny of the truth of the episteme, and the inevitability of the latter's decline is the inevitability of Christianity's decline – and the decline of all the other traditional cultural currents of the West, capitalism and democracy included. Their decline implies their impossibility to remain as the primary aims of taking action; it implies, in fact, their subordination to technics.

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All the great cultural currents of the West view man *qua* man as a being that is ephemeral, short-lived, contingent, temporal, historic, finite, and becoming a mortal being, that is, who is the victim of nothingness. Thus, these currents are at the *root* of and are responsible for the deep anguish of Western man. The epistemic, metaphysical apparatus is doomed to wane into the scientific-technological apparatus; the latter, too, however, tries in vain to disguise and cover the nothingness to which man, within Western civilization, is inexorably doomed. After conjuring up nothingness – the original and essential nothing of all things – the West knows no longer how to defend itself from that nothingness and can only delay its assault. For the masses, the time to realize this situation has already come.

On the shoulders of the meaning that Western thought has attached to Becoming, therefore, rests an enormous burden. Yet ours, perhaps, is also

the time when we can question the soul and, with it, what lies at the roots of Western culture, namely, the meaning that Greek thought has once and for all placed on the becoming of Being. The time may be ripe to challenge the absolute, unconditional evidence we have all along attached to Becoming.

The whole of the Western tradition has been challenged – and has inevitably been destroyed – because of its reliance on the assumption of the evidence of Becoming. On this assumption, Western tradition has erected each and every form of what we call “critical spirit.” The “crisis” that is at the root of the criticality of the “critical spirit” is exactly the transience of certainties, their being crushed by this Becoming. But what is the basis for this assumption? Can this assumption withstand every form of criticism? Can it bear the enormous burden of the West?

My work has, for some time, attempted to answer this question. The answer I have provided, however, can be presented today only allusively, and inevitably will raise more questions than can be answered.

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The Essence of Folly

Becoming, understood as the wavering of an entity between Being and nothingness, is the *ontological* form of an even *more primal* meaning of Becoming, a *pre-ontological* meaning, present since the beginning of man’s journey on Earth and thus dominating also the whole of Eastern culture. From the very beginning and everywhere, Becoming has been understood as *becoming-other*. We must turn our attention to this topic now.

A thing is thought to become only if it becomes *other* than what it is. A house is built only if the building material becomes other than self, which, in this case, is the joining of the material into the joint structure of the house. Time passes only if *before* becomes other than *before* which is *after*. The wood blazes and burns away only if it becomes other than the wood, the ash – or any of the intermediate states between the newly kindled wood and the ash. Becoming is transformation, metamorphosis, becoming-other, precisely. The end of Becoming is other than the beginning of Becoming. The result, namely, the fulfillment of Becoming, is the situation in which the thing that becomes has become other than self, and because it became other than self *is other than self*. Becoming is fulfilled when the thing that becomes, having become other than self, *is other than self*. But then, isn’t a thing that is other than self, in fact, that which is not what it is, the very meaning of the impossible? Isn’t it the very essence of Folly?

However, when we think that Becoming is becoming-other, we also think that the end of Becoming contains only what from the start is other. When we think that the wood becomes ash, we believe that when the wood stops burning; the ash alone exists. The ash is there, the wood is gone. In this belief, where is the impossible and where is Folly?

Even so, when we state that the wood becomes ash, we do not mean *only* that a certain quantity of ash begins to exist. Sure, we do mean this *too*, but not only this. What we mean is also that *it is the wood* that becomes ash, and this is why we think some quantity of ash begins to exist. At the end of the process of burning, we think that *the wood* has become ash, or that *the wood* is *ash*. At the end of the process of burning there is not just the ash, but being ash *on the part of the wood* – and being ash on the part of the wood – means, in fact, that *the wood is ash*, or that something is other than self, is not itself, is not what it is.

Becoming-other is identification of that which is different and differentiation of that which is identical. At the end of the process of becoming other, the different *qua* different is identical, and the identical *qua* identical is different. Now isn't this exactly the impossible, what cannot exist, the true core of Folly? And if this is the way things stand, are we not correct when we state that man has always lived inside Folly, for his belief has always been that becoming is becoming-other, on the part of what becomes?

At this point, one could reply that Hegel has criticized most effectively the principle of non-contradiction; and if becoming-other implies being-other than self on the part of something, this being other is exactly a contradiction, and, in fact, one of the instances of contradiction rejected downright, if in vain, by the principle of non-contradiction.

Nevertheless, there are many shadows hanging over Hegel's criticism of the principle of non-contradiction and of the criticism of the better part of contemporary philosophy. This principle is first of all the principle of the episteme, and as such it is the most radical form of negation and obliteration of Becoming. As Hegel points out, this principle holds determination, in its being identical to itself, steadfast as something absolute that wants to remain outside Becoming; or further, as Nietzsche points out, the principle of non-contradiction identifies different states of Becoming but then reduces the new to old patterns.

For those having faith in Becoming, then, it is necessary to deny the principle of non-contradiction as a principle of the episteme, namely, as negation of Becoming. Yet we can also believe in the existence of becoming-other only if we assume that the thing, which becomes other, is *not* from the very start its own other, and that it can become other than self precisely because

it is not immediately its own other, and needs to not be its other. But that a thing is not its own other is actually the very essence of the principle of non-contradiction.

This principle, therefore, does not have just the value thanks to which it is the principle of the episteme (hence, something to be denied in the name of Becoming); the principle of non-contradiction carries also with it a basic value thanks to which it also belongs to the very essence of Becoming, to the essential framework of Becoming. It enjoys, therefore, the very evidence Western thought has assigned to Becoming. If it is impossible for Western thought to deny Becoming, then it is also impossible for such a thought to deny the primal meaning of the principle of non-contradiction, without which Becoming, as becoming-other, could not exist.

118 *But now we are looking beyond our faith in Becoming*, and thus beyond Western belief in the principle of non-contradiction. As we are suggesting, stating that a thing *becomes* other than what it is means stating that, as a result of its becoming, a thing is other than what it is, or, *is identical* to its own other: it *is* what *is not*. As a result of its becoming, the wood *is* ash (and at the onset of its becoming, where the ash is still wood, the ash *is* wood). Therefore, the belief that things are a becoming-other than self – a belief shared by humanity throughout its history – at the very moment it wants the thing *not* to be other than self (the becoming-other of a thing would, otherwise, be impossible), and at the very moment it professes this act of faith, it in fact undermines its wanting, and by stating that Becoming is becoming-other, it states that the thing, having become its own other, *is* its own other.

Faith in Becoming is thus unable to think and hold steady this not-being-other, that is, this being-self on the part of the thing, which, however, lies at the foundation of this faith. Our faith in Becoming is faith in the existence of the impossible, the absurd, the self-contradictory. It is a faith in the extreme form of Folly, both because it asserts the identity of being and its other, and because, at the same time, it denies and asserts this identity.

All That Shows Itself Is Eternal

Since becoming-other is actually the impossible, becoming-other is not and cannot be something *manifest*; it is not and cannot be something that *appears* and shows itself. It cannot be manifest that the wood is ash; the identity of the different, namely, the becoming of ash on the part of the wood, cannot be manifest. Because the result of Becoming cannot appear, not even Becoming,

understood as a process leading to that result, can appear. Faith in Becoming distorts the genuine face of what appears.

What appears is certainly a becoming, but not a becoming-other. What appears is the sequence of the stages of the world. First appears the unlit wood, then the burning wood, then the glowing wood, then the ash (and all the intermediate stages, which I have outlined). Wood and ash are terms to be taken literally, but they are also metaphors of the life and death of all events. Man, too, is wood that becomes ash. The stages of the world appear gradually. It appears that each stage is none of the other stages; it is not the other than self and itself. Each stage, each instant of the world is necessarily near itself, and does not emerge from self to become other.

As a result, it does not become that other than self which is nothingness, just as nothingness does not become other than self, which is being. Every state, every instant of the world is *eternal*. It is thus necessary that the becoming of the world be both the arising of the eternal in the eternal horizon of appearing and their parting from such horizon. With every stage and every instant of the world – as well as with their contents – it comes into line with the nature of the sun, which keeps on shining all the same when at dusk and before dawn it hides from our eyes.

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The horizon of appearing is the totality of what shows itself. All that shows itself is eternal, or rather, is near itself and does not emerge from self to become other. Also, Becoming is the arising of the eternal in the manifest wholeness of the eternal as well as their emerging from this wholeness. Becoming is possible only as becoming of the eternal, that is, as the eternal making itself present and absent from the manifest wholeness of the eternal.

Non-Folly is the appearance of the endlessness of every being. Not the endlessness of the “eternal return” Nietzsche writes about, where the Folly of emerging from nothingness and returning to nothingness is multiplied to infinity, but the endlessness as impossibility for the entity to be nothingness, hence as the impossibility for being – namely, every stage and every instant of the world – to emerge from and return to nothingness.

Should the eternity of everything appear to humanity, an unprecedented way of inhabiting the Earth would begin to appear. And if “man” is will, a will in fact for something to become other, the decline of becoming-other would be the decline of “man”; that is, it would be the appearance of the “Beyond-Man”, but with an unfathomably different meaning from what this expression has in Nietzsche’s language, where it hints at one of the extreme forms of the will that wants the becoming-other of things.

The Nihilism of the West

Western thought, starting from the Greeks, has understood becoming-other on the part of a thing in an ontological sense, taking it to mean that the thing becomes other only insofar as it first annihilates itself, and insofar as the other first emerges from nothingness. The West thinks that only if the specific form of wood becomes nothingness, then the wood can become ash. It further believes that the ash is the result of becoming ash by the wood only if the specific form of ash emerges from nothingness. But the contradiction of becoming-other is pushed to extremes by this way of thinking and living what we think, for not only the wood becomes one and identifies with its other, which is the ash, but, above all, it becomes one and identifies with its infinitely other, which is nothingness (since nothingness is the infinitely other with regard to every being). The result of Becoming, in turn, develops not only because in it being ash is being wood but, above all, because nothing whence springs the specific form of ash becomes one and identifies with the infinitely other than nothing, which is the ash, as does every other being.

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Since it places its faith in becoming-other, the pre-ontological thought thinks that when the ash is still wood and when the wood is already ash, there exists a time in which the ash is wood and the wood is ash. Since it places its faith in becoming-other, the ontological thought of the West thinks that when the being is still nothingness and when the being goes back into nothingness, there exists a time in which being is nothingness and nothingness is being. Western thought has a tendency to reject a time when the circle is a square; yet it becomes completely blind when faced with the Folly that thinks of a time in which Being is nothing. To state that at a given moment of time the wood (the specific form of wood) is nothing, in fact, does not imply that at a given moment of time nothingness is nothing! The same is true *of the wood*, that is, *of a being*, that is, of something *that is not* a nothing. The statement does not imply that, at a given moment of time, *it is* a nothing!

The belief that beings are nothing is the very essence of *nihilism*. Yet the basic essence of nihilism has a meaning completely different from the meaning nihilism holds in Nietzsche's thought or in Heidegger's. Nietzsche and Heidegger resist nihilism, yet their works remain bound to the faith in becoming-other, that is, to nihilism's real essence.

This essence is the ontological form of the faith in becoming-other. Western history is the history of nihilism, in the sense that the Folly of nihilism is hidden exactly in what, for the West, is the highest and basic evidence, that is, becoming-other on the part of beings, their emerging from and returning to

nothingness. The history of the West, seen as faith in the ontological sense of the Becoming, is the history of the belief that beings *qua* beings are nothing. The West is the life that lives this belief of beings as nothingness.

The Destiny of Truth

Non-Folly is the unheard-of meaning that truth holds outside the faith in Becoming and therefore outside nihilism, which is also and above all present in the episteme. Non-Folly is the destiny of truth, what truth is fated to. Outside Folly, truth is the denial of becoming-other, that is, the denial of the non-being of beings; truth is to assert the eternity of every being. Truth's destiny is the appearance of being-self of the Being, for this being-self of the Being, or its non-being-the-other-than-self, is non-becoming-other, and so is not-becoming-a-nothing and not-emerging-from-nothingness. Truth's destiny is the framework in which the being-self of the Being is necessarily joined with the appearance of the existent.

In turn, not even the appearance of truth's destiny is a dimension that emerges from and returns to nothingness: truth's destiny appears eternally, and the real "being-man" (which is the basic "being beyond man") is the eternal appearance of truth's destiny. Destiny is not a by-product of time. On the contrary, the millennia of time loom within the appearance of truth's destiny. And only within this destiny can the faith in becoming-other appear, as well as the extreme form of such a faith, namely, nihilism's real essence. In the civilization of technics, the will for beings to become other than self – the will to create and annihilate beings – reaches its climax. Therefore, the civilization of technics is the climax of Western nihilism. The indefinite growth of its capability to reach its goals, which is the primary aim of technics, is one and the same with the indefinite growth of the will to have Being become other than self, as well as to have infinite new worlds be created and old worlds be annihilated. 121

The eternal that appears in truth's destiny has a meaning essentially different from the eternal of the truth of the episteme. The eternal of the episteme, as Law and definitive Meaning of Being, is the lord and master of becoming-other; in Western history, the eternal is, therefore, the basic acknowledgment that becoming-other exists. Throughout this history, the eternal has been the master, and becoming-other has been the servant. (And the servant will eventually destroy its master.) Outside the faith in becoming-other and outside nihilism, truth's destiny sees instead Folly – the impossibility, the necessary non-existence of becoming-other. That is, it sees that every state and every instant of the beings is eternal, that beings as beings are eternal. It sees, thus,

that the eternal is not the lord and master of a servant, for the servant does not exist, and therefore not even a master exists. The eternal of the episteme curbs the becoming of beings; the eternal of truth's destiny is beings themselves, the basic calling of beings as beings.

Since emerging and returning to nothingness is impossible, every state and every instant of beings lie near themselves and do not leave nothingness so as to enter themselves, and they do not leave themselves so as to return to nothingness. They are eternal. But that is exactly why every state and every instant are necessarily joined with all others. Becoming is the appearing and disappearing of the eternal, their entering the eternal horizon of appearing and their leaving it. Eternal is the unlit wood, eternal is the lit-up wood, and the glowing wood and the ash. Eternal is the very faith in becoming-other, the essence of Folly and nihilism, the climax of Folly, namely, the belief that Being enters and leaves the nothingness, for, if the content of Folly is the impossible, that is a nothing. Folly is not a nothing but a being, which is, like every being, eternal and which is, actually, the eternal that dominates human history. But even to err belongs to the eternal constellations of being. Can the constellations of Folly wane? Can the constellations of Non-Folly, of truth's destiny, come forward?

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The Failure of Will

Since every being is eternal, the will cannot achieve what it wants. The will wants becoming-other, that is, it wants the impossible. Thus the will cannot achieve what it wants. However "evident" its success might be, the success of the will needs to be apparent. Since the will wants the impossible, that is, that which appears, when we think that the will has achieved what it wants, what the will has achieved is necessarily *other* than what the will wanted. It is necessarily other, although we might think that it is the same. The will of the victor deceives itself believing in its own victory, and so does the will that believes it has been defeated. The world *must* have a *different* meaning from the meaning that appears to the will in both the exhilaration of victory and the anguish of defeat and death.

When there appears the eternal that is the will, this appearing is accompanied by the eternal spectacles of sorrow, violence, anguish, and death. When there appears the eternal that constitutes the will, then extreme violence appears, that is, the will that something be other than what it is; and the whole of Being reacts to the will's violence, leading to the eternal spectacles thus vio-

lently evoked into their appearing. Violence is not the overstepping of limits that are not to be crossed, but that can actually be crossed. Why, in fact, not destroy all that lets itself be destroyed – either a God, or the sense of morality, or the sense of guilt or good faith? Why should man not do what he can actually do? Why should we call violence the violation of limits that let themselves get violated? To these questions there is no answer as long as we remain within the faith in becoming-other.

Yet truth's destiny sees that no being allows its own destruction or creation: that no becoming is in fact a crossing of the limits where standing on this side of the limit becomes the other than self that is standing beyond the limit. No being is something that depends on or springs from a "doing". The real limit is the one we cannot cross. The real limit consists in being self on the part of Being and in its non-being the other than self. The real limit is the destiny of truth, namely, the impossibility to be other than self. Violence is not the will to cross the limits that can be crossed, nor is it the will that wants what in the eyes of the belief in the becoming is possible. Violence is the will that wants the *impossible*; and the real impossible is that something should become other than self; the real impossibility is the violation of truth's destiny. Will as such is violence; charity, love, and tolerance are the hidden forms of violence. Belief in becoming-other is the foundation of every will to power and of every violence, for we can wish for something to become other only if we believe the whole world is a becoming-other on the part of things.

The Fading Away of Folly

When the will appears, there appear spectacles of horror, more or less visible, more or less hidden. There appear the eternal spectacles of violence – the eternal spectacles of fire and ash. But the *annihilation* of Being does not appear. The burning of the wood and the ash are also metaphors of the devastation and destruction of man and things. And yet, when the fire and ash appear, the annihilation of the wood does not appear, nor does it appear that the ash emerges from nothingness. In fact, what annihilates itself from the point of view of nihilism must, from that same point of view, emerge from the horizon of appearing. What has become nothing cannot go on appearing. Insofar as a thing is believed to annihilate itself, it is also necessary to believe that such a thing emerges from the vault of appearing; and the appearing of things cannot share the lot of what no longer appears, just as the heavenly vault cannot show, to anyone looking at it, what befalls the sun after the sun has set. The heavenly

vault shows the sunsets and the horror of these sunsets heralding the dark night. The circle of appearing shows the horror of fire and ash, but does not show the annihilation of the wood. It can also happen that the wood no longer appears, and that only the eternal that are fire and ash appear instead. But the wood, too, is an eternal; thus its coming out from the circle of appearing is not its going into nothingness. All that dies is eternal, and all that is yet unborn is eternal as well.

That which is yet unborn is destined to enter the circle of appearing. To this circle is first of all destined the sunset of the essential Folly, which entails having faith in becoming-other of Being and, with it, the living and the willing according to this faith. Essential Folly is *destined* to fade out for it is the essential contradiction in which beings as beings are equated to nothingness. The fading out of Folly is not its annihilation, but rather the fulfillment of its appearing, its having thoroughly moved into the inside of appearing. The fading out of Folly is not the result of taking action or of a will, nor is it the handiwork of men or gods; it is not a becoming-other. The fading away of Folly is the inevitable for it consists of overcoming the contradiction.

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On the other hand, overcoming the contradiction – any contradiction – is not a future that is still nothing: the overcoming of the contradiction is there already from the start, it is eternal, and is bound to show itself in the circle of appearing in the place where the contradiction of the belief in becoming-other is still dominant. Overcoming the contradiction means “Joy”. The place where man’s contradiction is overcome is man’s genuine being. We are this Joy. But for the waning of essential Folly to appear, it is not enough to have the waning of Folly as thought: we also need the waning of the “products” of Folly, namely, the spectacles of sorrow and death, which appear when there appears the will for the world to become other, and when this will culminates in nihilism and in the civilization of paradise and technics.

The sunset of the “products” of essential Folly can begin only after Folly has shown all its features. The civilization of technics is the beginning of Folly’s revealing itself completely. Every criticism our culture directs at science and technics is based on this very belief of the becoming-other, of which technics is the most strict and powerful expression. Only truth’s destiny, beholding the Folly of the becoming-other – the Folly of the East and the West – can behold the Folly of technics and science.

Our civilization is moving toward the paradise of technics, along a path where disadvantaged peoples, too, try to enjoy the wealth of the privileged. And yet even the clash between rich and poor has an ideological character that

can be settled only if both sides resort to technics. The rich are likely to retain, in the future, their ability to defend their privileges. It is inevitable – according to what surfaced in the first part of our considerations – that technics will end up subordinating to itself the ideology of the rich and the poor, and that eventually the whole of humankind (we do not know at what cost) will take it upon itself to safeguard and increase the power of technics.

Constellations of Joy

When these events come to the fore, the power of technics gives man the illusion he can “achieve” all that he never managed to achieve throughout his history. From within this conviction arises the paradise of technics, which is the greatest form of happiness within essential Folly. And yet, not only is this happiness of Folly happiness, but it is also the happiness built on the foundation of a knowledge and logic that bid farewell to the truth of the episteme and that are now at the remotest distance from fate, that is, from the genuine meaning of truth. In the paradise of technics, happiness is, by its very essence, unstable: this instability is eventually bound to become manifest, and, inevitably, so will the impossibility to overcome it. Placing his trust in his ability to obtain what he wants, the man in the paradise of technics finally realizes he cannot obtain the *truth* of all he achieves; he cannot obtain the truth of his own happiness. Hence, his own paradise becomes the place of his deepest anguish. Not even technics can save man from nothingness. Of all goods, truth is the only good that the paradise of technics cannot obtain.

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In a time when truth is scarce, man is forced to turn once again to deciphering the meaning of truth, as are people. In a time of scarcity, we can return to the meaning the West has assigned to the truth, or, better, to the truth of the episteme. We can move in a circle and return to the beginning. But we can also behold the unprecedented meaning of truth, namely, the dimension that belongs to the destiny of truth. Only then, for all peoples, can the waning of essential Folly begin, as well as the coming forward of the eternal constellations of Joy, that is, of those constellations that are not in agreement with the challenges of the violence of will, but that are long awaited by the manifestation of destiny.

Translated by Santo Pettinato

MAN IN THE AGE OF TECHNICS

That which is truly disconcerting is not that the world trans- 127
forms itself into a total dominion of technique.

Far more disconcerting is that man is not at all prepared for
this radical alteration of the world.

Far more disconcerting is that we are still not capable of
reaching, by means of a pondered thought, a proper com-
parison with that which is truly emerging in our era.

M. Heidegger, *Gelassenheit* (1959), Italian translation
L'abbandono, Il Melnagolo, Genoa, 1983, p.36.

1. Man and Technique

We are all convinced that we live in the technical age of which we enjoy its benefits in terms of goods and spaces of freedom. We are freer than primitive men because we have more playgrounds to choose from. Any regret, any disaffection in our times seems pathetic. But the habit with which we utilise instruments and services which reduce space, speed up time, soothe pain, make vain the standards on which all morals have been carved, we risk not asking ourselves if our way of being men is not too antiquated for living in the technical age which not we, but the abstraction of our mind has created, obliging us, with an obligation stronger than the one sanctioned by all of the morals which have been written in history, to enter and take part.

In this rapid and relentless pursuit we still carry in ourselves the traits of pre-technological man who acted in view of purposes inscribed on a horizon of meaning, with a baggage of his own ideas and a wealth of feelings in which he recognized himself. The technical age abolished this “humanistic” scenario, and the questions of meaning which arise remain outstanding, not because technique is not yet sufficiently perfected, but because finding answers to similar questions is not a part of his plans.

In fact technique does not tend toward a purpose, does not promote a meaning, does not open scenarios of salvation, does not redeem, does not reveal the truth. Technique *works*, and since its functioning becomes planetary, it is necessary to look again at the concepts of the individual, of identity, freedom, salvation, truth, meaning and purpose, but also those of nature, ethics, politics, religion and history, of which the pre-technological age nourished itself and that now, in the technical age, will have to be reconsidered, cast off or re-established at their roots.

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2. Technique is our world

These are a few of the themes which are born from thinking of the shape that man is taking on in the technical age. The reflections carried out here are only a beginning. There is still much to think about. But first of all it remains to be considered whether the categories which we have inherited from the pre-technological age and which we still employ to describe man are still suitable for this absolutely new event in which humanity, as we have historically known him, learns from his going beyond.

In order to orient ourselves we must above all cut out the false innocence, with the fable of *neutral* technique which offers only the *means*, which then man decides to use either for good or for evil. Technique is not neutral, because it creates a world with specific characteristics which we cannot avoid inhabiting and, inhabiting it, acquire habits which relentlessly transform us. We are not, in fact, immaculate and extraneous beings, people who sometimes use technique and sometimes leave it aside. Due to the fact that we live in a world in which every detail is organized technically, technique is no longer something which we choose, but it is our environment, where ends and means, purposes and ideations, conduct, actions and passions, even dreams and desires are articulated technically and need technique to be expressed.

For this reason we irremediably and without a choice dwell in technique. As advanced westerners this is our destiny and those who, although living it, still

think that they can trace an essence of man beyond technical conditioning, as we sometimes hear, are simply unaware those who live the mythology of man free for all choices, that he does not exist if not in the delirium of omnipotence of those who continue to see man beyond the real and concrete conditions of his existence.

3. Technique is the essence of man

With the term “technique” we intend both the *universe of mind* (the technologies), which together make up the technical apparatus, and *rationality*, which presides over use in terms of functionality and efficiency. With these characteristics technique was born not as an expression of the human “spirit”, but as a “remedy” for his biological insufficiency.

In fact, as opposed to the animal which lives in the world established by his instinct, man, due to his lack of instinctual endowment, can only live thanks to his actions, and he immediately lands in those technical procedures which cut out, in the enigma of the world, a world for man. The anticipation, the ideation, the planning, the freedom of movement and of action, in a word, history as a succession of self-creations, have in their biological lack their roots and their expression in technical workings.

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In this sense it is possible to say that *technique is the essence of man*, not only because, due to his insufficient instinctual endowments, man, without technique, would not have survived, but also because, exploiting that plasticity of adaptation which he derives from the vagueness and non-rigidity of his instincts, was able, by means of the technical procedures of selection and stabilization, to “culturally” reach that selectivity and stability which the animal “naturally” possesses. This thesis, which A. Gehlen has extensively documented in our times, was anticipated by Plato, Thomas of Aquinas, Kant, Herder, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Bergson, by the great exponents of western thought, independent of the direction of their philosophical orientation.

4. Technique and the radical refounding of psychology

If these premises are accepted, psychology must make some radical calculations with itself and begin to think of the different figures, the object of its knowledge, beginning with technique, which is that original pact between man and the world which has remained “unthought of” both by *scientific-naturalistic* psychology, which attempts to “explain” man beginning with experiments on animals, and by *phenomenological-hermeneutic* psychology which, in all its

variations: psychodynamic, behavioral, cognitivist, systemic and sociological, attempts to “comprehend” man beginning with the typical conditionings of western culture which speak of “body”, “soul” or “conscience”.

Without an adequate reflection on technique, thought of as the essence of man, scientific-naturalistic psychology can't help but arrive at ethology, while phenomenological-hermeneutic psychology can't help but stop at the naivety of subjectivism, since from the former it escapes that man is abysmally distant from the animal because he is devoid of that feature typical of the animal which is instinct, and to the latter that the “soul” or “conscience” are the residual of his action and of his technical extension, therefore that which remains after action has already permitted man to be of the world and, in it, to carve out *his* world.

At this point it is necessary to establish a *psychology of action* in order to avoid both a *simplistic* look at man, as occurs in scientific-naturalistic psychology which thinks of man as starting from the animal, and a *reactive* look at man, as occurs in phenomenological-hermeneutic psychology which does not approach man beginning from his immediate experience of reality through action, but from his second experience, and therefore *re-active*, which is the reflection on his action.

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It will then be discovered that, starting from his lack of instinct compensated by the plasticity of action, it will be possible to explain his capacity for movement, perception, memory, imagination, conscience, language, thought, in their genesis and in their development, following an absolutely linear path which, in order to justify its path, does not need to resort to that *body and soul dualism* which all psychology declares to want to overcome without knowing how.

In fact, there is no science which, born from a false presupposition, could remove it without denying itself. And this is precisely the case of psychology which, even if it doesn't know it, is the most “platonian” of sciences, because it has not yet emancipated itself from that anthropological dualism which, inaugurated by Plato and made more rigorous by Cartesius, prevents psychology from reaching its object, if first this science does not detach itself from the dualistic presupposition from which it was born. It has to do with a detachment which can take place only through a radical refounding of psychology, which must take as its starting point not the “psychological subject” and much less the “psychic object”, but *action*.

5. The “instrumental” origin of technique

If we share the thesis that technique is the essence of man, then the first criteria of legibility to be modified in the technical age is the traditional one

which foresees man as *subject* and technique as an *instrument* at his disposition. This could have been true for the ancient world, where technique was practiced within the city walls, which was an *enclave* inside nature, whose undisputed law entirely ruled the life of man. For this reason, Prometheus, the inventor of technique, could say: "Technique is far weaker than necessity."

But today it is the city, which has extended itself to the ends of the earth and nature has been reduced to its *enclave*, fenced in within the walls of the city. Then technique, from an *instrument* in the hands of man in order to dominate nature, becomes the *environment* of man, that which surrounds him and constitutes him according to the rules of that rationality which, measuring itself against the criteria of functionality and efficiency, doesn't hesitate to subordinate the demands of man to the demands of the technical apparatus.

Technique, in fact, is totally inscribed in the constellation of *dominion*, from which it was born and inside which was able to develop itself only through rigorous *control* procedures which, in order to be truly such, cannot avoid being *planetary*. This rapid sequence was already clearly glimpsed and announced by modern science at its first dawn when, without delay and with illustrious foresight, F. Bacon removed every misunderstanding and proclaimed: "*scientia est potentia*".

6. The transformation of technique from "mean" into "end"

But in the era of Bacon the technical means were still insufficient and man could still claim his subjectiveness and his dominion over technical instrumentation. Instead today the technical "means" has grown so large in terms of power and extension as to determine the *overturning of quantity into quality* which Hegel describes in his "*Logic*" and which, applied to our topic, forms the difference between ancient technique and the present state of technique.

In fact, as long as the technical instrumentation available was barely sufficient to reach those ends by which the satisfaction of human needs was expressed, technique was a simple *mean* whose meaning was entirely absorbed by the *end*, but when technique *increases quantitatively* to the point that it makes itself available for the achievement of any end, then it *qualitatively changes* the scenario, because it is no longer the end to condition the representation, the research, the acquisition of technical means, but it will be the increased availability of technical means to show all the possibilities of any end which through them can be reached. Thus *technique from means becomes an end*, not because technique proposes something to itself, but because all the purposes and ends that men propose themselves cannot be reached if not through technical mediation.

Marx had already described this transformation of means into ends regarding money. If as a *means* it serves to produce goods and satisfy needs, when goods and needs are mediated entirely by money, then the attainment of money becomes the *end*, where even the production of goods and the satisfaction of needs are sacrificed in order to reach it, if necessary. From another perspective and with the background of another scenario, E. Severino observes that if the technical mean is the condition necessary for achieving any end that cannot be reached leaving out the technical mean, *the attainment of the mean becomes the true end*, which subordinates everything to itself. This entails the collapse of numerous categorical systems with which man had until now defined himself and his place in the world.

7. Technique and the revision of historical scenarios

132 If technique becomes that last horizon starting from which all fields of experience are revealed, if it is no longer the experience which, reiterated, represents the beginning of technical procedure, but it is technique which places itself as a condition which decides the way to have experiences, then we are witnessing that overturning where the subject of history is no longer *man*, but *technique* which, having emancipated itself from the condition of mere “instrument”, disposes of nature as its background and of man as its official. This entails a radical revision of the traditional ways of intending reason, truth, ideology, politics, ethics, nature, religion and history itself.

REASON is no longer the immutable order of the cosmos in which first mythology, then philosophy and in the end science were reflected creating their respective cosmo-logies, but it becomes the *instrumental procedure* which guarantees the most economical calculation between the means available and the objectives which one intends to reach.

TRUTH no longer conforms to the order of the cosmos or of God because, if more horizon is not given which is capable of guaranteeing the eternal picture of the immutable order, if the order of the world no longer dwells in its being, but depends on “being technical”, *efficiency* explicitly becomes the one and only criteria of truth.

IDEOLOGIES, whose force rested on the immutability of their doctrinal body, in the technical age do not hold up to the hard simplification of all ideas to simple *working hypotheses*. In fact technique, unlike ideology, which dies at the moment in which its theoretical nucleus is no longer “representative of the world” and much less “explains” it, thinks of its own hypotheses as surmountable “on principle”, and therefore it is not extinguished when one of its

theoretical nuclei turns out to be ineffective because, not having tied its truth to that nucleus, can change and correct itself without contradicting itself. Its errors don't cause it to collapse, but immediately convert themselves into opportunities for self-correction.

POLITICS which Plato had defined as "technique pre-eminent" because it assigned to all techniques their respective finalities, today can decide only subordinate to the financial apparatus, in turn subordinate to the assets guaranteed by the technical apparatus. In this way politics finds itself in that situation of *passive adaptation*, conditioned as it is by technical development, which it cannot control and much less direct, but only guarantee. Reducing itself ever more to pure technical administration, politics maintains an active role and therefore only decisional there where technique is not yet leader, or where in its supremacy it still presents gaps or insufficiencies with respect to the restraint of its instrumental rationality.

ETHICS, as a form of *acting* in view of ends, celebrates its impotence in the world of technique regulated by *doing* as a pure production of results, where the effects are added up in such a way that the final results can no longer be lead back to the intentions of the initial agents. This means that it is no longer ethics to choose the ends and to charge technique to find the means, but it is technique which, assuming as ends the results of its procedures, conditions ethics obliging it to take a position on a reality, no longer natural but artificial, which technique does not cease to build and to make possible, whatever the position assumed by ethics. In fact, once "acting" is subordinated to "doing", how can one prevent he who can do from not doing that which he can? Not with the *moral of intention* inaugurated by Christianity and re-proposed in terms of "pure reason" by Kant, because this moral of intention, basing itself on the subjective principle of self-determination and not on the one of objective responsibility, does not take into consideration the objective consequences of actions and, precisely because it limits itself to safeguard the "good intention", cannot be up to the task of being technical. But not even the *ethics of responsibility* is up to the task which Max Weber introduced and H. Jonas re-proposed because, if the ethics of responsibility limits itself to demanding, as Weber writes, that "one can respond to the foreseeable consequences of one's own actions", then it is technique itself to reveal the scenario of unforeseeable-ness, attributable, not like that ancient one to a defect of knowledge, but to an excess of our power to *do*, enormously greater than our power to *foresee*.

NATURE. The relationship man-nature was regulated for us westerners by two visions of the world: the Greek one, which conceives of nature as the *abode*

of men and of gods, and the Judaeo-Christian one, later taken up by modern science, which conceives of it as a field of *dominion* of man. Although they are different, these two concepts come together in excluding that nature form part of the sphere of competence of ethics, whose ambit has until now been limited to the regulating of relationships among men, with no extension to the beings of nature. But today that nature shows all of its vulnerability as a consequence of technique, a scenario opens up before which traditional ethics is mute, because it does not have the instruments to welcome nature in the ambit of human responsibility.

134 RELIGION has as its presupposition that dimension of time where in the end (*éschaton*) there is realized that which was announced at the beginning. Only in this “eschatological” dimension, which inscribes time in a design, all that happens in time acquires its meaning. But technique, substituting the *eschatological* dimension of time with the *projected* one, contained, as S. Natoli writes, between the recent past in which the means available are found and the immediate future in which these means find their use, subtract from religion, as a result of this contraction of time, the possibility of reading a design in time, a meaning, a final end to which to be able to refer in order to pronounce words of salvation and truth.

HISTORY establishes itself in the act of its narration, which orders the happening of events in a plot of *meaning*. The finding of a meaning translates *time* into *history*, in the same way that its loss dissolves history into the insignificant flow of time. The a-final character of technique, which does not move in view of *ends* but only of *results* which spring forth from its procedures, abolishes any horizon of meaning, thus determining the end of history as time provided with meaning. With respect to historical memory, the memory of technique, being only *procedural*, translates the past into the insignificance of the “surpassed” and grants to the future the simple meaning of “perfecting” procedures. Man, at this point, in his total dependence on the technical apparatus, becomes *a-historical*, because he has no other memory if not the one mediated by technique, which consists in the rapid cancellation of the present and past for a future thought of only in view of the strengthening of his own memory.

8. Technique and the suppression of all ends in the universe of means

Among the categories which we usually employ to orient us in the world, the only one which places us up to the task of the scenario revealed by tech-

nique is the category of *absolutes*. “Absolute” means freed from every bond (*solutus ab*), therefore from every horizon of ends, from every production of meaning, from every limit and conditioning. This prerogative, which man first attributed to nature and then to God, now finds himself to refer it not to himself, as the Promethean promise and the biblical promise foretold when they alluded to the progressive dominion of man over nature, but to the *world of his machines*, with respect to whose power, in addition inscribed in the automatism of their strengthening, man, as G. Anders writes, is decidedly inferior and unaware of his inferiority.

As a consequence of this lack of awareness, he who operates the technical apparatus or he who is simply included, without being able to distinguish anymore if he is active or if he in turn is operated, doesn't ask himself anymore if the purpose for which the technical apparatus is placed in operation is justifiable or if it simply has a meaning, because this would mean to doubt technique, without which no meaning or no purpose would be attainable, and then “responsibility” is entrusted to the technical “response”, where the imperative is understood that *one “must” do everything that one “can” do*.

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But when the positive is totally inscribed in the exercise of technical power and the *negative* is circumscribed to technical error, to the technically repairable breakdown, technique gains that level of self-reference which, subtracting it from all conditioning, poses it as an absolute. An absolute which presents itself as a *universe of means*, which, since it doesn't have true *means* in view but only *effects*, translates the presumed ends in further means for the infinite increase of its functionality and efficiency. In this “evil infinity” as Hegel would call it, something has value only if it is “good for something else”, therefore precisely the final objectives, the purposes, which in the pre-technological age regulated the actions of men and conferred “meaning” to them, in the technical age seem absolutely “nonsensical”.

In this regard one must not be deceived by the need for meaning, by the hectic search, by the unceasing demand to which the religions try to give an answer with their promotions of faith, and therapeutic practices with their promotions of health, because all of this reveals only that the figure of “meaning” was not saved from the universe of means. If in fact, the finding of meaning favors existence, if, as Nietzsche writes, it represents a biological advantage for the human condition, there where meaning is not *found* it must be *devised*, and then the “meaning” is justified because, as a *means for living*, it is capable of rising in turn to the rank of “means”.

9. From technological alienation to technological identification

What is the destiny of man in a universe of means that has nothing else in sight if not the perfecting and strengthening of its own instrumentation? There where the world of life is entirely generated and made possible by the technical apparatus, man becomes an *official* of said apparatus and his identity becomes entirely reduced to his functionality, therefore it is possible to say that in the technical age man is *present-to-himself* only inasmuch as he is functional to that *other-than-himself* which is technique.

Technique, in fact, is not man. Born as a condition of the human existence and therefore as an expression of his essence, today, for the dimensions reached and for the autonomy gained, technique expresses abstraction and the combination of human ideations and actions to a level of artificiality such that no man or human group, although specialized, and perhaps precisely due to his specialization, is able to control it in its entirety. In a similar context, to be reduced to an official of technique then means for man to be “elsewhere” with respect to the abode that he has historically known, it means being *far from himself*.

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Marx called this condition “alienation”, and coherent with the conditions of his time, he circumscribed alienation to the capitalistic manner of production. But both capitalism (the cause of alienation) and communism (which Marx planned as a remedy for alienation) are figures still inscribed in *humanism*, or rather still in that horizon of meaning, typical of the pre-technological age, where man is foreseen as subject and technique as instrument. But, in the technical age, which begins when the universe of means has no finality in view, (not even profit), the relationship is overturned, in the sense that man is no longer a *subject* which capitalistic production alienates and makes a thing, but is a *product* of the technological alienation which establishes itself as subject and man as its predicate.

It follows that the theoretical instrumentation made available by Marx, who was even among the first to foresee the scenarios of the technical age which he called the “civilization of machines”, is no longer entirely suitable for reading the time of technique, not because capitalism historically won over communism, but because Marx still moves in a *humanistic horizon*, with reference to the *pre-technological man*, where, as Hegel’s lesson states, the servant has in his lord his antagonist, and the lord in his servant, while, in the technical age, there are no longer either servants or lords, but only the requirements of that rigid rationality to which both servants and lords must be subordinated.

At this point even the Marxist concept of “alienation” appears insufficient, because it is possible to speak of alienation only when, in a humanistic scenario, there is an anthropology which wants to salvage itself from its extraneousness in production, in a context characterized by the conflict between two wills, of two subjects who still consider themselves owners of their actions, not when there is a single subject, the technical apparatus, with respect to which the single subjects are simply its predicates.

Existing exclusively as predicate to the technical apparatus which places itself as absolute, man is no longer able to perceive of himself as “alienated”, because alienation foresees, at least in prospective, an alternative scenario which absolute technique does not concede, and therefore, as R. Madera writes in another context, man translates his *alienation* to the apparatus to *identification* with the apparatus. As a result of this identification, the individual subject does not find in himself another identity outside of the one conferred on him by the apparatus, and therefore an identification of individuals takes place with the function assigned by the apparatus, and when he performs the identification of the individuals with the function assigned by the apparatus this functionality, having become autonomous, reabsorbs within itself every residual meaning of identity.

10. Technique and the revision of the humanistic categories

Since he is an official of the technical apparatus, man is no longer legible according to the categorized systems elaborated and ripened in the pre-technological age. A radical revision of the humanistic categories is necessary, beginning with the notions of the individual, of identity, freedom, communication, until the concept of soul, whose psychic backwardness still does not permit the man of today an adequate comprehension of the technical age.

THE INDIVIDUAL. This typically western notion, which was born in the platonic notion of “soul”, seen again in Christianity, has in the technical age its foreseeable act of death. Certainly that indivisible (from Latin: *in-dividuum*) entity does not die which at a natural level is a part of the species, and at a cultural level is a part of a society of which it repeats, for its characteristics, the general type, but that subject dies which, beginning from the *awareness* of his own individuality, thinks himself autonomous, independent, free until the boundaries of freedom of the other, and because of this recognition, equal to the others. In other words, the empirical individual, the social atom, does not die, but the *system of values* which, starting with this singularity, decided our history.

IDENTITY. This notion which, like that of the individual, was born within western anthropology because, before the West and alongside the West, the individual does not recognize his identity but only his *belonging* to the group with which he identifies, depends, as Hegel reminds us, on *recognition*. Only that, while in the pre-technological age it was possible to recognize the identity of an individual by his actions, because these were read as manifestations of his soul, in turn understood as a decisional subject, today the actions of the individual are no longer legible as expressions of his identity, but as possibilities calculated by the technical apparatus, which not only foresees (predicts) them, but even describes them in the form of their execution. Carrying them out, the subject does not reveal his identity, but that of the apparatus, inside of which personal identity is reduced to pure and simple *functionality*. (Cfr. Chapter 49: "Functionality as a Form of Identity").

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FREEDOM. If with this word we intend the exercising of free choice beginning with the existing conditions, we must say that the technologically advanced society offers a space of freedom decidedly superior to that conceded in slightly differentiated societies, where the personal and not objective quality of bonds, let alone social homogeneity, reduce the margin of freedom to that basic one of obedience or disobedience. Technique, having as its imperative the promotion of all that can be promoted, creates an open system which continually generates an ever wider spread of options, which become little by little practicable on the basis of the levels of competence which the single individuals are able to acquire. But *freedom as competence*, having as expressive space that *impersonal* one of professional relationships, creates that radical schism between "public" and "private" which, even if by many is acclaimed as a mainstay of freedom, involves that schizophrenic conduction of the individual life (functional schizophrenia), which manifests every time that the function, which is up to the individual as an impersonal member of the technical organization, collides with that which the individual aspires to be as a global subject. There is determined, in fact, for the first time in history the possibility for the individual to enter into relationship with the other individuals, and therefore to "make society", without this involving any personal bond. And then, deprived of a common experience of action, which is ever more the exclusive prerogative of technique, individuals react to the sense of impotence they experience withdrawing within themselves and with the impossibility of recognizing themselves communitarily, end up considering society itself in purely instrumental terms.

MASS CULTURE. The displacement between "public" and "private", between "social" and "individual" operated by technical rationality, modifies even the

traditional concept of “mass”, introducing that variant which is its *atomisation* and *displacement* in individual singularities which, fashioned as mass products, mass consumption, mass information, render obsolete the concept of *mass as the concentration of many*, and current the concept of *massification as a quality of millions of individuals*, each of which produces, consumes, receives the same things as everyone, but as a soloist. In this way to each one is delivered his own massification, but with the illusion of privacy and the apparent recognition of his own individuality, in such a way that no one is able to perceive an “outsider” with respect to an “insider”, because that which each one encounters in public is exactly that which he was provided in private. From here those processes of *de-individualization* and *de-privatisation* were born which are at the base of mass conduct typical of approved and conformist societies.

MEANS OF COMMUNICATION. The means of communication which technique has strengthened contribute exponentially to social approval modifying our *way of having experiences*: no longer in contact with the world, but with the indirect representation of the world which makes what is far, near, who is absent, present, available he who would otherwise be unavailable. Exonerating us from direct experience and placing us in relationship not with the events, but with their staging, the means of communication have no need to falsify or obscure reality, because they codify precisely that which they inform, and the code effect becomes not only an interpretive criteria of reality, but also a leading model of our judgements, which in turn generate behavior in the real world which conforms to what was learned from the leading model. In this *tautological communication* where he who listens hears the same things that he himself could calmly say, and he who speaks says the same things that he could listen to from anyone, in this *collective monologue* the experience of communication collapses, because the specific differences among the personal experiences of the world which are at the basis of every communicative need are abolished. In fact, with their pursuit, the thousand voices and the thousand images, which fill the air progressively, abolish the differences, which still exist among men, and perfecting their approval, make it superfluous if not impossible to speak “in the first person”. At this point the means of communication no longer appear as simple “means” at the disposition of man because, if they intervene on the way of having an experience, they modify man independently of the use that they make of him and of the purposes that he proposes to himself when he employs them.

THE PSYCHE. When in the pre-technological era the world was not available in its totality, every soul constructed itself as a resonance of the world with

which it was having experiences. For every man this resonance was his *interior life*. Today, exonerated from the personal experience of the world, the soul of each one becomes *coextensive with the world*. In this way he is suppressed: the difference between *interior life and exterior life*, because the content of the psychic life of each one ends up with coinciding with the common representation of the world, or at least with that which the means of communication assign to it as the “world”; the difference between *depth and surface* because, with the consent of depth psychology, the depth finishes with being nothing else than the individual reflection of the rules of the game common to all spread out on the surface; the difference between *activity and passivity* because, if the tendency of the technological society is that of functioning at a regime of maximum rationality, therefore Leibnizly as a pre-established harmonic system, no “activity” is procured which is not for the system itself “adaptation” to the technical procedures which, alone, make it possible. In this way the soul is progressively *de-psychologized* and made incapable of comprehending what it really means to live in the technical age, where that which is asked is a strengthening of the intellectual faculties over the emotive ones, to be able to be up the task of *objectivized culture in things* which technique demands to the detriment of and at the expense of that *subjective culture of individuals*.

11. The Technical age and the Inadequateness of Human Comprehension

The de-psychologization of the soul maintains discussions on the technical age at that inessential level which is unconditioned exaltation or a-critical demonization. This paper would like to promote that further step which is the opening of the *horizon of comprehension*, persuaded as we are that today horizon of comprehension is no longer *nature* in its stability and inviolability, and not even the *history* that we have lived and narrated as progressive dominion of man over nature, but *technique*, which reveals an interpretive space which it has definitively left behind, the horizons of both nature and history.

This is the epochal passage in which we find ourselves, epochal given by the fact that the history that we have lived knew technique as that manipulative doing which, not being capable of engraving on the great cycles of nature and of the species, was circumscribed to a horizon which remained stable and inviolable. Today even this horizon enters into the possibilities of technical manipulation, whose power of experimentation is limitless because, unlike what was happening at the dawn of the modern era, where scientific experimen-

tion took place in the “laboratory”, therefore in an *artificial* world distinct from the *natural* one, today the laboratory has become coextensive with the world, and it is difficult to continue to call “experimentation” that which irreversibly modifies our geographical reality and therefore history.

When the conditions laid down “by hypothesis” leave irreversible effects, it is no longer possible to continue to inscribe technique in the *hypothetical-conjectural judgement* which has as its characteristics problematical ness, revision ability, provisional ness, perfectibility, falsifiable ness, but it is necessary to inscribe it in the *historical-epochal judgement*, which among the judgements, is the most severe, because that which happens once has happened forever irrevocably.

At this point the question: if man does not exist apart from what he does, what does man become in the horizon of unlimited experimentation and infinite manipulation revealed by technique? In order to respond it is necessary to overcome the naive persuasion according to which human nature is something stable, which remains uncontaminated and intact whatever man does. If in fact man, as the expression of Nietzsche states, is that “animal not yet stabilized” which since his origins cannot live if not operating technically, his nature is modified on the basis of the modalities of this “doing”, which therefore becomes the horizon of his self-comprehension. Not therefore man who can use technique as something *neutral* with respect to his nature, but man whose nature is modified on the basis of the methods with which he defines himself technically. Today technique places man before a world which presents itself as *unlimited manipulability*, and therefore human nature cannot be thought of as the same which related to a world, which is the world which history has until now described to us at its limits, inviolable and fundamentally unmodifiable.

But yet even today humanity is not up to the task of the technical event produced by itself and, perhaps for the first time in history, its sensation, its perception, its imagination, its feelings reveal themselves inadequate with respect to what is happening. In fact, the capacity for *production* which is unlimited has exceeded the capacity for *imagination* which is limited and such as to not allow us to comprehend any more, and at the most to consider “ours” the effects that irreversible technical development is able to produce.

The more complicated the technical apparatus becomes, the more dense the intertwining of the sotto-apparatus becomes, the more its effects are magnified, the more our capacity of *perception* regarding the processes, the results, the outcomes, is reduced, to say nothing of the purposes of which we are part and condition. And since in front of this it is not possible either to perceive or

to imagine, our *feeling* becomes incapable of reacting. To the “active nihilism” of technique inscribed in its “doing without a purpose” it is placed alongside “passive nihilism”, denounced by Nietzsche, which leaves us “cold”, because our feeling of reaction stops at the threshold of a certain grandeur. And thus as “emotional illiterates” we witness the irrationality which springs forth from the perfect rationality (instrumental) of the technical organization which grows on itself outside of any horizon of meaning.

The Nazi experiment, not for its cruelty, but precisely for its *irrationality*, which springs forth from the perfect rationality of an organization, for which “exterminate” had the same simple meaning as “work”, it can be taken as that event which marks the *act of birth of the technical age*. Then it wasn’t a question of, as it could seem today, of an erratic or a-typical event for our era and for our way of feeling, but of a *paradigmatic event*, still able today to point out that we will not be capable of bringing ourselves to be up to the task of generalized technical operating on a global scale and without gaps, each of us will remain entrapped in that individual irresponsibility which will allow the totalitarianism of technique to proceed undisturbed, without even the need anymore to rely on waning ideologies.

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Differently, in fact, from the nihilism described by philosophy which interrogates itself on the meaning of being and not being, the nihilism of technique does not only call into play the *meaning* of being and therefore of man, but also the *being itself* of man and of the world in its totality. And if the nihilism described by philosophy was anticipator, prophetic, but *impotent*, because it wasn’t able to determine the nihilism which it foreshadowed, the nihilism which underlies the a-final character of technique has not only *nothingness* in its power, but separate from the quality of the technical imperatives and the morality of the instruments which are derived from it, it is within the possibility to exercise this power. The fact that philosophy, and with it literature and art, still hold back on the problem of the meaning of being and therefore of man, without protruding into the problem of the *possibility which man and the world have of continuing to be*, contributes to that “passive nihilism” which Nietzsche denounced as the nihilism of resignation.

Born under the sign of *anticipation*, of which Prometheus, “he who thinks in advance”, is the symbol, technique ends in this way with subtracting from man any anticipatory possibility, and with it that responsibility and mastery which derives from the capacity to foresee. In this incapacity, by now having become *psychic inadequacy*, for man the greatest danger is hidden, as in the enlarging of his capacity of comprehension, his feeble hope.

This *psychic amplification*, to whose advancement this lecture entrusts its meaning, if on one hand is not sufficient to dominate technique, it at least avoids that technique happens to man unknowing and, from essential *condition* to the human existence, becomes the cause of the *insignificance* of his very existence.

DENIALISM

WHAT IS “REAL” IN PUBLIC DEBATES TODAY? THE CASE OF EVOLUTION

We define here “denialism” the public refusal of empirically corroborated scientific evidences, like biological evolution by natural selection, or shared scientific consensus, like climate change as a global process also due to human activities. We focus on scientific denialism, leaving apart a more general definition of the concept that includes historical denialism (the refusal of proven historical events). Any form of denialism is clearly related to social and political issues, like religious fundamentalism spreading around Western countries and conservative movements, but here we concentrate mainly on its philosophical and cognitive features. It could be argued that denialism is an expression of trivial irrationalism, opposed to the use of common sense and rationality. For a philosopher of science, the allegedly simple contradiction between the self-evident rationality of science and the obscurity of a lazy superstition is not the whole story. We propose here to consider denialism as based on much more influential cognitive roots, on the ambiguities of the demarcation of sciences, and on the counter-intuitive results of many scientific researches. In this field, what is “real” and “true” is disputed between science, philosophy and socially driven public opinions. **145**

Intuitive teleology

We will use the acceptance of the theory of evolution as a case study. Denialism in this matter is growing on and it is a widely inter-cultural and inter-religious phenomenon. It must be explained. Every teacher of evolutionary

topics knows that students' minds have strong propensities for the overlapping between ontogeny (the development of an individual towards the adult form) and phylogeny (the evolution of species as a process of descent with modifications), both misunderstood as directed and quite finalistic processes. In Aristotelian terms, efficient and formal causes have less appeal than the finalistic ones¹.

Now, convergent data, coming from developmental psychology, evolutionary psychology, anthropology and neurosciences, suggest a biological predisposition of our minds, even in the earliest phases of development, to distinguish inert entities (like physical objects) and entities with psychological features (like living agents) very instinctively (Bloom 2004), and to attribute or, incidentally, hyper-attribute intentions and purposes to animate and inanimate objects, producing "teleo-functional explanations" of the natural world (Keleman 2003). The discovery of the cognitive bases of this promiscuous teleology – so similar to the folk teleology of Voltaire's dr. Pangloss – could explain the natural propensity to find psychologically and emotionally satisfying the animistic justifications of natural events or those based on invisible intelligent designers. We like to attribute mental states to a large variety of entities,² when they have proper movements, complex structures, and anthropomorphic appearances.

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How can we philosophically interpret these experimental results? The widespread diffusion of cognitive detectors of causality and causal agents also in other animals (Vallortigara 2008) and the presence of inferences about hidden causes in early childhood (Saxe *et al.* 2005) suggest that it could be a mental habit – strongly rooted in adaptive specializations – to suppose rapidly and economically that a purposeful agent with projects and aims is hidden behind the complexity of natural phenomena, rather than a laborious series of blind mechanic processes. Humans seem affected by an hypertrophy of the system dealing with animated objects (Boyer 2001): we tend to attribute desires, intentions, and projects, whereas they do not exist; and supernatural entities have the double feature of being causal agents able to disobey the physical laws. Our mental world is William Paley's world, the world of a natural theologian (paradoxically, we are so by natural evolution!).

For those reasons human beings love explanations based on purposes, as if they had a sensor always turned on for detecting the presence of other

1 When we study animate beings, frequently the functional question "what is it for" hides meanings of purposefulness, the same meanings present in early childhood (and in patients affected by Alzheimer's disease: cf. Lombrozo *et al.* 2007) about inanimate objects as well.

2 Even in front of the idea of death, in early human development there is a sharp difference in the acceptance between the physical end of the individual and the psychological and intentional disappearance of the individual (Bering and Bjorklund 2004).

animate agents and prevent the moves of potential external enemies. These cognitive devices (typical of a species with a prevalent history of prey, rather than predator like in our preferred “just-so-stories” (Hart and Sussman 2009; Pievani 2011a)) could have evolved afterwards in different ecological niches, shifting their contributions to the behavioural human fitness and then being co-opted for other functions. If this is right, following a classical theoretical dichotomy in literature, it means that such beliefs could not be direct adaptations for cooperation in groups and pro-social behaviours, but primarily exaptation (Gould and Vrba 1982; Gould 2002; Pievani 2003): by-products of already evolved, non-religious, cognitive functions (Pyysiäinen and Hauser 2009). The conclusion seems confirmed by the data of developmental psychology concerning the precocious natural attitude towards empathy, benevolent acts and precursors of moral actions, independently from the cultural acquisition of supernatural beliefs (Hamlin *et al.* 2007).

In front of incomprehensible dangers or heavily painful events that hanged over us, eagerly an intuitively theist species looked for explanations involving invisible histories, processes and agents. The authentic satisfaction of psychological, social and cognitive needs in our teleologically equipped minds was so wide that it turned out to be the common sense that science is frequently compelled to face and dismantle, sometimes unsuccessfully. It is plausible to think that there is a connection between these data of folk biology and the peculiar situation of the public acceptance of the theory of evolution, a situation with few equivalents – in terms of widespread misunderstandings and persistent ideological denial – in other similarly technical and demanding scientific research programmes (like those coming from particle physics: apart from some isolated “conspiracy theorists”, there is no denialism about Higgs boson and the Standard Model) .

The scandal of contingency

Darwin himself thought pessimistically that the objections to his theory had something spontaneous, or intuitive, something that we can easily imagine, even if wrong as a matter of fact. He understood that natural selection was challenging common sense.³ He had no great hopes that our reasoning could prevail over the resistances of imagination, as if the structure of our brains was

³ He was so aware of the dangers of the teleological reasoning that he apologized to the readers, in the *Origin*, for using anthropomorphic terms in the descriptions of the agency of natural selection like an engineer or like a breeder, underlining that natural selection is certainly a designer (or better, a tinkerer) though a blind and unaware one (Darwin 1859).

not adapted for the acceptance of such ideas. As a young student, he tested the persuasive power of the alternative inference, based on the analogy between the complexity of human artefacts, products of a conscious and intelligent activity, and the complexity of organic structures (the quite unavoidable comparison between the eye and the telescope). Reading William Paley's *Natural Theology* (1802) like many of his contemporaries, he was aware of the communicational efficacy of the finalistic explanations achieved through the classical Thomistic argument of design (then also present in John Ray's and William Derham's works, and mostly in Isaac Newton's *Opticks*), based on the analogy between the complexity of elements and relations in human artefacts and the "intelligent" complexity of living beings (Darwin 1836–1844; Pievani 2012c).

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Through contemporary science and history of science, we see here a huge philosophical question of Modernity. The teleological analogy, the metaphor of the design, could be a kind of natural inference. Conversely, the differential survival of individuals bearing inheritable non directional mutations, under ever changing and contingent environmental circumstances, finding case by case trade-offs with the internal and developmental constraints of the available organic materials (Pievani 2009), is somewhat an "unnatural" inference, a counter-intuitive explanation.

The point is that the evolutionary explanation – in its mix of functional, structural and historical inferences, with at least three robust inflows of chance (random mutations, random genetic drifts, contingent ecological macro-events) – is deeply a-teleological and purposeless, even if in philosophy of biology we had some inappropriate overlapping between the concepts of function and purpose. As a matter of fact, our teleological attitude is clear also in the ease with which we accept evolutionary unverifiable "just-so-stories", reconstructions of intuitive narratives where the past is involved for justifying a necessary present. The anomaly of human evolution – since two decades ago intended as a quite exceptional linear chain of progress by the mainstream of evolutionists – is a clear example of this anthropocentric and teleological bias inside the science itself (Eldredge and Tattersall 1982).

From a philosophical point of view, reading his private early writings, Darwin's denial of natural theology was based on an argument by absurd (if there is an Intelligent Design, is it so intelligent?) and an argument by parsimony (do not add hypotheses, like special creations, if not strictly necessary). Furthermore, historical contingency is the crucial concept today when we try to reconstruct evolutionary histories, mostly in paleo-anthropology. Contingency means that evolution has to be interpreted not only as a process in

time – with the risky “great narratives” produced in our minds by the teleological preferences – but also as a process occurring in a material space: the ecological and geographical space, which is not “for us” but in which we have to survive.

The dependence of our evolution on external (and frequently accidental) circumstances – like the Great Rift Valley formation and the Pleistocene climate oscillations – does not mean that human evolution occurred exclusively “by chance”, but through an entanglement of functional factors (produced by selective pressures), structural constraints, and historical contingent events: an interplay between random events and regularities (Gould 1989; 2002). *Homo sapiens* is an improbable and tiny branch at the end of a luxuriant tree of species. Like any other species, we are not at the top of a process of perfect optimisation, but we are the offspring of the material and contingent relationships between localized populations and ever-changing environments (Tattersall 2009). The massive contingency of human evolution means that particular events, or apparently meaningless details, were able to shape irreversibly the course of natural history.

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Then, the clash between human time and geological deep time changes irreversibly our historicity. This alternative explanation (a narrative anyway, but of other kind: a narrative of possibilities) requires a much more costly cognitive investment. It is harder to believe, definitely less cheering, counter-intuitive in its challenge against some firm pillars of our common sense. Something we do not like to think. Leaving Paley’s world and entering Darwin’s one is a hard cognitive enterprise.

The appeal of pseudoscience and the risk of “hardened” answers

The evidence that the teleological propensity and the hyper-attribution of mental states are not stupid or childish human attitudes, but a mental activity crucial for the functioning of our minds, does not belittle the fact that we can misuse these attitudes very badly in many occasions, like when we deny the validity of a corroborated scientific programme following fallacious but intuitively amusing arguments. To be conscious of the evolution of our adaptive or exaptive cognitive constraints is a tool for dealing with them in a more careful and rational way, because the evolutionary explanation of their emergence is not a justification by nature, and the understanding of a behaviour as product of the biological and cultural evolution of our species does not imply that the

behaviour itself is forever written in the stone (Giroto *et al.* 2008)⁴. Nevertheless, we should consider the intentional misuse of these mental habits carefully, with respect to the counter-intuitive nature of many scientific explanations.

A cognitive study of neo-creationistic ID arguments⁵ shows that they are carefully suited for our minds attracted by teleological beliefs and by vaguely defined concepts like complexity, and for our intuitive refusal of chance and contingency in causal explanations. Furthermore, all such unfair psychological advantages are powered by the privileged position of any unorthodox minority in a public debate. For these reasons, without any intention of justification, we should admit (as in *Nature*, April 2005, about the diffusion of ID in North American University campuses: Brumfiel 2005) that ID is not only the manifestation of blind religious fundamentalism: it is an ideological campaign able to fit our minds, and perfect to be manipulated (like fear) as a political instrument of consensus.

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The structure itself of ID doctrine, presented as a way to conciliate science and faith, is consciously shaped by this cognitive appeal for our minds “born to believe”, then implemented by a strong familiarity with the specific rules of public debates and communication, and with the politically-correct arguments of the freedom of research and the need of a plurality of schools of thought. The basic elements of the structure are: negative arguments about the gaps and the alleged lack of evidences; generalization of single anecdotal cases considered as critical; rhetoric tricks like irreducible complexity discussed as supposed alternative explanations. The appeal of ID is rooted in the cognitive docility that accepts inferences concerning the effects of the hidden actions of an animate and intelligent agent. Meaningfully, quite nothing consistent is said about the identity, the properties and the supreme mind of the designer.

The point is that pseudo-science is something different from a plain non-science: it is a camouflaging of science and an abuse of its methods (Kitcher 1982), adopting cognitively and psychologically persuasive and deceptive inferences. In this situation – a powerful mix of psychological appeal, cognitive constraints, communicational unfairness, and political supports – is it still

4 The assumption that we are “born to believe” should not offer any fatalistic excuse for irrational manifestations of credulity, as demonstrated by the empirical successes of many projects of early and interactive science education, which is a truly “conceptual change” (Carey 2000), and by the fact that analytic thinking seems able to discourage superstitious beliefs (Gervais and Norenzayan 2012).

5 For such a proposal, we refer to T. Pievani, “Intelligent Design and the appeal of teleology. Structure and diagnosis of a pseudoscientific doctrine”, in *Paradigmi*, Sept. 2012, in press. See also Pievani 2006.

useful to oppose arguments (like in Richard Dawkins 1986 and 2006, or in Coyne 2009) based only upon pure evidences of “truth” and on a supposedly shared naïve definition of what is science and what is not?

Denialism and post-modernism

Denialists have a great success in public virtual arenas without substantial controls and references, like the web and the blogosphere. They love weak epistemologies and relativistic ideas of science, represented as a set of fights between free and equivalent interpretations of subjective images. They love the idea that science is always provisional. In this way, they try to deny a shared space of dialogue, a shared world based on the scientific state of the art in a specific field. But without this shared field of common interests and fair rules any democratic debate is precluded. Denialists flourish in a radical post-modernist culture medium. In contrast, but following the advancements of recent epistemology, we should rediscover the possibility to talk about scientific evidences as “facts”, intended as real and irreversible constraints for our future paths of knowledge. It is possible to avoid the use of old fashioned categories like scientific “objectivity”, substituting it by an operational concept of “robust inter-subjectivity”.

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The advanced controversies around the demarcation problem in philosophy of science and the rise of an epistemological and methodological pluralism in the philosophy of special sciences could become, paradoxically, insidious Trojan horses for the neo-creationistic pseudoscience (Forrest and Gross 2004), not by chance attracted by post-modernist tendencies and by the hermeneutics of epistemological anarchism. But it is also clear, on the other side, that we should not be urged to harden our technical debates about the updating of the theory of evolution because of extra-scientific religious attacks. To erect a defensive barrier in the name of an alleged universal Darwinian algorithm, presenting natural selection with neo-teleological terms (as pointed out in Godfrey-Smith 1999), seems a losing strategy in the mid-term. The same we could say for the use of strict, apodictic demarcation definitions, already epistemologically weakened as the ID supporters know.

If ID arguments find an unexpected ally in our deeply rooted mental attitudes (results of our adaptive evolution, ironically) for hyper-detecting causes, purposes, intentions and finalities in the external reality and nature, we have today other reasons to accept, carefully and wisely, the neo-creationistic challenge in mass media (and exclusively in mass media, because the acceptance of

debates in scientific institutions could become an implicit certificate of scientific relevance). After the defeats in Courts – the latest one in Pennsylvania at the end of 2005 – ID supporters are concentrating their efforts on mass media and entertainment: this strategy may be not so bad in our commercial and secular societies. Secondly, the spreading of private teachings in US and Europe – and the current political appeal of the idea that a liberal policy should allow the constitution of private schools distinguished by culture, confession or ethnic group – actually creates a propitious context for these fundamentalist lobbies. In 2007, the rapid spread of creationistic inter-religious movements throughout Europe produced for the first time a formal critical response by the Council of Europe (*The Dangers of Creationism in Education*, Resolution 1580).

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Nevertheless, every scholar involved in public debates on mass media has experienced a disagreeable communicational asymmetry: ID supporters can use very simple and effective messages and slogans – misleading but psychologically cheering – presenting themselves as a minority of free thinkers; reversely, scientists have the duty of a rational and supported argumentation, usually unsuitable for TV talks, with the continuous risk of appearing the defenders of an old and dogmatic orthodoxy. Considering the appeal of this pseudoscientific doctrine, in order to answer its tricky arguments we should represent science – in a positive and not only defensive way – as a process of discovery and as a peculiar field of researches based on specific rules, a process of growth of knowledge through confrontations and revisions in research programmes (Pievani 2012a).

The fact that in some points Darwin was wrong, of course, and evolutionary Modern Synthesis turned to be inadequate, loses a great part of its striking dramatic power. The theory of evolution, like any evolving research program, has a flexible structure: there are no Darwinian orthodoxies and the theory is quite different from the formulations of 1859 and XXth Century, though still consistent with the basic Darwinian processes (Pievani 2012a). In its internal rational dynamics of theoretical assimilation and accommodation, the structure of evolutionary theory shows its core-problems and belt-problems (Ayala and Arp 2010).

Science as an evolution of research programmes

How to answer the creationistic arguments in this political and cultural context? A reactive, defensive and spot by spot policy of rebutting seems not enough. Science is an open way of thinking, with common rules, it has a public

role in our societies and, as a matter of principle, any dissent is potentially useful. If ID were a good alternative school of thought about the explanation of life it should explain all the empirical basis of current Neo-Darwinian research program (1), it should explain something more (2), and it should do all that using different laws and factors from Neo-Darwinian ones (3). Through this pragmatic “benefit of doubt” methodology (Pievani 2012c), we can easily see that there is nothing like that (1-3) in the scientific field at the moment, and nothing predictable in the future.

So, let us play our shared game, not the ideological game imposed by the denialists. This approach is grounded also on the idea that science and religious beliefs inspiring pseudoscience are two radically different fields of research, but inevitably interfering one with the other in several points (mainly, when both of them face the themes of the evolution of human moral systems). So, this is not a procedure based on a strict and normative interpretation of Stephen J. Gould’s “non-overlapping-magisteria” (Gould 1999). In the light of the distinction between scientific (methodological) naturalism and philosophical (ontological) naturalism (Forrest 2000), we should clarify that evolution is not the scientific door to atheism, but anyway an abundant harvest of knowledge that should influence any philosophical reflexion about man’s place in nature.

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If a philosophical argument is based on a naturalistic assumption (like “evolution has been a necessary trend towards human consciousness”), and the assumption is afterwards falsified by scientific data, it is hard to demonstrate that the falsification should not have consequences on the philosophical argument. On the contrary, it is a viaticum for pseudoscience also to affirm – according to the old course revived in the papal Regensburg’s Speech in September, 12th, 2006 (De Caro and Pievani, 2010) – that the “wider” rationality of theology and philosophy must supervise the “narrower” rationality of natural sciences (for an example of this science *sub specie theologiae*, coming from a theologian not suspected of strict orthodoxy, see Küng 2007, and his theologically-oriented distinctions between good scientific theories and bad scientific theories in evolution and cosmology). Secular philosophers need to reinforce a *pars construens* in this public debate, exploring a scientifically informed ethics of contingency and the philosophy of human finitude (Pievani 2011b).

Evolutionary biology shows today the uniqueness of its old-fashioned and never tamed opponents, but also the peculiarity of its interdisciplinary frame of convergent countless proofs and its explanatory mixing of experimental, comparative and historical evidences. If we examine the philosophical arguments of ID in current literature, in their indifference towards the scientific

advancements, we see that they are quite exactly the same of the Natural Theology in the XIXth century, always using the same psychological refrains about intentional causality, the primeval scope, the alleged impossibility of explaining anything exhaustively through the action of laws and chance. On the contrary, both the scientific evidences for evolution and the structure of evolutionary theory are deeply evolving (Eldredge 1995; Gould 2002), in a process of criticism through sophisticated falsificationism (Lakatos and Musgrave 1974). This could be a *post hoc* criterion of demarcation.

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Pier Aldo Rovatti

WE, THE BARBARIANS REFLECTIONS ON THE ITALIAN ANOMALY

Who are the barbarians? They are usually said to come from the outside and to possess no faces. They are also said to be “the others”. In today’s Italy the barbarians are most commonly associated with the immigrants, for whom even the passage from clandestine to legal status is not enough to render them “visible” **157**

But what if, on the contrary, it is us who are the barbarians? Recently, in the daily Italian newspaper *La Repubblica* a short debate was launched between Alessandro Barrico, a novelist, and Eugenio Scalfari, the founder of the paper and an established essayist. Barrico claimed that the “new barbarians” will be the men and women who have learned through the internet to navigate only the surface of things and avoid the trappings of false depth. Scalfari, though, urged for more caution and invited us to instead reflect on our own current barbarization. I would, in general, like to opt for this second suggestion, for I believe that the projection contained by the first is an unaffordable luxury. I believe that our ongoing barbarization is carried by a wide-spread and unifying underculture successfully promoted by today’s style of Italian government.

This undercultural consensus, that I call “the Italian anomaly”, possesses all the traits characteristic of modern barbarity. These traits have quite a history: they were already foreseen by Pier Paolo Pasolini when he spoke of anthropological mutation, and have since turned into phantoms not easy to exorcise – even by those who have managed to maintain at least a small stock of critical

spirit. It is as if a kind of fog or gel or glue had engulfed everything: from public discourse to individual forms of existence.

It is truly we that are the barbarians, for it seems there is almost no-one capable of escaping this fog, even though some still struggle to maintain at least a couple of well-lit zones. I would say that no-one is fully able to resist a model of living characterized by the values of material wealth and personal success, along with the (real or merely desired) enjoyment of these so-called values. From the standpoint of material wealth and its consequential enjoyment, however, rules of democracy prove to be mere pesky obstacles to be circumvented. I am not sure if the word “fascism” can still be used to any effect today, but we are certainly dealing with a specific variety of what Michel Foucault had termed “biopolitics” But this is not about defining the phenomenon, it is, rather, about patiently describing it.

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If one wants to circumvent the obstacle of rules and, with that, of democratic legality, one first has to dissolve democracy while simultaneously claiming this is being done in the very name of democracy and freedom. Democracy and freedom are to appear as if scotched by their own intricacy: they are to be released and unburdened if we wish to continue to function and take action – where functioning and taking action means (in today’s wide-spread new language) realizing the dominant model of living. It is a warning meant for everyone, from a young temporary laborer, to the unemployed, from one who has already felt the weight of material dispossession, to one who has found himself in a fix due to her race, age or gender. All of them are supposed to possess the opportunity to turn into cunning self-promoters, either thanks to their personal enterprise or to mere “cunningness”, an ancient dowry of the Italian character that today sees its promotion into a social standard.

An impressive string of incidents of corruption, that has led the judicatory to become such an important (and so ferociously disputed) subject in Italy, is seen by the public as if it were a mere case of the hiccups. Of course, no “normal” citizen would openly declare herself in favor of corruption, but it seems that the crime of corruption has today been degraded in the eyes of the public into a minor offence hardly worth our interest. This has resulted in the general mindset shifting towards adapting oneself to strategies of cunningness, – dictated by private interest and reaffirmed by an enterprise logic modeled on the government –, and not only to adapting to it but also to occasionally singing its praises. A further effect of this is the absolute perversion of political practice: every day political action becomes a bit more demoted in the eyes and heads of the citizens, presented as a vicious circle, a waste of time, a straying away

from true objectives. This enables the reduction of the so called political class, crowding for space on television talk shows, to a spectacle for idiots, and we can no longer wonder at the complete lack of a generational exchange. Why would a young person even enter into politics? If anything, it is the rich and powerful who have completely staked that field these days.

As you can see it is not always necessary to repeat the crucial question of “the conflict of interests” that has shadowed Silvio Berlusconi since his first entrance into the world of politics at the beginning of the 90’s: in fact, it was this very conflict that accelerated that “descent” that has since been hammered as an ever more influential and glaring nail into the Italian institutional scene. The political opposition (then in power) was at a loss how to confront it – or perhaps even lacked a desire to do so. How many decrees and so-called laws *ad personam* (and sometimes *ad aziendam*¹) have been passed in these years? Even now (at the end of 2010), despite large-scale problems in the field of employment and appalling social conditions, the prime minister’s main concern is to protect himself against the presupposed aggression of jurisdiction – via an institutional shield, and through a foretold attempt to *ex lege* domesticate the autonomy of the judiciary.

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We do not even need to recall that this “conflict of interests” regards the ownership of television as a crucial source of creating political and cultural consensus. Even a minimal dosage of old Marx suffices to see how in Italy the ownership of means of production is perversely connected to political leadership, leading to effects that any democracy would consider an anomaly. The media monopoly is creating a culture of submission within a State that is ever more reminiscent of a firm and that has transformed itself above all into an electoral machine or an incessant practice of acquiring consensus through the media.

We have been living this anomalous situation of interest conflict in Italy for so long now that it seems that the very word “conflict” has evaporated: the anomaly has become cultural normality and only a very small minority is still willing to correct it. The sense of it being a perverse practice is diminishing: it is as if most of us had already digested the idea that public and personal interests are intertwined and that they are to progress together in a natural, almost physiological manner. And, if this is in fact so, that each citizen should fend for himself in this plexus of interests or at least “experience” it in a way that will let him reap the most personal benefit.

1 An untranslatable wordplay that suggests the meaning »in the benefit of companies«.

What, then, is here barbaric; what are the signs and symptoms of our barbarization? They are, first and foremost, the acceptance of a language (the parlance of an underculture), in which the public and the private blend into a single dimension (within that above-mentioned fog) and overlap into a single cliché of a lifestyle. The projection of this cliché onto the persona of the prime minister has become a general phenomenon of identification that surpasses any “political” consciousness of individuals. The corroded critical consciousness has found itself in an impasse: it cannot refer itself to the historically topped models opposing this cliché and it seems at least momentarily unable to produce new ones. The only possible solution is a battle on all fronts, a battle against this dominant underculture, against the barbarity that has settled in every one of our souls.

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This stance, that I deem “*etica minima*”, is an appeal towards a sort of “courage of truth”, and each one of us should first and foremost apply it auto-critically, for no-one can “count himself out” or claim to be immune to barbarity. We should, so to speak, re-count everything and take nothing for granted. We should discard all convictions in a supposed truth and arm ourselves with an uncommon analytical patience to take on that subjectivity we still consider our own.

I would like to take as an example the so-called “question of morality”. Is public morality the same as personal? And what weight does this word “morality” hold for us today? Our answer to the first question might be yes, both moralities should form a single unit; but this unity would today be completely at odds with the traditional idea of a “common good”. And, again taking the current condition into account, we should answer the second question by finding that the word “morality” has almost completely lost its weight and has become slippery and inconsistent.

The sense of responsibility in governing public affairs has been the subject of several debates complaining of its diminishment or even disappearance; the nature of these complaints, however, is more rhetorical than practical and most often, they fade into a brittle moralism leaving no trace the morning after. These discourses are all façade and seem to lack any substantial power. What it finally comes down to is the public space giving an effect of being completely estranged to morality: as the rhetoric fades, the only thing left with any effect is the “cynicism” of one sided interests that has today gained the status of the real value to be practiced and realized. The so-called “common good” has been degraded into an eventual side-effect or something marginally useful (as far as it still capable of creating a consensus). Tax evasion, wide-spread

illegality, favoritism and even abuse of power have become practices gradually unburdened of moral prohibition. Some of them are even praised by the members of the government as prudent and therefore recommendable practices, so it is clear that these practices, already wide-spread among the populace, will receive a kind of popular legitimization. To confirm this wide-spread public cynicism one only has to take a look at the wealth of material associated with the recent string of Italian scandals.

Similar reflections could be made on the value of personal dignity or the private dignity of public personas. A decadent life or sexual affairs may cause public uproar, games of reprisal and publication of confidential documents, but they fail to actually disqualify a political persona, who usually resorts to claims about their right to a personal life of their own choice. Even the Church, when it does decide to raise its voice in the defense of morality, goes unheeded, but then again it hardly seems in a credible position to preach.

But let us observe these things carefully. The private sphere is playing a double and contradictory game: on the one hand it evokes the sacrosanct right to “privacy” (Cf. the whole controversy on phone bugging); and on the other it talks of the intertwinement of the public and private as if it were an immutable historical fact. I believe that it is precisely here that the true face of barbarity is revealed: the point is not merely in the diminishing of moral values or in permissiveness, the point is in models that can be emulated and identified with. The decadent life of affluent and politically influential people has become the object of general envy. Who doesn’t want to live in a luxurious mansion? Who would say no to the exciting mixture of prestige and sex? Or to lighting fast careers with the star role guaranteed? Through his biography the prime-minister seems to be reassuring his subjects: “If you are lucky, if you take risks and if you do like I do, you too can have a life like this.” How many have gone for this bait? How many have managed to truly avoid it?

They say all of this is the result of crafty propaganda, in the commercial sense of the term. They also say that this world is fake and artificial. While this is certainly so, we should nevertheless admit that the interplay of true and false is today – in the world of television underculture and a regime that holds sway over the world through that very media – has become so complex that it has become a highly difficult task to carry out the critical operation of distinguishing with precision between the true and the false. Perhaps the most evocative symptom of our current barbarity is this extreme difficulty we encounter when trying to draw this dividing line – provided that we choose to attempt drawing it at all.

If the battle for morality is today one that seems to have been lost from the outset, all we are left with is the possibility to insist on a minimal line of resistance and hold fast to some impassable rampart. It is but a hope but into this hope we pour all of our citizen indignation. A sticky gelatin surrounds and engulfs us, but we should still insist on one point: we are not passive subjects to this gelatinous power, but its accomplices, we are the ones who have given in to this adhesive, albeit automatically. So where does one begin? We possess no political recipes; all we know is that barbarity is not simply outside us but is at work within us, often with our own consent; it is, therefore, part of our very lifestyle, and as such, something that we still have some say in.

If we are to find at least a morsel of truth to provide us with a sense of direction, we should perhaps look for it in our own lives, in the inception of a cultural transformation and in the courage to take on such an inception. It is a risky strategy, but in its absence any political or social move can only mean a step in the wrong direction.

STATE OF EXCEPTION¹

In his *Political Theology*, Carl Schmitt established the essential proximity between the state of exception and sovereignty. But although his famous definition of the sovereign as “the one who can proclaim a state of exception” has been commented on many times, we still lack a genuine theory of the state of exception within public law. For legal theorists as well as legal historians it seems as if the problem would be more of a factual question than an authentic legal question.

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The very definition of the term is complex, since it is situated at the limit of law and of politics. According to a widespread conception, the state of exception would be situated at an “ambiguous and uncertain fringe at the intersection of the legal and the political,” and would constitute a “point of disequilibrium between public law and political fact.” The task of defining its limits is nevertheless nothing less than urgent. And, indeed, if the exceptional measures that characterize the state of exception are the result of periods of political crisis, and if they for this very reason must be understood through the terrain of politics rather than through the legal or constitutional terrain, they find themselves in the paradoxical position of legal measures that cannot be understood from a legal point of view, and the state of exception presents itself as the legal form of that which can have no legal form.

¹ This text is an extract from a lecture given at the Centre Roland-Barthes (Universite Paris VII, Denis-Diderot) and an edited translation of 'Lo stato di eccezione come paradigma di governo': the first chapter of Agamben's *Stato di eccezione. Homo Sacer II* (Bollati Boringhieri, May 2003, Torino).

Source: www.egs.edu/faculty/giorgio-agamben/articles/state-of-exception/

And, furthermore, if the sovereign exception is the original set-up through which law relates to life in order to include it in the very same gesture that suspends its own exercise, then a theory of the state of exception would be the preliminary condition for an understanding of the bond between the living being and law. To lift the veil that covers this uncertain terrain between, on the one hand, public law and political fact, and on the other, legal order and life, is to grasp the significance of this difference, or presumed difference, between the political and the legal; and between law and life. Among the elements that render a definition of the state of exception thorny, we find the relationship it has to civil war, insurrection and the right to resist. And, in fact, since civil war is the opposite of the normal state, it tends to coalesce with the state of exception, which becomes the immediate response of the State when faced with the gravest kind of internal conflict. In this way, the 20th century has produced a paradoxical phenomenon defined as “legal civil war”.

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Let us look at the case of Nazi Germany. Just after Hitler came to power (or, to be more precise, just after he was offered power) he proclaimed, on February 28, 1933, the Decree for the Protection of the People and the State. This decree suspends all the articles in the Weimar Constitution maintaining individual liberties. Since this decree was never revoked, we can say that the entire Third Reich from a legal point of view was a twelve year-long state of exception. And in this sense we can define modern totalitarianism as the institution, by way of a state of exception, of a legal civil war that permits the elimination not only of political adversaries, but whole categories of the population that resist being integrated into the political system. Thus the intentional creation of a permanent state of exception has become one of the most important measures of contemporary States, democracies included. And furthermore, it is not necessary that a state of exception be declared in the technical sense of the term.

Global civil war

At least since Napoleon's decree of December 24, 1811, French doctrine has opposed a “fictitious or political” state of siege in contradistinction to a military state of siege. In this context, English jurisprudence speaks of a “fancied exception”; Nazi legal theorists spoke unconditionally of an “intentional state of exception” in order to install the National Socialist State. During the world wars, the recourse to a state of exception was spread to all the belligerent States. Today, in the face of the continuous progression of something that could be defined as a “global civil war”, the state of exception tends more and more to

present itself as the dominant paradigm of government in contemporary politics. Once the state of exception has become the rule, there is a danger that this transformation of a provisional and exceptional measure into a technique of government will entail the loss of the traditional distinction between different forms of Constitution.

The basic significance of the state of exception as an original structure through which law incorporates the living being – and, this, by suspending itself – has emerged with full clarity in the military order that the President of the United States issued on November 13, 2001. The issue was to subject non-citizens suspected of terrorist activities to special jurisdiction that would include “indefinite detention” and military tribunals. The U.S. Patriot Act of October 26, 2001, already authorized the Attorney General to detain every alien suspected of endangering national security. Nevertheless, within seven days, this alien had to either be expelled or accused of some crime. What was new in Bush’s order was that it radically eradicated the legal status of these individuals, and produced entities that could be neither named nor classified by the Law. Those Talibans captured in Afghanistan are not only excluded from the status as Prisoners of War defined by the Geneva Conventions, they do not correspond to any jurisdiction set by American law: neither prisoners nor accused, they are simply detainees, they are subjected to pure de facto sovereignty/to a detention that is indefinite not only in its temporal sense, but also in its nature, since it is outside of the law and of all forms of legal control. With the detainees at Guantamo Bay, naked life returns to its most extreme indetermination.

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The most rigorous attempt to construct a theory of the state of exception can be found in the work of Carl Schmitt. The essentials of his theory can be found in *Dictatorship*, as well in *Political Theology*, published one year later. Because these two books, published in the early 1920s, set a paradigm that is not only contemporary, but may in fact find its true completion only today, it is necessary to give a resume of their fundamental theses.

Doctrine of sovereignty

The objective of both these books is to inscribe the state of exception into a legal context. Schmitt knows perfectly well that the state of exception, in as far as it enacts a “suspension of the legal order in its totality”, seems to “escape every legal consideration”; but for him the issue is to ensure a relation, no matter of what type, between the state of exception and the legal order: “The state of ex-

ception is always distinguished from anarchy and chaos and, in the legal sense, there is still order in it, even though it is not a legal order.” This articulation is paradoxical, since, that which should be inscribed within the legal realm is essentially exterior to it, corresponding to nothing less than the suspension of the legal order itself. Whatever the nature of the operator of this inscription of the state of exception into the legal order, Schmitt needs to show that the suspension of law still derives from the legal domain, and not from simple anarchy. In this way, the state of exception introduces a zone of anomy into the law, which, according to Schmitt, renders possible an effective ordering of reality. Now we understand why the theory of the state of exception, in *Political Theology*, can be presented as a doctrine of sovereignty. The sovereign, who can proclaim a state of exception, is thereby ensured of remaining anchored in the legal order. But precisely because the decision here concerns the annulation of the norm, and consequently, because the state of exception represents the control of a space that is neither external nor internal, “the sovereign remains exterior to the normally valid legal order, and nevertheless belongs to it, since he is responsible for decision whether the Constitution can be suspended in toto.”

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Ecstasy-belonging

To be outside and yet belong: such is the topological structure of the state of exception, and since the being of the sovereign, who decides over the exception, is logically defined by this very structure, he may also be characterized by the oxymoron of an “ecstasy-belonging.”

1. In 1990, Jacques Derrida gave a lecture in New York entitled *Force de loi: le fondement mystique de l'autorité*. [«Force of Law: the Mystical Foundation of Authority»] The lecture, that in fact consisted of a reading of an essay by Walter Benjamin, *Towards a Critique of Violence*, provoked a big debate among philosophers and legal theorists. That no one had proposed an analysis of the seemingly enigmatic formula that gave the lecture its title is not only a sign of the profound chiasm separating philosophical and legal culture, but of the decadence of the latter. The syntagm «Force de loi» refers back to a long tradition of Roman and Medieval Law where it signifies «efficacy, the capacity to oblige,» in a general sense. But it was only in the modern era, in the context of the French Revolution, that this expression began designating the supreme value of acts expressed by an assembly representative of the people. In article 6 from the Constitution of 1791, «force de loi» designates the indestructible character of the law, that the sovereign himself can neither abrogate nor modify.

From a technical point of view, it is important to note that in modern as well as ancient doctrine, the syntagm «force de loi» refers not to the law itself, but to the decrees which have, as the expression goes, «force de loi» – decrees that the executive power in certain cases can be authorized to give, and most notably in the case of a state of exception. The concept of «force de loi», as a technical legal term defines a separation between the efficacy of law and its formal essence, by which the decrees and measures that are not formally laws still acquire its force.

Anomic space

This type of confusion between the acts by an executive power and those by a legislative power is a necessary characteristic of the state of exception. (The most extreme case being the Nazi regime, where, as Eichmann constantly repeated, «the words of the Fuhrer had the force of law.») And in contemporary democracies, the creation of laws by governmental decrees that are subsequently ratified by Parliament has become a routine practice. Today the Republic is not parliamentary. It is governmental. But from a technical point of view, what is specific for the state of exception is not so much the confusion of powers as it is the isolation of the force of law from the law itself. The state of exception defines a regime of the law within which the norm is valid but cannot be applied (since it has no force), and where acts that do not have the value of law acquire the force of law. This means, ultimately, that the force of law fluctuates as an indeterminate element that can be claimed both by the authority of the State or by a revolutionary organization. The state of exception is an anomic space in which what is at stake is a force of law without law. Such a force of law is indeed a mystical element, or rather a fiction by means of which the law attempts to make anomy a part of itself. But how should we understand such a mystical element, one by which the law survives its own effacement and acts as a pure force in the state of exception?

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2. The specific quality of the state of exception appears clearly if we examine one measure in Roman Law that may be considered as its true archetype, the *iustitium*. When the Roman Senate was alerted to a situation that seemed to threaten or compromise the Republic, they pronounced a *senatus consultum ultimum*, whereby consuls (or their substitutes, and each citizen) were compelled to take all possible measures to assure the security of the State. The *senatus consultum* implied a decree by which one declared the *tumultus*, i.e., a state of exception caused by internal disorder or an insurrection whose consequence was the proclamation of a *iustitium*.

The term *iustitium* – construed precisely like *solstitium* – literally signifies «to arrest, suspend the *ius*, the legal order.» The Roman grammarians explained the term in the following way: «When the law marks a point of arrest, just as the sun in its solstice.» Consequently, the *iustitium* was not so much a suspension within the framework of the administration of justice, as a suspension of the law itself. If we would like to grasp the nature and structure of the state of exception, we first must comprehend the paradoxical status of this legal institution that simply consists in the production of a leg. void, the production of a space entirely deprived by *ius*. Consider the *iustitium* mentioned by Cicero in one of his Philippic Discourses. Anthony's army is marching toward Rome, and the consul Cicero addresses the Senate in the following terms: «I judge it necessary to declare *tumultus*, to proclaim *iustitium* and to prepare for combat.» The usual translation of *iustitium* as «legal vacancy» here seems quite pointless. On the contrary, faced with a dangerous situation, the issue is to abolish the restrictions imposed by the laws on action by the magistrate – i.e., essentially the interdiction against putting a citizen to death without having recourse to popular judgment.

Faced with this anomic space that violently comes to coalesce with that of the City, both ancient and modern writers seem to oscillate between two contradictory conceptions: either to make *iustitium* correspond to the idea of a complete anomy within which all power and all legal structures are abolished, or to conceive of it as the very plenitude of law where it coincides with the totality of the real.

Un-executing the law

Whence the question: what is the nature of the acts committed during *iustitium*? From the moment they are carried out in a legal void they ought to be considered as pure facts with no legal connotation: The question is important, because we are here contemplating a sphere of action that implies above all the license to kill. Thus historians have asked the question of whether a magistrate who kills a citizen during a *iustitium* can be put on trial for homicide once the *iustitium* is over. Here we are faced with a type of action which appears to exceed the traditional legal distinction between legislation, execution, and transgression. The magistrate who acts during the *iustitium* is like an officer during the state of exception, who neither carries out the law, nor transgresses it, just as little as he is in the process of creating a new law. To use a paradoxical expression, we could say that he is in the process of «un-executing» the law.

But what does it mean to un-execute the law? How should we conceive of this particular class within the entire range of human actions? Let us now attempt to develop the results of our genealogical investigation into the *iustitium* from the perspective of a general theory of the state of exception.

– The state of exception is not a dictatorship, but a space devoid of law. In the Roman Constitution, the dictator was a certain type of magistrate who received his power from a law voted on by the people. The *iustitium*, on the contrary, just as the modern state of exception does not imply the creation of a new magistrate, only the creation of a zone of anomy in which all legal determinations find themselves inactivated. In this way, and in spite of the common view, neither Mussolini nor Hitler can be technically defined as dictators. Hitler, in particular, was Chancellor of the Reich, legally appointed by the president. What characterizes the Nazi regime, and makes it into such a dangerous model, is that it allowed the Weimar Constitution to exist, while doubling it with a secondary and legally non-formalized structure that could not exist alongside the first without the support of a generalized state of exception.

– For one reason or another this space devoid of law seems so essential to the legal order itself that the latter makes every possible attempt to assure a relation to the former, as if the law in order to guarantee its functioning would necessarily have to entertain a relation to an anomy.

Future violence

3. It is precisely in this perspective that we have to read the debate on the state of exception which pitted Walter Benjamin and Carl Schmitt against each other between 1928 and 1940. The starting point of the discussion is normally located in Benjamin's reading of *Political Theology* in 1923, and in the many citations from Schmitt's theory of sovereignty that appeared in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. Benjamin's acknowledging of Schmitt's influence on his own thought has always been considered scandalous. Without going into the details of this demonstration, I think it possible to inverse the charge of scandal, in suggesting that Schmitt's theory of sovereignty can be read as the response to Benjamin's critique of violence. What is the problem Benjamin poses in his *Critique of Violence*? For him, the question is how to establish the possibility of a future violence outside of, or beyond the law, a violence which could rupture the dialectic between the violence that poses and the one that conserves the law. Benjamin calls this other violence «pure,» «divine,» or «revolutionary». That which the law cannot stand, that which it resents as an

intolerable menace, is the existence of a violence that would be exterior to it, and this not only because its finalities would be incompatible with the purpose of the legal order, but because of the «simple fact of its exteriority».

Now we understand the sense in which Schmitt's doctrine of sovereignty can be considered as a response to Benjamin's critique. The state of exception is precisely that space in which Schmitt attempts to comprehend and incorporate into the thesis that there is a pure violence existing outside of the law. For Schmitt, there is no such thing as pure violence, there is no violence absolutely exterior to the *nomos*, because revolutionary violence, once the state of exception is established, it always finds itself included in the law. The state of exception is thus the means invented by Schmitt to respond to Benjamin's thesis that there is a pure violence.

The decisive document in the Benjamin/Schmitt dossier is surely the 8th of the theses on the concept of history: «The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the 'state of exception' in which we live is not the exception but the rule. We must attain to a conception of history that is in keeping with this insight. Then we shall clearly realize that it is our task to bring about a real state of exception, and this will improve our position in the struggle against Fascism.»

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Exception as a rule

That the state of exception since then has become the norm does not only signify that its undecidability has reached a point of culmination, but also that it is no longer capable of fulfilling the task assigned to it by Schmitt. According to him, the functioning of the legal order rests in the last instance on an arrangement, the state of exception, whose aim it is to make the norm applicable by a temporary suspension of its exercise. But if the exception becomes the rule, this arrangement can no longer function and Schmitt's theory of the state of exception breaks down. In this perspective, the distinction proposed by Benjamin between – an effective state of exception and a fictitious state of exception is essential, although little noticed. It can be found already in Schmitt, who borrowed it from French legal doctrine; but this latter, in line with his critique of the liberal idea of a state governed by law, deems any state of exception which professes to be governed by law to be fictitious.

Battle of the giants

Benjamin reformulates the opposition in order to turn it against Schmitt: once the possibility of a state of exception, in which the exception and the

norm are temporally and spatially distinct, has fallen away, what becomes effective is the state of exception in which we are living, and where we can no longer distinguish the rule. In this case, all fiction of a bond between it and law disappears: there is only a zone of anomy dominated by pure violence with no legal cover. Now we are in a position to better understand the debate between Schmitt and Benjamin. The dispute occurs in that anomic zone which for Schmitt must maintain its connection to law at all costs, whereas for Benjamin it has to be twisted free and liberated from this relation. What is at issue here is the relation between violence and law, i.e., the status of violence as a cipher for political action. The logomachia over anomy seems to be equally decisive for Western politics as the «battle of the giants around being» that has defined Western metaphysics. To pure being as the ultimate stake of metaphysics, corresponds pure violence as the ultimate stake of the political; to the onto-theological strategy that wants pure being within the net of logos, corresponds the strategy of exception that has to secure the relation between violence and law. It is as if law and logos would need an anomic or «a-logic» zone of suspension in order to found their relation to life.

4. The structural proximity between law and anomy, between pure violence and the state of exception also has, as is often the case, an inverted figure. Historians, ethnologists, and folklore specialists are well acquainted with anomic festivals, like the Roman Saturnalias, the charivari, and the Medieval carnival, that suspend and invert the legal and social relations defining normal order. Masters pass over into the service of servants, men dress up and behave like animals, bad habits and crimes that would normally be illegal are suddenly authorized. Karl Meuli was the first to emphasize the connection between these anomic festivals and the situations of suspended law that characterize certain archaic penal institutions. Here, as well as in the *iustitium*, it is possible to kill a man without going to trial, to destroy his house, and take his belongings. Far from reproducing a mythological past, the disorder of the carnival and the tumultuous destruction of the charivari re-actualize a real historical situation of anomy. The ambiguous connection between law and anomy is thus brought to light: the state of exception is transformed into an unrestrained festival where one displays pure violence in order to enjoy it in full freedom.

5. The Western political system thus seems to be a double apparatus, founded in a dialectic between two heterogeneous and, as it were, antithetical elements; *nomos* and anomy, legal right and pure violence, the law and the forms of life whose articulation is to be guaranteed by the state of exception. As long as these elements remain separated, their dialectic works, but when they tend

toward a reciprocal indetermination and to a fusion into a unique power with two sides, when the state of exception becomes the rule, the political system transforms into an apparatus of death. We ask: why does *nomos* have a constitutive need for anomy? Why does the politics of the West have to measure up to this interior void? What, then, is the substance of the political, if it is essentially assigned to this legal vacuum? As long as we are not able to respond to these questions, we can no more respond to this other question whose echo traverses all of Western political history: what does it mean to act politically?

THE DISCONTENT OF DEMOCRACY

We are witnessing a discontent of democracy. It is not the discontent – the refusal, in reality – that feeds the rich current of thought “against” democracy developed throughout the history of Western civilization,¹ nor the discontent, overflowing into anguish, that may be perceived “in face of” democracy, like the one felt by Tocqueville, who compared democracy to the deluge; and nor is it the discontent “within” democracy, the dismay Ortega manifested inside democracy in the age of the revolt of the masses. It is precisely the discontent “of” democracy, that is to say the actual discontent induced by democracy (and by its political institutions and social reality), today, in that part of the world where democracy had been achieved a long time ago, and where now people are asking whether it is a thing of the past (and is therefore facing a discontent “after” democracy, a post-democratic discontent). **173**

The discontent of democracy is a two-sided coin: the first face is primarily subjective, involving that subject that we would call its ‘citizen’. It emerges as disaffection, an ordinary indifference towards democracy that equates to its passive and a-critical acceptance and the implicit refusal of its most complex and challenging presuppositions. The typical inhabitant of real democracies shows more and more often an attitude towards politics that threatens democracy itself: an enraged and resigned repugnance, generated by the embarrassment of a death that cannot be announced. This discontent is not

1 J. T. Roberts, *Athens on Trial. The antidemocratic Tradition in Western Thought*, Princeton University Press, Princeton (NJ) 1994.

“hatred”², since it does not grow from a particular oligarchic will to power that faces democratic masses with hostility, but rather rises from the bottom, from the fact that there is a kind of obscurely perceived separation between politics and society on the one hand and democracy on the other, despite the fact that, no matter what the facts seem to suggest, democracy continues to dominate our political lexicon, as if it were endowed with a kind of quasi-naturalness, regarded almost as a destiny. This generates apathy together with rebellious attitudes. It is this element of enraged protest, although passive, that qualifies this discontent as something more than simple “disenchantment”, or unhelpful mistrust of democracy.³

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The other face of this discontent is objective, structural. It grows from the inability of democracy and its institutions to keep their promises, to keep up with their humanistic objective, to give everyone equal liberty, equal rights, and equal dignity. Democracy is swept by the transformations of the world. Even if new democratic waves are hitting the globe – after the third one that followed the end of the Cold War, a fourth one is crushing dictatorships in the Arab World, and we begin to make (doubtful) speculation about the next wave which may affect the world’s most populated nation, China, that should overthrow the surviving dictatorships in Burma, North Korea and other countries; even if democracy seems to progress in synergy with the *Zeitgeist*,⁴ not being obstructed by any explicitly antidemocratic thought; even if economic development – that does not coincide with democracy, even though they are often associated – is actually rooting itself in Asia, Africa and Latin America; “real democracy” is nevertheless facing a crisis, even though the idea of democracy has been triumphant in the latest democratic revolutions, exciting events, rich in *pathos* and hope.

In other words: without openly questioning the logical presuppositions or the set values of democracy, its rules and institutions are often criticized, which means that even if some of its prerequisites are met,⁵ it does get off the ground, and its performance is perceived as disappointing by an increasingly large number of people. Democracy is undoubtedly invoked where it is missing, and bravely pursued as an essential aspiration of peoples, but in the countries where it has been long established, its institutions are less and less vital, toiling hard to connect with real politics, that manifests itself – in its fluxes

2 J. Rancière, *Lodio per la democrazia* (2005), Cronopio, Napoli, 2007.

3 C. Crouch, *Postdemocrazia*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2003

4 P. Grilli di Cortona, *Come gli Stati diventano democratici*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 2009.

5 R. A. Dahl, *Sulla democrazia* (1998), Laterza, Roma-Bari 2000.

of power – sharing far less with democratic mechanisms than with oligarchic dominion.

In various contexts and in manifestations of different intensities, democracy is blurred; its survival is larval, even if it is not yet extinct. From the objective standpoint, the discontent of democracy consists in the fact that it does not seem to be fit to regulate and give contemporary politics a concrete form;⁶ and from the subjective perspective it consists in the feeling – spontaneous or induced: it must be investigated – that this fact is actually true. It is therefore a different discontent than the one theorized by Freud,⁷ which arose from the sacrifice of individual libido – erotic or aggressive – prescribed by civilization in order to preserve collective harmony. It was a partial sacrifice, a redirection: while Eros embodied the universal link among men, Thanatos, aggressiveness, turned into the Super-Ego, the sense of guilt that makes civilization possible by ethically influencing the Ego. This is the home proper [*propio*] to human beings precisely because they do not feel immediately at home (in their own [*propia*] home): discontent – *das Unbehagen*, lack of comfort or ease, disorientation – is the condition of civilization.

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The discontent of democracy, on the contrary, does not have the fatal and progressive quality of the one hypothesized by Freud; it is more similar to Charles Taylor's *Malaise*,⁸ rising out of a combination of individualism, technical disenchantment and loss of liberty, that constitutes the betrayal of the modern ideal of authenticity and of the individual's full freedom of expression. The discontent of democracy is not the uncertainty one may feel before a choice between two different options; it is the dissatisfaction for democracy together with the suspicion that there are no available alternatives to it; it is a disorientation that risks becoming chronic and insuperable, but never productive. It is a discomfort that is accompanied by a feeling of deception – a notion typical of the 20th Century, which has slipped its way into the 21st as well.

A critical and genealogical knowledge is therefore necessary in order to understand what we can know, what we should fear and what we should hope for. We can speak of the discontent of democracy, and of its paradoxes, only if we proceed to define and reconstruct the term-concept «democracy» and

6 C. Galli, «Politica e cultura nella grande mutazione», in *il Mulino*, 2003, n. 1, pp. 5-19; Id., «Di che cosa parliamo quando parliamo di politica?», in *il Mulino*, 2004, n. 2, pp. 201-10; Id., «Democrazia: grandezza, miserie, prospettive», in *il Mulino*, 2008, n. 3, pp. 490-98.

7 S. Freud, «Il disagio della civiltà» (1929), in Id., *Il disagio della civiltà e altri saggi*, Boringhieri, Torino 1971, pp. 197-280.

8 Ch. Taylor, *Il disagio della modernità* (1991), Laterza, Roma-Bari 1999.

its institutional reality. In other words, speaking about this discontent could help us understand exactly what “democracy” means, a polysemic term where different options and meanings are stratified; the complexity of democracy is, together with this discontent, the second theoretical and political focus of this research, whose basic assumption is that a partial and plausible remedy to that discontent could be the awareness and the selective revitalization of that complexity, where different possibilities have lived together. These must be analysed, in order to understand if it is democracy itself that failed to keep up with our expectations – that is if it did not keep its promises (and if this is the case, we should investigate who or what is at fault) –, or if those promises have actually been kept, and democracy has therefore simply exhausted its potential; to understand if we must sadly cohabit with an illusion, whose fire has already burnt out, leaving us with nothing but cold ashes, or if we can reasonably foresee a future for democracy; or if, at last, this is a crisis of democracy as a political system – as the expression of a particular civilization – or just a crisis of some of its aspects and factors.

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The features of contemporary democracy develop themselves along the two pathways of discontent and complexity.

The discontent towards democracy springs from an addiction to it, from the a-critical acceptance of the “real democracies” discourses about themselves, which take democracy for granted as something quite obvious and natural, as a home already built for men; and yet, today more than ever, it also grows from the actual experience of its contradictions and failures. To understand clearly this particular point we could picture a kind of *supermarket*⁹ of rights, where the merchandise (the rights) is not available, and instead has been substituted by a *slogan*¹⁰ announcing and proclaiming that the merchandise is already present; when in reality, rather than being satisfied by these rights, we face more and more difficulties, abuses, frustrations, marginalization.

This concrete lack of real democracy in current democratic institutions gives birth to anomic behaviour: as if we are moving towards the transformation of our society into a jungle, therefore acting more and more like ‘free riders’¹¹ – capable, according to the particular case, of compromise or rebellion, and yet without stable hope for tomorrow (which is exactly how modern ra-

9 Translator’s Note: English in the original

10 Translator’s Note: English in the original

11 Translator’s Note: English in the original

tionalism portrayed the “state of nature”). The discontent of democracy is the impression of having ended up in a cul-de-sac, or a path which does not stop suddenly, but keeps de-grading [*digrada/degrada*] into a sort of trail, less and less visible in the jungle of our present. This discontent is compliance, angry or resigned, to a poor democracy, to its assumed necessity.

At first glance it appears as a passive discontent, something more than the one described by Freud, one which was indeed the sign of a lack [*mancanza*] – of the immediate satisfaction of the Eros and Thanatos drives –, and yet a necessary and intimately progressive lack. The discontent of democracy is the sign of a lack as well, an absence perhaps necessary, but surely not progressive: it is not the discontent towards the good functioning of civilization, but towards the bad functioning of democracy.

The most important issue that must be pointed out is that as long as it is faced from the standpoint of the individual consumer – the deceived consumer of democracy, or rather of its surrogate, or simulacrum – this discontent of democracy is part of the problem, and not of the solution. This will continue to be the case as long as this discontent remains nothing other than Narcissus’ broken mirror, or as long as it continues producing fantasmatic projections such as the People of populism.

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Let this be clear: if in the past the criticism of conformism was conducted from an aristocratic point of view (from Tocqueville to Nietzsche, with all their differences), today the criticism of consumerism and its frustration (discontent in a passive sense) must be carried out from a democratic one. It should be made clear to the individual that feels discontent towards [*della*] democracy that in his non-freedom – which, although contemporary democracy does not expressly deny individual happiness, it is not very «comfortable, smooth, reasonable» (and here lies the difference between our present and that of Marcuse)¹² –, this individual is taking seriously the promises but not the premises of democracy,¹³ and thus his/her concrete perception is not facing the real complexity of democracy. In other words, if this discontent consists in the belief that we have achieved real democracy once and for all, together with the definite feeling of having been deceived by its sad result, the next step – of knowledge and experience; of theory and practice – would consist in the awareness that democracy has in itself other possibilities, hidden into the many folds of its history. This way, the discontent of democracy can and must pass from the (frustrated) idea that takes democracy for granted

12 H. Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, London; Routledge, 2002. p.3.

13 H. M. Enzensberger, *Il perdente radicale* (2006), Einaudi, Torino 2007.

(believing in the natural existence of an uncorrupted people with its sets of innate rights) to the awareness of its complexity and of its striving nature, of its being-for-the-future; departing from oversimplification, indifference, inertia, sterile protest, political apathy and entropy; this discontent can and should transform itself into active criticism, energy, action, conscious relation with mediation and complexity. Democracy as a natural necessity must be turned into democracy as decision, free invention of political forms, even if transitory and contingent.

Today, an active democratic life implies the recovery of the idea that democracy should not be just a mass regime, but also a regime with a human quality; that it should deal not only with the mere rearing of life, but also with the promotion of good life in a public space – according to the *telos* each subject may freely choose –; that it should not be just a power effect inscribed in the syntax of dominion, nor just the subaltern protest against it, but also a practice of counter-power.

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We must now introduce a methodological note. The Global Era is bringing some radical innovations to modernity and its main political categories: the people have been pulverized, sovereignty is obsolete, territory has no more boundaries and subjectivity is almost imperceptible. And yet it is true that the Western Global Era is surrounded by the ruins of modern politics: ruins that are filled with lessons we cannot forget, ideas we cannot just leave behind, and institutions that still hold symbolic, if not operative, significance. And therefore, if going beyond liberal democracy is indeed what is at stake, rather than trying to go against it, we should try to achieve, even if with different tools, its strategic objectives. And if it is necessary to acknowledge the lack of democracy in current democracies, it would be definitely naive to try to set a presumed uncorrupted and pure democracy free from the chains of the past, or to imagine a new and ultimately authentic one. Immediacy is either an enemy of democracy, or inadequate, or just deceptive.

If there is no democratic garden of Eden to turn back to, nor a new one to head to, and if it is impossible to rescue democracy from its history, we can nevertheless try to engage in a selective re-interpretation of its historical complexity, having the courage to separate what could be brought to new life from what is ultimately deceased. An exercise that must be pursued in awareness of the fact that praxis cannot be deduced from theory – at least on this particular point modernity is definitely behind us –; theory can point out issues, spaces and horizons, but cannot describe nor prescribe concrete actions and new institutions; these can only grow and be justified through contingent action.

The first problem we must face is to determine the subjects of action for democracy. With the exception of ethnic ideologies, which are the problem and not the solution, it is nowadays impossible to hypothesize the existence of a people, whether conceived as a uniform substance, as constituent power, or as represented citizenship: whether in part or as a Whole. Moreover, a privileged subject, individual or collective, capable of embodying a trace of universality awaiting development is nowhere to be seen. But if neither the people, nor the nation; neither class nor the individual, have any significant political consistence left, if our current understanding of the universal – that is the infinite reality of fragmentation –, is the exact opposite of singular ‘parts’ immediately aware of themselves, it is because this is only a serial immediacy, that is to say, that the ‘immediately human’ is nowadays consumed, weakened and governed by extrinsic dreams and desires: in the best case scenario the political subject is reduced to being a spectator of his own misery [*miseria*]. To see humanity re-appropriate its virtues and work [*opera*] in order to regain control over its life is the objective, not the starting point.

And yet, in spite of everything, it is from this indistinct helplessness that we must start, and the first step must be the result of a free decision, a deliberate will for democracy; that is to say, we must think and speak about that helplessness, affirm its unnaturalness; revealing the contradictions and the internal differences of this universal suffering and giving a name to its main ‘parts’ even if they are not yet aware of themselves.

It is a start at once immediate (the decision, the will) and mediate (the discourse that articulates the accusation). The first step of this struggle for democracy consists in a critically and politically oriented social analysis, a conscious attempt to rebuild, if not a hegemony, at least the thread of a political *logos* not adherent to dominion, a discourse that, taking charge of itself, unveils what we have in front of us but we still don’t understand clearly: the contradictions of society (the ‘common’ is not conceivable without the contradictions that build it: the development of the sphere of symbolic and material production implies a growth of contradictions). For this reason, action for democracy must take place within society, where real politics is located – asymmetry, pluralism, conflict between *élites* and various groups bound by different interests and cultures –; and not within institutions, where politics is sublimated, stylized and, from time to time, mystified. Democracy in the Global Era will consist in the freedom of all singular parts, which could even be conceived as political parties or movements in reciprocal interaction, under the condition that they will be more spontaneous and adherent to the

partial interests of society than they are nowadays (which does not mean that they will be de-structured). Before thinking about a planetary democracy, Global Era democracy should start by recognizing the link between the bad quality of Western democracy and the lack of democracy in a great part of the world, the peripheries – although of increasingly central importance – where we unload the contradictions of capitalism, that ultimately bounce back into our cities; and should therefore grow aware of the fact that the struggle for democracy that is taking place in these parts of the world bears serious consequences for those who live in the developed world. In any case, we cannot think of the Western model of democracy as the only one, and should start pondering multiple democracies, grounded on the only political universalism that is conceivable: non-oppression, the zero-degree – and acme – of politics.

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The free and intentional discursive and linguistic mediation of the immediateness and indeterminateness of dominion and suffering can turn these contradictions into conscious conflict. Free growth in equal dignity of differentiated parts in any given public space – which is the very essence of democracy – cannot elude (today more than ever) this dimension of conflict and struggle. But a strong democratic humanism [*umanesimo*] cannot limit itself only to conflict, insurgency and turmoil: democracy cannot be reduced to the schematic opposition between order and politics, dominion and conflict, institutions and emergencies, because conflict itself cannot be hypostatized (just as this was not the case for order either), and must be understood in their main determinateness, in their right and wrong. Not every conflict can be described as liberating – as should be evident, even though we tend to forget it –, and not all institutions imply dominion: contemporary antagonism against democracy pursues the destruction of democratic institutions by exploiting democratic rhetoric. Democracy in the Global Era must not renounce its own complexity, which means that liberty and equality, order and struggle, institution and protest must walk side by side; and, on the other hand, subjectivities cannot just be nomadic and transitory ripples in a flux of needs and drives, ‘differences’ that simply want to ‘be’ or ‘act’ in order to express themselves, and nor can they just riot or revolt, but must also bear the responsibility of producing a realistic common perspective of society – as contingent as it may be –, if not of the universal itself.

The effort to move the barycenter of democracy from institutions to society, and from State sovereignty to freedom, to the equal dignity of all singular parts, is a movement which is neither revoltist (whose immediacy would clash

ruinously with the power of dominion), nor neoliberal (which supports and promotes the survival of the fittest): it faces directly both the harshness of reality and the flight of the imagination.

The foundation of this complex political space must be based on the negotiation of a pact – even tacit, as long as operative; indeed contingent and always re-negotiated –: which is the refusal of violence in its absolute sense, as inhumanity; that is to say, the refusal of the modern political, both in its openly fatal dimension and in its sovereign ‘neutralization’, which freezes this fatality in the law, centered on the moment of decision. This does not imply a lack of realism, nor does it imply an adherence to the reassuring hypothesis that every conflict can be interpreted in terms of ‘recognition’, out of excessive fear and realism, in order to seek the complete neutralization of every conflict. It rather suggests not fetishizing conflict, confusing the (albeit correct) idea that real life is permeated by conflicts with the idea – still useful to describe the development of modern politics, and yet destined to fade away alongside it – of the perpetual and impending possibility of the friend-enemy relation.

To say that the origin of that which follows after modern democracy must not be conceived in modern ‘political’ terms means that democracy will prescind from the centrality of sovereignty and its mechanisms, now more than ever fantasmatic: in the Two of the friend-enemy logic lies the implicit One of neutralising sovereignty, and it is this very unity – and not the Constitution *per se* – that must be weakened by the politics of tomorrow. To create an emancipatory image of democracy in the Global Age and not a sovereign representation means that it must embody the negotiation of a pact which is not sovereign, that leaves power and responsibility to the ‘parts’, at the same time committing these parts, at the very least, to banning extremes of suffering that arise out of conflict, movement and challenges.

This democratic universality will surely be dynamic (that is not static), but it will also be grounded on rules that exclude the possibility of inhuman domination (effective rules, requiring public political efforts, even institutionalised to a certain degree). And even the language of rights should be revisited, since as of right now it is entirely embedded in the modern form of State: we must preserve the intentions implicit in that language – defining democracy as the political tension between the full expression of individual and collective potential –, and yet we must overcome its purely juridical connotations; in the same way, the emphasis on the new grammar of democracy, ‘emergence’, viewed as people’s subjectivity in perpetual evolution, must be distinguished from the

state of exception of modern political theology.¹⁴ And lastly an issue of scale: the modern political space – the State – is completely inadequate as a political horizon and, nevertheless, we must also recognize in this case that democracy should have a hold on what remains of the public function of the State, even if opened and integrated into larger and more articulated spaces.¹⁵ Europe is the first of these spaces, although we must be aware that it is not and never will be a Great Space, a Fortress, and that globalization can perhaps be governed but surely not repelled at its borders.

In sum, 21st Century democracy will have a complex profile, at once *liberal* (for the strategic role accorded to the expression and flourishing of subjectivity), ‘federal’ (for the constant negotiation of a pact between always changeable parts); ‘conflictual’ (for the constant confrontation of these parts, even in the field of the relations of production) and ‘republican’ (the objective is the struggle against dominion); a profile of democratic complexity far from both the present non-democratic complexity and the presumed essentiality and simplicity of the conflict. This democracy will therefore result from a horizon of selective revitalization of democracy’s historical complexity (rather than seeing a case of democracy being somehow overcome), today burst open and uncoordinated. This is a horizon which can only anticipate a multilevel democracy, where the intersection of law and agonism is the usual; that is, a democracy that is both a practice of citizenship and the political space where struggles for equal inclusion take place, a struggle that must be achieved through confrontation with new regimes of subordination that will constantly emerge from within society.¹⁶ It is a horizon, a constellation where what is at stake is following through with the decline of sovereignty and representation, accepting the loss of the central role they played in modern democracy. The people’s sovereignty must be primarily imagined as an absence of dominion, as an exclusion from politics and society of disproportionate powers; the Parliament must be interpreted above all in symbolic terms, as the emblem of the agreement not to make absolute violence the cornerstone of politics. Democracy will consist in the revitalization of political dialectics within its territories and in the articulations of society and, although always a work in progress, this life won’t go wasted in conflicts, but will be directed towards the construction

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14 B. Honig, *Emergency Politics: Paradox, Law and Democracy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2009.

15 S. Sassen, *Territorio, autorità, diritti. Assemblaggi dal Medioevo all’età globale* (2006), Bruno Mondadori, Milano 2008.

16 E. I. Isin, *Being Political. Genealogies of Citizenship*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis (MN) 2002.

of effective forms of public policies; and last we must be aware that the ends of economic production – and this is the highest challenge, requiring the greatest energy in the effort to govern the economy through politics – must be social and humanistic, that is to say oriented towards building a non-illusory public happiness, the humanistic flourishing of the public into the private.

This set of indications represents an effort to escape the short circuit between dominion and discontent, an effort to turn passive discomfort into decisiveness for democracy, an active awareness that democracy is structurally incomplete, because it is the constant effort to open and develop a political space where humanity can live a non-causal or hetero-directional life, that is, a life lived according to the equal dignity of differences. In the awareness, that is to say, that democracy is not an already determined political form, but is rather the civic space that hosts constructive conflicts for equality, searching for the progress of humanity, which should not be a disparate or senseless movement *a priori*. This possibility, which is also an unexhausted must-be [*dover-essere*], carries in itself the many faces of politics: democracy is the existence of the Many, of the many parts, but is also the existence of the non-sovereign One (the exclusion of inhuman violence), and of the Two (the non-lethal conflict), and this general structure is made possible by the causal and, I stress, contingent intersection of various traditions and institutions that at the same criticize and exclude others; even those others which today still continue to call themselves democratic.

If the discontent of democracy is the delusion over what democracy has become – melancholy before a landscape of ruins –, that discontent can change from necessity to freedom through decision: in fact, this discontent could be interpreted as the keeper of a humanistic signifier, that keeps shining even in the depth of the darkest night. That is, in this discontent there is an intuition that democracy essentially deals with the humanity of both men and women (otherwise there would not be any discontent in the absence of democracy), and that, as its primary objective is the humanity of these men and women, democracy cannot renounce from creatively recycling the humanist heritage of the past, even if it is in ruins (just as this was the case in the Renaissance). Let this be clear: it is not a case of searching for a lost Good Ethicality, nor about eluding the harsh reality of politics and its constitutive incompleteness and contingency; and yet, just like in figurative art, we do not need academism to be able to recognize the line that unites, throughout the forms of Western civilization, figurative expression with the non-figurative. In the same way, the effort to keep the image of humanity and of its City moulded throughout antiquity

and modernity alive – even if the democracy of current humanism and that of the humanism to come are both, in different ways, contradictory – might not be completely naïve. This holding-on-to in discontent [*custodire nel disagio*] means that if yesterday's and tomorrow's democracy may exist without a center, it could not survive without an end. All of which must consist – despite the multiple and conflicting shapes it will assume – in the humanistic flourishing of free personalities in any given public space. In other words it helps us to be aware, that it is exactly through the remembrance and the recognition of our own history – in order to criticise it, and overcome it –, that democracy could once again coincide with politics, as the free organization of hope.

*We would like thank Casa Editrice Einaudi for having cordially consented in the publication of the initial and final pages of C. Galli's book, *Il disagio della democrazia* (2011)*

DEMOCRACY AND BIOPOLITICS

The illness of the present democracy is a widely known fact on which we do not need to dwell further, being that we do well know its phenomenology. More interesting is the analysis of the different interpretations of such an illness. I'd say that in substance they could be linked with two different families of argumentation. The first one questions the democratic pathology, starting from the so called „unfulfilled promises“ – the ever-increasing difference from what it promised and the results that had taken place. The other prevalent interpretation, which has a more antique origin, doesn't look for a dark side of democracy in the bad application, or insufficient, of a model good in its own, but it individualises it in the same model, in a primal vice that from the very beginning threatens the idea of democracy, cursing it to counter itself. The deficit of democracy – following this tradition which can be traced in its genesis back to Plato and peaks in Hegel, but not a stranger, in other areas, to Tocqueville – would not regard its historical realisation, but its essence, its own conceptual status. **185**

Without further analysis of these two lines of interpretation, which are widely known in their assumptions and argumentations, I'd like to address a third hypothesis that doesn't connect the crisis of democracy to a simple series of inadequacies, and neither to an original vice, but to a historical passage that challenges the very existence of it. Surely, if we stick to the formal facts – the plurality of parties, mechanisms of representation, the periodical elections – in which we live, at least in the western side of the world, they are really

democratic regimes. But if we look further into the reality of these regimes, the connection with democracy, at least in the sense which is usually given to this category, starts to appear somewhat problematic. From this viewpoint, if we accept this interpretative model, it could be said that the modern democracy had its own duration, which can be traced from the second half of the 19th century to the 20ies and 30ies of the 20th, and that after this period the experiment drifted into a different form of politics, one of complex definition, but in several aspect different from democratic semantics. And this to the point – in order to still give meaning to the definition of democracy – of re-taking the idea, in itself not accurately defined, of totalitarianism in the sense of a vicious cycle that defines democracy as a turn-around of totalitarianism and totalitarianism as turn-around of democracy, without the proper explanation that in some cases in fact there was no continuous passage from one to the other. Looking from this angle, those countries that emerged victorious from the second world conflict haven't remained the classic democracies of the period before the war, but became regimes that – even though they maintained some democratic rituals – resulted in something wholly different.

For further inspection of such diversities, an inquiry has to be made into the mutation that transformed (in the recent decades) the present viewpoint in its root with consistent effects on the socio-cultural dynamics. I'm pointing at that connection, ever more direct, that for some time now holds together politics and human life in its biological dimension, following the modality that has been, at least starting from the research of Michel Foucault, defined as „biopolitics“. Because this is the horizon, the new regime of meaning, that mutated the shape of democracy itself, making its classic procedures more and more inadequate at solving questing that spring from its historical context and from its conceptual dictionary. Of course there is no need to accentuate things in a unilateral manner. When we speak of epochal modifications it is clear that the processes are slow; that some elements of the old regime stay alive and only later come to be superated and replaced by others. But something more than just a transfer of accents seems to be undeniable. As we all know, democracy is born from the modern political order following the passage from the absolute state to the constitutional one. And this in a historical-conceptual picture that is defined by the categories of sovereignty and rappresentation, of liberty and equality, on the basis of which the citizens with equal right express their positions about the actual government of the state with others programs of governing.

And now its precisely this picture – with its insitutional mediations and conceptual profiles – with the biopolitical twist that enters in crisis, radically

mutates its distinguishing marks in favor of another scene, another logic, another substance which is in fact that of the living body of individuals and populations, which are hardly understood as informed and free citizen, capable of assigning their own preferences. When did this passage, or better said, this changing of paradigm occur? Without sinking my teeth too deep – the origins of the biopolitical turn-around can be traced back into the end of the 18th century, but its whole affirmation springs about in the 20ies and 30ies of the 20th – I'll limit myself to recalling three emblematic events that sum up the meaning of this turn-around in just a few years. At the end of the 60ies the question of type became dominant, the question of generation and genetics, in a form that seems to replace the biopolitical semantics of *ghenos* and that of the democratic *nomos*. Like the question of sexual differences and that of the generation as a united whole of individuals defined by specific characteristics, not just of a chronological type, but socio-cultural, different and frequently alternative in respect to those of the previous generations. Furthermore, in the year '71 there is the first experiment in genetic modification on the sheep Dolly. This event was destined to refigure, at least on the level of possibility, the already tense connection between technology and life, and only today can we see the great impact it had on the traditional political categories. Thinking that the possibility of the genetical modification of human life doesn't reflect (and radically transform) on political semantics is a mistake we cannot allow ourselves. In the end, in the '72, the first world conference on ecology, which had taken place in Stockholm, makes the question of ecology a political one and of first importance. In this manner a complex mutation is determined, one whose effects were slowly marked: the life of men, the life of the species and the life of the world come strongly onto a political scene that is not able to understand them yet. Imagining that this real and proper revolution which has the question of *bios* in its core might leave the previous political dictionary alone is an illusion destined to be continually debunked.

Without excessive radicalization of the discourse, it can be said that from that time, with successive bigger waves, the rupture between that which is biological and that which is political, is more and more the main attribute of our time, investing and mutating our whole experience, redefining in an unprecedented manner our reality and our imagination. From the new ethnic-religious conflicts to the growing wave of immigration, from the question of public health to that, ever more punctuated, of security, that which we were used calling politics, or 'the political', changes in a radical manner, it enriches itself and it gets more complicated, it dilutes and transforms. It is like the changing of

the whole conceptual apparatus that expressed the configuration of politics for nearly a century, but – in a sense for more than four centuries, from the beginning of the modern era. It is then – in a moment where birth and death, health and sexuality, the modification of our surrounding and the transformation of the body become public thematics of big importance – that the classical opposition between right and left begins to crumble, or at least need to be redefined on other levels, but the whole of the democratic vocabulary seems to be losing efficiency. Not only am I unable to bite the reality, I can't even interpret it.

188 How to use the democratic thesaurus of formal equality between abstract juridic subjects – pure logical atoms, periodically called upon to express a rational and voluntary option on the government of society – when there is the ever-increasing importance of the difference – be it ethnical, sexual, religious – between men that are essentially defined by their bodies, blood, age or their health? How to reconcile the sphere of the State, in which modern democracy was born, in the time of the *ius publicum europaeum*, with the horizon without boundaries of the globalisation that breaks from the beneath and the above, from the outside and the inside, the boundaries of the national State in a net of global and local? It's self-evident that those old european categories, that defined the semantic and interpretative picture of the 20th century, do not hold truth anymore. How to imagine an informed consensus – or a dissensus –, necessary for the democratic expression of vote, in a situation of the concentration of the media in few places and in a tight connection of complex matter, like for example, the one with the stem cells or sources of energy, the modification of the environment or the significance of the human life, on which neither the technical committees come to common decisions? To think that it is possible to finally solve this type of problems through the classical instrument of individual rights, or worse, in strikes of parlamentar majority is at the same time impossible and inadequate.

The principle of equality is not the only one to be revoked, but also a wide variety of distinctions and oppositions on which resides the modern conception of democracy – the ones between public and private, artificial and natural, right and biology, to name a few. Because in the moment when the body fills the abstract subject of the juridical person, it becomes difficult to differentiate between that which regards the public sphere and that which falls into the private, technology and nature, the right and theology. Because birth and death, but also the sexual and generational life, the body and ethnicity are exactly the places where the boundaries collapse. Naturally I do not wish to imply that this *per se* denotes the crumbling of democratic procedures – they stay formally in

place. But frequently turned upside-down in their sense or in their intention, like it happens when the same juridical institutes are collocated in a completely new horizon. It's like we were living in a nocturnal light of an ancient constellation – when one star turns off, but keeps to produce a light without any substance behind.

All of the three constitutive categories of democracy – the representation of electors, the identity between governors and governed and that of popular sovereignty – have already acquired a twisted significance in comparison to original ones. The representation has become more and more theatrical, televised, expressible. With the consequential transposition of the political concept of „public“, insofar as opposed to the private, into the „mediated public“, educated, or not, destined to the reduction of the critical capacities of the spectators. Without even mentioning the results of media research which is predefined by the posed questions. The identity between governors and governed has become the imagined identity between leaders and masses in the search of winning models evermore degraded on the level of quality – the whole with a dry lack of Symbolic or Real, made easy by the imagination and mimetic desire, that is oriented on the same things and the same styles of behaviour. In the end even the popular sovereignty has changed – is turned-around – in a populist one, based on the preventive politisation of what the idea of people used to mean inside the national ideology, that is undivided will of the people oriented to the elaboration of mutual values. In the society of the show, or in the show of society, which goes on air every day on our television programs, every dissensus becomes a consensus and every consensus is simply agreement, if not an applause regulated by the movie director.

The problem which is in front of us today it's not the limit, or the incompleteness, of democracy – it's „unfulfilled promises“. It's its paradoxical achievement in the inversion of its assumptions, in something which simultaneously derives and constitutes its opposite. It's when it happens that the democratic disposition moves from the modern horizon into another one. What is meant with this? That democracy is not possible today? That we need to fall down onto something which precedes it? This, evidently, wouldn't be possible or desirable. Urgent is the deep modification of what was up until now understood with this ancient but undeniable word. I'm not pointing towards a simple institutional reform, but neither in the direction of a more complex one. I'm addressing something deeper: at the transformation of the entire categorial asset of a concept, around which the whole of the modern political order has been turning, but that has lost all the grip on reality, like our, configured in

biopolitical terms. This means that we must, on the contrary, put it in the centre of the scene, work on its sense and its expectations, on the dilemmas that it opens and of the forces it evokes.

190 What this is supposed to mean is hardly summed up in a few strokes or, worse, framed in a to-do list. In a line of principle, it's about reanimating that biological line between generations that modern democracy originally overlooked or stomped inside the limited sight of the present. It's about projecting the look on the future – reasoning not only about what the world already is, but also on what it could become in a few decades, not only for the demographic growth in some areas, but for the inevitable ethnical mixing and the mutations of the environment which will follow. This means reallocating the economic, ecological and medical resources towards underdeveloped countries, making also a mutation the model of development inside the western world. Only in this matter talking about human rights won't sound condescending in respect to the open wounds and distances between obese and hungry countries. It is easily imagined that this transformation will not pass without struggle and confrontations. Personally I don't believe in a struggle-free world – in a homogenic development and pacifist of a human nature, made easy by limitless progress of technology. When Nietzsche predicted that all the modern conflicts would revolve around the definition and modification of the human life, he was touching a fundamental nerve of our time and was opening a restless ambient. Which does not by necessity mean the extinction of the categories of modern politics – about democracy, equality, liberty. But their transferment from the formal sphere of the institutions to the substantial one of the living body of individuals and societies. Free and equal will be only those men that will have the capacity and the possibility of intervention on their own lives without annihilating those of the future generations. Just will be the institutions that will enable this. The idea of democracy needs to be remodelled in an unprecedented cross-breed between nature and story, technology and life, space and time. It needs to be situated in the crossing point between the horizontal space of a globalised world and the vertical succession of the generations. Only if it will have this capacity of auto-transformation, it will have a future not inferior so its past.

Translated by Jan Hrvatin

Jurij Verč Uvodnik

Kanonična nadčasovnost filozofske raziskave se ne more povsem odpovedati preučevanju predmeta sodobnosti in z njo povezanih fenomenov, saj šele s soočanjem s časovno aktualnim predmetom lahko preučevalec izkusi nujno samoizpraševanje. Od predmeta (sodobnosti) do preučevalca (sodobne filozofije) se izoblikuje refleksija preko samoopredmetenja lastnega mesta in vloge, rezultat raziskave pa je vsakič znova vprašljiv, ker je prav tako vprašljiva nespremenljivost zgodovinskih in družbenih razmer.

Gljučne besede: sodobnost, italijanska filozofija, vednost, reprezentacija, demokracija.

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Jurij Verč Editorial

The canonical timelessness of philosophical research can not entirely relinquish the study of the subject of contemporaneity or its corresponding phenomena; for only by confronting the topical object does the researcher experience the necessary self-inquiry. From the subject (contemporaneity) to the researcher (contemporary philosophy), a reflection takes form through self-objectification of one's place and role, the result of the research being continually questionable, as is the permanence of historical and social conditions.

Key words: contemporaneity, Italian philosophy, knowledge, representation, democracy.

Adriano Fabris Etika relacij

Razprava obravnava nekaj vidikov sodobne italijanske filozofije, vrednoti njeno specifičnost ter hkrati osvetljuje nekatere njene slabosti. Med slednjimi

sta izpostavljena abstrakten in predvsem teoretski značaj večine raziskovanj izpeljanih v Italiji. V nasprotju s tem tokom pričujoča razprava razvija razmislek o etiki in o ideji filozofije, ki se, z osredotočanjem na prakso relacij, lahko sooča s konkretnimi vprašanji v javnih razpravah in to ne zgolj italijanskih.

Ključne besede: italijanska filozofija, etika, teorija, relacija, univerzalnost.

Adriano Fabris

The Ethics of Relations

This essay analyses several aspects of contemporary Italian philosophy. It evaluates what is specific to it and highlights some of its weak points. Among these weak points the abstract and theoretical nature in particular of much research carried out in Italy is emphasized. To counteract this trend, this essay develops a reflection on the plane of ethics and an idea of philosophy that, by centering on the practice of relations, can be helpful in facing even concrete questions in public debate – and not only the Italian.

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Key words: Italian philosophy, ethics, theory, relation, universality.

Ugo Volli

Dvojčka ali razlogi sodobne italijanske filozofije

Namen članka je premisliti položaj evropske filozofije dvajsetega stoletja, ki si ga filozofija sama določa (njeno obvezo), in kako se je ta položaj spremenil v zadnjih desetletjih. Ni naključje, da se je veliko število filozofov podredilo in služilo totalitarnim gibanjem, tako desnim kakor levim, kar je nedvomno vsebinsko vplivalo tudi na njihovo misel kot tako. Preko predloge dveh mitoloških figur (Tehne in Načrt) postavljamo pod vprašaj predvsem analizo tehnike in "represivne tolerance" liberalnih družb.

Ključne besede: tehnika, totalitarizem, filozofija, obveza, hegemonija.

Ugo Volli

The Twins or the Reasons of Contemporary Italian Philosophy

The purpose of this article is to discuss the position that most of the twentieth century European philosophy has assigned to itself (the commitment) and the way in which this position has been transformed in recent decades. It is no coincidence that most of the philosophers are put at the service of the totalitarian movements of both right and left wing and this has undoubtedly influenced the content of their thought. In particular, it questioned the analysis

of the technique and the “repressive tolerance” of liberal societies, through the proposal of two mythical figures (Techne and the Plan).

Key words: technique, totalitarianism, philosophy, commitment, hegemony.

Carlo Sini

O etični revoluciji v filozofiji

Prispevek predlaga globljo rekonstrukcijo znotraj filozofije, ki temelji na pojmu »prakse«. Mišljenje prakse kritizira tako površinski relativizem »šibke« hermenevtike, kakor dogmatski poziv k “močni” resnici. Mišljenje prakse si prizadeva osvoboditi subjekta objektivističnih iluzij ter ga poziva k genealoški refleksiji lastnega ustroja in ustroja predmetov spoznanja. Tako zastavljena etična revolucija ustvarja virtualne učinke in, kolikor se znebimo predsodkov in praznoverji, sovpada s politično in družbeno usodo demokracije.

Ključne besede: filozofija, praksa, subjekt, relativizem, dogmatizem.

Carlo Sini

On Ethical Revolution in Philosophy

The paper suggests a deep reconstruction in philosophy, based on the notion of “practice”. The thought of practices criticizes both the superficial relativism of “weak” hermeneutics and dogmatic call for a “strong” truth. The thought of practices aims to freeing the subject from its objectivistic illusion, urging him to a genealogical work of reflection on his own constitution and on the constitution of the objects of knowledge. This ethical revolution produces virtual effects and, getting rid of superstition and prejudice, coincides with the political and social destiny of democracy.

Key words: philosophy, practice, subject, relativism, dogmatism.

Arturo Martone

Percepcija in sodba okusa. Nekaj nazornih primerov in nekaj aporij

Prispevek obravnava vprašanje 'resničnosti' sodb okusa iz dvojne perspektive: estetske in semiotične. Primerjava sodb okusa z drugimi sodbami čutov, kot sta to vizualna, predvsem pa zvočna sodba, razkriva, da so sodbe okusa drugačne od ostalih sodb čutov, saj le okus je znotrajtelesni čut, ki kot tak v celoti zajema telesnost subjekta spoznanja.

Ključne besede: semiotika/semioza, estetika, intra/intersubjektivnost, sodbe okusa/čutov, čutno zaznavanje.

Arturo Martone

The Perception and Judgment of Flavor. Some Exemplary Cases and some Aporias

The paper discusses the 'truthfulness' concerning gustatory judgments in perspective both aesthetic and semiotic. It compares these gustatory judgments to other sensorial judgments, such as visual and auditory in particular, and states that the gustatory judgments are very different from other sensorial ones because only the taste is an endocorporeal sense that entirely engages the corporeal nature of the subject.

Key words: semiotics/semiosis, aesthetics, intra/intersubjectivity, gustatory/sensorial judgement, sensorial perception.

Massimo De Carolis

Narava duha

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Diskusije o naravi človeškega duha so od druge svetovne vojne naprej opredeljene z razvojem tehnološkega znanja, vprašanje pa je v kolikšni meri lahko te nove znanosti prispevajo tudi h kritični osvetlitvi lastnih učinkov kakor tudi načelnega filozofskega vprašanja o človeškosti človeka kot taki. Razprava skuša pokazati, kako je pri opredelitvi današnje tehnike potrebno upoštevati dva znanstvena zastavka, in sicer »naturalizacijo duha« kot nevropsihologičen program in »naravo duha« kot fokus filozofske kritike psihologizma.

Ključne besede: tehnika, duh, naravoslovje, humanistične vede, Noam Chomsky.

Massimo De Carolis

The Nature of Spirit

From the Second World War onwards the discussions concerning the nature of human spirit have been characterized by the development of technoscience, but the following question still remains unanswered: what is the extension of a possible contribution of these new sciences towards a critical elucidation of their own effects as well as of the principal philosophic question of the humanity of the human being as such? The essay attempts to show how two scientific approaches for a definition of contemporary technology must be taken into consideration, namely the "naturalization of spirit" as a neuropsychological program, and the "nature of spirit" as a focal point of a philosophical critique of psychologism.

Key words: technology, spirit, natural sciences, humanities, Noam Chomsky.

Maurizio Ferraris

Novorealistični pristop k hermenevtiki

Prispevek primerja novorealistični in konstrukcionistični pristop hermenevtičnih raziskav do preučevanja resničnosti. Pri hermenevtično-konstrukcionističnem pristopu opazamo "transcendentalno zmoto", po kateri je mogoče trditi, da predmet obstaja le znotraj naših "stvariteljskih" pojmovnih shem. Drugi del se osredotoča na novorealistični pristop, ki z razčlenbo spremenljivih in nespremenljivih predmetov ponuja možno rešitev konstrukcionistične zmešnjave med ontologijo in epistemologijo, to pa tako v sferi fizičnih kakor družbenih predmetov.

Ključne besede: hermenevtika, novi realizem, ontologija, epistemologija, fizični in družbeni predmeti.

Maurizio Ferraris

A New Realist Approach to Hermeneutics

The article compares the constructionist and the new realist approach to hermeneutic research of what is "real". The hermeneutic-constructionist approach is affected by a "transcendental error", according to which it can be argued that the object exists only within our "creative" conceptual schemes. The second part focused on the new realist approach offers a possible solution to the constructionist confusion between ontology and epistemology, and a possible re-foundation of ontology in both spheres of objects: the natural and the social ones.

Key words: hermeneutics, new realism, ontology, epistemology, natural and social objects.

Gianni Vattimo

Realizem v dveh delih

Čemu povratek k realizmu? V čem se "resnično" razlikuje od "resnice" ter kako se iskanje resničnega izogne "postmoderni opitosti"? Prispevek odgovarja na vprašanje povratka k realizmu kot novi filozofski usmeritvi preko dveh krajših zapisov. Prvi zapis ponuja premislek o odnosu med resnico, resničnim ter interpretacijo, medtem ko drugi zapis, pismo Umberto Ecu, vprašanje še dodatno razdela skozi primerjavo težnje k realizmu ter njenega mesta izjave.

Ključne besede: realizem, interpretacija, resnica, postmoderno, Umberto Eco.

Gianni Vattimo
Realism in Two Pieces

Why a return to realism? How “real” distinguishes itself from “truth” and how the searching for “what is real” manages to avoid the “postmodern inebriation”? The paper answers the question about a possible return to realism as a new philosophical direction through two shorter notes. The first note offers a reflection on the relationship between the truth, the ‘real’ and the interpretation, while the second, a letter wrote to Umberto Eco, further elaborates the issue through a comparison of the tendency to realism and its place of enunciation.

Key words: realism, interpretation, truth, postmodern, Umberto Eco.

Giovanni Leghissa
Kdo se boji *Cultural Studies*? O politizaciji humanističnih ved med antropologijo in ontologijo sodobnosti

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Cilj pričujoče razprave je razjasniti teoretski vložek, ki se vzpostavlja skozi primerjavo med kontinentalno tradicijo kulturnih študijev in anglosaksonskimi *Cultural Studies* (CS). Po krajšem pregledu tradicije *Cultural Studies* se želim dotakniti pregleda kritike le teh. CS so podvržene kritiki, v kolikor jih vzporejamo s plodno refleksijo o kulturnih razlikah v okviru znanstvenih ved, kot sta kulturna antropologija in filozofija, ki se odvija v kontinentalni Evropi (in predvsem v Franciji in Italiji). Vendar je izkupiček *Cultural Studies*, v kolikor jih obravnavamo kritično, pozitiven, saj lahko pripomorejo k politizaciji humanističnih ved, obravnavanih kot celota.

Ključne besede: Cultural Studies, kontinentalna filozofija, humanistične vede, kulturna antropologija, politizacija.

Giovanni Leghissa
Who's afraid of *Cultural Studies*? On the Politicization of Humanities between Anthropology and Ontology of the Present

The goal of the present article is to elucidate that which is theoretically at stake in the comparison between the continental tradition of humanistic studies and the *Cultural Studies* of the Anglo-Saxon world. Following a brief overview of the tradition of *Cultural Studies* I endeavor an overview of critical stances towards them. *Cultural Studies* are subject to critique in so far as we compare them with a productive reflexion upon the cultural differences in the

sciences, such as cultural anthropology and philosophy, a reflexion that mainly takes place in the continental Europe (and first and foremost in France and in Italy). But the contribution of *Cultural Studies* is positive, inasmuch as we discuss them critically, for they can contribute to a politicization of humanities, viewed as a whole.

Key words: Cultural Studies, continental philosophy, humanistic sciences, cultural anthropology, politicization.

Emanuele Severino
Tehnika, nihilizem, resnica

Članek postavlja v ospredje razmerje med tehniko, resnico in nihilizmom, ki je določilno ne samo za izročilo filozofije, marveč za zgodovino in sedanjí trenutek Zahoda sploh. Po orisu trenutne zgodovinske situacije Zahoda v celoti, se avtor naprej pomudi pri grški filozofski utemeljitvi *episteme*, ki ima v vzpostavljanju zgodovine zahoda svoje teleologične, teološke in tehnološke nasledke, ob čemer postanejo razvidne tudi nihilistične implikacije tega razvoja.

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Ključne besede: Zahod, tehnika, postajanje, nihilizem, norost.

Emanuele Severino
Technics, Nihilism, Truth

The article brings to the forefront the question of the relation between technology, truth and nihilism, which is determinative not only for the philosophical tradition, but also for the history and the current moment of the West in general. After a description of the current historical situation of the West as a whole, the author firstly dwells upon the Greek philosophical foundation of *episteme*, which has its teleological, theological and technological consequences in the establishing of the history of the West, but whereby also the nihilistic implications of this development become apparent.

Key words: the West, technology, becoming, nihilism, folly.

Umberto Galimberti
Človek v dobi tehnike

Tehniko si še danes predstavljamo kot *orodje*, s katerim razpolagamo. Toda tehnika je postala *okolje*, ki nas obdaja in konstituira v skladu s tisto obliko racionalnosti, ki upošteva le merili funkcionalnosti in učinkovitosti ter brez

zadržkov podreja potrebe človeka potrebam aparata tehnike. Posledično tej nevednosti se človek v dobi tehnike obnaša kot pred-tehnološki človek: še vedno je nosilec prtljage idej in čustev, znotraj katerih se je prepoznaval in katerega delovanje je bilo uperjeno osmišljevalnim horizontom. Doba tehnike je "humanistično" predstavo ukinila, saj tehnika ne teži k smislu, ne ponuja nikakršnih novih scenarijev odrešenja, niti ne odrešuje, niti ne razkriva resnice. Tehnika *funkcionira*, njeno delovanje pa postaja planetarno. Znotraj teh okvirov ponuja prispevek ponovni premislek pojmov posameznika, identitete, svobode, odrešitve, resnice, pomena in smisla, ter pojmov narave, etike, religije in zgodovine, iz katerih se je napajala *humanistična doba* in ki jih danes, v *dobi tehnike*, moramo prav tako na novo premisliti, opustiti ali pa na novo utemeljiti.

Ključne besede: tehnika, humanistično, smisel, resnica, človek.

Umberto Galimberti

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Man in the Age of Technics

We are still imaging technics as an instrument that we have at disposal. But technique today becomes the *environment* of man, that which surrounds him and constitutes him according to the rules of that rationality which, measuring itself against the criteria of functionality and efficiency, doesn't hesitate to subordinate the demands of man to the demands of the technical apparatus. Consequent to this wrong idea man in the technical age still carries in ourselves the traits of pre-technological man who acted in view of purposes inscribed on a horizon of meaning, with a baggage of his own ideas and a wealth of feelings in which he recognized himself. The technical age abolished this »humanistic« scenario, and the questions of meaning which arise remain outstanding, not because technique is not yet sufficiently perfected, but because finding answers to similar questions is not a part of his plans. In fact technique does not tend toward a purpose, does not promote a meaning, does not open scenarios of salvation, does not redeem, and does not reveal the truth. Technique *works*, and since its functioning becomes planetary, it is necessary to look again at the concepts of the individual, of identity, freedom, salvation, truth, meaning and purpose, but also those of nature, ethics, politics, religion and history, of which the *humanistic* age nourished itself and that now, in the *technical age*, will have to be reconsidered, cast off or re-established at their roots.

Key words: technics, humanistic, mean, truth, man.

Telmo Pievani

Negacionizem. Kaj je “resnično” v javni razpravi danes? Primer evolucije

Dojemanje tega, kaj je »resnično« in kaj »resnica« je bilo v znanosti vedno sporno. Raziskali bomo primer “negacionizma”, zanikanja, ki se dogaja na področju evlucijskih razlag življenja in človeške narave. Odklonilni odnos do potrjenega znanstvenega konsenza pri človeku namreč temelji na globoko zakoreninjeni psihološki naravnosti. Tu pride do hudega spopada med našo intuitivno teleologijo in znanstvenim ter filozofskim škandalom kontingence. Postmodernistična epistemologija, ki jo negacionistična psevdoznanost pretkano zlorablja, s svojim pozivanjem v javnih razpravah ob nepravem času povzroča toge, neupogljive odzive nekaterih področnih znanstvenikov. To je zanimiv primer aktualnih kritičnih razmerij med znanostjo, filozofijo in družbo v odnosu do predmeta realnosti in metodologije znotraj demokratičnih razprav. Kljub neprijetnim komunikacijskim asimetrijam je vsako nesoglasje v znanosti potencialno lahko uporabno, toda le v okviru skupno določenih in poštenih pravil obnašanja. Zato menimo, da je demokratična podoba znanosti, v smislu razvoja raziskovalnih programov (v skladu s sodobno različico falsifikacionizma), lahko v pomoč pri takih polemikah.

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Ključne besede: negacionizem, intuitivna teleologija, kontingenca, psevdoznanost, raziskovalni programi.

Telmo Pievani

Denialism. What is “Real” in Public Debates Today? The Case of Evolution

The perception of what is “real” and “true” in science has always been disputed. We explore here the case of denials about the evolutionary explanations of life and human nature. This refusal of a corroborated scientific consensus is based on deeply rooted psychological attitudes. There is a sharp clash between our intuitive teleology and the scientific and philosophical scandal of contingency. Slyly, denialistic pseudoscience misuses post-modernist epistemology. Its appeal in public debates produces inconveniently hardened reactions by some field scientists. This is an interesting case of ongoing critical relationships between science, philosophy and society around the themes of reality and methodology of democratic debate. Despite the disagreeable communicational asymmetries, any dissent in science is potentially useful, but only under shared and fair rules of behavior. We propose that the democratic image of

science as an evolution of research programs (according to an updated falsificationism) could help dealing with such controversies.

Key words: denialism, intuitive teleology, contingency, pseudoscience, research programs.

Pier Aldo Rovatti

Mi, barbari. Razmišljanja o italijanski anomaliji

Če se zdi, da smo boj za moralo izgubili že od samega začetka, nam preostane kot možnost vsaj to, da vztrajamo pri minimalnem odporu, da postavljamo neko mejo našemu toleriranju. To je le upanje, vendar v to upanje izlivamo vse svoje civilno, državljansko ogorčenje. Lepljiva želatina nas obdaja in nas prežema, pa vendar se moramo zavedati, da nismo pasivni subjekti neke zdri-zaste oblasti, postanemo pa lahko njeni sokrivci, če na to lepilo pristanemo, mogoče celo povsem avtomatično. Kako, od kod začeti? Nimamo političnih receptov, vemo samo, da barbarstvo preprosto ni izven nas, ampak da deluje v naši notranjosti, večkrat ob našem soglasju. Torej gre zlasti za naš način in stil življenja, za nekaj, nad čimer lahko še učinkujemo.

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Ključne besede: barbarizacija, korupcija, mediji, demokracija, etika, svoboda.

Pier Aldo Rovatti

We, the Barbarians. Reflections on the Italian Anomaly

If it seems, that we are losing the fight for morality from its very beginning, as our option remains at least the possibility to persist in a minimal resistance, to set a boundary to our tolerance. This is only a hope, but into this hope we pour our entire civil, civic indignation. A glutinous gelatin surrounds and pervades us, and yet we must realize that we are not passive subjects of a gelatinous power, although we can become its accomplices, if we give – maybe even completely automatically – our assent to this glue. How, wherefrom should we begin? We do not have political directives, we know only that barbarism is not simply somewhere outside, it works within ourselves, in our interior, not seldom with our consent. Therefore, above all our way and style of living, something over which we still have influence is at stake.

Key words: barbarization, corruption, the media, democracy, ethics, freedom.

Giorgio Agamben
Izredno stanje

Carl Schmitt v delu *Politična teologija* izpostavlja neposredno povezanost med izrednim stanjem in suverenostjo. Toda, navkljub temu, da je bila njegova slavna opredelitev suverena kot "tistega, ki lahko razglasi izredno stanje" v preteklosti nešteto krat tolmačena, še vedno pogrešamo neko celovito teorijo izrednega stanja znotraj javnega reda. Prispevek bo poskušal razkriti ta negotovi teren, ki se nahaja med, na eni strani javnim redom in političnim dejstvom, ter na drugi med pravnim redom in življenjem. Zato pa bo poglobljeno razdelati sprva pomen razlike, ali domnevne razlike, med političnim in legalnim.

Ključne besede: izredno stanje, pravo, suverenost, Carl Schmitt, Walter Benjamin.

Giorgio Agamben
State of Exception

In his *Political Theology*, Carl Schmitt established the essential proximity between the state of exception and sovereignty. But although his famous definition of the sovereign as "he who decides on the exception" has been commented on many times, we still lack a genuine theory of the state of exception within public law. The paper will try to lift the veil that covers this uncertain terrain between, on the one hand, public law and political fact, and on the other, legal order and life. Therefore is necessary to grasp the significance of this difference, or presumed difference, between the political and the legal.

Key words: state of exception, law, sovereignty, Carl Schmitt, Walter Benjamin.

Carlo Galli
Nelagodje v demokraciji

Prvi del prispevka se osredotoča na vprašanje nelagodje v demokraciji, ne kot nelagodje proti, temveč inherentno demokraciji sami. V tem oziru bomo to nelagodje analizirali iz dveh vidikov: a) subjektivni vidik, iz vidika državljana, ki se s slepim pristajanjem nanjo oddaljuje od političnega in predaja apatiji, ter b) iz strukturnega vidika kot nelagodje, ki izhaja iz nezmožnosti demokraciji, da izpolni lastne obljube po uresničevanju višjih humanističnih ciljev. Drugi del bo nato, upoštevajoč indice, ki nam ponuja razčlemba nelagodja, namenjen razumevanju in tolmačenju tega večpomenskega pojma, »demokracija«.

Ključne besede: demokracija, nelagodje, Freud, apatija, nesposobnost.

Carlo Galli

The Discontent of Democracy

The first part of the paper aims to analyze the discontent of democracy, not as a discontent against democracy but a discontent of democracy, inherent to it. This discontent is a two-sided coin: a) the first face is primarily subjective, involving the citizen whose attitude towards politics is more and more an enraged and resigned repugnance which leads at the end to apathy; b) the second face is objective, structural: it grows from the inability of democracy to keep its promises, to keep up its humanistic objective. The second part aims to elaborate what this polysemic term-concept »democracy« means.

Key words: democracy, discontent, Freud, apathy, inability.

Roberto Esposito

Demokracija in biopolitika

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Idejo demokracije je potrebno na novo oblikovati v novem prepletanju narave in zgodovine, tehnologije in življenje, prostora in časa. Potrebno jo je umestiti v tem presečišču med horizontalnim prostorom globaliziranega sveta in vertikalnem nizu menjav generacij. Samo kolikor bo imela to sposobnost samo-transformacije, bo imela nič kaj slabšo prihodnost kot v preteklosti.

Ključne besede: demokracija, biopolitika, globalizacija, nacija, politika.

Roberto Esposito

Democracy and Biopolitics

The idea of democracy needs to be remodeled in an unprecedented cross-breed between nature and story, technology and life, space and time. It needs to be situated in the crossing point between the horizontal space of a globalised world and the vertical succession of the generations. Only if it will have this capacity of auto-transformation, it will have a future not inferior to its past.

Key words: democracy, biopolitics, globalisation, national State, politics.

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2. Klaus Held, »Husserls These von der Europäisierung der Menschheit«, v: O. Pöggeler (ur.), *Phänomenologie im Widerstreit*, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt/M., str. 13--39.
3. Rainer Wiehl, »Gadamers philosophische Hermeneutik und die begriffsgeschichtliche Methode«, *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 45 (2003), str. 10--20.

4. Dilthey, op. cit, str. 31. Husserl, nav. d., str. 50.

5. Ibid., str. 15. Isto, str. 20.

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3. Rainer Wiehl, »Gadamers philosophische Hermeneutik und die begriffsgeschichtliche Methode«, *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 45 (2003), S. 10--20.

4. Toulmin, op. cit., p. 32.

5. Ibid., p.15.

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2. Toulmin, Stephen (1992): *Cosmopolis. The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. (p.) 31.

3. Wiehl, Rainer (2003): »Gadamers philosophische Hermeneutik und die begriffsgeschichtliche Methode«, *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 45, (S.) 10--20.

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