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From a classic point of view, hope is considered to be a virtue and a feeling that focuses on an object or state relating to the future that is uncertain but possible. It is often linked with eschatology because for hope to be ultimately fulfilled is typically not achievable in this life. From a contemporary point of view, hope has been thought more as a mood or an existential attitude that responds to life's challenges and that underlies distinct objects of hope in relation to particular acts. Yet can a hope whose object is known as such really be characterised as hope? Derrida insists that the object of hope cannot be known without reducing it to the level of finitude, that is, without our settling for something that is less than worthy of our hope, or less worthy of hope as the impossible. From the perspective of a non-religious humanism, Martin Beck Matuštík also thinks hope as the impossible, in two ways. The first way is similar to that of Derrida, which is the "paradoxical, aporetic dimension of impossible hope". The second way is where "the religious is revealed in (inter)personal and impersonal dimensions of faithful awakening or awareness as well as by saturating … experience with the counterexperience of impossible hope." This involves thinking hope according to saturation, where it arises as a gift in experience but exceeds conceptual clarity or determination. In this way it is a mood or a state without an object. It is without ground, but is granted suddenly or unexpectedly, as if from elsewhere. Despite this being a secular way of thinking hope, Matuštík suggests that it opens onto a response of prayer, which involves relating to a "living intelligence" that might be called God or Spirit. According to the terms of this analysis, then, hope remains an option for an exclusive humanism, and is not simply a theological construct, even if it still borrows from theological models and invites the humanist into a restricted form of trancendence.

Emmanuel Falque, *Survival and Creation: Hope Keeps Us Alive («L'espoir fait vivre»)*

"Survival and Creation" is all about hope. Because with The Extra-Phenomenal, we might have thought that the future was definitively blocked. If trauma – illness, separation, the death of a child, natural disasters and pandemics – means that I note that I'm still here when I should be dead, this sense of survival is also life itself, and this is what grounds the (human) hope on which all (divine) hope is based. To trace the path from survival to creation is thus

to make the great crossing from "my" impossible life to the possibilities of "life". This text thus marks a decisive step, not in exiting from my state, which I cannot forget, but in living it differently, for there is always within me, and with the other, an act of creating.
Thought advances, and even progresses, by always returning to the point where it left off. The "step backwards" is not just a matter of going back to the origin of thought, but also of regaining a foothold on the basis of the old crossing. The same is true of "Survival and Creation", which sets out in search of the "weight of happiness" not as a relief, but as a conquest, after measuring the weight of unhappiness: «To each his own measure, for if unhappiness is heavy to bear, happiness is even heavier». *The Extra-Phenomenal*, for all that it itself to the "confines of phenomenality", had never ceased to measure it: «What we must wait and hope for is not to exit from the crisis, nor even to restore an opening or a mode of manifestation that we have forgotten, but rather to *be in it differently*, as if it reminded us of the essence of our humanity, by way of being always transformed». And *At the limit*, by way of "phenomenological arguments", certainly drives the nail in, but with a finale (The weigh of happiness) that allows us, if not to hope, at least not to be left with trauma alone, as if frozen in extra-phenomenality. Of course, no "salto" is required here, as we fear nothing more than the kind of resilience that consists in bouncing back to always land on our feet. *What's most astonishing* is not that we can get back up again - because that's not always a given – but «to discover, ever and always, that we are still alive when we could have been, or should have been, dead». Or again, *what's most astonishing*, «in pure philosophy this time, and independently of theological or theologal virtues (Charles Péguy's Little Girl Hope), is therefore to see oneself *still alive* – precisely when and where we thought we were going to sink, and never subsist» (illness, separation, death of a child, natural disaster, pandemic).

Chiara Pesaresi, *Hors d'attente. Rethinking Hope with Henri Maldiney*

The Maldinean conception of the real as *hors d'attente* (beyond expectation), as event, stands in contrast to the Heideggerian project, which restricts the field of possibilities to human projection, thereby leaving no room for the unexpected or the unforeseeable. The event is that which disrupts one horizon in order to open another, and whose paradigm is the encounter – whether with the other or with the work of art. The Maldinean concepts of transpossible and transpassible express this horizon of the outside-of-expectation, as well as the originary possibility to be affected by the real, prior to any anticipation, thanks to the pathic dimension of existence. To think hope in the light of Maldiney's philosophy, and of his concepts of transpossibility and transpassibility, is therefore to renounce any claim to mastery over the future and to open oneself to the risk of the event, within a horizon of assumed uncertainty.

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Fernando Arancibia-Collao, *La ética en la economía: fundamentos normativos de la teoría y la política económica*

This essay explores the structural relationship between ethics and economics, arguing that economic theory is inherently normative, both in its methodological assumptions and in its policy applications. The classic distinction between positive and normative economics is critically examined, showing that even allegedly descriptive propositions involve moral judgments, either implicitly or in their truth claims and practical implications. Through the analysis of key concepts such as Pareto efficiency, Arrow's impossibility theorem, and social welfare functions, the paper reveals that concepts like efficiency, welfare, and preference embed normative evaluations. Furthermore, it distinguishes between formal and substantive accounts of well-being, emphasizing the ethical necessity of assessing which preferences ought to be included in welfare functions. Ultimately, the essay concludes that economics cannot coherently detach itself from ethical reasoning, as it would compromise both its internal consistency and its social relevance.

Zaida Charepe, *Hope and Integral Health: Nurturing a Human-Centred Approach*

Hope is an essential element for global health, promoting physical, psychological, and social well-being. The relationship between hope and health, its relevance as a driving force for resilience and a quality of life, especially in contexts of adversity. The intentional integration of hope into health systems is presented as a holistic and human-centred approach. This article examines the significance of hope in promoting integral health, considering its multifaceted dimensions and its impact on healthcare systems.

Victoria Bauer, *Hope in Philosophical Posthumanism*

The paper explores the multifaceted role of hope within Philosophical Posthumanism, examining how Francesca Ferrando articulates an ethics that transcends anthropocentrism and dualistic ontologies. By situating hope within a relational and non-dual framework, posthumanist thought redefines it as an immanent, generative force rather than a transcendent ideal. The analysis suggests that such a reconfiguration enables new forms of ecological awareness, coexistence, and epistemic humility. Philosophical Posthumanism thereby offers a nuanced ethics of hope oriented toward inclusive, sustainable futures.

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Alessia Cadelo, *The Multidimensional Concept of Autonomy and the Role of Hope in its Promotion*

Autonomy is a multifaceted concept which is difficult to define. In the liberal tradition, it intended as ability to be self-governing and is strictly related to the process of preferences formation. By contrast, for authors who support a relational account, autonomy is, a socio-relational phenomenon. This implies that the social and cultural context could promote the exercise of autonomy or, on the contrary, hinder it. If autonomy is intended as a socially and culturally embedded notion, hope could also play an important role in its promotion, as it could foster imaginative abilities and self-esteem, which are both required in relational perspectives on autonomy.

Flavia Chieffi, *Hope as a Figure of Human Historicity: Time and History in Virgilio Melchiorre's philosophy*

In an era marked by the decline of grand ideological narratives the relevance of a discourse on hope may appear anachronistic. Nevertheless, contemporary consciousness re-engages with this theme through multiple pathways. To be understood in its essence, the phenomenon requires a transcendental phenomenological approach. Such reflection, by transcending the bounds of mere phenomenality, enables a critical investigation into the constitutive condition of the essential horizon of hope. The philosophical inquiry undertaken by Virgilio Melchiorre pursues this trajectory. Assuming an ontological valence, his investigation is gradually referred to the roots of existence, to the most proper dimension of the human being: temporality. The philosopher's question addresses the «nexus rendering the words of time authentic». Within the necessary confluence of history, phenomenology and metaphysics, the Melchiorrian inquiry focuses on the historicity intrinsic to the human being. Ultimately, hope is elucidated as the most fitting figure of human historicity.

Giacomo Chironi, *The Human between Forgiveness and Hope*

This presentation aims to describe the concrete meaning of the concept of hope, first by examining its connection with the notion of forgiveness and analyzing their theoretical value together, and second by illustrating the practical significance of forgiveness in the context of an Italian case of restorative justice. From the perspective of the time concept, hope means to give the future another chance, by facing every times that could come and, in this way, really living the present. Even the forgiveness allows the human being to be free from a cumbersome past and finally to be fully human.

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Enrico Di Meo, *Imaginative variation on power: Ricœur's take on Utopia*

In his 1975 series of lectures at the University of Chicago, Paul Ricœur explicitly declared his intention to integrate Ideology and Utopia within a unified conceptual framework, which he termed the social imagination. Focusing on his analysis of utopia, I will examine Ricœur's characterization of it as an "imaginative variation on power" that leads to a questioning of what presently exist. Rather than approaching utopia as a merely literary genre – typically associated with an idealized realm detached from reality and therefore unattainable – Ricœur's lectures underscore its imaginative capacity to question and destabilize the established order, namely the prevailing power structures. In this perspective, utopias function as a potent instrument for conceiving feasible alternatives and articulating the hope for substantive transformation.

Tomaso Pignocchi, *Language and Emptiness. Toward a Non-Foundational Soteriological Epistemology*

This article examines the convergence between Madhyamaka Buddhism and Wittgenstein's later philosophy regarding the soteriological implications of a non-foundational knowledge. Both traditions see philosophy and practice as a pursuit of clarity, not a search for hidden foundations. They target deep-seated linguistic patterns that create the illusion of fixed essences and a permanent self, which are the source of suffering. The Madhyamaka focus on emptiness (śūnyatā) as dependent origination mirrors Wittgenstein's use of ordinary language to expose metaphysical errors. The goal is to transform vision, recognizing that ultimate truth is not a separate realm but a clearer perspective on conventional, interdependent reality, leading to liberation by accepting our conditionedness.

Carlo Maria Simone, *Hope Beyond the Apocalypse: An Ovidian Myth in "The Road" by Cormac McCarthy*

This paper examines *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy through the intertextual lens of Ovid's myth of Philemon and Baucis, recalled in the episode of the encounter with Ely. By highlighting McCarthy's conscious inversion of Ovid's myth, the essay argues that the novelist relocates the classical paradigm of divine hospitality into a post-apocalyptic moral landscape. In McCarthy's world, the divine does not manifest in the stranger, as in Ovid's tale, but in the compassion of the boy, whose gratuitous goodness suggests a Christological reinterpretation of the myth. The boy's actions embody an unreasoned, enduring hope—*spe contra spem*—that survives the collapse of civilization. Thus, *The Road* transforms the Ovidian narrative of reward and metamorphosis into a meditation on morality and transcendence amid desolation.

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Jan Juhani Steinmann, *Hope and Disquiet. Reflections on the Dialectics of Freedom*

This article examines the phenomenon of freedom in the space between hope and disquiet. Freedom is explored phenomenologically as a disturbing phenomenon of excess, to which ultimately only a poetic phenomenology can respond. The starting point if this reflection on the dialectics of freedom is the crisis of the present, understood as a crisis of the real, the possible, the impossible, language and freedom itself.

Giammarco Basile, *Flaminio Piccoli, the Christian Democracy, and South America*

The aim of presentation is to highlight the role that Italy and its most important political party, the Christian Democracy (DC), played in the context of international relations with the South American continent within the framework of the Cold War, from the early 1970s to the 1990s. In particular, the presentation seeks to shed light on the political, ideological, and financial role played by the Catholic-inspired party in a region such as Latin America, which, during those years, was marked in various areas by authoritarian military regimes.

Cecilia Benassi, *Note sul metodo di Florenskij*

The essay explores the methodological core of Pavel Florenskij's thought, focusing on the concepts of integrity, organicity, and the dynamic tension between *ergon* and *energeia*. The author shows how Florenskij's epistemology is closely connected with aesthetics and theology, proposing a symbolic and poetic approach to knowledge based on the living interaction between subject and object. The notions of "symbolic methodology" and "poetic methodology" emerge as ways to grasp reality in its dynamic wholeness, standing against abstract or systematic approaches and emphasizing an organic, relational, and vital understanding of knowledge.

Sarah Horton, *Maine de Biran on the Limits of Science and the Self*

According to Maine de Biran, insanity (or alienation) necessarily involves a complete loss of all intellectual faculties. Today this view is surprising, and it is easy to become entangled in the question whether any specific aspect of Biran's thought is right or wrong. But Biran reorients our conception of the human person, showing that we must attend to the powers of the body even as we recognize that humans are not solely physical beings. These lessons remain as relevant today as they did when Biran wrote in the early nineteenth century.

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Francesco Marcelli, *Hope and optimism among Italian Catholic university students after the Second World War*

A general sense of hope and optimism can be observed among the members of Fuci (Federation of Italian Catholic university students) after the Second World War and during the political, social and economic reconstruction of Italy. The presence of a volitive and optimistic spirit among the Catholic university students and intellectuals of the postwar period probably helped them to rebuild a new society through different professions.

Gianluca Michelli, *The Non-Person: Benveniste and Ortigues on the Role of the Third Person*

Benveniste famously argued that the third person, unlike the first and second, marks absence from discourse, thus constituting the category of the non-person. In this paper, I challenge this conclusion by reassessing Benveniste's assumptions. After discussing the indexical nature of all personal pronouns, I consider the implications of taking proper names as the paradigm for the third person. My argument builds on insights from Ortigues' work on symbolism, assigning to the third person a necessary role in shaping personal identities.

Federico Rudari, *Stillness and movement (or life and death) in Anne Imhof's* Natures Mortes

The article explores Anne Imhof's exhibition *Natures Mortes* (2021) through a phenomenological and semiotic perspective. The project developed by the artist at the Palais de Tokyo (Paris) is examined with a particular focus on how it intertwined human movement, the post–COVID-19 city, and the artistic tradition of still life and its symbolism. By merging her own work with that of Eliza Douglas and more than thirty other artists into a cohesive material narrative, Imhof investigated the tension between creativity and decay, disorientation and meaning, stasis and action. The second part of the article takes Susan Broadhurst's analysis as a point of departure, approaching *Natures Mortes* as a hybrid and total work.

Riccardo Maria Sciarra, *The Long Road to the EPP: a Historical Overview of Christian Democratic Cooperation in Europe*

This study seeks to provide an overview of the manner in which specific Christian Democratic formations within the European context contributed, through a framework of transnational dialogue, to a collaboration that gra-

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dually established the prerequisites for the eventual formation, in 1976, of the European People's Party (EPP). Despite the inherent peculiarities offered by each constituent formation, the EPP is fundamentally rooted in shared foundational values, the trajectory of which this paper will attempt to trace.

Giuseppe Vena, *Some Notes for a Genealogy of Confession: Foucault on Christian Veridiction*

This paper offers a preliminary investigation into the genealogy of confession in Christian contexts as theorized by Michel Foucault, focusing on the regime of veridiction and alèthurgy in his later work. Drawing on Foucault's reflections on truth-telling, it tentatively explores how confession may shape the ethical formation of the subject through obedience, renunciation, and introspective examination, outlining its dual role as a mechanism of power and a site of moral transformation.

Lorenza Zucchi, *Invisibility and Passibility of Aesthetic Experience: Perspectives from Michel Henry and Henri Maldiney*

How does the link between aesthetic and artistic experience emerge? A phenomenological view of passibility, drawing on the thought of Michel Henry and Henri Maldiney, offers a possible answer. For both, the point of convergence is found in the concept of pathos as an invisible affective thread that allows the subject to feel: the work of art is a metaphysical and invisible element that reveals itself in visibility. Aesthetic experience resonates with artistic experience because it finds in "feeling" the manifestation of Life (Henry) and the opening of being (Maldiney).

Marco Valerio, *Challenges in Integrating Civic and Citizenship Education and Education for Sustainable Development in Initial Teacher Education for Pre-Primary and Primary Education: Preliminary Findings from Two Italian Case Studies*

This paper presents preliminary findings from a doctoral research project exploring how Civic and Citizenship Education (CCE) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) are integrated into initial teacher education for pre-primary and primary school teachers. Focusing on two Italian universities, the present contribution analyzes interviews with faculty members within a multiple case study and mixed-methods design. Results highlight a predominantly environmental interpretation of sustainability, limited integration between CCE and ESD, and fragmented conceptualizations of CCE. These findings reveal a lack of curricular coherence and point to the need for more holistic and interconnected approaches in teacher education.

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Hope in humanism (or humanism in hope)*

Robyn Horner

In recent times, it seems as though we live in a world without hope. There seems to be no hope that famine will end in Gaza, that war will end in Ukraine, or that Trump and his cronies will be called to account in the United States. Pleas for peace and justice seem to go unheard. The machine of self-interest grinds on and on. Hope languishes as day after day, more footage emerges of starving children, cities under siege, and blatant persecution of the weak or pursuit of personal enemies that goes unchecked. Moreover, at the same time, it seems that the human horizon is shrinking. As Charles Taylor observes, we live in 'a secular age,' and he describes what it means to be human under these conditions:

> The buffered identity of the disciplined individual moves in a constructed social space, where instrumental rationality is a key value, and time is pervasively secular. All of this makes up what I want to call 'the immanent frame'. There remains to add just one background idea: that this frame constitutes a 'natural' order, to be contrasted to a 'supernatural' one, an 'immanent' world, over against a possible 'transcendent' one. [1]

It seems that for many, the present world is all there is because it appears to be the natural order of things, the social imaginary reduced to what is immediate and self-evident, religious ways of being largely eclipsed. There is no longer hope in something beyond what is here and now. It is within this context that an exclusive humanism arises, a humanism that has no other boundaries than its own. Within this context, what does it mean to hope?

* Parts of this text have previously been published as "On Hope: Critical Rereadings," Australian EJournal of Theology 15 (Jan 2010).

[1] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA/London: Belknap /Harvard University, 2007), 542.

Classic and contemporary characterisations of hope

In hope, one intends the possibility of some positive object or state occurring in the future. A classic characterisation is found in the work of Thomas Aquinas, who thinks of hope as a passion. The medieval 'passion' is the Latin *passiō*, which is "an affection of the mind," or "emotion", and this will distinguish Thomas' understanding from some contemporary analytic accounts of hope which find its origin in rational belief rather than feeling [2]. For Thomas, the object of hope is some perceived future good which is difficult but possible to attain [3]. In other words, one cannot be sure that one's hope will be realised, but the possibility that it will be realised cannot be excluded because the grounds for it have some justification. Thomas' discussion largely focuses on the theological virtue of hope, which relates to hope eschatologically as the prospect of eternal life with God, a state which can only be attained with God's help. For Thomas, hope is lived as the virtuous mean between having an attitude of presumption or entitlement and one of despair [4].

In comparison and contrast with this classic account, Nancy Snow argues that hope has two essential features. First, not unlike Thomas, she argues that the concept of hope concerns an outcome that is unsettled and cannot be known determinatively by the one who hopes. A person can hope that the war in Ukraine will end soon, but they do not know that it will and do not have access to something like secret military intelligence that might convince them decisively of this as a fact. Second, however, Snow maintains that hope is both "a deep-seated orientation [and] that [it] makes possible more specific hopes with particular objects" [5]. With respect to this last part of the characterisation, Snow refers to what scholars in her edited volume claim is a 'pre-intentional' or 'basal' hope, out of which background specific hopes are subsequently established [6]. Gabriel Marcel gives a sense of this understanding in speaking of the difference between a hope, or

[2] Oxford English Dictionary, "passion (n.)," June 2025, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/7483386093.

[3] Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Benziger Bros., 1947), I-II, q. 62-67 and II-II, q. 17-22; see also Josef Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, trans. Richard Winston, Clara Winston, and Mary Frances McCarthy (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, [1935] 1997).

[4] Aquinas, *ST*, I-II, q. 64, a. 61.

[5] Nancy E. Snow, ed., *The Virtue of Hope* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024), 2, 3.

[6] Snow, *Virtue of Hope*, 3.

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hope in, which is quasi-existential and relational – especially theologically relational, along the lines of faith – and hope *that*, which takes particular objects [7].

Now, there is something compelling in this thinking of hope as a deep-seated orientation, and it makes sense to me to think of it as a fundamental intentionality of mood, and not as an emotion [8]. This is because emotions are often short-lived, whereas moods tend to be longer lasting and more pervasive. While it is possible for one's heart to leap instantaneously with hope (or to plummet when it is dashed, in much the same way), I suspect that hope normally has a more extensive duration that orients one's whole person over a period of time. I suggest that the momentary revelation that hope's object might be fulfilled or dashed *speaks* to a pre-existing hope instead of being originary. In light of these factors, I would describe hope in Heideggerean terms as belonging to the structure of *Befindlichkeit*, an existential way of finding ourselves in the world which is instantiated as an existentiell in a *Stimmung*, or specific mood of attunement.

While suggesting that hope be thought as a mood, I do not think that of necessity it functions as the basis of further, discrete hopes, each with their own particular hoped-for objects. This is because such a position might imply that hope would be a constant *Grundstimmung* opening onto smaller episodes of various *Stimmung*, or that it is a *Stimmung* with more specific hopes structurally looking like a series of feeling- or emotion-episodes (*Gefühlen*). Since *Befindlickheit* is an ontological characterisation and remains universal and nescient with respect to moods, the thinking of a single, dominant *Grundstimmung* brings about its own difficulties, even if Heidegger tends to give anxiety this type of prominence, for example. In short, to make one *Stimmung* determinative raises questions about where others might fit. However, where hope is relational (a hope in God, for example, or another person), it can make sense to think of specific hopes in light of this overall attitude.

Snow further observes the common point of view of some twentieth century thinkers that hope is a fundamental and more general orientation that enables a person to "respond to life's trials" [9]. A basic

[7] Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, trans. Emma Craufurd (New York: Harper and Row, 1951/1962), 32.

[8] Robyn Horner, "Is Anxiety Fundamental? Lacoste's Reading of Heidegger," *New Yearbook in Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy* XXI, no. Special (2023): 399.

[9] Snow, *Virtue of Hope*, 4.

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commitment to life's overall meaningfulness or to good ultimately winning out over evil would be examples of such a hopeful orientation, such as we find in the work of Victor Frankl [10]. Living with an attitude of hope was frequently what enabled Frankl's fellow prisoners to survive the Shoah. Snow also mentions Kant's view of hope as an act of practical reason; while it is not within Snow's narrative, I note that a Kantian view requires a kind of eschatological fulfilment of hope to make the search for moral perfection ultimately achievable [11]. Kant argues that a virtuousness that cannot be perfected in the present life implies a life beyond this one where perfection becomes possible. This is the foundation of his argument for God.

In the wider literature, hope is frequently contrasted with optimism. I may be optimistic that my presentation will go well because I have put into it a great deal of preparation, but it is always possible that something untoward might happen that makes it go more or less well. This is not hope. Giving a paper is something that I do regularly; things not going well might be a source of embarrassment, but it would be unlikely that any consequences would be devastating. There are not enormous stakes riding on it, although I would like it to be successful. That is to say, then, that hope often refers to something important rather than to something relatively trivial. As Marcel writes: "The truth is that there can strictly speaking be no hope except when the temptation to despair exists" [12].

In precisely this sense, hope can also be contrasted with wishing: I might wish that the lottery ticket I buy will yield a fortune that enables me to purchase an apartment in Paris, but this is not hope. I well know that my ticket has an infinitesimal chance of winning, and I have not yet sold my house in Melbourne in expectation of a lottery win any time soon. Wishing has an air of fantasy about it. We sometimes use the word 'hope' when what we actually mean is 'wish'. I might say that I hope the speed camera I just drove past did not catch me doing 50km per hour over the limit. Perhaps something of the difference between wishing and hoping also has to do with the gravity of the anticipated consequences. If the consequences of being caught speeding were likely to be going to jail, a wish that something hadn't actually been picked up by the speed camera might turn into a hope for judicial leniency.

[10] See Victor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (New York: Beacon Press, 1946/2006).

[11] Immanuel Kant, *Kant's Critique of Practical Reason and other Works on the Theory of Ethics* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., [1898] 1909).

[12] Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 36.

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Nevertheless, given the virtue-aspect of hope, we would still need to ask whether such a hope would be for the good. For thinkers such as Marcel, hope involves a foundation of self-transcendence which means that genuine hope is always more than self-interest [13].

A phenomenological analysis of hope

Thus far I have suggested that hope is a deep, affectively intentional orientation of a person towards the good in relation to an outcome that is significant and possible but cannot yet be confirmed or known as such. It is reducible neither to optimism nor to wishfulness. Yet, we can go further in articulating the dimensions of hope in a systematic way. James K. A. Smith gives a phenomenological account according to five required elements of hope: a hoper; a distinct intentional act of hoping; an object of hope (which is good); a ground (which enables it to be distinguished from wishful thinking) and the potential for, if not the certainty of, fulfilment [14].

With respect to the one who hopes, let us not delay here with too many anxieties about naming the identity of the hoper. We take as given that there is one who hopes, even if we do not wish to say that the one who hopes is solely a transcendental *ego.* Moving immediately to the second phenomenological element, then, the affective intentionality of hope could readily be mistaken for desire, for hope is surely the desire for something, some outcome, some resolution to a situation. Yet, desire has a different character to hope, for desire is normally directed to some possession of its object, whereas hope has nothing to do with possession or satiety but has an inability to be more than open towards what its outcome could be [15]. What gives rise to hope can only be an object of the imagination [16]. This brings us to consider the object of

[13] Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 67.

[14] James K. A. Smith, "Determined Hope: A Phenomenology of Christian Expectation," in *The Future of Hope*, ed. Miroslav Volf and William Katerberg (Eerdmans, 2004). Note that I have changed the order of Smith's elements, placing intentionality prior to hope's object for ease of exposition.

[15] "We might say that hope only escapes from a particular metaphysical ruling on condition that it transcends desire—that is to say, that it does not remain centred on the subject himself." Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 66.

[16] See Robyn Horner, "Ignatian Imagination in Prayer: Phenomenological and Hermeneutical Perspectives." *The Phenomenology of Christian Imagination,* ed. Javier Carreño Cobos and Katarzyna Dudek (London: Bloomsbury, 2025). "For Husserl, imagination is, first, a way of intending; and second, a way of intending in the absence of any directly experienced object in person."

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hope, and here, Smith dialogues with Jacques Derrida, whose position on hope requires some detailed preliminary explanation.

Much of Derrida's writing concerns the possibility of openness to the completely other ("the impossible"), to an event that cannot be expected, planned for, recuperated or accommodated within the circle, however we might characterise it (structure, reason, the economy, or a horizon of meaning, for example). Justice, love, forgiveness, the gift, and so on, exemplify the impossible. As promise, the impossible impassions and motivates us but remains part of an absolute future that cannot be presented as such.[17] Its conditions of possibility are, equally, its conditions of impossibility (the gift, for example, must be given in complete freedom, but we always risk reducing it to being an element of exchange once it is recognised as a gift)[18]. The impossible enables the circle to turn but remains exterior to it, although it is not simply transcendent to the circle: the overrunning of the circle by the gift, if there is any, does not lead to a simple, ineffable exteriority that would be transcendent and without relation. It is this exteriority that sets the circle going, it is this exteriority that puts the economy in motion. It is this exteriority that engages in the circle and makes it turn"[19].

In an important passage from *Specters of Marx*, Derrida describes democracy as the impossible or the event, and sets out the relationship of democracy to hope: "the effectivity or actuality of the democratic promise, will always keep within it, and it must do so, this absolutely undetermined messianic hope at its heart, this eschatological relation to the to-come of an event and of a singularity, of an alterity that cannot be anticipated"[20]. In so far as the impossible can be awaited but cannot arrive in the present, Derrida's thinking of it has a messianic structure, but it is messianic without reference to a particular messiah. It is messianic in form, but not, apparently, in substance[21]. At the same

[17] "another opening of event-ness as historicity that permitted one not to renounce, but on the contrary to open up access to an affirmative thinking of the messianic and emancipatory promise as promise: as *promise* and not as onto-theological or teleo-eschatological program or design." Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York/London: Routledge, 1994), 75.

[18] Robyn Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology*, ed. John D. Caputo (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), 1-18.

[19] Jacques Derrida, *Given Time. 1. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991/1992), 30.

[20] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 65. See also Jacques Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge: the Two Sources of 'Religion' at the Limits of Reason Alone," in *Religion*, ed. Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo (Stanford University Press, 1998), 17ff.

[21] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 167ff; Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge," 16ff. See also the

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time, John D. Caputo argues that Derrida's messianic thought cannot only be formal, since that would oppose the very concrete historical and particular engagement of deconstruction and repeat the violence of metaphysics in the establishment of an overarching, transcendental structure. Instead, Caputo maintains that deconstruction is another messianism – in the style of, and alongside the Abrahamic religious messianisms[22]. In his longing for justice, or for democracy-to- come, Derrida is completely engaged rather than removed and speaking at the level of theory[23]. He makes an impassioned commitment to the

later clarification: "A messianicity *without* messianism is not a watered-down messianism, a diminishment of the force of the messianic expectation. It is a different structure, a structure of existence that I attempt to take into account by way of a reference less to religious traditions than to possibilities whose analysis I would like to pursue, refine, complicate, *and* contest - ... the possibility of taking into account, *on the one* hand, a paradoxical experience of the performative of the promise (but also of the threat at the heart of the promise) that organizes every speech act, every other performative, and even every preverbal experience of the relation to the other; and, *on the other* hand, at the point of intersection with this threatening promise, the horizon of awaiting [*attente*] that informs our relationship to time – to the event, to that which happens [*ce qui arrive*], to the one who arrives [*l'arrivant*] and to the other. Involved this time, however, would be a waiting without waiting, a waiting whose horizon is, as it were, punctured by the event (which is waited for *without* being awaited.... No future, no time-to-come [*à-venir*], no other, otherwise; no event worthy of the name, no revolution. At *the point of intersection* of these two styles of thought (speech-act theory and the onto-phenomenology of temporal and historical existence), but also against both of them, the interpretation of the messianic that I propose does not ... much resemble Benjamin's. It no longer has *any* essential connection with what messianism may be taken to mean, that is, at least two things: on the one hand, the memory of a determinate historical revelation, whether Jewish or Judeo-Christian, and, on the other, a relatively determinate messiah-figure." Jacques Derrida, "Marx and Sons," in *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Jacques Derrida's Spectres of Marx*, ed. Michael Sprinkler (Verso, 1999), 213-269, 250-251.

[22] John D. Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Religion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 134-143; John D. Caputo, ed., *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), 168-180; James K. A. Smith, "Determined Violence: Derrida's Structural Religion," *The Journal of Religion* 78 (1998); James K. A. Smith, "Re-Kanting Postmodernism? Derrida's Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone," *Faith and Philosophy* 17 (2000).

[23] As he later explains: "Messianicity (which I regard as a universal structure of experience, and which cannot be reduced to religious messianism of any stripe) is anything but Utopian: it refers, in every here-now, to the coming of an eminently real, concrete event, that is, to the most irreducibly heterogenous otherness. Nothing is more 'realistic' or 'immediate' than this messianic apprehension, straining forward toward the event of him who/that which is coming." "As this unconditional messianicity *must* thereafter negotiate its conditions in one or another singular, practical situation, we have to do here with the locus of an analysis and evaluation, and, therefore, of a responsibility." Derrida, "Marx and Sons," 248, 249. "To all this I would oppose ... everything I placed earlier under the title of the im-possible, of what must remain (in a non-negative fashion) foreign to the order of my possibilities, to the order of the 'I can,' to the theoretical, descriptive, constative, and performative orders (inasmuch as this latter still implies a power guaranteed for some 'I' by conventions that neutralize the pure eventfulness of the event). That is what I meant earlier by heteronomy, by a law come from the other, by a

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messianic[24]. Yet in his insistence that the "messiah" remains in the absolute future, Derrida rejects the belief that any finite (for which we might also read "determined") instantiation of justice, or democracy, or the messiah, will be adequate to the task[25].

Now, Derrida is critical of any religious faith that purports to know its object. The reference also concerns the claim of any determined object of hope:

> At some point, you ... translate your faith into something determinable, and then you have to keep the 'name' of the resurrection. My own understanding of faith is that there is faith whenever one gives up not only certainty but also any determined hope. If one says that resurrection is the horizon of one's hope, then one knows what one names when one says 'resurrection'—faith is not pure faith. It is already knowledge[26].

As soon as the object of hope becomes known, in other words, it is reduced to the dimensions of human aspiration. Prayer, which we might normally situate in the context of hope, must for Derrida be characterised by a kind of hope*less*ness: "I am not expecting, I am not hoping: my prayer is hopeless, totally, totally hopeless. I think this hopelessness is part of what prayer should be." At the same time, in prayer we frequently re-enter the economy: "Yet I know there is hope, there is calculation. ..... I know that in praying something happens..."[27]. Where

responsibility and decision of the other—of the other in me, an other greater and older than I am. This im-possible is not private. It is not the inaccessible, and it is not what I can indefinitely defer: it is announced to me, sweeps down on me, precedes me, and seizes me *here now*.... ..... This im-possible is thus not a regulative *idea* or *ideal*. It is what is most undeniably *real*." Jacques Derrida, Jacques Derrida, "Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides. A Dialogue with Jacques Derrida," in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*, ed. Giovanna Borradori (University of Chicago Press, 2003), 85-136, 134.

[24] For Derrida this is a commitment to the messianic rather than to messianism, although he opens the possibility that his thought bears some relation to messianistic tradition. Derrida, "Marx and Sons," 250-251.

[25] "a certain emancipatory and *messianic* affirmation, a certain experience of the promise that one can try to liberate from any dogmatics and even from any metaphysico-religious determination, from any *messianism*. And a promise must be kept, that is, not to remain 'spiritual' or 'abstract,' but to produce events, new effective forms of action, practice, organization, and so forth." Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 89.

[26] Jacques Derrida in Richard Kearney, ed., *Debates in Continental Philosophy: Conversations with Contemporary Thinkers* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 12.

[27] Jacques Derrida, in John D. Caputo, Kevin Hart, and Yvonne Sherwood, "Epoché and Faith: An Interview with Jacques Derrida," in *Derrida and Religion: Other Testaments*, ed. Kevin Hart and Yvonne Sherwood (Routledge, 2004), 27-50, 31. See also the discussion in Martin Beck Matuštík, *Radical Evil and the Scarcity of Hope: Postsecular Meditations* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 183.

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there is hope, there is always the beginning of a certain accounting: " ... if one could count on what is coming, hope would be but the calculation of a program" [28].

Smith responds to Derrida's thinking of hope with a number of interrelated criticisms. He argues that by its very nature, hope cannot be indeterminate, and he seeks "to show (contra Derrida) that determinacy per se cannot disqualify particular hopes." He maintains: "indeed, hope must be determinate and cannot be otherwise. Christian hope thus cannot be excluded simply by virtue of its determinacy" [29]. Determinacy need not be a necessary characteristic of hope if we are considering it in terms of epistemology or language (that we cannot fully know the object of hope does not present a problem for Smith), but it is certainly necessary for him if we are contemplating hope in an ontological or phenomenological register (ontological or phenomenological indeterminacy seems, to Smith, to undermine hope's very character as hope). Smith argues that by denying the possibility of a determined object of hope, Derrida denies the possibility of the phenomenon of hope as such [30]. Christian hope, Smith maintains, has its own object, he argues, even while demonstrating a degree of nescience with regard to the precise bounds of hope. In this way, Christian hope remains possible.

Questioning the need for indeterminacy with regard to the object of hope, Smith links determinacy with finitude, and then argues that Derrida is unnecessarily critical of the finite [31]. The link between determinacy and finitude happens quite quickly in the text but is an important step in Smith's argument. He distinguishes between "Justice Itself" and (the presumably temporal) Christian incarnations of justice, but then seems to imply that this distinction should not exclude those incarnations from being just as well (that is, justice does not need to be indeterminate). Smith slips immediately from the need to "maintain this critical posture" with regard to any identification of "our particular regime with 'Justice Itself'" (in other words, he affirms that finite incarnations of justice can never approximate infinite justice) to his summary of "Derrida's fundamental logic regarding determination and violence". This is that "determination itself is violent and leads to violence; therefore, in order to avoid violence we must have a hope which

[28] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 169.
[29] Smith, "Determined Hope," 205.
[30] Smith, "Determined Hope," 207n230.
[31]

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is indeterminate; and ... our mode of expecting [it] must be 'without horizon'" [32]. Yet Smith maintains that finitude is "violent and exclusionary only if one assumes that finitude is somehow a 'failure'," and that "Derrida conflates ... 'the historical production of violence' with the 'necessary production of violence' in its relation to religion" [33]. What is interesting about this argument – and we take it together, as Smith requests in his note, with his other writing on Derrida and the violence of finitude – is that it seems to suggest that the object of hope can be finite, or at least, that it can have finite dimensions.

For the sake of clarity I summarise Smith's approach: the context of the argument is whether or not hope's object can be determinate; the claim is that Derrida equates determinacy with finitude, and finitude with necessary violence; and the counterclaim is that finitude does not need to equate with violence, even if it cannot be fully equated with its infinite inspiration (here, at the risk of sounding Platonic, which I don't think is Smith's intention, "Justice Itself"). My question, however, is why the object of hope needs to involve any determination (any finite definition) at all, if it is infinite. Smith's valuing of all that is genuinely good in the finite is laudable, but it seems to me that there is a completely different point at stake. Derrida gestures towards the impossible character of justice, love, democracy, and so on, not in order to cast judgment on the human but to alert us to the danger of settling for too little, of settling for anything less than the infinite. Now, surely this is true for theology, too, which will not have its infinite hopes dashed in any merely finite resolution. The nub of Derrida's disagreement with theology on this question actually concerns not whether the finite is of value, but whether the infinite is ever to be realised. For Derrida, the messiah simply cannot come (in the present), because its presentation would run counter to its infinitude; as soon as the messiah is limited to the dimensions of what can be known, it will no longer be the messiah. ("If you meet the Buddha on the road, kill him."). As John Caputo observes, "Were the messiah ever to show up in the flesh, were, *per impossibile*, his coming ever taken to be an occurrence in historical time, something that could be picked up on a video camera, that would be a disaster. The effect would be to shut down the very structure of time and history, to close off the structure of hope, desire, expectation, promise, in short, of the future" [34].

[32] Smith, "Determined Hope," 221.
[33] Smith, "Determined Hope," 221. See also Matuštík, *Radical Evil* 155.
[34] Caputo, ed., *Deconstruction in a Nutshell* 163.

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This leads me to consider a second, related argument in Smith's work, which is that the object of Derrida's hope – democracy to come – is itself determined, and is thereby somehow finite or limited [35]. There is perhaps greater merit in this point, not because Derrida presents any determined idea of democracy-to-come, but more because democracy is a specific and historically evolved form of the political. Yet it is difficult, in these days when "democracy" and "freedom" are seen as exigencies that can be brought about by force, not to feel the faintest suspicion about them. In any case, Derrida thinks democracy as a value rather than as a state, so that it stands as an aporetic good to be desired alongside justice and the gift, and so on [36]. Such a move preserves its status as always "to-come," and thereby strips it of any determinacy. Democracy to come would have no content as such and its fulfilment would be endlessly deferred.

We do have a further suggestion from Smith to consider, however, which is that while it has "an important degree of determinacy," Christian hope also has "an important, and perhaps helpful, lack of specificity and indeterminacy" [37]. This is relevant in response to Derrida's point

[35] Smith, "Determined Hope," 222.

[36] " ... an idea of justice – which we distinguish from law or right and even from human rights—and an idea of democracy – which we distinguish from its current concept and from its determined predicates today...." Derrida, *Specters of Marx* 59. " 'Democracy to come' does not mean a future democracy that will one day be 'present.' Democracy will never exist in the present; it is not presentable, and it is not a regulative idea in the Kantian sense. But *there is the impossible*, whose promise democracy inscribes – a promise that risks and must always risk being perverted into a threat. There is the impossible, and the impossible remains impossible because of the aporia of the demos: the demos is *at once* the incalculable singularity of anyone, before any 'subject,' the possible undoing of the social bond by a secret to be respected, beyond all citizenship ... *and* the universality of rational calculation, of the equality of citizens before the law.... And this impossible that *there is* remains ineffaceable. It is irreducible as our exposure to what comes or happens. It is the exposure (the desire, the openness, but also the fear) that opens, that opens itself, that opens us to time, to what comes upon us, to what arrives or happens, to the event. To history, if you will, a history to be thought otherwise than from a teleological horizon, indeed from any horizon at all. When I say 'the impossible that there is' I am pointing to this other regime of the 'possible- impossible' that I try to think by questioning in all sorts of ways (for example, around questions of the gift, forgiveness, hospitality, and so on)...." Derrida, "Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides," 120. "Derrida makes connections between the notion of the *a-venir* [sic], derived from the reading of Blanchot and Levinas, and an analysis of the concept of democracy, as democracy to come, or democracy as promised. This promise is understood on the model of the promise to Abraham.... Derrida imports this complicated temporality of the event which, in so far as there is faith, has already arrived. This promise of democracy has, as analysed by Len Lawlor, this complex temporality of contingent historical conjuncture, categorical injunction and an afterlife in an indispensable double affirmation, in human communities of remembrance." Joanna Hodge, *Derrida on Time* (London: Routledge, 2007) 137. See also the discussion of the "here and now" at 141.

[37] Smith, "Determined Hope," 225.

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concerning hope in the resurrection, because it seems to me that very little of the theology of resurrection, from Paul onwards, is very clear about what resurrection means. Contemporary theological discussions of resurrection highlight an enormous range of understandings, not only of the resurrection of Jesus, but also of the resurrection for which Christians can hope [38]. But Smith's point is perhaps even more relevant than he intends, or at least, it is relevant in more ways than he might realise, which quickly becomes apparent in reading only the other essays in the book of which his chapter forms a part, let alone the vast Christian literature on hope. Christians do not always have the same idea of that in which their hope consists. This variance suggests not only a lack of specificity and determinacy concerning some of the details, but a much more intrinsic indefinability when it comes to the object of Christian hope. The symbol for hope may be heaven, but what on earth does that mean? One response to Derrida is simply to say that Christians simply do not really know what they are hoping for.

Our engagement with Derrida thus leads us to the point of hope as the impossible. Martin Beck Matuštik argues, however, that there are two ways of thinking the impossible-ness of hope. On the one hand, there is the "paradoxical, aporetic dimension of impossible hope," a "first-order impossibility [that] maximizes the intention of hope [but] whose satisfaction is permanently deferred" [39]. On the other hand, there is a second-order impossibility, where "the religious is revealed [by way of the uncanny] in (inter)personal and impersonal dimensions of faithful awakening or awareness as well as by saturating my ordinary experience with the counterexperience of impossible hope" [40]. The two dimensions of hope as Matuštík outlines them incorporate aspects of the trajectories of the work of Derrida and Jean-Luc Marion respectively, whose differences—in terms of their potential reference to God—have a bearing on our discussion [41]. It is important to note, how-

[38] Marcus Borg and N. T. Wright, *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2000); Robert B. Stewart, John Dominic Crossan, and N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of Jesus: John Dominic Crossan And N.T. Wright in Dialogue* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2006); Anthony J. Kelly, *The Resurrection Effect: Transforming Christian Life and Thought* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2008); Anthony Kelly, *Eschatology and Hope* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013).

[39] Matuštík, *Radical Evil*, 166.

[40] Matuštík, *Radical Evil*, 166, 168. Matuštík speaks of hope as a "counterexperience to the religious revealed as the messianic now-time." Matuštík, *Radical Evil*, 18.

[41] "We have contended that Marion and Derrida are agreed in regarding the 'intention' or the 'concept' as an 'arrow' which is aimed at the heart of God from which God must be 'shielded' ... or kept 'safe.' For Marion, ... this is because the arrow of intentionality is too weak

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ever, that even though Matuštík's thinking of the impossibility of hope is religious, it takes place within a nontheological, postsecular framework, and that he seeks to avoid making any ontological claims. He writes: "The religious as the phenomenon of excess, which I ponder in these meditations, is not instituted through the ontotheological frame of reference (metaphysical, propositional, evidential way) but rather existentially (self-transformative way)" [42].

In my discussion of Derrida, we have already seen something of the first trajectory of hope. We turn, then, to consider the second, which is where Matuštík makes use of Marion's thought of the saturated phenomenon in order to think hope without an object. A saturated phenomenon occurs where the givenness of the phenomenon overruns the available concepts that might enable us to see it as any thing [43]. Unable to be constituted by a subject, the saturated phenomenon constitutes the self (or more correctly, *l'adonné*, the one "given over" to the revealing phenomenon, or "the gifted") [44]. In Matuštík's work, it is the religious – by way of the saturated phenomenon of "the uncanny" – that (inexplicably) gives rise to hope. For Matuštík, what gives rise to hope is marked by saturation, an experience of counterexperience, or as Marion now refers most commonly to saturated phenomena, an experience of an event [45]. Hope does not have its origin in *l'adonné* but is given as a gift.

Moreover, Matuštík thinks of hope intransitively, that is, as a mood or a state without an object [46]. At the same time that he tries to separate the mood of hope from any specific goal, so that hope in his work is not hope for any outcome in particular, he recognises the hermeneutic dimensions of phenomenology such that there will be inevitable interpretations of the saturated phenomenon that gives rise to hope.

and narrow to penetrate or comprehend the infinite givenness of God; it would compromise the infinite incomprehensibility of God who has utterly saturated the intention 'God' in a plenitude of givenness. But for Derrida, ... the arrow takes aim at God and never reaches God precisely because the name of God is the name of what we love and desire, ... something *tout autre* which is not 'present,' not only in the narrow conceptual sense of conceptual presentation advanced by Marion, but also not *given.*" John D. Caputo, "Apostles of the Impossible: On God and the Gift in Derrida and Marion," in *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism*, ed. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (Indiana University Press, 1999), 199.

[42] Matuštík, *Radical Evil*, 19. "By 'existential' I do not mean an ontological structure of being- in-the-world, but rather the passionate care for one's soul..." (6).

[43] Jean-Luc Marion, *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena*, trans. Robyn Horner and Vincent Berraud (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 112.

[44] Marion, *In Excess*, 50.

[45] Matuštík, *Radical Evil*, 137-139. See my discussion in Robyn Horner, *The Experience of God: A Phenomenology of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

[46] Matuštík, *Radical Evil*, 3, 18.

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> When the saturated phenomenon gives itself by revealing itself, we arrive at impossible counterexperiences of the second order. Phenomenologically, the possibility of counterexperiential revelation can prescribe or prophesy neither historical (Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist) nor contemporary mystical forms of revelation (cf. 367n.90); it can at best describe the condition of their phenomenal *impossibility* or excess or resaturation [47].

That hope arises as a gift underscores the fact that it is not determined by the principle of sufficient reason and therefore has no ground. " Even tragic beauty", Matuštík writes, "cannot explain why hope is given at all or why it is given to us here and now" [48]. Hope arises in response to no thing but is "granted" or "intimated"; "its granting to us is sudden and unexpected," he says; it is "'the unhoped for'" [49]. Hope is risked. It is given in experience but without a why, and so its fulfilment must remain in question.

What kind of response are we to make to such counterexperiences? From within the frame of the secular, Matuštík nevertheless speaks of a possible commitment to the fulfilment of hope that can be made in prayer:

> Neither compelling God to appear on terms of the saturated phenomenon described by a new hyperphenomenology nor streamlining the biblical revelation to match it in a literal way with terms of counterexperience, I hold nonetheless intransitive space for I-Thou relationship with the divine whether in prayer or otherwise. Admitting the hermeneutical turn through which every phenomenon must pass in revealing itself to me, prayer needs to be no more hostage to the entropic view of the universe than it needs to be lost in signifiers. ..... One either prays, and so relates to a living intelligence, call it God or Spirit...., or one faces an entropic, practico-inert universe in which one's hope is already an orphan [50].

In other words, in prayer, hope keeps a stance of openness towards the possibility of its fulfilment.

This stance of openness reminds us of the significance of hope's relationship to time, both eschatological time thought as the end-time and also what Matuštík calls "the chips of messianic now-time" that

[47] Matuštík, *Radical Evil*, 86.
[48] Matuštík, *Radical Evil*, 190.
[49] Matuštík, *Radical Evil*, 201, 195.
[50] Matuštík, *Radical Evil*, 170.

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interrupt the present as saturated dimensions of time[51]. Jean-Louis Chrétien speaks of a hope that perpetually opens up a future and exceeds particular hopes in being hope for the unhoped for, which arises in sudden and unanticipated events[52]. Chrétien draws from Heraclitus with respect to this idea, which

> «becomes what defines the highest hope, a hope rendering all the others vain, in so far as it clears a path there where no path had hitherto been cleared and as if in expectation of our step. Hope disassociates itself from all calculation. It is the access to what is without access, the way toward the *aporon* as such. ...if one can hope for the unhoped for, is there anything else than this to truly hope for?»[53]

Relating this to biblical hope, Chrétien further observes: "hope has as its object what can be hoped for only from God, thus what is impossible by any human force, and what we neither could nor would have to hope for from ourselves and by ourselves. … hope renounces what one ordinarily regards as hope"[54]. Chrétien also draws from Philo of Alexandria to argue that hope is what constitutes the core of being human. "This is to define our humanity by its future," he says, "and to make of our being a relation with the Other"[55]. In other words, hope that is truly hope is open to the possibility of the impossible, an alterity that cannot be anticipated but that calls forth the most genuinely human response.

Conclusion

In this paper I have considered hope from classic and contemporary viewpoints as well as according to a phenomenological characterisation. From a classic point of view, hope is considered to be a virtue and a feeling that focuses on an object or state relating to the future that is

[51] Matuštík, *Radical Evil*, 191.

[52] I note the event character in the following (emphasis added): "When it emerges, the unhoped for necessarily has a sudden and discontinuous character. It surprises, since it has not been foreseen, anticipated, contained in advance by our thoughts. *It strikes like lightning, all at once*"; "Suddenness makes up a part of the essence of this gift, rather then being no more than a circumstance. It confers on the gift *the character of encounter. This encounter can be completely unforeseen, not being provoked by us and not resulting from any search or labor on our part*, but it does not occur without desire or hope." Jean-Louis Chrétien, *The Unforgettable and the Unhoped For*, trans. Jeffrey Bloechl (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 106, 111.

[53] Chrétien, *The Unforgettable*, 104.

[54] Chrétien, *The Unforgettable*, 107-108.

[55] Chrétien, *The Unforgettable*, 111.

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uncertain but possible. It is often linked with eschatology because for hope to be ultimately fulfilled is typically not achievable in this life. From a contemporary point of view, hope has been thought more as a mood or an existential attitude that responds to life's challenges and that underlies distinct objects of hope in relation to particular acts. In both cases, hope has to be distinguished from optimism and wishing, which underscores the ways in which hope normally has to do with matters that are significant and concerns more than self-interest.

Next, taking the lead from James K. A. Smith, I laid out the different components of a phenomenological analysis of hope. This ultimately involved engaging in dialogue with Jacques Derrida, as Smith does, on the question of whether a hope whose object is known can really be characterised as hope or whether it becomes a question of knowledge. Derrida insists that the object of hope cannot be known without reducing it to the level of finitude, that is, without our settling for something that is less than worthy of our hope, or less worthy of hope as the impossible. From the perspective of a non-religious humanism, Martin Beck Matuštík also thinks hope as the impossible, but according to two ways. The first way is similar to that of Derrida, which is the "paradoxical, aporetic dimension of impossible hope". The second way, however, is where "the religious is revealed in (inter)personal and impersonal dimensions of faithful awakening or awareness as well as by saturating … experience with the counterexperience of impossible hope." This involves thinking hope according to saturation, where it arises as a gift in experience but exceeds conceptual clarity or determination. In this way it is a mood or a state without an object. It is without ground, but is granted suddenly or unexpectedly, as if from elsewhere. Despite this being a secular way of thinking hope, Matuštík suggests that it opens onto a response of prayer, which involves relating to a "living intelligence" that might be called God or Spirit.

Finally, drawing on Jean-Louis Chrétien's thesis that only hope for the unhoped for can really be hope, I pointed to the important relationship that hope bears to time, which Matuštík thinks as either the end times or interruptions to time that we might call eschatological irruptions of the event. In this way, I responded to Smith's elements of hope in a manner that accepts the possibility that hope can take place without being present as such.

According to the terms of this analysis, then, hope remains an option for an exclusive humanism, and is not simply a theological construct, even if it still borrows from theological models and invites the humanist into a restricted form of trancendence.

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Survival and Creation: Hope Keeps Us Alive («L'espoir fait vivre»)

Emmanuel Falque

Sur-vival

Once we've been through the trauma – being, if not all "traumatized", at least all "traumatizable" – we're then no longer living from life [*vie*], but rather from "survival" [*survie*]. In neurology, *"to be in survival mode*" certainly refers to the situation where the brain takes control of the existant to avoid the explosion or destruction of the subject itself (vertigo, for example, which by drawing me down protects me from it by making me recoil); or the state of the mountaineer who practices going "three minutes without breathing", "three days without drinking", and "three weeks without eating", to be sure of coping with the icy situations that could put him in danger for a long time [1].

But "survival" is not an exception to life, whatever therapists or adventurers may say. It is life itself - *all life reveals itself as being, at bottom, survival*. Better, it's literally, or rigorously, that we must say that *living is over-living*: certainly continuing to live when we thought everything was going to stop, certainly living beyond life, even if we have to believe in after-worlds still made to console us, but above all "living more intensely, or living *more than life itself*". *Sur*-viving, in that *life* goes beyond *my* life. What's most astonishing is not that *I* live, but that there's still *life* in me. My body survives me, and the blood never ceases to flow in my veins, even though my psyche would like to suppress me. While, under the blow of trauma or by the trauma after the fact, I keep telling myself that this has gone on long enough and that it's time for it to stop,

[1] Cf. respectively, Ienke Keijzer, *Connecter, Déconnecter, Reconnecter, Reprogrammer le cerveau pour être bien dans sa vie*, Personal Growth, 2018; and Morgan Segui, *Mode survie sur la montagne sacrée* (podcast).

paradoxically*, there's something of the living* inside me that binds me to life. It is in reality a question of the "body" in survival, because it's also a question of the biological in the "always living" – and therefore of this "power of life", which certainly doesn't suppress my trauma, which always persists, at least as a scar, but also that a force is discovered in me, not to overcome it, but to not abide in it or remain as if attached to it. It's not by bouncing back to land on one's feet and win anew (resilience), but by being "thrown forward into the unknown at the risk of losing oneself", that life moves forward (prosilience). There is no need to refer to German Romanticism to know this (Novalis, Hegel, Hölderlin or Schelling): nature is the very power to create, and spring pushes winter to the point of metamorphosing everything.

Creation

Creating thus becomes a «declaration of survival»[2] – not just negatively, by demanding to live on, but positively, by inaugurating new possibilities that had never happened before. Not "other possibles", but "*otherwise is possible*", in the sense that virtuality (Bergson, Deleuze) exceeds possibility (Heidegger). It's *only after the fact* that we know, or have known, that this was possible, when we have, if not gotten back up, at least continued to enjoy existing. For it's only when the thing is realized (in the present) that we discover it as having been possible (in the past) or to be envisaged (in the future). And that's what *creating* is: not expressing a possibility already present in me, nor waiting for a programmed future, but "doing" or "having already done" the unexpected that was never hoped for: «Let a man of talent or genius emerge, let him *create* a work: there it is, real, and by that very fact it becomes *retrospectively possible* [...]. This is why I said that its *possibility*, which does not precede its *reality*, *will have preceded it once the reality has appeared*»[3].

Nothing could be further from the truth than the belief that everything is *given*. On the contrary, we expect everything from the

[2] P. Audi, *Créer, Introduction à l'esth/éthique*, Paris, Verdier, 2010, pp. 14-17 (cit. p. 14)

[3] H. Bergson. "Le possible et le réel" (1930 lecture), in *La pensée et le mouvant* (1938), Paris, PUF, Quadrige, 1985, p. 110-111. For the whole of this perspective, we refer to *Hors phénomène*, op. cit, § 67, pp. 384-392: "Autrement est possible" ("Otherwise is possible"). Possibility expressed here not only in terms of virtuality (Bergson, Deleuze), but also of creativity (Nietzsche).

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very act of *creation* – that is, the formation of new flows for possibilizing: «The subject is not a given», Nietzsche insists in a *posthumous Fragment*, «but something invented-in-addition»[4]. Creation is not, in this sense, or only, a "*mode of life*". It is, or must be, a "*way of life*" – life itself, in order to confront and remain within survival. Far from its exclusively aesthetic meaning, creation is the name of life. From aesthetic it becomes ethical, *poesis* becomes a *praxis*. No longer the "beautiful" to be sought, but "possibilities" to be opened up, since "to create" means: «to free the possibilities of life likely to increase both the power of sensitivity and the enjoyment of the fact of living»[5].

"Survival and Creation" thus marks a *step* forward, not a step back, relative to *Hors phénomène*. For while the trauma is never forgotten, and we can never return to past states, the present sometimes gives a reason to live, or a "reason for life" – at the very least because we are still standing and have not yet sunk. The pleasure of being (still) alive is the only answer to this death in the trauma that should mean that I'm no longer here. But we still have to go to it – this time carrying the "(heaviest) weight of happiness" and not just measuring the "(resigned) weight of unhappiness". This is the "*sunny side of the Hors phénomène*"[6], the long-awaited side that we can sometimes existentially experience and not just hope for.

Laetitia est hominis transitio a minore ad majorem perfectionem - «*Joy* is man's passage from a lesser to a greater perfection»[7]. Spinoza's word is well known. It's not *being in joy* that counts, but in some way *becoming joy*. And to "become joy" is to be life itself, to feel alive and enjoy existing in one's *conatus* or effort "to persevere in one's being" (Spinoza), or even "to create new possibilities of being" (Nietzsche): "I say passage (*dico transitionem*)", says the Amsterdam philosopher. «For Joy is not perfection itself (*non est ipsa perfectio*). If indeed man were born with the perfection to which he passes, he would possess it without any affection of Joy»[8]. The movement towards joy, or the hap-

[4] F. Nietzsche, *Posthumous Fragment*, XII, 7 [60].

[5] P. Audi, *Créer, Introduction à l'esth/éthique*, op. cit. p. 17.

[6] Cf. Paul Audi, "L'extra-phénoménalité à l'épreuve de la solitude", in "Hors phénomène", *Transversalités* magazine, no. 166, 2023/3, pp. 73-94: "If I quote these verses ["To each his own measure, for if misfortune is heavy to bear, happiness is even heavier"], it is by telling myself that the *solar face* of Hors phénomène remains to be described. And, consequently, to be written" (cit. p. 89, emphasis added).

[7] B. Spinoza, *Ethics* (1677), Paris, Vrin, 1983, L. III [On the Origin and Nature of Affections], Definition of Affections, II, p. 367.

[8] Ibid, III, p. 367.

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piness of existing, *is* joy, more than the attainment of joy itself. Every human being is a "guide (*passeur*)" – suffering (*pâtir*) and crossing (*passage*) – and God himself in particular[9]. Hence the need to go now, but in pure philosophy this time, or by way of man *tout court*, from the "Extra-phenomenal" (*suffering*) to "Survival and creation" (*crossing*): not in a leap that would make us forget everything, but through the "power of the body", or of the "flow of life in me", which still enables me to be there, and even to possibilize.

1. *Healing and plasticity*

Everything leaves *scars*, not only on the body (the spread body) but also in the psyche (the extra-phenomenal). And there are probably as many scars as there are physical wounds, just as there are as many indelible traces as there are traumas. The "inappropriable" – this is what defines both the unfolded body and the extra-phenomenal, so that I can neither recognize myself, nor ever truly make my own that which has happened to me, be it a mater of corporeality or of the psyche. So the "scar" is there, and I cannot heal it. The wound always retains its mark after an injury, and even the stigma always remains its expression.

But "scars (*cicatrices*)" also mean "*healing* (*cicatrisation*)", independently of me and almost without me. The life of the body suffices unto itself for suturing the two edges of the skin and striving to reconstitute a single tissue, just as the life of the soul surprises itself with this "continuous feeling of existence" or "*sense of being*" (Winicott) that causes me to not have shattered. It's precisely here that there is *more than* living, or a mode of *sur-vival*, which is life itself. For no one is involved, or one is scarcely involved, in the self-repair of life – be it plant (cuttings), animal (healing) or human (projection or reinvention of a future). What we call "work" may indeed be required, whether "surgical" or "psychological", but it will always follow the paths of life and the living – norms of *creation* rather than *givenness*: "of the always and newly possible" rather than "of the already-there forever offered just to be welcomed or received".

In this sense, if there is any "healing", it will certainly never erase past life - for the mark of the tear or rupture always remains - but it will

[9] Cf. *Le passeur de Gethsémani*, Paris, Cerf, 1999, § 50 ["Passing to the Father"], p. 130: "In suffering this world (*pâtir*), the Son transmits to the Father (*passage*) the weight of finitude experienced in his death, and now implores him to also break its pain" (*Triduum philosophique*, Paris, Cerf, 2015, p. 123).

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also "pro-ject", or, better, project *itself* towards a future that seems to renew itself of itself: *there is still life or something living* since the sap always rises from the roots to the buds; there *is still life, or something living,* when the blood irrigates the limbs all the way to the pores of the skin, starting from the heart; there *is still life or something living* because thought, even when "de-thinking" or "out of thought", nevertheless does not cease to see myself still standing there when I should, or could, be dead. It's not a question of "getting better" when one was "doing badly", but rather of being or becoming "differently" – far from the cliché of a cure that merely "restores" the health lost in illness. Life invents, and invents itself, rather than regressing to a normalized previous state, or progressing towards an already determined future: "It has always seemed to me", confides François-David Sebbah in *Survies, quelques tentatives*, «that everything about a man or a woman, that everything about the human 'as such' could be said as a *scar*: our link to ourselves, to this other and to others, to those close to us and those further away, to the past, to the future – to what is to come? – also» [10].

"Plasticity" will then take over from "scarring". Or rather, it *will create forms* so as not to remain forever in formlessness or chaos: "*to master the chaos that one is*: to *force one's chaos to become form*; to become logical, simple, unequivocal, mathematical; to become law - that is the great ambition" [11]. This is Nietzsche's call, or requisite, of the living and the created, which we should never forget. It is not that we must dominate everything, according to the false interpretation of the "will to power". But because there is in man a true "power of the will" (Nietzsche), richer in a profusion of instincts than the simple "effort to persevere" (Spinoza's conatus) or "dissatisfaction of a pain never appeased" (Schopenhauer's wanting-to-live).

Life is indeed *creative plasticity*, not just *destructive plasticity*. Certainly, plasticity can be "destructive" – just as we speak of using "plastic explosives" on a building or a house to make it explode. While it is certainly a question here of a process (use of plastic explosives) and a material (plastic) – from *plastikos*, "relating to modelling", and *plassein*, "to mould, form" – the use or charge that is made to compose a material (plastic) can also be made to decompose a material (plastic explosives). For in "plasticity", rather than the "elasticity" Gilles Deleuze

[10] F.-D. Sebbah, *Survies, quelques tentatives*, Dol de Bretagne, Ed. d'Écarts, 2021, p. 137-138: "Nous, cicatrices" (cit. p. 138).

[11] F. Nietzsche, *Posthumous Fragment*, XIV, 14 [61]. Emphasis added.

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refers to with regard to Spinoza [12], there is *malleability*, modelling and moulding, not just *flexibility*, tension and distension. And this is where "plasticity" goes from being *destructive* to being *creative* - just like the (plastic) deformation of materials that gives shape or creates forms. It is not a simple effort to "persevere" or "tend" towards joy by virtue of the elasticity of a life "distended" by sadness (according to Spinoza's "greater" or "lesser" degrees of affection), but the production of an entirely new form, even if it's on the basis of a "living otherwise" or an "other living" by having passed through trauma. Here lies what gives true joy, according to Nietzsche, or, rather, what *is* joy itself: no longer the joy that consists in simply "passing from one state to another" (Spinoza), but the joy of "conquering oneself", of "creating oneself", of treating oneself as an "objet d'art" [13]: "*the only happiness is in creation*: all of you must *participate in creation*, enjoying the happiness of every action" [14]. *Plastic arts* as the creation of forms, *plastic surgery* as the reconstruction of forms, or *plastic beauty* as the admiration of form - so it is with *creative plasticity*, which is not only content to turn backward but also thrusts forward [15].

Freud himself made no mistake when he spoke of the "plasticity (*Plastizität*) of psychic life" in reference to wounded World War I soldiers returning from the front, still retaining the "indelible trace", or in our vocabulary the "scar" (*supra*), of their trauma – which can nevertheless be modified or transformed, but never erased: «this extraordinary *plasticity of psychic developments* is not unlimited in its direction. It can be described as a particular capacity to go backwards – regression – because it can happen that a later and higher stage of

[12] G. Deleuze, *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression*, Paris, Ed. de Minuit, 1968, p. 201: "Spinoza suggests that the relationship that characterizes an existing mode as a whole is endowed with a kind of *elasticity*" (emphasis added).

[13] F. Nietzsche, *Humain trop humain* I, in *Œuvres philosophiques complètes*, Paris, Gallimard, 1968, L. V [Caractères de haute et basse civilisation], § 274, p. 190-191: "Une section de notre Moi traitée en objet d'art".

[14] F. Nietzsche, *Posthumous Fragment* IX, 4 [76]. With a supplement, *Posthumous Fragment*, XI, 34 [176]: "For my part, I have called this whole way of thinking the *philosophy of Dionysus*: a reflection that recognizes in the *creation* and *transformation* of man as well as of things the *very enjoyment of existence*" (emphasis added). Gael Calame-Trottmann, *Soi-même comme une œuvre, Essai sur Nietzsche*, § 7: "De soi au Soi" (forthcoming), perfectly demonstrates this "creative", or rather "self-creative", perspective of the self (or rather of the Self).

[15] On this double meaning of "plasticity" (destructive and creative) and its departure from Spinoza's "elasticity", see Catherine Malabou, *Ontologie de l'accident, Essai sur la plasticité destructrice*, Paris, Éd. Léo Scheer, 2009, p. 34-40.

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development, which has been abandoned, cannot be reached again»[16]. It may come as a surprise to hear of "going backwards" in this type of plasticity (Freud), rather than "going forwards" through creativity (Nietzsche). This is because for the psychoanalyst of *psychic plasticity*, in contrast to the Dionysian philosopher of *plastic creativity*, life must be reinstated inasmuch as it will be rebalanced according to the medical imperative of health (and we understand him well inasmuch as it's a question of treatment), that is, of a psychic or somatic norm that enables us to "live better", in other words, to be reintegrated into the relational fabric that makes us exist: «But primitive states can always be *reinstated*, the primitive psychic is, in the full sense, imperishable»[17].

But it is with "libidinal plasticity (*Plastizität*)", Freud's second meaning of plasticity, that the "creative" character of the production of forms can nevertheless be rediscovered. It properly belongs to the plasticity of the libido that it relates to "mobility" (*Bewegtheit*) in its capacity to "change its object" or "find other investments". If «the lability of psychic investments diminishes with age»[18], as the father of psychoanalysis notes in the example of the Wolf Man (Sergei Pankejeff), then we must, if not find other investments, at least recognize that the decline in libido is also a decline in creativity. This shift from "psychic plasticity" (1915) to "libidinal plasticity" (1918) from the earliest Freudian writings is debatable, and also much-discussed (in particular by Ferenczi), but at least it has the merit of not sticking to the simple equilibrium of forms or homeostasis by virtue of energized sexuality, even if it is less a matter of "creative drives" (the Dionysian perspective) than of "destructive and reconstructive drives" (the psychoanalytic aim).

2. *Life drive and death drive*

What Thanatos lacked, Eros now comes, if not to fulfill it, then at least to give it a different direction. The phrase is partly true of Freud, but even more so in my own work, as we measure the crossing here from *Nothing to it* to *Survival and Creation*. If "Reading Freud as a philoso-

[16] S. Freud, "Considérations actuelles sur la guerre et la mort" (1915), in *Essais de psychanalyse*, Paris, Payot, 1981, p. 22-23 (emphasis added).

[17] Ibid.

[18] S. Freud, "L'homme aux loups" (1918), in Les *Cinq psychanalyses*, Paris, PUF, 1954, p. 415.

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pher" *(Nothing to it*, 2018) does not belong to *The Extra-Phenomenal* (2021), it is in this that it is the first draft, and like the nuclear core: this discovery of the "Id [*Ça*]" in the Second Topic as pure neutrality that resists any idea of the given. There is "nothing to it [*ça*]", because no one can see the "Id", but also because it "no longer has any relation." This is not a matter of the "saturated" or the risk of being burned by it (bedazzlement), but of a trace of the irreducible in a self that stops at its trauma (stupefaction): "Keep moving, nothing to see / Beware of it / It's not nothing / What is it? / It concerns me / It touches me / What's God have to do with it?" [19]

As I've said, there's no question of simply exiting from the "extra-phenomenonal" in "Survival and Creation". There isn't always a "way out" or an "emergency exit" when living under the impact of whatever befalls me (illness, separation, death of a child, natural disasters and pandemics). It remains, then, to invent, or rather *create*, new ways – to break down doors, or rather to force a way out that's never been noticed before. This is not just in order to escape (from a trauma that will never cease to be there), but in order to orient myself otherwise, or even to accept being and becoming totally modified or metamorphosed: «so many exceptions, so many modifications» [20]. Nothing is more to be feared than to believe one is so cheaply "saved" – if by salvation, in philosophy, psychoanalysis and theology, we wrongly mean the idea of *getting oneself out of it* (theology a maxima), and not first of *not being alone*, or at least being with the other "*by my side*" and also "*linked to me*" (phenomenology a minima) [21].

The return to *Nothing to it* from Survival and Creation thus requires us to cross from "death" to "life", or, let us rather say, from "death drive" to "life drive", or better still, to introduce Eros with, or alongside, Thanatos. The egg of the Id certainly consisted in recognizing with Freud «as a fact of experience that suffers no exception that every living being dies, returns to the anorganic (*ins Anorganische zurückkehrt*)» such that we can say that «the goal of all life is death (*das Ziel alles Leben ist der Tod*)» [22]. There's no doubt that Thanatos takes precedence over Eros in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), and

[19] *ça n'a rien à voir, Lire Freud en philosophe*, Paris, Cerf, 2018, table of contents (p. 153-153).

[20] Leitmotif of *Hors phénomène*, op. cit. ch. V [La crise], p. 299-307. To be distinguished from "as much appearance, as much being" (M. Heidegger), and "as much reduction, as much donation" (J.-L. Marion).

[21] Cf. *À la limite*, op. cit. ch. 2, pp. 31-59: "Pour une phénoménologie *a minima*".

[22] S. Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), in *Essais de psychanalyse* Paris, Petite bibliothèque Payot, 1981, ch. 5, p. 82.

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probably in all Freud's work. The fact remains that the "life drive", first associated with the "sexual drive", then with the "libido drive", now extends to the figure of Eros himself, who emerges at the end of the work [ch. 6: "Dualism of instincts: life instincts and death instincts"]. The final note then seeks to clarify the terms: the "*sexual drive*" for procreation, the "*libid"* as a tendency to pleasure, of which procreation remains only a tiny part, and *Eros* as a struggle between two drives, the "life drive" and the "death drive":

> «Speculation leads us to admit that this Eros is at work from the very beginning of life, and that it enters into opposition as the "life drive" to the "death drive" that has arisen from the fact that organic substance has come to life. In this way, we attempt to solve the enigma of life by hypothesizing that these two drives are opposed to each other from the very beginning»[23].

We could go on at length about this "life drive" that opposes the "death drive" from the origin, or better, about the original, agonal struggle between Eros and Thanatos. But here, from the perspective of "Survival and Creation", we'll just mention what Freud brings to the table *positively* for those who would confine themselves solely to the perspective of death, whether physiological or spiritual:

> «If we have made the hypothesis [according to which all living beings necessarily die of internal causes] without asking further questions, it is precisely because it does not appear to us as a hypothesis. It merely repeats an idea that is familiar to us and that our poets confirm. Perhaps we have adopted such a belief because we find some comfort in it [the ineluctable nature of death, which is said to be natural and not accidental, to 'make the burden bearable' for us]»[24].

To move from the "internal causes of death" to the "exteriority" of death for me, in the transit from Thanatos to Eros, in no way consists for Freud in thinking that death would then only be accidental or that the living thing would be destroyed only by "external causes", following Spinoza's example: "No thing can be destroyed, except by an external cause"[25].

[23] Ibid. ch. 6 [Dualisme des instincts: instincts de vie et instincts de mort (title added in Jankélévitch's translation)], chapter endnote, no. 16, pp. 110-111 (cit. p. 110).

[24] Ibid. ch. 6, p. 90.

[25] B. Spinoza, *Ethics*, op. cit, L. III [On the Origin and Nature of Affections], prop. IV, p. 259. The "life" or "effort to persevere in one's being" (*conatus*) being always primary: "each thing, as far as it is in itself (*qantum in se est*), strives to persevere in its being" (*Ethics* III, prop. 6).

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For Freud, exteriority, paradoxically but also ingeniously, refers to "alterity", which Emmanuel Levinas would later take up in *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (1961). For whoever says "sexuality", but also "libido" and even more so "Eros", recognizes that the (life) drive is directed towards an other and is for an other, whereas the (death) drive, derived from the "ego drive", is always directed towards oneself or for oneself: «because life goes to death, *sexuality is the great exception in the march of life towards death*»[26]. The sexual drive is thus the only exception to the simple restoration of the self, or of the "previous state of things", to which the other drives (anal drives, oral drives, self-preservation drives such as hunger and thirst, etc.) are directed.

The father of psychoanalysis gives two reasons for this - the prolongation of life and the appearance of immortality: «If this (sexual) union does not take place, the germ cell dies like all the other elements of the multicellular organism. It is only on this condition (of union) that the sexual function can *prolong life* and give it the *appearance* of *immortality*»[27]. Certainly, for our purposes, the first thing to remember is that what confers "survival" on life, or what Winnicott calls the "continuous feeling of existing", may at first be sexuality: "prolongation of life", including in the biological matter exchanged, and "appearance of immortality" in the generations that can be drawn from it and succeed me. *No one makes love* (union of bodies) without *love being made* (extension of life). It is not that eros is solely attached to procreation – quite the contrary, including for Freud – but because in this unique encounter with the other, with *my* life drive and *his or her* life drive, there is a shared struggle against death, through which, together, we still have the impression of being or existing.

"Survival" in the erotic drive – this is certain insofar as it attests to the living thing, or to the possibility of life in me as in the other, in order to resist together the challenge of death. "Creation" perhaps, in part for Freud and certainly for Nietzsche, in that "the replacement of libido by Eros" in Freud's theory of drives introduces, if not *creativity*, at least *otherness*, into drives – something that Nietzsche, of course, can neither see nor accept in the context of a will to power in which the Self

[26] Paul Ricoeur, in *De l'interprétation, Essai sur Freud* (1965), Paris, Seuil, coll. Points-Essais, 1995, p. 165 [Death drives]. Based on this passage from Freud's Beyond the Pleasure Principle: "Is it necessary to say that, with *the exception of the sexual drives*, there are *no drives* other than those that seek to *re-establish a previous state of affairs*, that there are not even any that tend *towards a state that would never have been reached*?" (emphasis added).

[27] S. Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, op. cit. ch. 6 (beginning), p. 89.

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is solely occupied "with itself" and "by itself" to work and surpass itself (the figure of Zarathustra). In *On Interpretation* (1969), Paul Ricoeur perfectly demonstrated this dimension of alterity within the framework of drives in Freud, in particular through the translation, or passage, from libido to Eros in the theory of drives:

> «The replacement of libido by Eros signals a very precise intention of the new theory of drives: if the living thing goes to death by an internal movement, what struggles against death is not something internal to life, but *the conjugation of one mortal with another mortal*. This is what Freud calls Eros; the *desire of the other* is immediately implicated in the position of Eros; it is always *with an other* that the living person struggles against death, against his own death, which he pursues in isolation [...]. Freud does not look for the impulsion in some will to live inscribed in each person: in the living *alone*, he finds *only death*» [28].

"To love someone" is to say: "*You, you will not die*" [29]. Gabriel Marcel's apt phrase indicates, on the one hand, that I live with you always in "survival" mode, since *from now on* I can*'t* imagine living *without you*, or sur-viving you, once you die – which gives meaning and weight *today* to our life in common and to our love ["Dying with you"] ; and means, on the other hand, that by binding me to you, you give me in "our exchanged life drives" something to believe in, if not immortality, at least an *enjoyment of the living one*, which outside of eros we cannot experience ["Survival and Creation"] [30]. Eros and Thanatos remain forever linked, in that the sexual drive is not solely self-centred (ego drive), and in its very essence is a "mutual struggle" against death. This is what Freud was able to bring us – and we cannot deny it, despite a life drive, as we will see, has to do more with balancing the death drive tending towards destruction (psychoanalytical perspective) than with the *ever-creative* and *inventive* character of the drive itself (Dionysian perspective).

The point is so well known, and so (rightly) criticized by Freudian commentators, and in particular by philosophers who read Freud and know Nietzsche, that it hardly needs elaboration. Many of the state-

[28] P. Ricoeur, *De l'interprétation*, op. cit. ["Death drives"], pp. 307-308.

[29] G. Marcel, "La mort de demain", in *Trois pièces*, Paris, Plon, 1931, Act II, scene 6, p. 161: "(in Antoine's words) Jeanne, believe me, this foresight is a betrayal. To love someone is to say to them: 'You, you won't die'".

[30] For the first interpretation of the formula (not imagining that I can "outlive" you, and giving weight to our love in the knowledge that one day you will die and thus suffer forever from your "absence"), we refer you to our contribution: "Où en sommes-nous? Mourir avec toi", *Phasis* magazine (forthcoming).

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ments in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) are astonishing, according to a position that would remain unchanged in the future, even in the deployment of Eros and Thanatos in culture or in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930)[31]. For Freud, it's all a question of regeneration, readjustment and even balance "downwards" in the struggle between drives, and not of profusion "upwards" in the guise of a creative thrust that doesn't exist there, or almost doesn't: «The pleasure principle is a *tendency* in the service of a *function* whose task it is to ensure that the psychic apparatus is absolutely *excitation-free*, or to keep the quantum of excitation in it *constant* or *as low as possible*»[32]. Hence the fact that eros will first and foremost have the function of linking and unifying drives - something that will be a constant for Freud, far removed from Nietzsche, who exclaims in the prologue to *Thus Spake Zarathustra*:

> «I love those who know how to live only on the condition of perishing, for in perishing they overcome themselves. / I love those who are filled with great contempt, for they carry within themselves the supreme respect, they are the arrows of desire stretched towards the other shore [...]. / I love him whose soul in its prodigality refuses all gratitude, and never returns anything; for he gives ceaselessly and reserves nothing for himself»[33].

Is it then necessary to *go further* in criticizing or rejecting Freud's ideal of health (at least psychic health), at which the doctor always aims? Without seeing the "pathological reduction" that Nietzsche imposes, such that it is now "from the point of view of illness" and not "of health" alone that we must envisage a new point of view on humanity: wouldn't "illness" be what "should inspire the philosopher", to follow the foreword to *The Gay Science* (1881), or rather: «what will become of thought itself, subjected to the pressure of illness?»[34]. *Probably not*.

[31] On this Freudian continuity of the Eros and Thanatos pair once it is fixed, see Paul Ricoeur, *De l'interprétation*, op. cit., pp. 319-326: "La culture entre Eros et Thanatos".

[32] S. Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, op. cit. ch. 7 (last chapter), p. 113. Emphasis added.

[33] F. Nietzsche, *Ainsi parlait Zarathoustra* (1883), Paris, Garnier-Flammarion (trans. G. Blanquis), 2006, Prol. § 4, p. 50-51.

[34] F. Nietzsche, *Le Gai Savoir* (1881), Paris, Gallimard, *Œuvres complètes*, 1967, Avant-propos, § 2, p. 14-15. With the excellent contribution of Jean Vioulac, "La réduction pathologique. La statut philosophique de la maladie dans la pensée de Nietzsche", in *Laval philosophique et théologique*, no. 67/2, June 2011, pp. 281-307: "Pathological phenomena are indeed those by which life, otherwise invisible, signals itself to consciousness, in a language of its own, which is that of symptoms. These experiences cannot be disqualified as atypical: the almost daily experience of illness in fact leads Nietzsche, against the medicine of his time, to completely rethink the question of the difference between the normal and the pathological" (cit. p. 287).

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The point is well known, so it hardly needs repeating. Lacan has rightly and vehemently criticized, in the context of psychoanalysis this time, on the one hand the Freudian equilibrium of drives that overlooks *dunamis* (unrealized force) by focusing solely on the *energeia* of desire (actualization), and on the other hand a fusional conception of eros based solely on "lack" (Aristophanes' myth in Plato's *Symposium*, quoted at length in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*). The condemnation is clear – and, on the whole, on these two points, absolutely indisputable[35].

Psychoanalyst Paul-Laurent Assoun also bears witness to the immense gap between *Freud and Nietzsche*: «This shows the heterogeneity of the conceptions of life at work in Nietzsche and Freud. One is *profusion and infinity*, the other *a limiting linking capacity*; one is *power*, the other *necessity*; one *valorizing*, the other *functional*. So much so that Nietzsche could diagnose *symptoms of reactivity and debility* in the Freudian conception of life!»[36]. To put it another way, and to quote the philosopher Rudolf Bernet this time, in the gap between Freud on the one hand, and Leibniz or Bergson on the other: «There is no trace in Freud of that *living force* or *vis activa* in search of 'perfection' that Leibniz did not hesitate to attribute to the simplest monads. Nor is there any trace of the *élan vital* or *creative drive* we find in Bergson and his spiritualist interpretation of the origin of life»[37]. This, then, is our conclusion – at least in this debate between the drives (Freud) and the Dionysian (Nietzsche): if the life drive is indeed "sur-vival" in Freud, and this is its merit *in its relation to the death of the other* by going from sexuality to Eros, it nonetheless remains – and this is its limit – a *will to unification and equalization*, which "creation" must overcome.

3. *It's the body that is enthused*

Finding, rather than rediscovering, the life force (*force*), the *élan vital* or the creative drive - this is what "Survival and Creation" aims to do in relation to "The Extra-Phenomenal". Not that the thought of strength (*force*) is absent from our work. Quite the contrary. But at a time when

[35] Cf. R. Bernet, *Force - Pulsion - Désir, Une autre philosophie de la psychanalyse,* Paris, Vrin, 2013, ch. IV [Les trois étapes de la théorie freudienne de la pulsion et les amendements de Lacan], p. 272-279: "Interlude lacanien" [in support of *Seminar II*: "Le moi dans la théorie de Freud et dans la technique de la psychanalyse (1954-1955)"].

[36] P.-L. Assoun, *Freud et Nietzsche* (1980), Paris, PUF Quadrige 2008, ch. III [Principes pulsionnels], p. 178 (emphasis added).

[37] R. Bernet, *Force - Pulsion - Désir, Une autre philosophie de la psychanalyse*, op. cit. p. 268.

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concepts that were initially shrouded in theology (for instance, "metamorphosis" in *Métamorphose de la finitude*) are now being expressed purely philosophically (for instance, "hyper-transformation" in *The Extra-Phenomenal*), we must do the same for the strength of the body as such, which certainly serves as an operative tool for eros and the eucharist (*The Wedding Feast of the Lamb*) but now awaits its purely philosophical conception in the *élan vital*, or even in a will to power, of which we recognize, contrary to Nietzsche, that the Self, and the relationship of the self with the self alone, cannot be the sole source.

Better still, just as "the extra-phenomenal" is here reoriented by the "creation of the possible", though without erasing it [1. Healing and plasticity], and just as Eros thereby comes to meet Thanatos, if not to constrain it, at least to signify to it humanly and philosophically that it will not have the last word in a sexuality that understands what it means to "love", right up to the very hypothesis of the disappearance of the other and the survival of myself in my carnal union with the other [2. Life drive and death drive]; likewise, we would not be able to confine ourselves to the "spread body" – our second concept from the point of view of corporeality, after "the extra-phenomenal", to express the trauma of the psyche in a disappropriated world – if this spread body could not also be said as a "vital body" whose instincts, more than drives, serve as a struggle within itself to become "creative artists" [3. It's the body that is enthused]. Traversed by "life," rather than by "my" life, in its very biology, this force of life then becomes what creates in me [4. It creates] and causes me to be in reality no longer myself, but causes us to be together in the experience of childbirth, at the source of a vitality come to transform us, without the "Self" alone having the task of assuming it. [5 We ourselves as a work of art]. «It's *the body that is enthused*, let's leave the soul out of it»[38], in Nietzche's beautiful words, in that enthusiasm is always also and etymologically an entry "into God himself" (*en-theos*), and because we cannot stick to a pure neutrality of strength if it is not also individualized in a divinity that creates works or possibilities – whether in the Greek Bacchant tradition (Dionysus) or the Christian tradition of the Incarnate Word (Christ).

How, then, is Nietzsche's "instinct" (*Instinkt*) other, or otherwise, than Freud's "drive" (*Trieb*)? Put another way, preferring the thinker of Sils Maria (the creative dimension) is not at all rejecting the founder

[38] F. Nietzsche, *Ecce homo*, in *Œuvres philosophiques complètes*, op. cit. Thus Spake Zarathustra. A book for everyone and no one", § 4, p. 311. Modified translation (borrowed from Gaël Calame-Trottmann*, Soi-même comme une œuvre*, op. cit. [forthcoming], ch. 9).

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of psychoanalysis (the drive in the relation to the other). Indeed, we must be nuanced, and it would be wrong to wholly oppose them to each other. If there is to be a "backlash" of psychoanalysis on philosophy, the former must have the means to transform the latter. It's not the psychoanalyst on one side and the philosopher on the other, except in terms of care, but the common quest for a "beneath" by which we are constituted.

Of course, as we will recognize, following Nietzschean exegete Patrick Wotling, is not Nietzsche's sense of drive simply «a facility that one gives oneself? "Instinct", "drive", could they be screen-words, words designed to modestly conceal our powerlessness to explain them?» [39] Let us say, at least to begin, despite the obscurity of the debate and the vagueness in the usage of the terms: «the term 'drive' (*Trieb*) evokes the thrust, while the term 'instinct' *(Instinkt*) highlights in contrast the infra-conscious and infra-rational character of the process» [40]. What's more, or rather otherwise, about Nietzsche's instinct, compared to Freud's drive, is that it is definitively rooted in the body - which is why we first speak of animal instinct, then transpose it to the human being, as an animal for his part also. Of course, it fell properly to Sigmund Freud to anchor the "drive" (*Trieb)* in corporeality. And if there's one thing we are not willing to let go of in his "philosophical reading, it's his unfailing foundation in corporeality, contrary to the symbolism of language that Jacques Lacan would like to impose: «The fact of being *derived from the somatic source*», insists the father of psychoanalysis, «is the absolutely decisive element for the drive» [41]. The fact remains that the Freudian drive will very soon cross over from the "corporeal" to the psychic by going from the "sexual drive" to the "libido drive" and the figure of Eros (*supra*).

This is not the case for Nietzsche, for whom we must always think "following the guiding thread of the body": «to take the body as a starting point and make it a *guiding thread*, that's what's essential» [42]. So we will never leave corporeality behind. But, saying it, we'll stick first to instinct – that is., to the animal dimension of man, as the forces and not

[39] P. Wotling, "Le sens de la notion de pulsion chez Nietzsche: "Une facilité que l'on se donne"?", in J.-Ch. Goddard (ed.), *La pulsion*, Paris, Vrin, Thema, 2006, p. 73-111 (cit. p. 94).

[40] C. Donat and P. Wotling, *Dictionnaire Nietzsche*, Paris, Ellipse, 2013, entry "Instinct, pulsion", pp. 174-178 (cit. p. 174).

[41] S. Freud, "Pulsion et destinins des pulsions" (1915), in *Métapsychologie*, Paris, Folio-Essais, 1986, p. 19 [OC, XIII, 170]. With our comment, *ça n'a rien à voir*, op. cit. p. 90-94: "Enracinement dans l'organique".

[42] FP XI, 40 [15].

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the mere substances that constitute us. In Nietzsche, there is no sublimation, no disguise of the drive. On the contrary, since the unconscious force does not have as its sole purpose its deployment in consciousness according to a presupposed teleological aim, it is here "the body itself that philosophizes": *der Leib philosophiert*[43]. Thus, instinct is (a) first «something good from one point of view or another: there is a *value judgment* in this, and it is for this reason that it has passed into the life of the body»[44]; thus (b) «it is our needs that *interpret* the world: our instincts their "for" and their "against"»[45]; thus (c) «there remain no "things", but *dynamic quanta* in a relation of tension with all other *dynamic quanta*»[46]. (a) The goodness of instincts, which capable on their own of making true value judgements in their unfailing rootedness in the body; (b) the elevation of instincts, which alone are capable of interpreting the world and therefore of giving it a significant and creative value through the corporeal itself; and (c) the dynamics of forces in a hierarchical and agonal relation, rather than the levelling of a struggle "downwards" as Freud's drives do: these, then, are the three features of instinct or "the primitive text of nature", by which we are made and by which we make ourselves[47]. Survival and creation are one and the same, since a *living being* is a *creating being* – not contenting oneself with persevering in one's being (Spinoza), but producing the absolutely possible as something that has never happened, and has never happened to *me*: «creative artists are needed: they are the instincts!»[48]

4. *It creates*

"It [*Ça*] creates," and no longer "it thinks" or "it wills": this is the new, definitive determination of Nietzsche's "Id (*Ça*)" (*Es*), or rather of the "Self" (*das Selbst*)[49]. For what the philosopher of Sils Maria suggests in the "Self", which is neither "I" nor "me", is the neutrality and im-

[43] F. Nietzsche, *Le Gai Savoir* (1882), in *Œuvres philosophiques complètes*, Paris, Gallimard, 1967, Avant-Propos § 2, p. 16.

[44] FP X , 26 [72].

[45] FP XII, 7 [60].

[46] FP XIV, 14 [79].

[47] We follow Nietzsche's triple determination of instincts according to Patrick Wotling, "Le sens de la notion de pulsion chez Nietzsche", op. cit., pp. 98-111.

[48] FP IV, 7 [179].

[49] We take up here Gael Calame-Trottmann's excellent formula ("ça créé" in distinction to "ça pense" or "ça veut"), in *Soi-même comme une œuvre*, op. cit. [forthcoming], ch. 3: "Je suis légion" [I am legion].

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personality of the pronoun under consideration here. It's not I who creates, but *it creates in me* insofar as I participate in the flow of life and let it flow right into my corporeality. In Nietzsche's eyes, the pregnant woman, or the woman in labor, becomes both the model and the sign. *It creates* in her, and *almost without her*. Life passes through her to the one to whom she gives her life, more than she gives birth to the living. In the experience of pregnancy, as we read in the extraordinary finale to *Daybreak* (1881), the pregnant woman is doing the work, or rather, *the work is being done* within her, that is the work of life itself - not *her* life alone, but life as such, be it primarily biological, but also with a view to fecundity and begetting:

> «Is there a more sacred state than that of *pregnancy*? To do everything we do with the silent conviction that it must serve, in one way or another, that which, within us, is becoming! That it must *grow* its mysterious nature, which we dream of with rapture! [...]. The pure, purifying feeling of profound *irresponsibility* reigns within us, almost like that felt by the spectator before the lowered curtain – *it* grows, *it* comes to light [...]. It's in this sacred atmosphere that we must live! That we can live! Whether the *awaited being* is a thought or an action – faced with any essential accomplishment, we have no other possible attitude than that of *pregnancy*»[50].

There is life, and life itself, in the "profound silence of pregnancy", and only those who have given birth can truly speak of it. Almost unbeknownst to her, life happens within her, the woman or the one in labor, participating at the moment of giving birth in the very act of creating. Even in pain, and even in the cry of childbirth, it is no longer "Quiet! It's rolling" but "Quiet! It's creating![51]" Let us dare to say it, as we also say it of the female animal, the woman "drops [*met bas*]" by generating the man from "below [*en-bas*]" or the man *tout court* "Quiet! It's creating", in a play on words that applies at least in French, becomes a "sacred" quiet: "Is there a *more sacred* state than that of pregnancy?" (*supra*).

At the heart of the extra-phenomenal, even in trauma, if there is still *creation* in *survival*, it's because I see, or rather, I note, that there is still life in me, that "that" is being birthed in me, even as I could believe I was already dead because of my trauma. The "*nothing to it*" (an essay

[50] F. Nietzsche, *Aurore* (1881), in *Œuvres philosophiques complètes*, Paris, Gallimard, 1970, livre V, § 552 [L'égoïsme idéaliste], pp. 281-282 (emphasis added).

[51] A "silence, ça crée!" by way of relay to the "silence, ça tourne!", rightly suggested by Gael Calame-Trottmann in *Soi-même comme une œuvre*, op. cit. ch. 9 (with an apt and beautiful development on the figure of the "parturiente").

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on Freud) is replaced by the "*it's creating*" (taken from Nietzsche). For, being less blinded than broken by my trauma – illness, separation, death of a child, natural disaster or pandemic – I don't recover (in the sense of resilience), but I still project myself forward (in a prosilience). This is the proof, if not the sign, not of a reopening towards a former being (the ideal of health), but of an absolutely new possible that has come to carve out its own path within me: «Man is a rope stretched between the beast and the Overman - a rope over an abyss»[52].

But the answer is also carnal, or rather corporeal, for childbirth is first a matter of the vital. The "*spread body*" (even on a hospital bed or cross) is therefore now answered by the "*living body*" – in that it still possesses the means to moan or scream, or even to make a "rattle" resound without being totally stifled, since the "scream" is its only, carnal way of expressing itself. *The Scream* of the painter Edvard Munch (Oslo, 1893) certainly stops short of the stupefaction of the experience, such that he remains speechless – "the extra-phenomenal". But *Bathing Young Men* (Oslo, 1904), directly inspired by Nietzsche according to the artist whose portrait he also painted (Stockholm, 1906), also takes the baton from it: "Survival and creation". The crossing to be made here is not to stick only to trauma, but to discover a force (neutral and impersonal) within myself, be it that of nature, or rather of the creative instinct in corporelaity as the sole source of language. To put it another way, and still within the framework of an aesthetic that properly signifies what it means to create, we cross from the "spread body" of Lucian Freud (*Naked Girl*, Steve Martin Collection, 1966) to the "living body", or at least the body still in motion, of Francis Bacon (*Triptych*, London, 1970). In this suffering and passage, we can see the flight of the *Victory of Samothrace*, headless and armless in its trauma (the extra-phenomenal), but otherwise taking charge of its destiny through the new possible of its outstretched wings (survival and creation): «In 1910, it was believed that the restored "Victory of Samothrace" would regain its gold, its arms and a buccina», comments André Malraux in *The Voices of Silence*. «Without gold, arms or buccina, she has regained her prow, and found the high staircase of the Louvre, which she dominates like a morning herald: it is not towards Alexandria that we are raising her, it is towards the Acropolis. *Metamorphosis is no accident, it is the very law of the life of the work of art*»[53].

[52] F. Nietzsche *Ainsi parlait Zarathoustra*, op. cit. prologue, § 4, p. 50.
[53] A. Malraux*, Les Voix du silence*, Paris, Gallimard, 1951, pp. 66-67.

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5. *Ourselves as a work of art*

That there is a "work of art" (*Werk*) in *Survival and Creation* is also self-evident. We'll stick neither to the trauma of the "extra-phenomenal" through survival, nor to the mere gaping being-there of the "spread body" by the living body, insofar as *praxis* becomes *poiesis* in the aesthetic sense of the term – not just by way of beauty, as I said (introduction), but according to a creation of possibles in me that are unhoped-for and even unexpected or never expected. Caught in my trauma, I think of nothing except perhaps dying, and spread out on a hospital bed, I can no longer bear my body "there", and would perhaps prefer to see it disappear rather than be so objectified that I can't appropriate it myself. And yet, *I am there and always there* – and this is the *effect, and the effort, of life in me*. There is an "enjoyment of living" in survival that life alone cannot teach me, so long as I have not crossed via my traumatized being, though of course I neither want nor desire to do so. The "passage through the fault" is such that it's only when the wall becomes smooth and impassable that I discover in myself possibles of my body to pull myself to the top.

But would I then become "myself as a work of art" – or rather "oneself as a work of art" (*sich als Werk*), to follow again the finale of *Daybreak*: «Thus what is most beautiful is perhaps still happening in the obscurity and sinks, barely born, in the eternal night – I mean the *spectacle of the force* that a genius employs, not to works of art, but *to oneself as a work of art*?»[54] As we will first recognize, no one can work with others without first working for him- or herself. Christianity's famous golden rule also applies to the work or the way of doing work: «You shall love your neighbor as yourself» (Mt 22:39). The "thyself" precedes the "ourselves", and therefore the "oneself as a work of art" precedes the "*ourselves* as a work of art". Far from Nietzsche's false accusations of a pure heroism of the subject, or of an a priori of alterity such that one would always forget oneself, one recognizes that it is also and first of all by passing through oneself that one goes to the other, and not solely the other way round.

But am I always the first in the roped party? Or, rather, do I tirelessly climb "solo", without seeing that I'm always bound, even roped, to

[54] F. Nietzsche, *Aurore* (1881), op. cit. book V, § 548 [Victory over strength], pp. 278-279 (cit, p. 279). Here, of course, we take up the fine "thesis" (in every sense of the word) of Gael Calame-Trottman, *Soi-même comme une œuvre*, op. cit. (forthcoming), ch. 9: "Faire œuvre". With the difference that, far from following Nietzsche in this assumption of self by self, we opt for a "shared burden", so that we are together in "our" work.

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the other? At the very least, this is the question we must ask the thinker of Sils Maria, as the author and creator of Zarathustra. *If indeed there is* life in me *that is not my own in my own right – force of nature, power of the organic or hierarchy of instincts, it doesn't matter – does it then necessarily belong to the meaning of* life *that I must appropriate it for* myself*, subsume it, even also overcome it?* What if, after all, we were to let the living be the living, thereby recognizing that the movement of life does not come from me and does not return to me? At most, it *passes* "through me", or rather "through us", with no overcoming or acheiving. As we said, and as we have seen, following Freud's explanation of the "sexual drive" as interpreted by Paul Ricœur: «if the living thing goes to death by an internal movement, that which struggles against death is not something internal to life, but the *conjugation of one mortal with another mortal*» (*supra*). Life is not "my" life, and hence survival in trauma does not come from me, but from a creative force of possible that the organic or the living still places within me: the blood that still flows in my veins, or the spring that follows winter. But life isn't "my life", in the same way, as we've said, that life is "our" life – the one that means I couldn't bear to go on living if I had to survive you, and the one that means we love each other by being "survivors" together, enjoying being there with each other all the more because the degree of intensity of each of our lives – or rather, of our "sur-vivals"– is what gives meaning to "our" life and to our shared commitment in "life".

"Ourselves as a work of art" (*Wir selbst als Werk*), rather than "*oneself* as a work of art*" (sich als Werk*), is therefore what must ultimately define the movement of life "in me", which is also the movement of life "in us". In the profound silence of pregnancy, the unborn child is not "her" child for the woman or one in labor who carries it; nor is it "my" child for the one who, with her, made it blossom, at least embryonically. It is "our" child because together we have done the work, or the *work of life* has been done in us. Far from the pure neutrality of the force of life in me, and in us, we have to recognize that we are also stakeholders in life, not just as life subsumed by oneself, but received by another, whether it be nature or even God himself. «A wild outpouring of Dionysian life. Saint John [...]. Saint John's Gospel was born of the Greek atmosphere, of Dionysian soil»[55].

Certainly, and we can only acknowledge this, the *intoxication of the*

[55] FP 1870 6 [14] and 1871-1871 [13], quoted and commented by Barbara Stiegler, *Nietzsche et la critique de la chair, Dionysos, Ariane, le Christ*, Paris, PUF, coll. "Epiméthée", 2005, ch. 12, pp. 279-304: "La vie éternelle et l'éternel retour de la vie" (cit. p. 281).

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wedding feast indeed runs all through the generosity of the Dionysian life like the «superabundance of Christian life»: Zarathustra proclaims in his prologue[56]: «I love him who does not reserve the slightest drop of his spirit, but who is the quintessence of his own virtue; it is in the quintessential state of spirit that he will cross the bridge»; and «I have come that men may have life (*zôen ekôsin*), and that they may have it abundantly (*kai perisson*)» announces Christ in the parable of the shepherd in John's gospel (John 10:10). But the superabundance of life in Christianity has nothing in common with the vital generosity of Nietzscheanism, in that it is received from another and by another, and never given to oneself by oneself: «It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me", to quote the Apostle Paul's famous phrase in his *Letter to the Galatians* (Gal 2:20)»[57].

Far from Nietzsche's so-called "egoism" (in the good sense of the word), including for the pregnant woman or woman in labor - «such is the true *idealist egoism*: to spare neither our care nor our watchfulness and to keep our soul silent, so that our fecundity may know a happy completion!»[58] – My child is "our" child, up to and including the origin and primitive scene that can give rise to gestation. This is precisely the backlash of psychoanalysis on the Nietzschean corpus that we must not forget, for it is in being "bound" that we first existed. Alterity is what Nietzsche lacks. Not because there is no love or generosity – the prologue to Zarathustra constantly proclaims the opposite – but because to love is to "depend", and it is from this that the thinker of Sils Maria wishes to protect himself. This is where the discrepancy between "Dionysus and Christ" lies, as Nietzsche famously wrote in 1888: «Dionysus versus the Crucified One: you have there the opposition [...]. You can guess; the problem is the *meaning of suffering*: a Christian meaning and a tragic meaning»[59].

* * *

"Survival and creation" after "*The Extra-Phenomenal*" – or rather, not to go beyond "The Extra-Phenomenal", but to reveal its sunny *side*

[56] F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, op. cit. prologue. § 4, p. 51.

[57] On this gap between Dionysian and Christian life, we refer to Noces de l'agneau, Paris, Cerf, 2011, § 35, pp. 363-367: "L'ivresse des noces" [Triduum philosophique, 2015, p. 659-663].

[58] F. Nietzsche, *Aurore* (1881), op. cit, § 552 [Idealist egoism], p. 282.

[59] F. Nietzsche, Inédit de l'année 1888, translated, quoted and commented in P. Valadier, *Nietzsche, l'athée de rigueur*, Paris, DDB, 1975, texte XXXII, pp. 149-150.

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(creation of new possibles) where only its *dark side* remained (survival in the impossible): such was the challenge of the present essay. Not, of course, by way of conclusion, inasmuch as thought, like any other act of living, seeks itself in order to be able to state itself. But because the path towards a certain light is by no means definitively blocked – and that it is by receiving the force of life within me, whether it be simply natural or divine, that something within me can be born that I had never hoped for. There are births that one discover in oneself where one did not expect them, and just as one did not suspect them. So "life" is *the one in labor* par excellence – Dionysus or Christ, as the case may be – who gives birth to us and creates new possibilities.

"*Prayer to life*". Lou Andreas-Salomé, who, however, crossed through it all, and above all known all and everyone (from a life with Nietzsche that is impossible to communicate, to Paul Ré's ambition, to her encounter with Rainer Maria Rilke and Sigmund Freud), then poetizes the most generous ode to life - not overcoming trauma, but consecrating the otherwise "of a living being always called to continue to live and think: «Certainly, as one loves a friend / I love you, enigmatic life - Whether you have made me exult or weep / Whether you have brought me happiness or suffering. // I *love* you with all your cruelty / And if you must annihilate me / I'll tear myself from your arms / As one tears oneself from the bosom of a friend. // With all my strength I embrace you! / Let your flames devour me / In the fire of combat allow me / To further fathom your mystery. // To be, to think for millennia! / Hold me in both your arms / If you have no more happiness to offer me / Ah well – you still have your torments» [60].

[60] Lou Andreas-Salomé, "Prière à la vie" (*Gebet ans das Leben*, 1882), in *Ma vie, Esquisse de quelques souvenirs*, Paris, PUF Quadrige, 2015, "Expérience de l'amour", pp. 38-39 (emphasis in text).

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Hors d'attente. Rethinking Hope with Henri Maldiney

Chiara Pesaresi

Introduction

It is easy to observe the profound and rapid transformations, as well as the multiple crises, that characterize our times: from climate disruption, which threatens life on the planet, to the crisis of democratic institutions; from the weakening of the social bond to the technological – even anthropological – revolution represented by artificial intelligence. In this world increasingly marked by uncertainty, it is no doubt less easy to speak of hope. And yet, it is precisely in such moments of history that hope becomes both an intimate and collective necessity. «There is no hope – writes the philosopher C. Pelluchon – without the prior experience of a total absence of horizon, which is like a night in the middle of the day and forces individuals as well as peoples to free themselves from their illusions» [1]. Hope thus arises where crisis opens an abyss. In this sense, phenomenology, and more particularly Henri Maldiney's phenomenology, although it does not directly thematize hope, can nevertheless help us to think about it.

Let us begin again with a simple question: what does it mean to hope? Between illusion and grounded expectation, hope is often misunderstood, associated sometimes with naïve optimism, sometimes with the projection of subjective desires. A demanding virtue for theology, hope becomes with Kant a dynamic of intelligence. For Kant, hope is inscribed within the three great fundamental questions of philosophy: "What can I know?", "What should I do?", and finally, "What may I hope for?" Kant makes hope an essential dimension of practical reason

[1] P. C. Pelluchon, *L'espérance, ou la traversée de l'impossible*, Rivages, Paris 2023, E-pub, p. 6, (my translation).

and the condition of moral action, at once rooted in transcendence and confronted with the uncertainty tied to the limits of human reason. But can we truly think hope within the mere limits "of reason alone"? Is it not first and foremost a lived experience, rather than a simple dynamic of the intellect?

Maldiney's phenomenology helps us to envisage hope in this perspective. To hope does not simply means to wait or to expect for something, or for a result, on the basis of acquired certainties and the predictability of a world understood as the chain of causes and effects. Hope entails a relation to time and to the world far deeper than mere expectation. The philosopher Gabriel Marcel emphasized that hope is a "breakthrough through time," whereas despair confines us within a closed time, a kind of "prison-time":

> « Le désespoir, c'est en un certain sens la conscience du temps clos, ou plus exactement encore, du temps comme prison – au lieu que l'espérance se présente comme percée à travers le temps ; tout se passe alors comme si le temps, au lieu de se refermer sur la conscience, laissait passer quelque chose à travers lui »[2].

Here we encounter again an essential intuition: hope always implies an openness to the unexpected. It is within this framework that I would like to interrogate the phenomenology of Henri Maldiney. His phenomenology of the real as *hors d'attente* (beyond expectation) can help us to envisage hope otherwise than under the sign of prediction and mastery. For this, it is necessary, with Maldiney, first to deconstruct the modern paradigm of subjectivity, and to call into question the Heideggerian concept of *Dasein*, which remains in part dependent on this paradigm.

The Event Beyond Anticipation: The Pathic and the Open

The modern paradigm rests upon anticipation and predictability: modern science constitutes itself as calculation, anticipation, and reproducibility. Heidegger himself, despite the radicality of his existential analytic, does not free himself entirely from this framework: *Dasein*

[2] G. Marcel, *Esquisse d'une métaphysique et d'une phénoménologie de l'espérance*, in *Homo viator*, Aubier, Paris 1947, p. 71. «Despair is, in a certain sense, the consciousness of closed time, or more precisely, of time as prison—whereas hope presents itself as a breakthrough through time; everything then happens as if time, instead of closing in on consciousness, allowed something to pass through it» (my translation).

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remains the one who must conquer itself. Despite anxiety and crisis, it always finds itself again by projecting and by repossessing its bearings. Thus, the Heideggerian project remains inscribed within a modern and individualistic perspective: *Dasein* projects itself toward its own possibilities, conceived as objectives or ends. It is to *Dasein* to realize itself, that is, to master its possibilities in view of its ends. To assume death – to stand free before the ultimate horizon, the impossibility of all possibility – does not escape a certain logic of mastery. What still dominates in the background is the modern idea of individual realization and the conquest of one's own goals. What, then, does it mean to think the real no longer in terms of project, but in those of unexpected? And how does such an approach relate to a phenomenology of hope? This is precisely what Maldiney's critique of the "project", in an Heideggerian sense, seeks to overcome, by means of the concepts of event, transpassibility and transpossibility.

Since Heidegger's *Beiträge*, phenomenology has continually questioned the meaning of the event. The matrixial – that is, foundational – meaning of this word, already underscored in Diderot's *Encyclopedia*, makes it indefinable in terms of a determined and positive content: its etymology refers both to what happens by "coming out of..." or coming from elsewhere (*ex-venire*), and to what arises, taking place in an unexpected manner (*ad-venire*).

In 1990, in an article entitled *Crise et temporalité dans l'existence et la psychose*, Maldiney wrote that «the event does not occur in the world, but the world opens up each time from the event»[3]. Nine years later, in his book *L'événement et le monde*, Claude Romano developed from this assertion his entire hermeneutics of the event. In so doing, he actually codified Maldiney's work and thought, which are in themselves resistant to any attempt at systematization. Let us therefore, for a moment, follow Romano's analyses[4].

An event, which distinguishes itself from an intramundane fact,

[3] H. Maldiney, *Penser l'homme et la folie*, Grenoble, Millon, 2021, p. 91 (my translation) : « *L'évènement ne se produit pas dans le monde, mais le monde s'ouvre à chaque fois à partir de l'événement* ». On the question of the event in Maldiney, see: F. Dastur, *Henri Maldiney : une phénoménologie de la rencontre et de l'événement*, in *L'Ouvert*, 1, 2008, pp. 61-71 ; J. de Gramont, *Pour une phénoménologie du non-événement*, paper delivered at the General Assembly of the International Henri Maldiney Association, 2015, Lyon, France, accessed online: https://www.henri-maldiney.org/sites/default/files/imce/de_gramont_-_ag_2015.pdf

[4] I shall return here to the analyses developed in my article: C. Pesaresi, *L'ébranlement du monde bien connu. Lectures croisées de Patočka et Maldiney*, in *On Conflict and Violence*, *Studia Phaenomenologica*, XIX, 19, 2019, pp. 193-209.

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presents the following characteristics: (i) it overturns the horizon of the world, that is, the ensemble of possibilities determined within a meaningful context: the event «is not inscribed within the world, but opens a world» [5]; (ii) as the event is without prior context, the event is anarchic, that is to say, it does not allow any causal archaeology; moreover, it re-transfigures the world «to the point of introducing into it an excess of meaning inaccessible to any explanation» [6]: it is in this sense *insignifiable*, as Maldiney says; (iii) the event is «inaugural», as it institutes a horizon of presence, a space-time in which a history and other events may take place; (iv) as such, it is temporalizing: «its temporality as temporization means being-always-already-in-the-past-what-it-will-be-as-present» [7]. In other words, the event is never present except as having already passed and as instituting a future: it is at once "retrospective" and "prospective"; (v) finally, the event is always addressed: the one to whom it happens is thereby implicated in what happens to them, undergoing in it a «constitutive transformation», as Maldiney says, borrowing Victor von Weizsäcker's expression. Moreover, the event takes place and manifests itself as this very transformation; it is such only insofar as it affects me, insofar as it takes place and matters for me.

If Husserl's "things themselves" are indeed those things that concern me and remain irreducible to mere external facts, then the event thus conceived is the very object of phenomenology. To this idea that the event is always addressed and "subjectivating", we must nevertheless add that the event is at the same time that which prevents me from being a "subject": it haunts me in my fixed identity, it forms and transforms me, it tears me away from the coherence and tranquil continuity of my everyday existence. A phenomenology of the event is, to this extent, a phenomenology of existence as movement and as incessant dispossession and exposure to crisis. The event is indeed not only the advent of another world, but also a tear (*déchirure*), the maximal exposure of existence to the peril of its own upheaval: it is the disfiguration or deformation rather than the reconfiguration of a horizon.

In their reflection on the event, Maldiney and Romano converge in a shared critique addressed to Heidegger: in the existential analytic, centered on the idea of the thrown-project, the event takes place «in an 'opening' that would entirely condition its meaning» [8]. The project of *Dasein*

[5] C. Romano, *L'Événement et le monde*, PUF, Paris 1998, p. 56 (my translation).
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 61.
[7] C. Romano, *L'Événement et le temps*, PUF, Paris 2012, p. 182 (my translation).
[8] C. Romano, *Il y a*, PUF, Paris 203, p. 17 (my translation).

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thus appears as a mastery of prior possibilities, and meaning, subordinated to these possibilities, is thereby limited and determined *a priori*. Perhaps more radically than Romano, Maldiney insists on the excess of the event in relation to the subjective horizon of the possible – that is to say, of the project. Both seek to move beyond the idea of a world that would be identified either with the constituting power of an intentional consciousness, or with the meaningful totality disclosed by being-in-the-world.

> « L'accueil de l'événement suppose une ouverture à l'apparaître qui n'a pas la structure du projet. L'horizon d'où il surgit, lequel s'ouvre avec lui, n'est pas celui d'un monde dont je serais l'ouvreur. L'événement n'est pas en mon pouvoir »[9].

The reception of the event presupposes an openness to appearing that does not have the structure of the project. The horizon from which it arises, which opens with it, is not that of a world of which I would be the opener. The event is not in my power. If the opening of possibility as such is the very being of the project, the opening to the event belongs to the order of passibility. What remains beyond all possible anticipation is in fact this «infinite capacity to feel» that Maldiney calls *passibility*, and which refers to the pathic dimension of existence. It exposes us to the event, whose reception depends less on our power to act than on our capacity to be affected (*pâtir*), to be touched by the unexpected. In dialogue with Erwin Straus's study of aesthetic experience, Maldiney conceives feeling (*le sentir*) as the originary opening of the ek-sistent: to feel or to sense, makes it possible to be in the world, but also exposes one to the possibility of the failure of existence and of the world itself. In the wake of the phenomenological psychiatrists, Maldiney names this originary and foundational dimension of feeling the pathic *(le pathique)*. A key concept at the crossroads of aesthetics, psychiatry, and phenomenology, the pathic designates the capacity of the existent either to respond to or to escape from crisis, a veritable «demand to be or to disappear»[10]. The pathic is thus the condition of ex-posure, through which existence can situate itself in the Open, exposed to the loss of bearings and to its radical transformation.

It is a matter here of recognizing a layer of experience that does not rest upon intentional self-determination, but upon the confrontation

[9] H. Maldiney, *Penser l'homme et la folie*, cit., p. 234.

[10] H. Maldiney, *Existence : crise et création*, in *Maldiney. Une singulière présence*, Encre Marine, La Versanne 2014, p. 221 : « *mise en demeure d'être ou de disparaître* » (my translation).

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with the real understood as «that which one did not expect», according to a formula of Maldiney borrowed from fragment 18 of Heraclitus. The openness to the event thus does not have the structure of the project: it is not situated within the meaningful horizon of the world, but within that «unlocatable place, condition of all sites», which Maldiney precisely calls the Open (*l'Ouvert*)[11]. A concept whose origin lies as much with poets (Hölderlin, Rilke) as with philosophers (the Greeks, Heidegger), the Open designates a "place" that does not manifest itself as such, but that gives place to every manifestation: it is not seen, it is experienced (*éprouvé*). It is in the Open that the pathic – the originary experience of being-in-the-world – unfolds as an infinite capacity to welcome an event without measure or prior cause. The existent is then defined above all by this fundamental receptivity «which is not of the order of the project, but of reception, of openness, and which admits of no *a priori*; which, waiting without expecting anything, remains open beyond all possible anticipation (*par-delà toute anticipation possible*)»[12]. At the same time, the Open is not the space of projectual self-conquest, but that of letting-be and letting-oneself-be, the place of constitutive transformation through what occurs: *Dasein* «exposes itself to itself under another horizon. This horizon is not the side of things turned toward us. It is the horizon of beyond expectation (*hors d'attente*), from which everything arrives, and such that in existing we ourselves arrive to ourselves»[13].

These analyses open the way to the distinction between transpassibility and transpossibility.

The Vertigo of the Real as Hors d'attente

In a 2016 article entitled *Du possible au transpossible. Maldiney lecteur et critique de Heidegger*, Claudia Serban proposes a reading that is at once faithful and critical of Heidegger's legacy in Maldiney[14]. The central issue is clear: to understand whether, and how, the notion of transpossibility, forged by Maldiney, constitutes a genuine surpassing

[11] Cf. H. Maldiney, *Espace, rythme, forme*, Cerf, Paris 2012, E-pub, p. 12. On this topic see: J.-P. Charcosset, *Vers l'ouverture, Maldiney phénoménologue ?*, in *Transversalités*, 113, 2010, pp. 161-173 ; J. de Gramont, *Présentation. Henri Maldiney: à l'épreuve de l'ouvert*, in *Transversalités*, 113, 2010, pp. 153-159.

[12] H. Maldiney, *Penser l'homme et la folie*, cit., p. 85.

[13] *Ibid*., p. 308.

[14] C. Serban, *Du possible au transpossible. Maldiney lecteur et critique de Heidegger*, in *Philosophie*, 130, 2016, pp. 58-71.

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of Heidegger's primacy of possibility. We recall that in *Being and Time*, possibility becomes the fundamental ontological determination of *Dasein* and unfolds in the project: to exist is to relate oneself to possibilities. The existent is then defined by its power-to-be, always in excess of its factuality. For Claudia Serban Maldiney takes up this determination, but radicalizes it. I would rather incline toward an overcoming of the category of the possible in the light of Maldiney's philosophy of the event as transpossible [15]. In fact, the event does not allow itself to be inscribed within a horizon of possibilities; it comes in excess, as «what one did not expect», and *cannot* expect. It is then, that the concept of the transpossible is introduced. The transpossible is «that which opens beyond or beneath all possibility, and which, from the perspective of positivist thought, is impossible» [16].

Such an event, which comes from beyond-possibility and beyond-project, also calls for another mode of reception, one that is not exhausted by the expectable and is therefore beyond expectation. It is at this point that Maldiney introduces the notion of transpassibility, in response to transpossibility: «transpassibility with regard to the event that comes beyond expectation (*hors d'attente*) is a transpassibility with regard to the Nothing from which the event arises *before being possible*. [...] Like the event itself, the existence that receives it is beyond expectation, infinitely improbable» [17]. Transpassibility makes possible the welcoming of the transpossible, allowing one to situate oneself in the Open and to exist "at the im-possible". Serban rightly shows that whereas Heidegger confined this determination to the relation to death (being-toward-death as the possibility of impossibility), Maldiney extends it to existence as a whole. It is the impossible that opens existence to the transpossible, and thus to the event.

[15] Cf. *Ibid*. Claudia Serban argues that Maldiney's thought does not abolish Heidegger's determination of existence as possibility; it does not eliminate the possible but extends it up to the impossible by grounding it in transpassibility. Thus, she writes, «it is legitimate to see in transpossibility a more radical response to the question of possibilization, rather than a surpassing or a destitution without right of appeal of that question» (*Ibid*., p. 11). She thereby opposes Jocelyn Benoist's position, for whom Maldiney's thought entails a reversal of «the primacy of possibility over actuality in order to assume the irreducibility of the event». According to Benoist, Maldiney therefore goes beyond the existential analytic, subjecting the category of project and of the possible «to a structure of excess», that of transpossibility (cf. J. Benoist, *Avant-propos*, in *Maldiney, une singulière présence*, Les Belles Lettres, «Encre marine», 2014).

[16] H. Maldiney, *Penser l'homme et la folie*, cit., p. 228.

[17] *Ibid*., pp. 306-307 (emphasis mine). On the question of Nothing (*Rien*), see Ph. Grosos, *Le rien, phénomène intotalisable. Journée d'études sur le Rien,* Bruxelles, 2016, HAL Archive ID: hal-04034937.

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In other words, the real gives itself as transpossible, in the form of the event, and the existent as transpassible, capable of welcoming it and of being transformed. Beyond the transpossible event, to which transpassibility opens, Maldiney also conceives a transpossibility inherent to the subject and articulated with its transpassibility: in this "existential transpossibility", reception and transformation are inseparable. As he writes: transpassibility is «the welcoming receptivity to the event, included in the transformation of the existent» [18]: the *ressentir*, which is neither reflection nor doubling, is an experience of the self, inseparable from a passibility to the event and from the transformation it summons [19]. Transpassibility, that is openness to beyond expectation, is thus inseparable from transpossibility, the event of beyond-project. The two form the conjoined moments of receptivity to the event. Maldiney specifies in this regard:

> « Ce sont là les deux moments conjugués en lesquels s'articule la réceptivité à l'événement. Il est vrai que l'être en état de crise est une essence encore indécidée. Mais l'existant qui est aux prises avec un événement qui le désétablit de son assurance et menace sa foi originaire (Urdoxa) existe, en la subissant, et subit en l'existant, une contradiction immanente à son pouvoir-être, de même qu'il existera la décision (krisis) qui y met fin. Son rapport à l'événement est, pour l'existant, son rapport à soi » [20].

In order to illustrate this openness concretely, Maldiney turns to the aesthetic experience of the mountain and of vertigo. As Jean-Pierre Charcosset emphasizes in *L'homme et la montagne* [21], the experience of the mountain described by Maldiney paradigmatically illustrates the irruption of the real as event. Maldiney himself was an experienced alpinist, and this lived engagement with the mountain profoundly informed his phenomenological reflection on the Open and on the event. The relevance of this perspective becomes especially apparent in two

[18] H. Maldiney, *Penser l'homme et la folie*, cit., p. 308.

[19] *Ibid.* p. 235 : « *Ce ressentir ne consiste ni dans une réflexion ni dans un redoublement : il est éveil du moi. L'événement nous advient en tant que nous devenons nous-mêmes. Indivises l'épreuve et la transformation* ». See again the analyses of C. Serban in *Du possible au transpossible. Maldiney lecteur et critique de Heidegger:* two dimensions of the transpossible emerge: the evental transpossible, which designates the real as an unforeseeable irruption, beyond all expectation; and the existential transpossible, which refers to a "*pouvoir-être*" more originary than the possible, enabling one to receive the transpossible event.

[20] H. Maldiney, *Penser l'homme et la folie*, cit., p. 307.

[21] J.-P. Charcosset, *L'homme et la montagne*, in *L'ouvert*, 9, 2016, online: https://www.henri-maldiney.org/sites/default/files/imce/louvert_n._9_reconstitue.pdf

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passages from Maldiney's from Maldiney's writings on the mountain, presented in *Ouvrir le rien, l'art nu*:

> « Celui qui dans une échancrure de la vallée de Zermatt ou bien de Staffelalp aperçoit le Cervin pour la première fois ne se trouve pas brusquement devant un bloc de pierre ou un accident de terrain. A vrai dire, il ne l'aperçoit pas : le Cervin apparaît. Tout à coup il est là à surgir, ouvrant l'espace »[22].
>
> « Quand surgit le Cervin, de la Riffelalp ou d'un tournant de la route du Breuil, surtout quand une nappe de brumes en suspens le sépare du sol sous nos pas, il ne surgit précisément pas de cette alpe ou de ce tournant, mais sans aucune perspective, à partir de lui-même. L'espace du Horn « s'espace » lui-même dans sa propre diastole à même l'ouvert sans distance du ciel ; mais simultanément il est lui-même le recueil de son expansion »[23].

The insufficiency of the concept of horizon (and of the project that is correlative to it) is here manifest: the Open gives itself in verticality, in the altitude that awakens the vertigo of beyond expectation and beyond project. Moreover, «the sense of altitude has nothing to do with a mathematical estimation of magnitudes: it is of an aesthetic order, bound to *ressentir*»[24]. It is this altitude that manifests verticality, and in it, says Maldiney, «the most characteristic aspect of human existence»[25].

Conclusions

In what way do Maldiney's concepts of transpassibility and transpossibility allow us to think hope? Maldiney's reflection on the project and the transpossible can be transposed to the pair hope (*espérance*) / hope

[22] H. Maldiney, *Ouvrir le rien, l'art nu*, Encre Marine, La Versanne 2010, p. 31. «The one who, from a gap in the valley of Zermatt or from Staffelalp, catches sight of the Matterhorn for the first time does not suddenly find himself before a block of stone or a terrain accident. Strictly speaking, he does not *catch sight of it*: the Matterhorn appears. All at once it is there in its surge, opening space» (my translation).

[23] H. Maldiney, *Regard, Parole, Espace*, Cerf, Paris 2012, p. 237. «When the Matterhorn surges forth, from Riffelalp or from a turn in the road from Breuil – especially when a sheet of suspended mist separates it from the ground beneath our feet – it does not in fact emerge from this alp or from that turn, but without any perspective, from itself. The space of the Horn "spatializes" itself in its own diastole, in the very openness without distance of the sky; but at the same time it is itself the gathering of its expansion» (my translation).

[24] H. Maldiney, *Ouvrir le rien*, cit., p. 45.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 43.

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(*espoir*). As Corine Pelluchon emphasizes, *espérance* is fundamentally distinct from *espoir*, although it is often confused with it[26]. *Espoir* corresponds to a projection toward a determinate or determinable object, inscribed within a relatively near and defined future. *Espérance*, on the contrary, engages an altogether different relation to time and to the world: it acts without being suspected, arises where nothing seemed able to call it forth, where it was un-hoped-for. It does not belong to calculation nor to rational project – as in the expectation of an experimental result, for example – but to a lived relation to temporality and to a welcoming of the unexpected.

Rather than to waiting, hope (*espérance*) refers to the unexpected. It rests upon the fact that not everything is given, and that what is given always opens a horizon never fixed in advance. «Hope sees and loves what is not yet and what will be», Péguy writes[27]. Yet our societal model and our collective imaginaries urge us constantly to seek control, mastery, and prediction. Hope, by contrast, presupposes an act of surrender: surrender of the desire to master everything, surrender to the event as an opening from nothing. As Pelluchon reminds us, hope « emerges without our having programmed it, and presupposes a surrender (*reddition*)»[28]. It is born from a form of dispossession, from an openness to mystery. It is not a voluntary construction, but an inner disposition to let oneself be reached by the unexpected.

To hope is thus not to foresee: it is even the opposite. To hope implies a welcoming of uncertainty. And it is precisely along this path that Maldiney's philosophy leads us: the real is, indeed, in itself event, exceeding and excluding any grasp (*prise*) upon it, as well as any horizon that could be determined *a priori*. To hope is thus to remain open in beyond expectation, not because one is condemned to it – as Sartre says of freedom – but because one assumes it in the light of an originary passibility, a capacity to sense (*sentir*) that is also a capacity to remain in the Open and to be transformed by what comes. It is not a peaceful experience, but on the contrary the vertiginous one of the alpinist. «Vertigo is an inversion and a contamination of the near and the far. [...] The sky tilts with the earth in a whirling without grasp. Neither man is

[26] C. Pelluchon, *L'espérance, ou la traversée de l'impossible*, cit., p., 10.

[27] Ch. Péguy, *Le Porche du mystère de la deuxième vertu*, in *Œuvres complètes*, t. V, Nouvelle Revue Française, Paris 1918, p. 270 : « *L'Espérance voit ce qui n'est pas encore et qui sera. Elle aime ce qui n'est pas encore et qui sera* ».

[28] C. Pelluchon, *L'espérance, ou la traversée de l'impossible*, cit., p. 23.

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the center, nor space the place. There is no longer any "there"»[29]. In vertigo, we are prey to all of space – a space that collapses in on itself in a universal slipping-away around us and within us; but, as Charcosset emphasizes, «vertigo also constitutes the first response to the abyss»[30].

In the light of Maldiney's concepts of transpassibility and transpossibility, it becomes possible to think hope – even though Maldiney did not directly thematize it. Hope does not deny fragility or uncertainty, but it allows them to be inhabited[31]. To recognize this can be vertiginous, for it exposes us and leaves us defenseless. Yet it is precisely in the irruption of the real as beyond expectation, which eludes all anticipation and our projects, that hope is at stake. This unexpected real, which traverses us and surpasses us more than it obeys us, is the very object of hope.

[29] H. Maldiney, *Regard, Parole, Espace*, cit., p. 205 (my translation).

[30] J.-P. Charcosset, *L'homme et la montagne*, p. 10.

[31] Certainly, hope is a disposition and an experience that invests the common, the human collectivity. Maldiney does not develop transpossibility or transpassibility in these precise terms, yet it is not insignificant that «the event par excellence» is for him the encounter, that reaches and even reopens my passibility: « *l'événement par excellence est la rencontre* [...]. *Il n'y a de rencontre que de l'altérité. L'altérité est imprévisible. L'épreuve que fait d'elle l'être-là est celle d'une ouverture dont il n'est pas le là* » (H. Maldiney, *Penser l'homme et la folie*, cit., p. 256).

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La ética en la economía: fundamentos normativos de la teoría y la política económica
(Ethics in Economics: foundations of theory and economic policy)

Fernando Arancibia-Collao

1. *Introducción*

El vínculo entre ética y economía puede estudiarse desde diversos puntos de vista. Aquí plantearé dos: 1) desde el punto de vista de la metodología de la economía (lo que incluye sus conceptos y sus supuestos) y 2) desde la perspectiva de las consecuencias de las políticas económicas. Si bien es cierto, lo más relevante parece ser el hecho de cómo impactan las políticas económicas a las personas, el estudio y elaboración de estas políticas, en cuanto económicas, supone la aplicación de un método de análisis económico. De ahí que la ética tenga un rol y una presencia en ambos momentos: en la elaboración de la política, y en la aplicación de la política.

De modo más general, la ética aparece en la interacción económica. Estas interacciones pueden ser evaluadas por marcos éticos generales en cuanto acciones humanas. También, estas interacciones son el objeto material del análisis económico. Además, dichas interacciones son el efecto de las políticas económicas. La diferencia de perspectiva es, entonces, de alcance: la metodología económica estudia las interacciones económicas, particulares o agregadas. Dicha metodología se usa para proponer y promover políticas económicas que tendrán efectos en las interacciones particulares, según el siguiente cuadro:

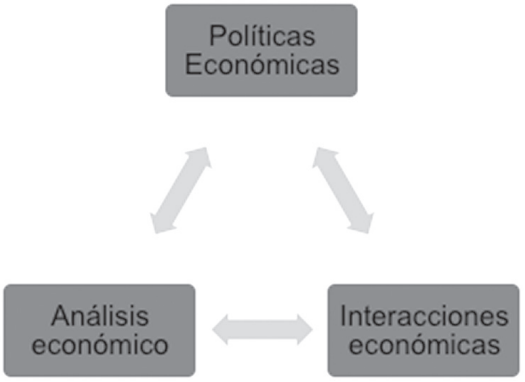

Figura 1: vinculación de las diversas áreas de la economía como realidad

Pensemos en el siguiente caso:

En 2008, se descubrió que las tres principales cadenas de farmacias de Chile – Fasa (Farmacias Ahumada), Cruz Verde y Salcobrand – habían participado en un acuerdo colusorio para fijar los precios de más de 200 medicamentos entre diciembre de 2007 y marzo de 2008. Este acuerdo tenía como objetivo aumentar los precios de manera coordinada, perjudicando directamente a los consumidores al eliminar la competencia en los precios de estos productos esenciales.

Cuadro 1: caso 1

De acuerdo con lo dicho, podemos analizar el caso según la estructura de análisis económico, políticas e interacciones económicas. La compra y venta de medicamentos constituyen formas particulares de interacciones económicas. Esas interacciones pueden analizarse desde la metodología del análisis económico: los medicamentos, especialmente aquellos esenciales, poseen una demanda inelástica, esto eso, que no varía sustantivamente según el precio. Por otra parte, el acuerdo entre las farmacias puede evaluarse, según los criterios del análisis económico, como una colusión, esto es, como una forma de oligopolio. Junto con lo anterior, el oligopolio puede implicar el establecimiento de barreras de entrada, lo que afecta sustantivamente la competencia en el mercado de venta de medicamentos. Frente a estos hechos, analizados por la metodología económica según los conceptos antes vistos, y considerando un juicio normativo en torno a la deseabilidad de un

mercado competitivo y a la indeseabilidad de fallas de mercado en las que los consumidores resultan afectados, se pueden plantear políticas para desincentivar la formación de oligopolios y promover mercados competitivos.

2. *La presencia de la ética*

La ética aparece en los conceptos del análisis económico, de manera implícita. Como veremos más adelante, la noción misma de mercado perfectamente competitivo requiere de restricciones morales. Por otra parte, el mercado competitivo se prefiere, en una medida relevante, por razones morales. Un mercado perfectamente competitivo (o lo más cercano a él) es preferible a uno que no lo sea porque promueve la eficiencia. Por otra parte, la eficiencia en un mercado es deseable porque promueve el bienestar. El bienestar, finalmente, es una categoría normativa: el bienestar es deseable.

Dos observaciones a esto último. La primera: que algo sea deseable no significa, necesariamente, que sean los deseos que determinen lo bueno o malo. En lo que sigue, usaré "deseable" como "moralmente deseable", y lo moralmente deseable es tal porque es bueno. Esta es una tesis realista u objetivista: existe una relación de fundación entre el bien y el deseo de algo que se considera bueno. Por otra parte, algo que se desea pero que no es bueno, no se hace bueno por ser deseado. El bien tiene una prioridad fundacional respecto de lo deseado. Esto implica, naturalmente, que, si un individuo *i* desea un cierto *x*, el carácter normativo de *x* para *i* dependerá de si *x* es bueno (si instancia una propiedad normativa o axiológica). Si *x* no es bueno y, sin embargo, sigue siendo deseado por *i*, entonces *i* está *equivocado* en desear *x*. Esto último tendrá consecuencias para nuestra consideración de las preferencias de los individuos: alguien podrá tener las preferencias que quiera, pero no por esto mismo serán preferencias buenas o deseables, y, por lo tanto, no por ser las preferencias de un individuo, la sociedad tendrá un deber de promoverlas o de considerarlas. Esto nos llevará al problema de la distinción entre una concepción formal del bienestar, de una concepción material, sobre el que volveremos más adelante.

La segunda observación: el argumento que, de manera implícita, plantea la presencia de la ética en el análisis económico radica en la interrelación de los conceptos de competencia, eficiencia y bienestar. Dijimos que la competencia es valiosa por la eficiencia, y la eficiencia,

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por el bienestar. Aquí, el bienestar está fundando normativamente las otras evaluaciones o valuaciones anteriores. Lo que quiero decir, en este punto, es que no es posible hablar, en algún sentido coherente, que el bienestar es valioso o algo que vale la pena buscar; o bien, que la eficiencia o que la competencia es, en algún sentido, valiosa, sin hacer un juicio de valor. Y ese juicio de valor es, fundamentalmente, moral, en la medida en que influye en el bienestar de las personas, sus derechos y sus posibilidades de realización.

3. *Economía positiva y economía normativa*

La presencia de la ética, además, se puede encontrar en ambos lados de la distinción entre economía positiva y normativa. Si bien se plantea que la economía normativa es aquella que incluye "juicios de valor" o proposiciones normativas, podemos decir, también, que la economía positiva incluye igualmente proposiciones normativas; o bien, que a la base de la economía positiva también encontramos valores y otros conceptos normativos.

La distinción entre economía positiva y economía normativa constituye una distinción entre dos enfoques del análisis económico y del quehacer del economista. Si bien existen algunos enfoques que llaman a superar dicha distinción [1], otros argumentan por mantenerla [2]. La distinción entre "ser" y "deber ser" fue introducida en la obra del filósofo David Hume [3] y tiene diversas manifestaciones: la distinción entre jui-

[1] Hands, D. W., «The Positive-Normative Dichotomy and Economics», en U. Mäki (ed.), *Philosophy of Economics*, North-Holland, Amsterdam, 2012.

[2] Weston, S. C., «Toward a Better Understanding of the Positive/Normative Distinction in Economics», *Economics & Philosophy*, 10, 1, 1994, 1-17.

[3] «No puedo evitar añadir a estos razonamientos una observación que quizás puede tener alguna importancia. En cada sistema de moralidad que he observado hasta ahora, encuentro siempre que el autor procede algunas veces en la forma ordinaria de razonamiento, y establece la existencia de Dios, o hace observaciones sobre asuntos humanos, cuando de repente soy sorprendido porque, en vez de las usuales copulaciones de proposiciones «es» o «no es», me encuentro con proposiciones ninguna de las cuales no está conectada con un «debe» o «no debe». Este cambio es imperceptible, pero es sin embargo de consecuencias últimas; porque como este «debe», o «no debe», expresa alguna nueva relación o afirmación, ésta debe necesariamente observarse y explicarse; al mismo tiempo debe darse una razón para algo que parece completamente inconcebible: cómo esta nueva relación puede ser una deducción de otras que son completamente diferentes de ella. Pero como los autores no toman comúnmente esta precaución, debo intentar recomendarla a los lectores; y estoy persuadido que esta pequeña atención subvertiría todos los sistemas vulgares de moralidad; y permite ver que la distinción de vicio y virtud no se encuentra simplemente en las relaciones entre objetos, ni es percibida por la razón» Hume, D., *Tratado de la Naturaleza Humana*, Editora Nacional, Madrid, 1977, 689-690.

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cios/proposiciones descriptivas y normativas, la distinción entre hechos y valores, entre otros [4]. La distinción entre economía positiva y normativa se encuentra primeramente planteada en John Neville Keynes (el padre de John Maynard K.), si bien él planteó que, entre ambas, media "el arte de la economía", que sería el uso de las herramientas de la economía positiva para alcanzar las metas de la economía normativa [5]. Fue Lionel Robbins quien estableció, en el canon del análisis económico, la distinción entre economía positiva y normativa, afirmando que la economía es una ciencia positiva, y que las cuestiones relativas a los valores no tienen lugar en la ciencia [6]. En esta idea le siguió Milton Friedman quien, en su ensayo metodológico sobre la economía positiva, plantea que, respecto de diferencias sobre valores básicos, «los hombres únicamente pueden luchar» [7].

La economía positiva se entiende usualmente como aquella área de la economía en la que se utiliza la verificación empírica, y se refiere a cuestiones acerca de lo que es (o fue o será), mientras que la economía normativa se refiere a cuestiones en las que están involucradas valoraciones [8, 9]. Sin embargo, siendo más precisos, la economía positiva no trataría de «lo que es», sino «de lo que *sería* si el mundo se ajustara a los supuestos de la teoría económica», mientras que la economía normativa "nos dice lo que *debería* ser para que la conducta de los agentes sea racional, lo que las firmas *deberían* hacer para maximizar sus beneficios, etc.» [10].

A manera de ejemplo, podemos dar algunas proposiciones de economía positiva y normativa. Proposiciones de economía positiva serían

[4] Putnam, H., *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy and Other Essays*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2002.

[5] Beker, V. A., «¿Es la economía una ciencia? Una discusión de cuestiones metodológicas», en W. J. González, G. Marqués, A. Ávila (eds.), *Enfoques Filosófico-Metodológicos en Economía*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Madrid, 2002, 36.

[6] Robbins, L., *An Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economics*, Auburn, Alabama, 2007.

[7] Friedman, M., «The Methodology of Positive Economics», en D. M. Hausman (ed.), *The Philosophy of Economics: An Anthology*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007, 147.

[8] Hardwick, P., B. Khan, J. Langmead, *Economía Moderna*, Minerva Ediciones, Madrid, 2010, 27.

[9] Al definir economía normativa, Hardwick et al. señalan que ésta "se ocupa de proposiciones que se basan en juicios de valor, esto es, afirmaciones que expresan opiniones", igualando un juicio de valor con una opinión. Esto es un error. Como veremos más adelante, los juicios de valor no son opiniones, en la medida en que opinión se tome en contraposición con "conocimiento".

[10] Beker, ¿Es la economía una ciencia? Una discusión de cuestiones metodológicas, 37.

las siguientes:

a. «El aumento de la demanda llevará al incremento tanto del precio como de la cantidad de equilibrio» [11].
b. «Una subida del precio de un bien tenderá a presionar a la baja los precios de los bienes complementarios» [12].
c. «En cualquier punto de la curva de indiferencia, la tasa a la cual el consumidor está dispuesto a intercambiar el bien medido en el eje vertical por el bien medido en el eje horizontal; es igual al valor absoluto de la pendiente de la curva de indiferencia» [13].

Por el contrario, proposiciones normativas serían las siguientes:

a. «Aun cuando el bienestar de la sociedad esté ligado de alguna forma al de sus miembros, también lo está al respeto de un conjunto de valores, respeto que debiera ser anterior a la búsqueda de la satisfacción de las preferencias» [14].
b. «El gobierno siempre podría transformar una riqueza en una mejora de Pareto al comenzar a los perdedores desde las ganancias de los ganadores» [15].

La distinción entre economía positiva y normativa se puede plantear, en los hechos, de diferentes maneras. Por ejemplo, la protección del bosque nativo es una cuestión normativa (ética, podríamos decir). La economía normativa buscaría mecanismos para poder alcanzar dicho fin de política pública. Por otra parte, la economía positiva trataría de contestar preguntas relativas a los efectos de una cierta política pública de protección del bosque nativo: por ejemplo, el efecto sobre los precios de la madera de árbol nativo [16].

Es cierto que es muy difícil plantear la completa separación entre hechos y valores, o bien, entre proposiciones positivas y normativas. Incluso un economista como Richard Lipsey, quien defiende claramente esta distinción, señala que «unos filósofos amigos míos me han per-

[11] Frank, R., *Microeconomía Intermedia*, McGraw Hill, México, D.F., 2009, 40.
[12] Hardwick, Khan, Langmead, Economía Moderna, 117.
[13] Frank, Microeconomía Intermedia, 67.
[14] Vial, B., F. Zurita, *Microeconomía*, Ediciones UC, Santiago, Chile, 2018, 253, explicando la teoría de Kant.
[15] Posner, R. A., *The Economics of Justice*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1983, 92, comentando la argumentación de Kaldor.
[16] Tomo el ejemplo de Frank, quien se refiere a la talla de secuoyas.

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suadido de que, en el límite, la distinción entre positivo y normativo se oscurece y derrumba completamente. La razón de ello consiste en que si se examinan cuidadosamente muchas proposiciones que aparentemente parecen normativas, se ve que llevan implícitas una base positiva» [17]. El ejemplo que da el mismo autor es el siguiente: la proposición "el desempleo es peor que la inflación porque los efectos -mensurables- del desempleo son considerados por la mayoría de los ciudadanos adultos mucho más graves que los efectos – mensurables- de la inflación" [18]. A los ejemplos del autor podemos agregar otros argumentos para plantear que la distinción, que puede ser útil en algunas circunstancias analíticas, fracasa completamente. Finalmente, Lipsey defiende la distinción en aras de la claridad, además de considerar dicha distinción como «uno de los pilares fundamentales de la ciencia» [19]

4. *La ética en la economía positiva*

Es fácil ver la presencia en la economía normativa: los juicios de valor, o proposiciones normativas, son esencialmente éticas, en la medida en que incluyen una valoración que afecta a la persona, ya sea a través de la prescripción de una conducta, como a partir de una identificación de un bien moral. También es cierto que, como ya han planteado innumerables filósofos e incluso algunos economistas, las proposiciones normativas y positivas se encuentran interrelacionadas. No viene al caso explicar las innumerables argumentaciones en contra de esta distinción [20].

Ahora bien, antes de entrar en el punto acerca de cómo entra la ética en la economía positiva, conviene hablar brevemente de la naturaleza de esta distinción, en qué sentido debe ser rechazada, y en qué sentido puede ser aceptada.

Si entendemos la distinción entre lo positivo (o descriptivo) y lo normativo, o bien la distinción entre hechos y valores, como una descripción acerca del mundo, no cabe más que rechazar la distinción sin más. *En la realidad se encuentran interrelacionadas cuestiones de hecho con cuestiones de valor, cuestiones positivas con cuestiones normativas*. Lo que hace la ciencia y la filosofía, es *analizar* la realidad. Analizar es,

[17] Lipsey, R. G., *Introducción a la Economía Positiva*, Vicent Vives, Barcelona, 1967, 5.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid., 7.
[20] Putnam, The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy and Other Essays.

fundamentalmente, separar en partes para comprender mejor. Pero la realidad sigue siendo *una*, mezclada, en desorden podríamos decir.

Ahora bien, esto no significa que, por motivos metodológicos fundados (motivos que son, usualmente razones prudenciales para efectos de lograr de mejor manera el objetivo de una ciencia en particular) sea útil aceptar esta distinción. En este sentido, la distinción no puede ser aceptada *ontológicamente*, pero sí *metodológicamente*. O, en otras palabras: no puede ser aceptada como una caracterización de la realidad, pero sí como un supuesto productivo del quehacer científico.

En esta misma línea es que puede plantearse la presencia de la ética en la economía positiva. Si tomamos una proposición de economía positiva, no veremos particularmente ninguna cuestión normativa (aparentemente). Pero, a la base de esas proposiciones hay evidentemente cuestiones normativas. Tomemos el siguiente enunciado: "La elección óptima del consumidor es la cesta de su conjunto presupuestario que se encuentra en la curva de indiferencia más alta" [21]. En primer lugar, el enunciado está definiendo lo que es una elección óptima. La referencia a lo óptimo puede verse como una cuestión de orden normativo: lo óptimo es un parámetro comparativo entre dos cestas; una es *mejor* que otra. Sin embargo, *tampoco es completamente* normativa, porque *describe* (en este caso, lo que es una elección óptima).

En segundo lugar, la aserción analizada se afirma, desde el punto de vista performativo (es decir, de su realización), con un afán informativo. O, en otras palabras, el hecho mismo que se afirme como algo cierto en un libro de economía constituye un acto que pretende expresar una verdad (o, más precisamente, *una proposición verdadera*). Y quien lee dicha afirmación, la comprende como una proposición con pretensión de verdad. El acto de afirmar algo como verdadero es un tipo de acto humano que puede ser evaluado moralmente. De ahí que, en nuestras prácticas morales usuales, se rechace la mentira, y a quienes mienten se les trate de mentirosos. La verdad, entonces, y en particular, *la afirmación de la verdad* (o, más precisamente, la afirmación de proposiciones verdaderas) *constituye un acto moral*. Por lo tanto, afirmar una proposición de economía positiva es un acto moral si se afirma con pretensión de verdad.

En tercer lugar, y en línea con la idea anterior, la idea misma de verdad y de conocimiento puede ser considerada en términos morales. En el párrafo anterior señalé que lo que posee valor moral es el acto

[21] Varian, H. R., *Microeconomía Intermedia*, Antoni Bosch, Barcelona, 2010, 91.

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performativo, es decir, el acto de afirmar una proposición como verdadera. Pero también una proposición, en cuanto posee un valor de verdad, genera una cierta normatividad. Por ejemplo, al mirar por la ventana de mi oficina puedo ver que es de día (en contraposición con la noche). La evidencia (en este caso, de mis sentidos) me indica que la proposición "es de día" es verdadera. En algún sentido, yo *debo* creer que es de día (es decir, tener la creencia de que es de día). Si yo creyera que es de noche, estaría yendo en contra de la evidencia, y, por lo tanto, tendría una creencia falsa, y estaría afirmando una creencia falsa.

Alguien puede pensar que tener creencias falsas no es moralmente incorrecto. En algún sentido, todos tenemos creencias falsas, y muchas veces nos equivocamos al representarnos las cosas. Por de pronto, cuando uno rinde una prueba y da una respuesta errada, esto es equivalente a tener una creencia falsa. Si bien tener creencias falsas no es, de por sí moramente grave, puede serlo en algunos casos. Tomemos los siguientes ejemplos:

En 2003, el gobierno de Estados Unidos, bajo la administración de George W. Bush, afirmó que Irak poseía armas de destrucción masiva (ADM) y que representaba una amenaza inminente para la seguridad internacional. Estas afirmaciones se basaron en informes de inteligencia que posteriormente se demostraron ser incorrectos o manipulados.

Cuadro 2: caso 2

El Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas (INE) realizó un censo que luego fue criticado por graves errores metodológicos y datos inexactos. Este censo tenía la finalidad de obtener datos demográficos precisos para la planificación de políticas públicas. Hubo subestimación de la población, omisión de viviendas y un procedimiento de recolección de datos cuestionable.

Cuadro 3: caso 3

El caso 2 ilustra cómo poseer información falsa puede implicar consecuencias devastadoras para la vida y las posibilidades de realización de las personas, incluyendo sus vínculos económicos. El caso 3 muestra cómo poseer información falsa puede llevar a anular un proceso altamente costoso y relevante para un país, como es el Censo. Detrás de la idea de que el valor de verdad de las creencias posee una carga moral está la dimensión normativa del conocimiento, o bien, la normatividad

epistémica [22]. Esto es, si la proposición *p* es verdadera, entonces, tengo un deber de creer que *p* es el caso. Supongamos que alguien afirma que la tierra es plana. Esa proposición es falsa. Luego, si creo que la tierra es plana, estoy vulnerando un *deber epistémico*. Esto implica, respecto de la economía positiva, que, si sus proposiciones son verdaderas, entonces tengo el deber de creerlas. Sea *p* una proposición de economía positiva. Si *p* es verdadero, entonces debo creer que *p* [23].

Finalmente, la economía positiva se relaciona con la ética en el siguiente sentido. Las proposiciones verdaderas de la economía positiva forman parte de un conjunto de proposiciones que constituyen el fundamento de un quehacer científico. En cuanto quehacer científico, la economía positiva posee reglas y principios morales que los rigen. De este modo, no sólo sería inmoral, sino que sería incorrecto epistémicamente (esto es, desde el punto de vista del quehacer científico) arreglar los datos de un estudio. En otras palabras: todo quehacer científico se rige por ciertos principios y valores. Dichos principios y valores constituyen no sólo un estándar moral del quehacer científico, sino que también están vinculados a los resultados de dicho quehacer, en el sentido más técnico posible. Es decir, que un estudio que utiliza datos "cocinados" no sólo constituye un acto inmoral, sino que también incorrecto desde el punto de vista técnico. En otras palabras: un economista que utiliza datos "cocinados" (a sabiendas) no sólo es una mala persona, sino también un mal economista.

5. *Economía normativa y economía del bienestar*

La economía del bienestar ocupa un lugar intermedio en la distinción entre economía positiva y normativa [24]. Algunos han planteado que se ubica de lleno en contexto de la economía positiva [25]. Podemos distinguir entre la economía del bienestar "clásica" y la "moderna". La eco-

[22] La normatividad epistémica se desarrolla en Cuneo, T., *The Normative Web*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007.

[23] Nótese que las proposiciones de economía positiva podrán tener diverso estatuto epistémico. Si dichas proposiciones son metodológicas, su verdad será solamente metodológica. Una proposición verdadera metodológica es distinta de una proposición verdadera ontológica. La primera es una forma débil y consuetudinaria de verdad. La segunda es una forma objetiva de verdad.

[24] Beker, ¿Es la economía una ciencia? Una discusión de cuestiones metodológicas, 39.

[25] Archibald, G. C., «Welfare Economics, Ethics, and Essentialism», *Economica*, 26, 104, 1959, 316-327.

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nomía "clásica" del bienestar fue fundada por Pigou[26]. La economía moderna surge a partir de una serie de supuestos metodológicos que alejan a la economía del análisis utilitarista y las comparaciones interpersonales del bienestar, reemplazando dicha metodología por el uso del criterio paretiano y el rechazo a las comparaciones interpersonales del bienestar[27].

El criterio paretiano (incluyendo el óptimo y la mejora paretiana) constituye el eje de la economía del bienestar. El criterio de Pareto es un principio de *benevolencia mínima*: es una mejora moral el que las personas se encuentren en mejor situación[28, 29]. Dicho criterio tiene una dimensión normativa clara, pero es insensible a las cuestiones de equidad. Por ejemplo, "supongamos una medida que mejore la situación del decil superior de la comunidad y deje iguales al resto. Es claramente una mejora paretiana. Sin embargo, esta alternativa más *eficiente* será rechazada en más de una sociedad en nombre de la *equidad*"[30]. En el mismo espíritu, Amartya Sen ha dicho que «un estado puede ser un óptimo de Pareto con algunas personas en la más grande de las miserias y con otras en el mayor de los lujos, en tanto que no se pueda mejorar la situación de los pobres sin reducir el lujo de los ricos»[31].

La dimensión ética de la eficiencia paretiana se encuentra en el hecho de ser un criterio de benevolencia mínima, tal como lo planteó Hausman. Este criterio de benevolencia mínimo dice relación con el bienestar de las personas. Y dicho bienestar se comprende desde las preferencias de los individuos. Si el individuo *i* logra satisfacer mejor sus preferencias que el individuo *j*, entonces *i* está mejor que *j*. En otros términos: $W = max\ U_i (p_1, p_2, p_3 \ldots p_n)$, donde W es la variable de bienestar, y U_i es la función de utilidad de *i*. El bienestar de *i*, entonces, radica en la maximización de su función de utilidad, conformada por sus preferencias.

[26] Pigou, A. C., *The Economics of Welfare*, Macmillan and Company, London, 1948.

[27] Sen, A. K., *Sobre Ética y Economía*, Alianza, Madrid, 1989, 48-49.

[28] Graafland, J. J., *Economics, Ethics and the Market: Introduction and Applications*, Routledge, New York, 2006, 32; Hausman, D., *The Inexact and Separate Science of Economics*, Cambridge ; New York, 1992, 66.

[29] «*Suppose (1) that one accepts the identification of individual well-being with the satisfaction of preferences and (2) that one accepts the moral principle of minimal benevolence: other things being equal, it is a morally good thing if people are better off. Then it is, other things being equal, a morally good thing to satisfy an individual's preferences. So (3) Pareto improvements are (other things being equal) moral improvements and Pareto optima are (other things being equal) morally desirable*». Hausman, The Inexact and Separate Science of Economics, 66.

[30] Beker, ¿Es la economía una ciencia? Una discusión de cuestiones metodológicas, 40.

[31] Sen, Sobre Ética y Economía, 50.

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Esta caracterización del bienestar como la maximización de la utilidad abre varias preguntas. En primer lugar, ¿qué preferencias pueden incluirse en U_i? La respuesta es: todas. No hay una exclusión a priori de ciertos tipos de preferencias. Entonces, ¿se pueden incluir preferencias inmorales? Por supuesto. Y esto es un problema.

Una manera de enfocar el problema es distinguir entre dos concepciones del bienestar: formal y substantiva. Una concepción formal del bienestar será neutral respecto del contenido y valor moral de dichas preferencias. Esta es la manera en que las preferencias son tenidas en economía. Una concepción substantiva evaluará las preferencias según la moralidad de su contenido. Las concepciones del bienestar en economía son usualmente formales, en la medida en que no discriminan a las preferencias que pueden integrar la función de utilidad de un individuo según su moralidad. Las concepciones filosóficas del bienestar usualmente son más amplias, y modelan las preferencias según un marco ético de referencia.

Esta distinción se recoge en el idioma inglés. En español tenemos una sola palabra: "bienestar". Sin embargo, en inglés tenemos dos palabras que se traducen al español como "bienestar": "*welfare*" y "*well-being*" [32]. "*Welfare*" alude a una concepción más general y superficial del bienestar, usualmente vinculada a cuestiones económicas. Así, por ejemplo, en español preguntaríamos: ¿cómo te ha ido?, a lo que responderíamos "bien", dependiendo de la situación. Aquí, "bien" o "me ha ido bien" alude a cuestiones generales sobre el curso de la vida, a saber, el tener trabajo, el tener en general una salud compatible con una vida activa, el tener una satisfacción general con la vida que pueda medirse en términos cuantitativos: nivel del salario, nivel de satisfacción con el trabajo, etc. Esta distinción es coherente con el cuerpo de literatura que existe sobre estos dos conceptos: la literatura económica, sobre economía del bienestar, hace referencia al "*welfare*" (de ahí el nombre "*welfare economics*"). Por otra parte, el término "*well-being*" abunda en la literatura filosófica, por la cual se apunta a esta concepción "sustantiva" del bienestar [33].

[32] Agradezco al prof. Claudio Santander por esta precisión.

[33] Alexandrova, A., *A Philosophy for the Science of Well-Being*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2021Bradley, B., *Well-Being*, Polity, Malden, 2015Fletcher, G., «Philosophy of Well-Being for the Social Sciences: A Primer», en M. T. Lee, L. D. Kubzansky, T. J. VanderWeele (eds.), *Measuring Well-Being: Interdisciplinary Perspectives from the Social Sciences and the Humanities*, Oxford University Press, 2021Fletcher, G., *The Philosophy of Well-Being: An Introduction*, Roudledge, London, 2016Griffin, J., *Well-Being: Its Meaning, Measurement and Moral Importance*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1986.

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En el último tiempo, algunos desarrollos de la economía del bienestar han apuntado a la compatibilidad entre estas dos nociones de bienestar ("*welfare*" y "*well-being*"). De ahí, por ejemplo, la propuesta de Matthew Adler [34] sobre la función de bienestar social (*social welfare function*) con la posibilidad de fundar dicha concepción de bienestar en una matriz sustantiva (es decir, de "*well-being*"). Sobre la propuesta de Adler no puedo profundizar aquí, pero lo interesante para nuestro tema es que plantea que la función de bienestar social es un mecanismo de deliberación moral [35].

6. *Función de bienestar social y teoría de la elección social*

En líneas anteriores habíamos distinguido entre la economía del bienestar "clásica", de la "moderna", y que la concepción clásica se basaba en un criterio utilitarista del logro social, y que la concepción moderna reemplaza dicho criterio por la eficiencia paretiana, en virtud del rechazo a las comparaciones interpersonales del bienestar, que era un supuesto necesario de la aplicación del modelo utilitarista.

La concepción moderna de la economía del bienestar surge con la obra de Bergson y es continuada por Samuelson [36]. La función de bienestar económico de Bergson se diferenciaba de los enfoques anteriores de la economía del bienestar al proporcionar un marco que permitía evaluar el bienestar social a través de una función matemática que consideraba el conjunto de recursos disponibles. Esto suponía un cambio con respecto a enfoques anteriores que no disponían de un método formalizado para evaluar el bienestar social. En cuanto a nuestro tema, el aporte de Bergson radicó en aislar y clarificar la función de los juicios de valor en la economía del bienestar [37]. Para Bergson, y en línea con el pensamiento anterior, el bienestar de un individuo depende de medioambiente general en el que ese individuo se mueva. En este

[34] Adler, M. D., *Well-Being and Fair Distribution: Beyond Cost-Benefit Analysis*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2011Adler, M. D., *Measuring Social Welfare: An Introduction*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2019.

[35] Adler, Well-Being and Fair Distribution, 2.

[36] Igersheim, H., «The Death of Welfare Economics: History of a Controversy», *History of Political Economy*, 51, 5, 2019, 827-865Samuelson, P., *Foundations of Economic Analysis*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1983Bergson, A., «A Reformulation of Certain Aspects of Welfare Economics», *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 52, 2, 1938, 310-334.

[37] Rothenberg, J., *The Measurement of Social Welfare*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1961, 8.

sentido, todo cambio en el ambiente afectará el bienestar individual. Sin embargo, lo que hace Bergson es simplemente rastrear los efectos *económicos* de esos cambios en el individuo, asumiendo todos los otros factores constantes (*ceteris paribus*). En este punto, su planteamiento se distancia del anterior [38].

En la evolución de la economía del bienestar, un punto de quiebre importante radica en la obra de Kenneth Arrow y su teorema de la imposibilidad [39]. Una primera diferencia con la economía del bienestar anterior radica en que las alternativas del análisis son los estados sociales (*social states*), los cuales clasifica en función de las preferencias y elecciones individuales. Bergson, por el contrario, clasifica los distintos estados sociales en función del conjunto de recursos disponibles en la sociedad [40].

Para Arrow, un estado social es

> Una descripción de la cantidad de cada tipo de mercancía (*commodity*) en las manos de cada individuo, la cantidad de trabajo entregado por cada individuo, la cantidad de cada recurso productivo invertido en cada tipo de actividad productiva, y la cantidad de varios tipos de actividad colectiva, tales como los servicios municipales, la diplomacia y su continuación por otros medios, y la erección de estatuas a hombres famosos [41].

Arrow asume que cada individuo en la comunidad tiene un orden de todos los estadios sociales en términos de su deseabilidad. Lo que le interesa es una derivación de los estados sociales individuales hacia una ordenación de los estados sociales general, a partir de una regla o un criterio [42].

Este criterio está conformado por los siguientes principios, los cuales deben cumplirse todos ellos para obtener una ordenación general de los estados sociales [43].

[38] Ibid., 10.

[39] Arrow, K. J., *Social Choice and Individual Values*, Yale University Press, New Heaven, 2012.

[40] Igersheim, The Death of Welfare Economics.

[41] Arrow, Social Choice and Individual Values Rothenberg, The Measurement of Social Welfare, 18.

[42] Rothenberg, The Measurement of Social Welfare, 18.

[43] Estos principios son los siguientes: dominio no restringido, la soberanía del consumidor o principio Pareto, la independencia de las alternativas irrelevantes, no imposición y no dictadura. Sigo a Rothenberg en esta clasificación. Maskin, comentando el libro de Arrow, plantea las siguientes: dominio no restringido, propiedad Pareto, independencia de las alternativas irrelevantes, no dictadura, transitividad Arrow, Social Choice and Individual Values, vii. Sen identifica las siguientes: independencia de las alternativas irrelevantes, principio Pareto, no dictadura, dominio no restringido Sen, A. K., *Collective Choice and Social Welfare*, Penguin Books, London, 2017, 5-6.

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1) *Condición 1: formulación del problema, o dominio no restringido*. La primera condición plantea que «entre todas las alternativas hay al menos tres de ellas tales que todas las ordenaciones individuales lógicamente posibles de estas tres son admisibles… [es decir], son ordenaciones para las cuales la función de bienestar social es requerida para hacer una elección» [44], o, en otras palabras, que «para un conjunto suficientemente amplio de conjuntos de ordenaciones individuales la función de bienestar social dará lugar a una genuina ordenación social [45].

2) *Condición 2: asociación positiva entre valores individuales y sociales.* Para Arrow, esta condición plantea que:

> La función de bienestar social será tal que el ordenamiento social responde positivamente a alteraciones en los valores individuales [...] si un estado social alternativo surge o se mantiene en el ordenamiento de cada individuo sin ningún otro cambio en esos ordenamientos, podemos esperar que surja, o que al menos no caiga, en el ordenamiento social [46]

3) *Condición 3: independencia de las alternativas irrelevantes*. Plantea que la alternativa socialmente más preferida de un conjunto depende solamente de la ordenación de ese conjunto y no de otros factores ajenos a ese conjunto [47].

4) *Condición 4: no imposición.* Esta condición plantea que no deben existir preferencias que sean "tabú", es decir, excluidas a priori. Este criterio tiene como fundamento la soberanía del consumidor, que, en el caso de Arrow, denomina "soberanía del ciudadano" [48]. Esta condición se ha llamado ordenamiento débil de Pareto, en el sentido de que «si cada uno estrictamente prefiere alguna alternativa x a otra alternativa y, entonces el ordenamiento social debe ubicar x estrictamente sobre y» [49]

[44] Rothenberg, The Measurement of Social Welfare, 19.
[45] Arrow, Social Choice and Individual Values, 25.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Rothenberg, The Measurement of Social Welfare, 21.
[48] Arrow, Social Choice and Individual Values, 28Rothenberg, The Measurement of Social Welfare, 23.
[49] Lützen, J., «How mathematical impossibility changed welfare economics: A history of Arrow's impossibility theorem», *Historia Mathematica*, 46, 2019, 56-87Sen, Collective Choice and Social Welfare, 6.

5) *Condición 5: no dictadura*. Esta condición plantea que no se puede identificar el ordenamiento de los estados sociales en su conjunto con el ordenamiento de uno de sus miembros (el "dictador")[50].

Estas condiciones, según Arrow, constituyen juicios de valor que expresan la soberanía del ciudadano. Si bien cada uno de ellos por separado puede ser puesta en cuestión (cosa que haremos en lo que sigue) plantea que son condiciones (axiológicas) razonables de una función de bienestar social[51].

El resultado central del planteamiento de Arrow consiste en afirmar que no es posible una función de bienestar social que pueda incorporar al mismo tiempo todas y cada una de las condiciones listadas anteriormente. Esto es lo que se conoce como "teorema de la imposibilidad". En palabras de Arrow: «si excluimos la posibilidad de comparaciones interpersonales de utilidad, entonces los únicos métodos para pasar de los gustos individuales a las preferencias sociales que sean satisfactorias y que sean definidas para un amplio rango de conjuntos de ordenaciones individuales son o impuestos o dictatoriales»[52].

No viene al caso plantear aquí la enorme importancia del teorema de Arrow para la economía del bienestar y la teoría de la elección social (sobre la que comentaré en breve más adelante). Tampoco quisiera desarrollar una alternativa viable para evitar el resultado de imposibilidad. Eso excedería las posibilidades de este texto, y, además, es tarea del economista. Sí es necesario, sin embargo, pronunciarse, desde la ética y la filosofía política, precisamente sobre las dos condiciones que Arrow señala que generan el resultado de imposibilidad: no imposición y no dictadura.

Si recordamos la condición de no imposición, veremos que esta tenía por objeto no excluir a priori ninguna preferencia. Recordemos también que Arrow definió estas condiciones como juicios de valor. Son, entonces, condiciones *normativas* de una función de bienestar social (sumado al hecho de que la referencia al bienestar ya es de por sí es normativa). El mismo Arrow plantea que es posible que estas condiciones sean discutidas. Y, como señalé más arriba, el bienestar se puede comprender desde dos perspectivas: formal y sustantiva. El criterio formal asume, como recordaremos, las preferencias como dadas, sin hacer

[50] Arrow, Social Choice and Individual Values, 30.
[51] Ibid., 31.
[52] Ibid., 59.

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un juicio de valor sobre ellas. El criterio sustantivo (también podemos llamarlo, criterio *material*) plantea que las preferencias pueden ser evaluadas, juzgadas, desde criterios éticamente relevantes. Por ejemplo: *i* tiene una preferencia muy fuerte por consumir drogas alucinógenas. Podemos comprender, desde el esquema de la economía del bienestar, esta preferencia como integrando un ordenamiento de preferencias sociales. En este caso, esta preferencia se manifiesta como un estado social *p* donde abundan las drogas alucinógenas, de modo tal que *i* prefiera *p* por sobre otros estados sociales posibles. Si el criterio de no imposición es correcto, entonces no podemos excluir *p* de un ordenamiento social. Por supuesto, *p* puede ser cualquier otra cosa que consideremos, *de modo fundado*, éticamente aberrante. Quizás las drogas alucinógenas no sean – tan – aberrantes éticamente. Pero podemos considerar otras cosas que quizás lo sean. El punto radica en que, bajo el criterio de no imposición, no podemos descartar preferencias.

Alguien podría responder que lo que se están considerando son preferencias del individuo para un ordenamiento *social*, y que las preferencias del individuo sobre sí mismo no están siendo consideradas. De este modo, si a *i* le gustan las drogas alucinógenas (o, en otras palabras, si estas drogas son parte de su bienestar *individual*), esto no significa que él querría un estado social en el cual las drogas alucinógenas sean parte del bienestar *social*.

El problema con esta respuesta es que supone que *i* puede considerar que algo es deseable de manera individual, pero rechazable de manera social. Esto no es lógicamente imposible o inconsistente, pero genera problemas cuando tratamos de explicar situaciones concretas. Quizás él considere que está bien drogarse, pero no que todo el mundo se drogue. Pero si no considera que sea deseable que todo el mundo se drogue, no es razonable pensar que él puede ser una excepción (violaría, entre otros principios, la formulación de universalización del imperativo categórico kantiano, por ejemplo) [53].

Lo mismo puede decirse de otras preferencias, aún más aberrantes. Para la economía, los animales no cuentan dentro de los integrantes del contrato social. Por supuesto, no hay una fundamentación *económica* para esta exclusión, sino que es un supuesto filosófico que no se problematiza. Dado este supuesto, uno puede pensar que los animales, al no ser parte del esfuerzo de cooperación social, son cosas, o, al menos, son algo más cercano a las cosas que a las personas. De ahí que existan

[53] Kant, I., *Fundamentación para una metafísica de las costumbres*, Alianza, Madrid, 2012.

industrias que se dedican a la cría de animales y producción de carne, de huevos y de diversos productos cárnicos y lácteos. Pero supongamos que, excluyendo esos casos – que pueden ser considerados explotación animal, pero con un sentido diverso de la mera crueldad – existe una preferencia extendida por causar sufrimiento gratuito a los animales. No puedo aplicar el criterio de Pareto para excluir este estado social, en el sentido de que esta preferencia hace que un *i* esté mejor pero que un *j* esté peor porque, por principio, los animales no son sujetos o individuos económicamente relevantes para efectos de la consideración de su bienestar o preferencias. De este modo, puede existir un estado social preferido por *i*, *j* y todos los otros individuos que consista en que se genere sufrimiento a los animales. Esto se prefiere en parte porque las personas "estarían mejor" si pudieran, a nivel social, satisfacer sus preferencias de crueldad hacia los animales.

De este modo, parece razonable que existan preferencias que puedan ser excluidas. No necesariamente esto requiere de una teoría moral substantiva. Podemos establecer algunos mínimos morales transversales. Pero eso requiere la posibilidad de que existan preferencias sobre estados sociales que estén excluidos.

Finalmente, puede decirse algo similar respecto del criterio de no dictadura. Recordemos que este criterio plantea que el ordenamiento de los estados sociales no puede ser el de un individuo, sino que debe pasarse de los estados individuales al social. De este modo, el "dictador" "impone" su ordenación al conjunto social.

El criterio de no dictadura supone un juicio de valor bastante grueso, en el sentido de que plantea una cuestión controvertida desde el punto de la filosofía política y social. Supone que, básicamente, la democracia, entendida como la regla de la mayoría (no de la mayoría simple, y, además, entendida como principio y no como mecanismo) es el principio que debe regir a una sociedad. Esto es, por supuesto altamente cuestionable. Tal parece que Arrow, al igual que Rawls, está escribiendo para sociedades occidentales liberales democráticas. La democracia, entonces, para estos autores, es más bien una premisa que el objeto propio de la investigación.

La afirmación de la no dictadura como criterio supone pensar que la democracia tiene un valor intrínseco, es decir, que posee valor por sí mismo, con independencia de otras consideraciones[54]. Esto, de al-

[54] Davison, S., *On the Intrinsic Value of Everything*, Continuum, 2012; Lemos, N. M., *Intrinsic Value: Concept and Warrant*, Cambridge University Press, 1994; Zimmerman, M. J., *The Nature of Intrinsic Value*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2001.

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guna manera, lleva a considerar a otras sociedades, que no comparten la adscripción a la democracia, como sociedades imperfectas. Por otra parte, no hay que ir a la antigüedad clásica para encontrar concepciones alternativas a la democracia. Si bien los autores clásicos, en particular Platón, Aristóteles, y posteriormente, San Agustín, Santo Tomás de Aquino, Maquiavelo, Hobbes y un largo etcétera, plantearon formas de gobierno no democráticas como formas más ideales o de mayor valor que la democracia, existen actualmente autores que buscan un principio alternativo al principio democrático para regir los destinos de las sociedades [55].

Por otra parte, la democracia puede entenderse de diversas maneras. Dworkin señala que no existe una concepción establecida de democracia entre los especialistas y que a la base de este desacuerdo existe una cuestión de orden normativa acerca de cuál es el valor de la democracia [56]. Una de estas concepciones es la procedimental, en la cual se pone de relieve exclusivamente los procedimientos para la elección social, sin considerar otras cuestiones relativas a valores substantivos [57]. Una concepción substantiva de democracia, a diferencia de la anterior, incorpora un conjunto de valores intrínsecos, tales como las diversas libertades y derechos políticos que reconocen las constituciones liberales modernas. La motivación de las concepciones substantivas es el desacuerdo entre las diversas concepciones comprehensivas acerca de la vida buena [58].

Una de estas concepciones formales de democracia es la concepción agregativa, que tiene por objeto agregar los diversos intereses de los individuos que conforman la comunidad política. Esta agregación de los intereses parte de dos principios: que estos intereses deben ser considerados de manera igualitaria (el llamado "principio de igual consideración de intereses") y que se presume que los individuos son autónomos para poder definir correctamente sus propios intereses [59].

No viene al caso profundizar en los interminables debates sobre filosofía política que plantean estas cuestiones. Baste señalar, simplemente, que el criterio de la no dictadura puede ser cuestionado desde dos aristas:

[55] Véase en particular el caso de Brennan, J., *Against Democracy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2017.

[56] Dworkin, R., «The Majoritarian Premise and Constitutionalism», en T. Christiano (ed.), *Philosophy and Democracy: An Anthology*, Oxford University Press, 2003.

[57] Cohen, J., «Procedure and Substance in Deliberative Democracy», Harvard University Press, United States, 2009.

[58] Rawls, J., *Teoría de la justicia*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, México, 1995.

[59] Cohen, Procedure and Substance in Deliberative Democracy.

la primera, desde concepciones alternativas a la democracia, y la segunda, desde el debate interno sobre la democracia. En este segundo debate, el criterio de Arrow asumiría una forma de democracia procedimental agregativa [60], lo que genera problemas para efectos de la protección de ciertas libertades de minorías o de grupos excluidos por diversas razones. Y porque, en último término, el principio de igual consideración de intereses, además del presupuesto de autonomía son altamente controvertidos.

Finalmente, es necesario hacer algunas menciones a la teoría de la elección social. Esta teoría nace, precisamente, en su forma actual, como fruto de la reflexión de Arrow acerca del modo de ordenar los estados sociales, si bien tiene registros antiguos en Condorcet, Borda y, de manera un poco más reciente, en Dodgson [61]. En cierto sentido, la teoría de la elección social y la economía del bienestar son dos áreas distintas de conocimiento, pero con aportes que se superponen [62]. El mismo trabajo de Arrow es una contribución a ambos campos del conocimiento, una contribución paradigmática.

7. *Eficiencia*

En la última parte de este texto quisiera referirme en particular a algunos aspectos de la economía del bienestar que no pudieron ser tratados en los apartados anteriores, sin consideraciones históricas, sino sólo sistemáticas, en el contexto de la microeconomía.

Había señalado anteriormente que la concepción "clásica" de la economía del bienestar tenía un mecanismo utilitarista para evaluar el bienestar social. Esto es así hasta la adopción de la eficiencia u optimalidad de Pareto como criterio canónico del análisis económico del bienestar. La diferencia entre el utilitarismo y el uso de la optimalidad paretiana radica en dos puntos fundamentales: el primero es la posición que tienen respecto de las comparaciones interpersonales de utilidad, y el segundo es el criterio de ordenación de las preferencias en la función de utilidad, a saber: ordinal o cardinal. El método utilitarista aceptará (es más, necesitará) las comparaciones interpersonales de utilidad, mientras que el óptimo paretiano las rechaza. El utilitarismo afirmará un criterio de utilidad cardinal, y el criterio de Pareto uno ordinal [63].

[60] Ibid.
[61] Sen, Collective Choice and Social Welfare, 2-4.
[62] Ibid., 9.
[63] Vial, Zurita, Microeconomía, 225.

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Volveré al criterio de Pareto más adelante. Por ahora, quisiera centrarme brevemente en otra alternativa de concepción del bienestar: el criterio *minimax* o Rawlsiano. Para este criterio de bienestar, la función de utilidad rawlsiana toma en consideración la situación del individuo peor situado: $W = min.\ U_i\ (p_1, p_2, p_3 \ldots p_n)$ [64].

La filosofía política de Rawls excede con mucho lo que se pueda decir aquí respecto de un criterio de bienestar social. Su influencia en la filosofía política contemporánea es inestimable. Su teoría no sólo ha sido una forma de fundamentar el liberalismo político, sino también de plantear una infinidad de temas en el contexto de la filosofía política y las disciplinas afines, entre las que se encuentra la economía del bienestar. Rawls es uno de los autores que ha tenido mayor colaboración, desde la filosofía, con los economistas. Entre sus colaboradores, podemos encontrar a los premios Nobel de economía Amartya Sen, Kenneth Arrow y John Harsanyi.

Finalmente, encontramos el criterio de Pareto, también conocido como eficiencia económica. El criterio de Pareto ha terminado por convertirse en la pauta canónica para la evaluación de los estados sociales. Existen dos conceptos fundamentales asociados con este criterio: el primero es la mejora de Pareto, y el segundo, el óptimo de Pareto. La mejora de Pareto es un estado social en el que mejora la situación de un individuo sin empeorar la de otro. El óptimo de Pareto es un estado social en el que no se puede mejorar la situación de un individuo sin empeorar la de otro.

La naturaleza normativa de este criterio es evidente. Amartya Sen señala que el criterio Paretiano lleva la lógica utilitarista más lejos aún que el mismo utilitarismo, al no necesitar ninguna comparación interpersonal de utilidad [65]. Por otra parte, como ya comenté, dicho criterio supone un principio de benevolencia mínima [66].

Más aún: no sólo el criterio de Pareto es una forma de utilitarismo sin comparaciones interpersonales de utilidad; no sólo supone un criterio de benevolencia mínima, sino que también, la noción misma de eficiencia económica requiere de restricciones morales. Walter Schultz argumenta que la eficiencia económica sólo puede alcanzarse a través de un conjunto de restricciones morales. Distingue entre restricciones morales y convenciones. Las primeras son límites al rango posible de acciones de un agente, y que están compuestas por una regla de com-

[64] Rawls, Teoría de la justicia, 87; Varian, Microeconomía Intermedia, 680-682.
[65] Sen, Sobre Ética y Economía, 56.
[66] Hausman, The Inexact and Separate Science of Economics, 66.

portamiento y un incentivo suficiente para el cumplimiento, mientras que las convenciones son reglas de coordinación [67]. Su argumento es el siguiente: «para los egoístas racionales estrictos, las asignaciones de equilibrio Pareto-óptimas de mercancías logradas a través de la interacción del mercado no son alcanzables sin restricciones normativas morales» [68]. De manera más técnica, Schultz plantea que:

> Una prueba del Primer Teorema Fundamental de la Economía del Bienestar establece que las asignaciones eficientes de bienes dependen de que cada individuo maximice su utilidad de forma competitiva. Por definición, un agente maximiza la utilidad de forma competitiva si y sólo si intenta obtener esa cesta de consumo dentro de su restricción presupuestaria de forma que ninguna otra cesta sea más preferible, y la adopción de precios es el mejor curso de acción para lograr su objetivo. Por lo tanto, la validez del teorema depende del comportamiento competitivo, y el comportamiento competitivo está garantizado por restricciones morales normativas [69].

Dentro de las diversas restricciones morales se encuentran, por ejemplo, derechos de propiedad bien definidos. Estos derechos de propiedad no surgen espontáneamente de acuerdo al mecanismo de mercado [70]. Tampoco basta que sean solamente reforzados (*enforced*) por la ley. Se requiere una aceptación autónoma de parte de los individuos que, a partir de su conciencia moral, y en virtud de reglas e incentivos claros, acepten los derechos de propiedad del resto. Por otra parte, estas restricciones normativas permiten que los individuos sean precio-aceptantes (*price-takers*). Schultz argumenta que no hay razones no morales para que los individuos actúen como precio-aceptantes: dado que los agentes son egoístas racionales estrictos, ningún individuo tiene una disposición a constreñir o limitar el comportamiento maximizador [71].

Conclusiones

Las reflexiones anteriores permiten arribar a una conclusión general: la ética no es un complemento externo a la economía, sino una dimensión

[67] Schultz, W. J., *The Moral Conditions of Economic Efficiency*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2008, 2.
[68] Ibid., 15.
[69] Ibid., 33.
[70] Ibid., 35.
[71] Ibid., 36.

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constitutiva de su propia estructura teórica y práctica. En primer lugar, la economía, tanto en su vertiente normativa como en la positiva, se encuentra atravesada por juicios de valor. Aun las proposiciones que se presentan como meramente descriptivas suponen, en su formulación y aplicación, presupuestos normativos que no pueden ser eludidos. La pretensión de verdad, el uso de conceptos como eficiencia o bienestar, y la relevancia práctica de sus conclusiones, evidencian que la economía está, desde su origen, comprometida con el ámbito moral.

La noción de bienestar – uno de los fines más recurrentes de la política económica – ejemplifica con claridad esta imbricación. En su versión formal, la teoría económica asume las preferencias individuales sin juzgarlas; sin embargo, esta neutralidad es solo aparente, pues implica aceptar como legítimas incluso preferencias que pueden ser moralmente problemáticas. De ahí la necesidad de considerar concepciones sustantivas del bienestar, que permitan evaluar el contenido ético de dichas preferencias.

Asimismo, criterios como la eficiencia paretiana o la función de bienestar social presuponen condiciones normativas relevantes. En particular, el teorema de Arrow muestra que toda decisión colectiva – y por tanto, toda política económica – exige la adopción de juicios de valor ineludibles, como la admisión o exclusión de ciertas preferencias y la valoración de la democracia como principio organizador. Estos juicios, no son meramente técnicos, sino que revelan opciones éticas fundamentales.

Finalmente, el quehacer científico mismo – incluido el económico – descansa sobre principios morales: la honestidad intelectual, la búsqueda de la verdad, el rigor metodológico y la responsabilidad frente a las consecuencias de las propias afirmaciones. Por todo lo anterior, no es posible comprender ni practicar la economía sin reconocer su dimensión ética. La economía requiere de la ética, no solo para orientarse hacia fines justos, sino también para sostener su propia coherencia interna como disciplina racional y humana.

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Hope and Integral Health: Nurturing a Human-Centred Approach

Zaida Charepe

Introduction

Integral health is a holistic approach to health that integrates the physical, mental, social, and spiritual dimensions of human life. It aims to address the complex unity of the human being, considering both tangible and subjective elements. This approach is linked to the idea that health practices should not only focus on physical well-being, but also on quality of life (Burke et al, 2022).

Another complementary perspective is the hope approach in human life. Hope is not a passive feeling, but an active force that moves communities to take better care of themselves and others. It is a multidisciplinary construct with an impact on overall health (Belfer et al, 2025). In this perspective, the hope impact is associated with promoting resilience, coping with illness, and developing positive relationships. Hope plays a significant role in an individual´s holistic health, as it is essential to human action and possibility. This concept is often discussed in humanistic contexts as an active response that promotes a dignified and resilient life.

Hope in Human Life

Hope is a driving force that guides human action and influences decision-making. It is more than a passive desire; it involves valuing an uncertain future and shaping intentions toward it (Mason, 2021). Draw-

ing inspiration from Frankl (2013), who highlighted the importance of hope for survival in concentration camps, and Solnit (2004), who linked it to political progress, hope is presented as a central element of humanism, sustaining human dignity, resilience, and the search for a better future, even in the face of suffering and uncertainty.

Hope is studied across various disciplines, including philosophy, psychology, medicine, nursing, anthropology, and theology. Each area contributes unique perspectives to its understanding. For example, in theology, hope is viewed as a theological virtue closely linked to faith and charity (Moltmann,1993). In psychology, it is analysed through cognitive and emotional theories and is considered central to overall well-being (Walker, 2006). This perspective reinforces the idea that hope is intimately linked to the agency and motivational power she exerts over different human actions. For example, Walker (2006) suggests that hope can dispose individuals to seek, plan, and strive to achieve desired outcomes, which is critical to recovery and maintenance of integral health. So, the questions are: How is hope defined in different cultures? Are there variations in the role of hope in different cultural contexts?

Hope has been described differently across cultures and historical epochs. For instance, in Greek mythology, hope was seen as one of the evils released from Pandora's box, whereas in the Judeo-Christian tradition, it is considered a virtue and a spiritual gift from God. Different social groups and historical periods have distinct hopes, such as for salvation, liberty, or social mobility, indicating that hope is shaped by cultural, social, and political histories.

Across cultures and contexts, nearly everyone possesses some hope. More than a "luxury," hope is an emotional necessity. However, hope is delicate and requires ongoing care and renewal.

Integration of Hope into Human Systems

Hope is a vital component of comprehensive care, as it positively influences a person's satisfaction with care, quality of life, and psychological well-being.

In healthcare, hope is crucial for fostering resilience and well-being among vulnerable individuals, particularly those with chronic or complex illnesses. Researchers generally agree that hope is a complex, idiosyncratic process that is essential to life, future-oriented, deliberate, and highly personalised (Antunes et al., 2023). Hope is a process in the

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experience of the transition from health to disease: experiential process (hope as coping, relativising suffering, focus on personal talents); rational process (hope associated with goal setting, believe, adjust values, inner strength); spiritual process (relationship with nature and higher being, express gratitude); relational process (family as a resource of hope, optimizing meaningful relationships) (Antunes et al., 2023).

The main argument is the intentional integration of hope into human systems as a component of holistic care, encompassing all aspects of life and their interactions with ecosystems. Health professionals should focus on strategies that promote hope, integrating physical, emotional, and spiritual care to provide truly holistic and person-centred care.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a pressing need to redesign daily life. Heightened uncertainty about the future intensified society's focus on hope, especially for vulnerable groups. Crises – including pandemics, natural disasters, social upheavals, conflicts, and poverty – act as catalysts that demand a renewed form of hope. Such adversity prompts individuals to seek hope relevant to contemporary realities and evolving challenges.

Hope also has a profound impact on the mental and emotional health of caregivers and those receiving care. Several studies have shown that individuals who maintain high levels of hope exhibit greater coping skills, a better quality of life, and more favourable clinical outcomes (Antunes et al., 2023; Shaw, 2020). This leads us to reflect on the privilege of positively influencing the hope of those we care for – whether they are patients, family caregivers, community members, or the teams we work with (Shaw, 2020).

Furthermore, hope is not only an individual force, but also a collective one. Hope is "contagious"; when we promote a caring environment based on character strengths and human virtues, we create a space where everyone can find courage and meaning. The philosophy of hope explains this as «ultimate hope and basic hope» (Marcel, 1962). When we have positive expectations for the future and anticipate tangible results. So, this is an area of diamonds that we should look for as health protectors, because we are committed to integral care.

Hope and Integral Care

Hope, though often perceived as subjective, can be measured and promoted. For instance, nursing interventions range from providing emo-

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tional and spiritual support to setting realistic and meaningful goals – even if only for the next minute or moment. This transformation of hope from a theoretical concept to a tangible resource demonstrates that it is not just an abstract idea, but a practical aspect of care.

On an ethical level, the tension between respecting patient autonomy and avoiding false expectations requires complex moral skills (Mason, 2021). Hope is not just a state of mind – it is a therapeutic intervention with a scientific basis, ethical meaning, and transformative power.

The ability to promote hope requires a deliberate approach and the establishment of circumstances that facilitate therapeutic interaction through intentional interpersonal engagement. As mentioned by Mason (2021, p. 521), «The stability of intentions also explains hope's capacity to sustain action: once one hopes for a state of affairs, it will take a significant amount of new evidence to reconsider the concomitant action (though intentions can be overturned, and one can give up hope)». This occurs in response to suffering, uncertainty, or emotional distress, ultimately leading to mutual personal growth for both the nurse and the client.

How does the science of promote hope align with a humanistic approach in healthcare, considering presence, information, and attention? The humanistic perspective emphasises that each patient is more than a diagnosis. Every individual has a story, complex relationships, and the need to be fully recognised. When communicating hope, we are not simply addressing symptoms – we are impacting lives.

Promoting hope is therefore a legitimate, effective, and deeply ethical intervention. Hope plays a crucial role in promoting and protecting human rights. It is linked to dignity, autonomy and the right to health, positively influencing quality of life and overall well-being.

The key elements for communicating hope are presence, information, and therapeutic intent in care. Establishing a strong bond between patient and healthcare professional, helps inspire hope and create an emotionally supportive environment (Johnson, 2007).

Healthcare professionals are required to navigate the ethical complexities of balancing truthful information with hope, particularly in discussions about prognosis and end-of-life care. Adequate training and professional development are essential in managing this balance effectively.

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Conclusion

The humanism of hope faces numerous challenges, ranging from conceptual ambiguities and cultural differences to ethical dilemmas in healthcare and the need for interdisciplinary research. Addressing these challenges requires an understanding of the multifaceted nature of hope and its implications in different domains of human life.

Hope serves as an active and essential force for integral health by fostering resilience, well-being, and human dignity, which are particularly vital during periods of adversity.

The intentional integration of hope into healthcare systems through holistic, human-centred approaches underscores its transformative role in enhancing quality of life and strengthening coping mechanisms. In addition to its individual impact, hope inspires collective action, renews perspectives, and drives social change during times of crisis.

Future research should examine the ethical, cultural, and therapeutic dimensions of hope. Evidence-based strategies are necessary to promote hope as a practical and renewable resource for addressing contemporary challenges. In this way, hope emerges as a cornerstone of humanism, supporting human rights, autonomy, and the pursuit of a dignified and resilient life.

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Hope in Philosophical Posthumanism

Victoria Bauer

Philosophical Posthumanism and posthumanist currents are somehow always linked to the concept of hope: many theoretical perspectives emphasize visionary, affirmative potentials, while others provide a radical critique of traditional notions of hope. Some posthumanist approaches explicitly call for an optimistic, and visionary attitude that opens up new possibilities for a more just, and more sustainable way of living together. Hope is understood here as a driving force for social change and as an invitation to imagine and shape alternative futures. [1] Particularly in the context of sustainability and ecological crises, posthumanism offers new perspectives for addressing urgent problems and redefining the relationship between humans and the environment [2]. At the same time, there are posthumanist currents that critically question the classical concept of hope. Some argue that hope - understood as an anthropocentric expectation of salvation or progress - is problematic and should even be overcome. Instead, an ethics of "hopelessness" is proposed, which accepts the end of the human as the central subject and enables new forms of coexistence and responsibility [3]. It is also emphasized that posthumanist visions do not always automatically lead to a better future and that many of their promises remain speculative [4]. Posthumanism is not a unified project but rather a field of contradic-

[1] Kumm, B., Berbary, L., & Grimwood, B. 2019. "For Those to Come: An Introduction to Why Posthumanism Matters." *Leisure Sciences*, 41, pp. 341-347.

[2] Dedeoğlu, Ç., Zampaki, N. 2023. "Posthumanism for Sustainability: A Scoping Review." *Journal of Posthumanism*.

[3] Pablo Vaccari, Andres. 2019. "Why Should We Become Posthuman? The Beneficence Argument Questioned." *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy.*

[4] Gumanay, Jorisse Campado. 2023. "More Human Than Human: Posthumanism in Literary Discourse." *International Journal of Humanity Studies (IJHS).*

tory positions: the debate moves between hope for transformation and radical critique of progress narratives.

I will concentrate on Philosophical Posthumanism as articulated by Haraway, Braidotti, and Ferrando, with Ferrando offering the most comprehensive conceptual elaboration. This current engages not only with its own intellectual genealogy in a particularly transparent manner but also demonstrates a high degree of precision in its use of terms and definitions. It explicitly distinguishes itself from transhumanism, positions itself as an ethical framework, and encompasses a range of future-oriented visions and forms of optimism, which I shall now seek to highlight.

Philosophical Posthumanism invites us to think beyond traditional human boundaries and re-evaluate the complex interactions between humans, technology and the environment. One theme that may be regarded as a profound source of optimism is the possibility of the abandonment of anthropocentrism and dualism and it constitutes a significant potential for hope. This is the reasoning behind it: According to Ferrando, the human special position is based on dualisms such as human/animal or human/machine. In the human/nonhuman dichotomy, there always seems to be one pole that is evaluated more positively and one that is evaluated more negatively. Historically certain ethnic groups have been dehumanized because they have been portrayed by the leading elite as more animalistic than themselves[5]. Our self-constructed sense of superiority can also be seen in our treatment of nonhuman entities such as forests, which for many years have been regarded merely as renewable resources. But research shows new levels of complexity in below-ground plant-plant interactions and the root system of a forest, which is a well-developed communication system and basically a really well-balanced network of nutrient exchange over long distances[6]. The underlying hope here is that the deconstruction of the anthropocentric conception of the human as ruler over all animate and inanimate matter will facilitate a critical reassessment of humanity's self-ascribed privileged position at the center of a reign it once sought to control. Such a shift would enable the human to conceive itself as equal to other nonhuman agents, thereby attributing to itself no greater value than that accorded to nonhuman animals, technological entities, forests, and ecological systems.

[5] Ferrando, Francesca. 2019. *Philosophical Posthumanism*, pp. 77-81.
[6] Ibid., p. 152, footnote 13.

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For those committed to Philosophical Posthumanism, there is a hope that more and more individuals will adjust their self-conception and revise the notion of human exceptionalism. For us, it is quite clear that what is at stake here are ontological claims, not mere opinions. Obviously, the human being is part of an ecosystem, which, when damaged, negatively affects the human condition as well. In such a framework the human is not approached as an autonomous agent, but is located within an extensive system of relations [7].

Another hope arising from this idea is avoiding technocentrality and enabling a balanced "eco-technology" by overcoming dualism and its hierarchical structures. The boundaries between human and non-human, organic and technological are based on dualistic thinking patterns that posthumanism rejects. Philosophical Posthumanism deconstructs the clear division between life/death, organic/synthetic and natural/artificial [8]. So «(...) technology should be rethought not in separation from the environment» [9]. Ferrando postulates that «if we do not critically address and deconstruct rigid forms of dualistic identity-formation practices, (...) forms of discrimination will consistently continue to arise» [10] and therefore invites us for an epistemological move: «from generalized universalism to situated perspectivism. From a sociopolitical standpoint it sustains a shift from categorical multiculturalism (based on the dualism us/them) to pluralism and diversity (...)» [11].

At its very core, hope is rooted in the transcendent. Also within Posthumanism, this dimension emerges - not necessarily in religious terms, but in a spiritual or existential framework that redefines our relation to life, to technology, and to the more-than-human world.

The metaphysical foundation of Ferrando's theory comes from a spiritual framework. For Ferrando, «spirituality contemplates a non-separation between the inner and the outer worlds» [12]. She understands the human being itself as an open and embodied network [13] or, as everything that consists of matter, «vibrating energy» [14]. The

[7] Ferrando, Francesca. 2013. "Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Antihumanism, Metahumanism, and New Materialisms: Differences and Relations", p. 32.
[8] Ferrando, Francesca. 2019. *Philosophical Posthumanism*, p. 5
[9] Ibid., p. 118.
[10] Ibid., p. 189.
[11] Ibid., p. 185f.
[12] Ibid., p. 84.
[13] Ibid., p. 186f.
[14] Ibid., p. 188.

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non-separation between inner and outer worlds becomes apparent when she describes the human being on the one hand as temporarily animated compost, as *humus*, which nourishes the earth after its death and thereby attempts to deconstruct the clear separation between life and death [15]. On the other hand she describes it as a microcosm: «The ways "we" think and communicate is the result of unlimited interactions with other human and nonhuman beings. "We" are (also) our gut microbiota (...). The food "we" eat literally becomes part of our bodies. The environment "we" inhabit has a direct impact on the epigenetic regulation of our gene expression (...). We are like oceans, but we often do not think of us in these extended and dynamic ways» [16].

Ferrando reflects for example on the physical structure of matter to destabilize «any reductionist approach» [17]. She introduces the hypothesis of the multiverse [18], a thought experiment based on discoveries within the field of physics to demonstrate «ontological potentials» [19] to expand «our ontological awareness" by "accessing existence from a non-universe-centric perspective» [20].

At this point, Ferrando's reflections on non-separation and the vibrational nature of matter invite a broader philosophical dialogue. Her spiritual framework resonates with non-dualistic traditions such as *Advaita Vedānta*, where the dissolution of the subject–object division is understood as the very ground of reality [21]. In *Advaita*, the self (*ātman*) and the ultimate reality (*brahman*) are not-two: multiplicity and separation are seen as provisional appearances sustained by *māyā*, while the essence of existence is relational and shared [22]. This parallel is significant because it demonstrates that Ferrando's posthumanism is not merely constructing a new metaphorical vocabulary, but engaging with a long lineage of philosophical thought that destabilizes dualistic categories at the metaphysical level [23].

[15] Ibid., p. 107.
[16] Ibid., p. 189f.
[17] Ibid., p. 176.
[18] Ibid., pp. 171-182.
[19] Ibid., p. 188.
[20] Ibid., p. 186.
[21] Potter, K.H., 1989. *The Development of Advaita Vedānta as a School of Philosophy*, pp. 71-72.
[22] Ibid., pp. 74-78.
[23] Ibid., p. 80.

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From such a perspective, posthumanism can be read as a contemporary articulation of an ancient insight: that the human is not an autonomous center, but a node in a dynamic field of relations that includes the more-than-human world[24]. This ontological stance carries ethical implications, since it reframes difference not as hierarchy but as co-belonging. In this sense, Ferrando's spiritual framework opens a path toward a posthuman ethics grounded not in universalism, but in non-duality and multiplicity.

Philosophical Posthumanism has some fundamental ideas in common with Jainism and *anēkāntavāda* ("non-absolutism") incorporating the principles of pluralism and the multiplicity of viewpoints[25]. Ferrando states «no single point of view can be regarded as the complete one (...)»[26], but does not reject facts. Facts are «the integrated landscape of all the material perspectives related to a specific factual node»[27]. It's important to mention that Ferrando does not claim that reality is constructed, manipulable or truth is a useless concept. Her approach does not fulfill the dogmas of postmodernism, which for example Maurizio Ferraris attacks with his manifesto of new realism[28]. It does not practice a departure from truth and reality[29]. It's important to stress out that philosophical posthumanism is described as the second generation of postmodernism and theoretically ties in the deconstruction of the concept of the human[30]. Ferrando abandons the universalist concept of the human, emphasizing that «we' are not the same, we are (...) all very different» and being different doesn't mean being better or worse: «(...) difference is not hierarchical. In this sense, pluralism does not equal relativism: we can be united in our differences and by our differences.»[31] In this passage she addresses inclusivity through the acknowledgement of human diversity and presents the aim of her work: Peaceful coexistence despite diversity - something that has historically been obstructed within humanist frameworks, but which posthumanist perspectives seek to make possible by overcoming anthropocentrism and dualism. This is why we all should become *posthuman.* Ultimately, we are all sustained by utopia. And Philosophical Posthumanism cre-

[24] Ibid., pp. 82-85.
[25] Ferrando, Francesca. 2019. *Philosophical Posthumanism*, p. 148.
[26] Ibid., p. 149.
[27] Ibid., p. 150.
[28] Ferraris, Maurizio. 2014. *Manifest des neuen Realismus*, p. 14.
[29] Ferrando, Francesca. 2019. *Philosophical Posthumanism*, p. 71.
[30] Ibid., p. 2f, 24.
[31] Ibid., p. 45.

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ates one full of hope and optimism for the future of humanity, sketched out in the following.

Imagine a world in which we have learned to live in harmony with nature and technology. Humanity recognizes itself as part of a great living organism. Forests, oceans, animals, and microorganisms are no longer perceived as objects of extraction but as partners in a common becoming. Relations between humans and other living beings are marked by respect: animals are no longer regarded as resources but as fellow beings. This recognition gives rise to an ecology of care, in which healing and regeneration take precedence. The fears of destruction, inequality, and alienation have been replaced by a profound trust in human creative capacities and in shared responsibility. Technology no longer serves exploitation but rather relief – it supports humans in their creativity, their learning, and their care for one another. It is no longer an instrument of control but a tool of connectedness. It expands human perception, enables new forms of empathy, and opens spaces for creative cooperation. Rather than hardening boundaries, it builds bridges across cultures, species, and generations.

In the future we dream of, the human being is no longer an isolated creature estranged from nature and technology. Instead, it is embedded in a web of relations that both sustains it and is responsibly shaped by it. In this future, humans live not longer but more deeply. The (post) human being is not a "ruler" over the earth but a guardian of the living. Vulnerable yet not weak; finite yet not imprisoned. Its greatest strength lies in the capacity for hope – a hope not naïve but generative: a force that transforms the present by allowing the possibility to resonate already here and now.

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The multidimensional concept of autonomy and the role of hope in its promotion

Alessia Cadelo

Introduction

Autonomy is a multifaceted concept which has a great value in modernity. The word derives from Greek and it literally means self-governing. In general terms, being autonomous means possessing self-consciousness, rationality and will in order to have the capacity to critically evaluate one's desires and values and act on those that one recognizes as one's own. On the contrary, a person who lacks autonomy is controlled or influenced by external factors and he is unable to act according to his authentic self [1]. Therefore, autonomy is associated with self-determination, self-governance and freedom from external influences. It even functions both as a status and capacity concept. As a status, it implies that individuals should have the right to exercise self-government over their own lives; as a capacity, it presupposes that adults, at least without any cognitive impairment, should be able to act autonomously [2]. Thus, it is a rather nebulous term. The aim of this paper is precisely to try to clarify the autonomy's meaning and investigate the role of hope in its promotion. Accordingly, it will be pursued an ethical inquiry into the concept, by drawing on the influence of key figures. In the first

[1] A. Reath, *Autonomy, Ethical*, in E. Craig (a cura di), Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, vol. I, Routledge, London 1998, p. 723. J. Christman, *Autonomy in Moral and Political Philosophy*, in The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, a cura di E. N. Zalta, Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, Stanford 2020, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/autonomy-moral/.

[2] C. Mackenzie, Relational *Autonomy: State of the Art Debate*, in Spinoza and Relational Autonomy, 2019, p. 19.

paragraph, it will be discussed the notion of autonomy emerging from the liberal tradition, also known as the traditional view, as it originated from long-standing roots and over time has become mainstream due to its significant impact [3]. However, this perspective has been criticized by feminist thinkers because is overly individualistic and ignores the role of social-relational conditions in the fulfilment of autonomy. Thus, in the second paragraph it will be examined the relational conception of autonomy. The authors discussed in this paper have been selected because they are highly representative of the debate in question; Frankfurt [4] and Dworkin [5] in particular provide foundational and influential accounts of autonomy which have constituted the conceptual foundations upon which relational autonomy theorists have articulated their critiques and alternatives. Christman [6] raises some criticisms against their perspectives and elaborates a theory of autonomy premised on a socio-historical conception of the self. His contribute is foundamental as, even if his account remains internalist, he nevertheless acknonowledges the influence played by the social and cultural context onto autonomy. Mackenzie plays a decisive role in systematising and consolidating the literature on relational autonomy [7]. Finally, it will be examined the role of hope in the promotion of autonomy.

Before proceeding in such examination, some preliminary distinctions will be made. Firstly, freedom and personal autonomy, even if related, are two distinct concepts. According to Dworkin, freedom

[3] S. Mhlambi, S. Tiribelli, *Decolonizing AI Ethics: Relational Autonomy as a Means to Counter AI Harms*, in Topoi, XLII, 3, 2023, p. 870.

[4] H. Frankfurt, *Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person*, in The Journal of Philosophy, 68, 1, 1971, p. 15: "Analogously, then, the statement that a person enjoys freedom of the will mean [...] that he is free to will what he wants to will, or to have the will he want. [...] It is in securing the conformity of his will to his second-order volitions, then, that a person exercises freedom of the will".

[5] G. Dworkin, *The Theory and Practice of Autonomy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1988, p. 20: "autonomy is conceived of as a second-order capacity of persons to reflect critically upon their first-order preferences, desires, wishes and so forth and the capacity to accept or attempt to change these in light of higher-order preferences and values. By exercising such a capacity, persons define their nature, give meaning and coherence to their lives, and take responsibility for the kind of person they are".

[6] J. Christman, *The Politics of Persons: Individual Autonomy and Socio-historical Selves*, Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 154: Autonomy "involves competence and authenticity; authenticity involves non-alienation upon (historically sensitive, adequate) self-reflection, given one's diachronic practical identity and one's position in the world".

[7] C. Mackenzie, Relational *Autonomy: State of the Art Debate*, cit, p. 22: "My proposal is that to do justice to this complexity it would serve us better to understand autonomy as a multidimensional, rather than a unitary concept, comprising three distinct but causally interconnected dimensions or axes: self-determination, self-governance and self-authorisation".

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concerns the ability to do whatever one wants, while autonomy pertains self-determination. Coercion and force seem to interfere with both, but deception interferes only with autonomy. Therefore, they are not identical: autonomy seems to be a more global notion than freedom [8]. However, Christman highlights that even autonomy could denote both a global condition (refers to entire life) or local concept (relative to a certain aspect, trait, motive or value). As a consequence, autonomy and freedom should be distinguished differently. Whereas freedom pertains to the capacity to act without external or internal constraints, autonomy regards the independence of the desires, values, and emotions that motivate action [9]. Secondly, moral autonomy should be distinguished from personal one; the former refers to the capacity to act morally while the latter is an ability that could be extended to any aspect of lives, not just to issues of moral obligation. Finally, it is necessary to distinguish between basic and ideal autonomy. The former corresponds the minimum degree of independence and ability to speak for oneself. The latter, however, is a goal to aspire to. Clearly, the second one can only be achieved by a small number of individuals, whereas basic autonomy implies that most adults [10] can consider themselves autonomous [11]. This paper will deal with basic and personal autonomy.

1. *The liberal tradition of autonomy*

The concept of autonomy, as it is generally understood today, was defined by John Stuart Mill, in his famous essay *On freedom* in 1859. He did not speak properly of autonomy, he used instead the more general term self-definition: according to him, it should be conceived both as a

[8] G. Dworkin, *The Theory and Practice of Autonomy*, cit, p. 14: "Suppose we think of liberty as being, roughly, the ability of a person to do what she wants, to have (significant) options that are not closed or made less eligible by the actions of other agents".

[9] J. Christman, *Autonomy and Personal History*, in Canadian Journal of Philosophy 21, 1, 1991, p.17.:"Generally, one can distinguish autonomy from freedom in that the latter concerns the ability to act, without external or internal constraints and also (on some conceptions) with sufficient resources and power to make one's desires effective [...]. Autonomy concerns the independence and authenticity of the desires (values, emotions, etc.) that move one to act in the first place"

[10] J. Christman, *Autonomy in Moral and Political Philosophy*: To be autonomous is necessary to possess a least a minimum grade of rationality, self-awareness and the capacity to decide about important spheres of their life. Therefore, I will exclude prenatal lives, children and all those adults who do not possess such capacities.

[11] *Ibid.*

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capacity and right to govern himself, to be determined by desires, preferences, values that are authentically one's own and not the product of unwarranted external influences. Therefore, the underlying conception of person of this concept of autonomy is individualistic [12]. This is the liberal tradition's fundamental premise and it is shared by many authors, such as Frankfurt and Dworkin. Frankfurt's account is one of the most influential and it has a hierarchical structure. According to him, there are two desires' level, namely "first order desires" and "second order desires". The former refers to the basic capacity to desire to do or not to do certain things, while the latter involves the ability for self-reflective evaluation, unique to humans, and it is the capacity non just to desire, but to want or not want certain desires [13]. The notion of will, as employed by Frankfurt, «it is the notion of an effective desire-one that moves (or will or would move) a person all the way to action» [14]. This kind of desires are labelled as "volitions of the second order" and, to be a person is essentially to have the second order volitions, not only the more generic "second order desires". Freedom of will is exercised when first order desires align with and are supported by second-order desires, and then, people identify with or are satisfied by these desires [15]. Dworkin shares with Frankfurt the key assumption that the fundamental characteristic of being a person is the capacity to reflect upon their second-order desires, wishes and intentions and act accordingly. According to him, autonomy includes not a mere ability to self-reflect and evaluate but also change one's preferences, act according to them and act according to them precisely because they have been adopted as one's own after a critical reflection. This process of self-reflection is not totally explicit neither fully articulated and conscious; thus, Dworkin's conception of autonomy is not intellectualist. Furthermore, he argues that, to make their values and desires effective in their lives, people should have a certain degree of liberty, power and control over important domains of their lives [16]. Another fundamental requirement is the so-called "procedural independence": in this regard, Dworkin distinguishes those ways of influencing people that bypass their rational and reflective abilities from those which improve them. Examples of the

[12] J. S. Mill, *Three Essays*, Oxford University Press, Oxford-London 1975, p. 15. K. Atkins, *Autonomy and autonomy competencies: A practical and relational approach*, in Nursing Philosophy, VII, 4, 2006, p. 207.

[13] H. Frankfurt, *Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person*, cit. p. 10.

[14] *Ibid*, p. 8.

[15] *Ibid*, p. 10.

[16] G. Dworkin, *The Theory and Practice of Autonomy*, cit. p. 20.

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first type of influence are hypnotic suggestion, manipulation, coercive persuasion, subliminal influence and so on. To be autonomous, the process of self-reflection should be independent from these kinds of pressures. At the same time, there should not be any constraint on the contents of desires, values, preferences and so forth [17].

Several objections have been raised against Dworkin's position. Christman in particular images a person who lives a completely submissive life and who identifies his own first-order desires that constitute that kind of life. He also supposes that this subservient life has been adopted because of socialisation and fierce conditioning. In hierarchical analysis, that person would still be considered as autonomous as his high-order desires are consistent with low-order desires. With this approach, called by Christman the "time slice" approach, what matters is just the person's evaluation of the desire at a particular time. Nevertheless, as he lived in an oppressive context, his values are not authentic in a real sense; they are the product of education and upbringing [18]. Thus, this account seems to be unconvincing when it is a question of judging a person's autonomy. Christman developed a new model of autonomy that «involves competence and authenticity; authenticity involves non-alienation upon (historically sensitive, adequate) self-reflection, given one's diachronic practical identity and one's position in the world» [19]. When he addresses competence, he means that, to be autonomous, a person must be minimally rational and in possession of minimal self-control. Moreover, the capacity to form effective intentions in the absence of external barriers is required. However, he focuses mainly on the authenticity condition and on the relative notion of alienation. It should not be confused with a lack of identification; it is indeed a stronger reaction, which involves a sensation of being constrained by the trait in question and the firm intention to repudiate it [20]. Secondly, alienation is not a pure cognitive judgement; it includes even deeply emotional and affective components. Rather, it must be intended as an active resistance to a factor. Therefore, the non-alienation test holds that a component of an individual's motivational set is authentically his own if, upon hypothetically reflecting on the historical

[17] *Ibid*, p. 15.

[18] J. Christman, *Autonomy and Personal History*, in *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, XXI, 1, 1991, p. 7.

[19] J. Christman, *The Politics of Persons: Individual Autonomy and Socio-historical Selves*, cit, p. 154.

[20] *Ibid*, p. 146.

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processes that led to its formation, he would not reject or feel estranged from it [21]. In summary, Christman's conception's fundamental premise is an historical account of the self. Indeed, he recognises the social and historical influences on the process of desire and preference formation. Nevertheless, his theory remains explicitly internalist, as the non-alienation test is a requirement for autonomy that concentrates entirely on the internal structure of the individual's mind [22]. His perspective, like Frankfurt's and Dworkin's accounts, has the merit of having underlined the psychological requirements for autonomy, namely a minimum grade of rationality, the ability to self-reflect critically upon preferences and ideas and the absence of self-deception [23]. Yet, feminist theorists have raised many objections to these approaches. Starting from these, they developed new theories of autonomy that have been labelled as "relational".

2. *Relational autonomy: Mackenzie's perspective*

In general terms, the major feminist critiques of the liberal notion of autonomy are premised on the idea that human beings are not individualistic as presupposed by the internalist accounts of autonomy. Indeed, human beings are not entities separated from the rest of the world; rather, they are interwoven in a network of relationships. Therefore, since the notion of subjectivity underlying internalist approaches of autonomy is regarded as unrealistic, even autonomy needs to be reconceptualised [24]. These refigured conceptions of autonomy have been called "relational autonomy". The term, as conceived by Mackenzie and Stoljar, does not refer to any specific view. Rather, it is an umbrella term, including different perspectives, whose fundamental assumption is precisely «the conviction that persons are socially embedded and that agents' identities are formed within the context of social relationships

[21] *Ibid*, p. 156.

[22] C. Mackenzie, Relational *Autonomy: State of the Art Debate*, cit., p. 16.

[23] *Christman, Autonomy and Personal History*, cit., p. 17: "The requirement of self-awareness, then, will resemble minimal rationality rather closely, in that for both conditions the agent is not autonomous if there are beliefs, plausibly attributable to the agent, which are manifestly inconsistent. In the case of self-deception, this inconsistency is 'buried' by the agent's tactics of not focusing her awareness on the suppressed belief".

[24] C. Mackenzie, N. Stoljar, *Introduction: Autonomy Refigured*, in C. Mackenzie, N. Stoljar (a cura di), *Relational Autonomy: Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy, Agency, and the Social Self*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2000, p. 7.

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and shaped by a complex of intersecting social determinants, such as race, class, gender, and ethnicity»[25]. As there are a lot of variegated theories of relational autonomy, it is not possible to illustrate them all here. Instead, I will focus on Mackenzie's account, as she elaborates a tripartite model of autonomy, encompassing the various dimensions of autonomy identified by diverse relational autonomy perspectives. According to Mackenzie, autonomy is a multidimensional concept, which includes three distinct but interdependent dimensions: self-determination, self-governance and self-authorisation[26]. The notion of self-determination is at the core of the concept of autonomy, especially in moral, liberal, and political discourse: namely, it defines the individual right to determine the path of one's life and exert control over important areas of it. The self-determination axis presupposes external, structural (political and social) conditions for personal autonomy, specifically conditions of freedom and opportunity. A self-determining life requires indeed certain political and personal liberties, which are specified in the freedom conditions. Instead, personal, social and political opportunities are intended as the opportunity conditions. Opportunities are relevant for autonomy since they enable the realisation of formal liberties into meaningful, substantive freedom. A person who is guaranteed formal freedoms but who cannot access a sufficient set of genuine opportunities is likely to struggle to pursue a self-determined life[27]. However, values of freedom and opportunity are weighted differently by different theories. Libertarians conceive freedom mostly as a negative liberty, namely as non-interference by others or by the state. Therefore, theorists who support this conception are likely to prioritise freedom conditions over the opportunity conditions[28]. According to Mackenzie, they overlook the importance of autonomy of access to numerous and variegated opportunities. Furthermore, libertarian theorists do not sufficiently address the equal distribution of opportunities and neglect the possibility that some individuals may require greater social support to lead self-determining lives. As a consequence, they fail to identify and discuss the impact of social domination on individuals' capacities to carry on a self-determining life, which, on the

[25] *Ibid*, p. 4.

[26] C. Mackenzie, *Three Dimensions of Autonomy: A Relational Analysis*, in A. Veltman – M. Piper (a cura di), *Autonomy, Oppression, and Gender*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2014, p. 16.

[27] C. Mackenzie, *Three Dimensions of Autonomy: A Relational Analysis*, cit. p. 26.

[28] *Ibid.*

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contrary, is one of the central issues of relational perspectives. These indeed are more concerned with opportunity conditions [29].

While the self-determination axis identifies the external and social conditions for autonomy, the self-governance dimension describes the internal skills (authenticity and competence) that are necessary to be self-governing. More specifically, the self-governance axis «involves having the skills and capacities necessary to make choices and enact decisions that express or cohere with one's reflectively constituted diachronic practical identity» [30]. Authenticity conditions illustrate the requirements by which a choice, value, commitment, or reason can be regarded as genuinely one's own. In this regard, she adopts the definition of authenticity provided by Christman, according to which being an authentic person implies the reflective acceptation of one's own motivations without being alienated in light of one's own history and one's own diachronic practical identity [31]. Competence conditions describe the set of capabilities or skills that a person needs to have to some degree at least to be self-governing. Cognitive skills are required, ranging from a minimal degree of rationality and self-awareness to more complex abilities for critical reflection along with volitional skills, for instance, self-control and decidedness. Relational autonomy theorists agree upon the importance of such skills for self-governance [32]. Nevertheless, they argue that philosophers have overestimated rational abilities for critical reflection by disregarding a number of capabilities that, as socially embodied humans, are equally necessary to be autonomous. Therefore, relational approaches deepen the philosophical account of autonomy competence by offering a more nuanced and expansive analysis of the skills required for self-governance. The abilities included in such analysis are emotional, like emotional responsiveness and the capacity to interpret one's own and others' emotions; imaginative, which enable people to imagine themselves otherwise, namely to explore alternative possibilities for themselves, including possibilities of action, desire, emotion, and belief; and social or dialogical skills, necessary for self-knowledge [33].

The third axis, self-authorisation, «involves regarding oneself as authorised to exercise practical control over one's life and to determine

[29] *Ibid*, p. 24.
[30] *Ibid*, p. 31.
[31] J. Christman, *Autonomy and Personal History*, in *The Routledge Handbook of Autonomy*, Routledge, London – New York 2022, p. 182.
[32] C. Mackenzie, *Three Dimensions of Autonomy: A Relational Analysis*, cit., p. 33.
[33] *Ibid.*

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one's own values and identity-defining commitments»[34]. In Mackenzie's opinion, self-authorisation involves three different conditions: the first, named "accountability condition", implies that a person regards himself as an agent accountable for his own actions; the second one, called "self-evaluative attitudes condition", implies that a person holds appropriate attitudes of self-esteem, self-trust and self-respect; since these attitudes are intrinsically social, they in turn assume that the person is considered as an autonomous agent even by others. This last condition has been labelled as the «social recognition condition»[35]. Thus, it seems possible to conclude that autonomy can't be reduced to self-determination, but it is a socially and culturally embedded notion, which encompasses several dimensions.

The role of hope in the promotion of autonomy

According to the standard account of hope, with its precursors in Aquinas and Hobbes, it is a combination of the desire of p and the belief that p is possible but not certain. However, this combination does not explain all instances of hope, nor does it capture the difference between hope and despair[36]. Luc Bovens was the first to argue that 'mental imaging' about the desired outcome is a necessary component of hope, emphasising in this way the tight relationship between hope and imagination[37]. More recently, Humbert Droz and Vazard have claimed that «hope is an emotion that typically triggers immersive imagination aimed at "trying on" a desired reality»[38]. In their perspective, this hoped scenario has an epistemic value: engrossing oneself in a desired scenario grants insight into the implications such an outcome would have on various aspects of one's existence, as well as the emotional response one would have to these novel life circumstances. In other words, through the immersive imaging we simulate the beloved situation, and,

[34] *Ibid*, p. 35.
[35] *Ibid*, p. 36.
[36] J. Huber, *Imaginative Hope*, in Journal of the American Philosophical Association, XI, 1, 2025, p. 155, R. S. Downie, *Hope*, in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, XXIV, 1963, p 249.
[37] L. Bovens, *The Value of Hope*, in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, LIX, 3, 1999, p. 674.
[38] S. Humbert-Droz – J. Vazard, *Imagining Out of Hope*, in The Philosophical Quarterly, LXXV, 1, 2025, p. 100.

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by doing so, we gain new information [39]. Therefore, hope could foster imaginative skills. As in Mackenzie's account they are necessary to be autonomous, being hopeful could promote autonomy. Furthermore, hope is strictly tied to self-esteem: several studies confirm a positive correlation between hope and self-esteem in adolescents, young adults and clinical populations: higher levels of hope are associated with greater self-esteem and vice versa [40]. Hence, it seems possible to conclude that hope is strongly connected to two dimensions of autonomy, namely self-governance and self-authorisation.

Conclusion

In summary, autonomy is a multidimensional concept, that it is associated, among others, with self-determination, self-governance and freedom from external influences. According to the liberal tradition, being autonomous means indeed establishing one's own interests, goals, values and conception of a good life, free from unwanted interference [41]. However, feminist theorists objected that this vision presupposes an individualistic conception of subjectivity, which is unrealistic. Therefore, they proposed alternative accounts of autonomy, labelled as relational. According to Mackenzie's approach, autonomy encompasses three different but intertwined axes: self-determination, self-governance and self-authorisation [42]. Within this framework, hope could play an important role in the promotion of autonomy, as it fosters imaginative skills and self-esteem. In other words, being hopeful would have a positive impact even on the exercise of autonomy.

[39] *Ibid*, p. 83.

[40] H. O. Alaeddine, *Hope and its relation with self-esteem among a sample of Lebanese university students,* in Journal of Umm Al-Qura University for Educational and Psychological Sciences, XIV, 1, 2022, p. 12; M. Jenabi Ghods – L. Fattah Moghaddam – M. J. Hosseinabadi-Farahani – M. Pourebrahimi, *The Mediation Role of Self-Esteem and Hope on the Relationship of Quality of Life and Unmet Needs of Elderly with Psychiatric Disorders,* in Journal of Education and Health Promotion, XII, 1, 2023, p. 164; M. Merkaš – A. Brajša-Žganec, *Children with Different Levels of Hope: Are There Differences in Their Self-Esteem, Life Satisfaction, Social Support, and Family Cohesion?*, in Child Indicators Research, IV, 3, 2011, p. 511.

[41] J. Christman, *Autonomy in Moral and Political Philosophy.*

[42] C. Mackenzie, *Three Dimensions of Autonomy: A Relational Analysis*, cit., p. 16.

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Hope as a Figure of Human Historicity: Time and History in Virgilio Melchiorre's philosophy

Flavia Chieffi

Introduction

In an era marked by the decline of grand ideological narratives and, more radically, by the ebb of utopian impulses of human consciousness, the relevance of a discourse on hope may appear anachronistic. Hope has not disappeared from the daily unfolding of lives, but it seems to have been reduced to an ephemeral and desperate waiting: «small and fleeting hopes rather than a call and tension towards an absolute meaning» [1]. And yet, contemporary consciousness is returning to the theme of hope along multiple paths, often in the manner preserved by the great theological traditions or the classic philosophies of the whole. Such return reflects a sense of disorientation, thereby revealing the need for a radical rethinking of the concept.

Although there are different levels of inquiry, the phenomenon of hope, to be fully understood, firstly requires an examination of the conditions that ultimately constitute its essential and ever-active horizon. «What is the principle accompanying and supporting the movement of hope, always open to the not-yet and thus to the uncertain?» [2]. This question seeks to uncover the possibility of an «essential hope» supporting «the noblest movements of waiting, warning against the will-o'-the-wisps of illusion, against empty and irresponsible hoping, or hope reliant solely on

[1] Virgilio Melchiorre, *Sulla speranza,* Morcelliana, Brescia 2000, p. 7. All the translations in English are made by the author.

[2] Ivi, cit., p. 9.

chance and contingencies»[3]. In this context, Virgilio Melchiorre's works[4] undertakes an investigation which, starting from a phenomenological approach, aims to restore hope as a fundamental category of the human. «If it is true that every human being cultivates, in one way or another, the paths of hope, we must consequently return to the essential structures of the human: the inquiry thus assumes an ontological character and gradually refers us to the very roots of existence»[5]. For such an inquiry to be truly foundational, it must begin with the most proper mode of human beings, their inescapable ontological condition: temporality.

Melchiorre's inquiry develops from the phenomenological analysis of temporality to the metaphysical elucidation of hope as the paradigmatic figure of human historicity. The first paragraph examines how, by engaging Augustine's meditation on the ambiguity of time in dialogue with Husserlian phenomenology, Melchiorre conceives temporal consciousness not as a mere succession of instants but as a dynamic unity grounded in intentionality and ultimately sustained by the full actuality of Being. The human becoming is grounded and directed by this metaphysical fullness. The second paragraph analyses how hope is identified by Melchiorre as the concrete expression of this tension. Rooted in the relation to the Absolute, through which human beings project itself toward the future while preserving the continuity and progression of

[3] *Ibidem*.

[4] Virgilio Melchiorre was a major figure in Italian philosophy during the second half of the twentieth century. A prominent student of Gustavo Bontadini, he developed his work under the influence of Bontadini's neoclassical teaching, which shaped his long meditation as an inquiry into the notion of foundation, always in connection with the anthropological question – the central focus of his speculative interests. The link between anthropological and ontological discourse became especially clear to him through his decisive encounter with Husserlian phenomenology. Analyses of consciousness processes, reinterpreted considering the logical principles of classical thought, provided fertile ground for a synthetic development. For Melchiorre, transcendental analysis was never limited to an epistemological function; rather, it could rigorously disclose the very assertion of foundation. His philosophical trajectory thus emerged at the intersection of these themes: firmly anchored in a classical framework, yet open to the challenges of the Husserlian phenomenological tradition and the existentialist current, particularly along the line from Kierkegaard to contemporary thought. Melchiorre's early attention to existentialism reveals his vocation to uncover the metaphysical structures at work in the lived forms of personal existence. In the preface to *Le vie della ripresa. Studi su Kierkegaard*, he acknowledges that his study of the Danish philosopher was, for him, a necessary complement to his metaphysical formation, oriented toward the constitutive themes of being. These themes, by their very nature, «would be meaningless if they were not explored starting from the living flesh of existence, and only to return to its heart, seeking its meaning and destiny» (V. Melchiorre, *Prefazione*, in Id., *Le vie della ripresa. Studi su Kierkegaard*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 2016).

[5] Ivi, cit., p. 8.

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historical existence, hope reveals itself as the most authentic expression of human historicity.

Temporality as the Transcendental Structure of the Human

Melchiorre's investigation into the constitution of temporality begins with the ambiguity of the experience of time, already noted by Augustine in the *Confessions*[6]. Augustine's reflection is based on a fundamental observation: «our life runs its course and unfolds within the span of its present, and yet every presence – if it is indeed presence in time – exist only insofar as it passes into the past»[7]. Although Augustine repeatedly associates consciousness with presence, a first difficulty emerges when reflecting on the meaning of *praesens*: «the *prae* signifies both "ahead" and "before", so the presence, at least the kind in which human time is given, seems to be constituted by an absence»[8]. If the present emerges from an absence – the non-being of the past – it likewise tends toward an absence, the non-being of the future. At a first

[6] The discussion of time in Augustine responds to precise concerns. It is situated in Book XI, which – through an exegesis of the first book of *Genesis* – aims to provide a proper explanation of one of God's principal attributes, namely that of «Creator», but also «Re-Creator» and «Savior» of humanity. Books XI and XII discuss God as «Creator», while Book XIII, through an allegorical interpretation of the days of creation, discusses God as «Re-Creator» and «Savior». The major problem of the radical difference between eternity and time arises in relation to the divine act of creation through the Word, eternally spoken because it's coeternal with God (see especially G. Reale, *Monografia introduttiva. Le «Confessioni» come la più alta espressione del Pensiero tardo-antico cristiano*, in Agostino, *Confessioni,* ed. by G. Reale, Bompiani, Firenze-Milano 2019, pp. 269-280). The core of Augustin's reflection on time is centred on the soul. Beyond his urge to resolve the problem of structural links between eternity and time – closely tied to the problem of creation – he seeks to demonstrate the decisive role of the soul in the knowledge of time. The very being of the three temporal dimensions – past, present and future – consists in their being within the soul. «These three kinds of time are, in some way, in the soul; I do not see them elsewhere» (*Conf.*, XI, XX, 26). The past is present in soul as memory of what has been, the future as expectation of what is to come, and the present as attention to the passing instant as it continually comes into presence. Even the very extension of time, which we measure while it passes, is measured in memory and, therefore in the soul. Time is measured in the soul: «It is in you, I repeat, that I measure time. The impression which things produce in you as they pass by, and which remains in you even when those things have passed, is precisely what I measure as present – not the things themselves that have passed to produce it. This is what I measure when I measure time, so either this is what time is, or I do not measure time» (*Conf.*, XI, XXVII, 37). Drawing conclusions on the nature of time, Augustine argues that time, in its entirety, is an extension of the soul.

[7] V. Melchiorre, *Sulla speranza. Dal nome ai principi,* in Id., *Sulla speranza,* cit., p. 46 (originally in AA. VV., *Le virtù della cittadinanza*, Grafo, Brescia 1998).

[8] V. Melchiorre, *Il concetto di storia*, in Id., *Essere e parola. Idee per un'antropologia metafisica* (1982), Vita e Pensiero, Milano 1993[4], pp. 261-2. (originally in Id., «Studium», 1991, 6).

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glance, the experience of time appears as a tension toward being which, however, finds its fulfilment only in passing into non-being [9]. Moreover, past and future cannot be given in themselves, but only within the being of the present [10], leading Augustine to speak of a «*praesens de praeteritis*» and a «*praesens de futuris*». This implies there must also be a presence in itself – a «*praesens de praesentibus*» - that is not reducible to mere presence; Augustine describes it in terms of a «*contuitus*» [11]. To illustrate this concept, he employs the example of a melody [12], an example later taken up – though without explicit reference – in Husserl's *Vorlesungen* on the internal consciousness of time [13]. The reference to Husserl is not accidental: the reflections of both philosophers, though separated by centuries, sought to recover the authentic meaning of conscious life. Melchiorre collects Augustine's inheritance and extends it through a dialogue with Husserlian phenomenology.

Beginning with an analysis of perception and consciousness as a continuous perceptual flow, Husserl underscores the difficulty of conceiving consciousness as absolute givenness. Its perspectival character discloses a constitutive non-being which, however, cannot be understood as pure non-being, but only as the actuality of the unactual. The analysis of perceptual *Erlebnisse* thus opens immediately onto the transcendental structure of time [14]. According to Husserl's analysis of temporality, the present does not appear as a simple unity, but rather as a unity of retention, revealing within it a «preservation of non-being and a projection of being into nonbeing» [15]. Husserl speaks of a «time of

[9] With Augustine's words: «Si ergo preasens, ut tempus sit, ideo fit, quia in praetirum transit, quomodo et hoc esse dicimus, cui causa, ut sit, illa est, quia non erit, ut scilicet non vere dicamus tempus esse, nisi qua tendit non esse?» (*Conf.,* XI, XIV. 16).

[10] «Ubicumque ergo sunt, quaecumque sunt, non sunt nisi praesentia» (*Conf*., XI, XVIII, 23).

[11] «Sunt enim haec in anima tria quaedam et alibi ea non video, preasens de praeteritis memoria, praesens de praesentibus contuitus, prasens de futuris expectatio» (*Conf.* XI, XX, 26).

[12] Cfr. *Conf,* XI, XXVII, 34-37.

[13] Cf. V. Melchiorre, *Il concetto di storia*, cit., pp. 263-265. See also E. Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie des Inneren Zeitbewusstseins: 1893-1917*, Hgg. v. Rudolf Boehm («Husserliana», Bd. X), Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague 1996; tr. it. A. Marini, *Per la fenomenologia della coscienza interna del tempo (1893-1917),* intr. R. Boehm, FrancoAngeli, Milano 1981.

[14] V. Melchiorre, Logos *come memoria dell'origine,* in Id., *Figure del sapere,* Vita e Pensiero, Milano 1994, p. 47, [originally in, «Filosofia e teologia», 3 (1989)]. See also the passage of Husserl to which Melchiorre refers: E. Husserl, *Ideen zur einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*, first book: *Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie, Husserliana,* voll. III/1 and III/2, Karl Schuhmann (ed.), Martinus Nijhoff, Den Haag 1976; tr. it. V. Costa, *Idee per una fenomenologia pura e per una filosofia fenomenologica,* libro primo: *Introduzione generale alla fenomenologia pura*, Einaudi, Torino 1965, §41.

[15] V. Melchiorre, *Struttura della coscienza storica*, in Id., *Ideologia, utopia, religione,* Rusconi, Milano 1980, p. 68. (originally with the title: *Storia (punto di vista filosofico),* in

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presence (*Präsenzzeit*)», which is nonetheless experienced as a succession that «can be held together, through the cohesion of consciousness, by a unitary act of apprehension» [16]. In the primary datum of conscious life, a presence that is never punctual, never fully contains, but «unfolds in a unitary continuity» is found. Here Husserl's transcendental analysis reconnects with the Augustinian itinerary and the need to wrest time from mere mutability, without reducing it to the immutable. This ensures the permanence of consciousness to itself in its becoming, as unity of past, present and future. This dynamic unity can exist only by virtue of an *intentio*, only through «a concentration capable of extending toward what lies ahead only insofar as it can gather itself into an everlasting unity» [17]. The unity of past and future in the present is, rather, an intentional co-existence, a tension. What is the foundation that ensures continuity and progress – what guarantees against the *dissipatio animi*? The analysis of the temporal structure of conscious life thus encounters the problem of «origin» and «final reference». At this point, transcendental reflection crosses over into the metaphysical side.

If the experience of human beings, as a temporal one, is not to be resolved into contradiction, the nonbeing constituting them cannot be understood as an original one, but rather as a reference to a pure and full actuality of Being [18]. In this sense, «we are at the primary *a priori* of consciousness and, at the same time, at the metaphysical assertion of Being as the condition pre-containing and safeguarding the existence of every reality, also constituting the orientation toward the future of fulfilment» [19]. Human beings are, therefore, the beings in which the historical process opens and unfolds, because they are inhabited by an absolute meaning that situates them beyond any determination and

Dizionario teologico interdisciplinare, Marietti, Torino 1977).

[16] V. Melchiorre, *Il concetto di storia*, cit., p. 265. See also E. Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie*, cit., pp. 20-23; tr. it. pp. 57-58, p. 327, tr. it., p. 321.

[17] V. Melchiorre, in Id., *Dialettica del senso. Percorsi di fenomenologia ontologica*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 2002, p. 152 (originally in AA. VV., *Filosofia del tempo*, Bruno Mondadori, Milano 1998, pp. 246-256). See also Agostino, *Conf.,* XI, XXIX. 39.

[18] While Augustine locates the measure of time within the interiority of the soul, the soul nevertheless continues to dissipate in time. Augustine ultimately resolves the aporia of temporality through a more radical metaphysical *intentio* – or, in modern terms, through a more radical transcendental conception. To safeguard the very fragility of permanence, he appeals to the indefectibility of God: the soul remains torn and divided, but only until it regains a deeper unity in God's being. Transcendence toward God thus provides the ground of memory, presenting itself, in the end, as the definitive transcendental condition of permanence. For further discussion: see also *Conf,* X 16, and V. Melchiorre, *Temporalità e ripresa in S. Agostino,* in *Rivista di Filosofia Neo-Scolastica*, XLIX, 5/6, 1957, pp. 459-468.

[19] V. Melchiorre, *Ermeneutica della temporalità*, cit., pp. 158-159.

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guides them from the incompleteness of the present toward a future sense. Of this absolute meaning, the human being can only ever have an indeterminate and never definitive knowledge. Then, the tension toward the future, is «a tension toward an alterity, which inhabits us from the very beginning yet always awaits being sought and fulfilled» [20]. This tension, operating within the dialectic between the positivity of the ideal and the negativity of the real, between immanence and transcendence, and between knowing and not-knowing, grounds the very progression of historical consciousness.

Hope as a figure of human historicity

Melchiorre locates the condition of possibility for historical progression in the constitutive relation of consciousness to an absolute meaning: the possibility of progress is an immanent component of human essence. Indeed, the intentionality identified by Melchiorre at the foundation of the historical process constitutes a «structural condition which, at different levels, constitutes the human being as a being in relation to transcendence» [21]. And the «historical dynamism», writes Melchiorre, «can be ontologically ensured only within the tension toward a metaphysical transcendence». In the absence of such metaphysically constituted tension, «every future would remain susceptible to being the ultimate future, that is, the centre of preservation, if not of sclerosis» [22]. Without this constitutive relation to transcendence, consciousness would have access only to conditions or events already given. Likewise, if human beings were pure transcendence, they would already exist within the immanence of Being, and there could be no question of tension, seeking, or wandering. However, if human beings are originally participants in the absolute *logos*, they are simultaneously transcended by its otherness. The original relation situates human beings on the path toward totality and Being, yet the alterity of the ultimate Foundation confines them to a knowledge that is approximate and provisional. As a result, initiative «remains, in some way, suspended in a form of metaphysical uncertainty and must concede an irreducible remainder

[20] V. Melchiorre, *Tradizione e rivoluzione,* in Id., *Ideologia, utopia, religione*, cit., p. 33 (originally in AA. VV., *Tradizione e rivoluzione,* Morcelliana, Brescia 1973).

[21] V. Melchiorre, *Struttura della coscienza storica*, cit., p. 98.

[22] V. Melchiorre, *Sullo storicismo di Gramsci*, in Id., *La coscienza utopica*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 1970, p. 216. (originally in «Humanitas», 1966, VI).

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of obscurity»[23]. The consciousness of the connection with Being – an original condition and the foundation of all intentional movements of consciousness, including historical consciousness – is always a potential knowledge, yet simultaneously a «perpetually possible faith in an ultimate meaning, in an anticipated not-yet that can still be sought, to which one can and must respond»[24]. This faith ultimately grounds all authentic hopes. Hope «does not know, but lives on the basis of an original knowledge». Its not-knowing is supported by a certainty, and its dependence is a «*recognition in the foundation that inhabits us, in a communion that permeates us*». Therefore, hope is a «tension that moves toward a future in which it already participates, a trust that already contains a reason within itself from which to proceed». It entrusts itself yet, simultaneously, it seeks and is already on the path. As Melchiorre notes, «only in these terms can we speak correctly of the human future»[25]. However, if one were to rely solely on faith in the ultimate meaning, hope would become ineffective, and the horizon of historical planning would collapse into disengagement and abandonment of the existence. Likewise, the loss of that trust – the essential and original connection in which hope lives – would lead to despair and to the laceration of time. Against this laceration, «only the courage of hope can stand, arising from its own darkness as already participates in the light and already glimpses a future»[26], positioning itself in the patience and trust of a root that both constitutes and simultaneously transcends it. Moreover, relying on transcendence is not a withdrawal from engagement with concrete reality, nor a refuge in the heavens of some indefinable beyond: «it is only in the intimate consciousness of time that the face of transcendence is revealed». Thus, reaching out to the metaphysical space of Being is not an escape, «but the deferral that protects from the disappointment of awaited things, from the failures and deaths that may always occur, yet are no longer understood as the ultimate end or as a definitive nullification of meaning. Patience is thus the secret soul of courage, the trusting disposition that allows one to endure in the time of unfulfilled expectations and ultimately reveals the real substance of hope»[27]. It is precisely because of its orientation between present and future, anchored in a meaning rooted in the in-

[23] V. Melchiorre, *La coscienza utopica*, cit., p. 76.
[24] V. Melchiorre, *Sulla speranza. Dal nome ai principi,* in Id., *Sulla speranza,* cit., p. 50.
[25] Ivi, cit., pp. 20-21.
[26] Ivi, cit., p. 27.
[27] V. Melchiorre, *Sulla speranza: dal nome ai principi*, cit., pp. 52-53.

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finite depth of our beings, that hope can set itself to awaiting, ultimately emerging as the most fitting figure of human historicity.

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The Human between Forgiveness and Hope

Giacomo Chironi

1. *Introduction*

Far from being a passive feeling or a general virtue that makes people passive and merely bound to a utopian future, hope can instead bring about an active, fully present living of the present and of life. Even more, it can lead the human being to be more and more human. Especially in a peculiar connection with the act of forgiveness, hope builds stronger and honest relationships among people. Finally, «since these faculties correspond so closely to the human condition of plurality» - as Hanna Arendt states in *The Human Condition* [1], a society with such a sense of hope and forgiving can better realize a concrete path of restorative justice and so recreate itself every time with a wider breath.

In this perspective, the present contribution will analyse the concrete meaning of the concept of hope: starting with the theoretical investigation of hope and forgiveness, of their connection and of their value together, and then by illustrating the practical significance of forgiving in the context of an Italian case of restorative justice, which involved Mafia victims. The description of this intense and meaningful experience, along with a podcast's strong storytelling that goes deep into the feelings of the people involved, will shed a brighter light on the existential importance of hope for human life.

Then, holding together hope and forgiveness, staying indeed between them, people can really "stay present when the time is present" – rephrasing the meaningful words of Abraham J. Heschel, remembered by Biancu [2] – they can respond to the call of the different times that

[1] H. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 237.
[2] See S. Biancu, *Presente. Una piccola etica del tempo*, Edizioni San Paolo, Milano 2014, p. 56.

reality makes to them, and they can rediscover again and again their humanity, becoming in every relationship and every personal experience more human.

2. *Theoretical perspectives of forgiveness and hope*

The theoretical analysis of forgiveness and hope can begin with an interesting connection between them and the concept of time, since right from this perspective, some essential definitions of their ethical dimensions emerge, along with a promising meaning that can even define a general anthropological value.

Forgiveness, both in its "supererogatory" dimension, which Stefano Biancu accurately describes in *Il massimo necessario*[3], and in Arendt's analysis in *The Human Condition*, refers the human being to the past, in a particular sense that discloses a more profound definition of it.

Regarding its supererogatory value, forgiveness can be seen as necessary and a duty, even though no law can require it. How can a duty exist if the law does not require it?

Biancu, in the above-mentioned book, which is mainly dedicated to the analysis of the forgotten category "supererogatory", points out that supererogatory acts call into question the traditional meanings of duty and ethics in general. In fact, according the tradition of moral philosophy, as even James O. Urmson clearly highlighted in his *Saints and Heroes* (1958)[4], the human actions can be divided into three main categories: the requested ones, which are morally good; the forbidden ones, which are morally bad; and the optional ones, which are permitted, i.e. the ones that would be indifferent if they would be taken or not. This traditional classification creates a mutual connection between the sense of moral good and the duty: if something is good, it must be required, and vice versa. From this perspective, there cannot exist an action that is good in a subjective sense and not required by the law, because, in that case, it could not be objective and valid for all humanity, as Kant's deontological ethics would require.

As long as we remain in this traditional standpoint, our understanding of the supererogatory actions in relation to the duty will lead to two paradoxes. According to the first, one of the "good-ought tie-up", it is

[3] S. Biancu, *Il massimo necessario: l'etica alla prova dell'amore*, Mimesis, Milano 2020.

[4] J. O. Urmson, *Saints and Heroes* (1958), in: J. Feinberg (ed.), *Moral Concepts*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1969.

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impossible to conceive good actions beyond what is ought. Following the second paradox, a supererogatory action can be felt as a duty only from a first-person point of view – like we can easily see when a person saves another risking his/her own life – and not from a third-person one; so only in a subjective and not objective way. Here, Biancu raises an interesting question: Is then the supererogation beyond the duty, or is maybe our understanding of duty too restricted? Along with the legal duty, we should actually recognize two more types: *ethical* and *anthropological*. While the legal sense affirms a duty requested from a "third" person or institution and refers to an immediate and abstract freedom, the other two senses describe the actions necessary for human existence and subjectivity. According to the "ethical" one, the duty can also correspond to humans' *responsibility* for their actions and for others' lives and destinies. In the "anthropological" sense, on the other hand, the duty refers to what is necessary for the subjectivity of *ànthropos* ("human being") – as we will see, for becoming fully human – and is connected to a concrete figure of mediate freedom.

Understanding these two other meanings, we see that supererogatory actions are beyond the legal sense of duty but are necessary from an ethical and anthropological perspective. Then, compared to the "minimal necessary" – i.e. what the law or a third-person right requests – that cannot and must not miss because every person must be born with an abstract and immediate freedom and with the rights recognized by the several international charters of right[5], the supererogatory can be considered as a "maximum"; therefore, since it is one of the conditions of the human freedom and subjectivity, this "maximum" is necessary.

Speaking mainly about freedom, we can see forgiveness one of the most meaningful and charged with implications supererogatory acts. From this perspective, it is possible to invert the relation among the French Revolution triad by considering first fraternity a condition for the concrete realization of freedom and equality[6]. The second one is indeed possible when, through a starting universal fraternity, after the encounter made possible by the other supererogatory act of hospitality, the people are given back to themselves, i.e., they are made equal to themselves and again more to the other. Freedom, instead, constantly moving from a common fraternity, can be made greater thanks to the supererogatory act of forgiveness. In this last relationship, we can fi-

[5] See, for example: *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)*, Article 1: «All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights [...] ».

[6] See: Biancu, *ibid.*, pp. 65-68.

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nally understand the connection mentioned above with the concept of time. After an offense, human beings are unavoidably chained, among themselves and to the action that remains in the past. In this sense, if they never forgive, they will always remain bound to the past. Then, even if it cannot be required by law or by a third-person in general, supererogatory forgiveness is due to both people involved in the offense, because it leads people to construct their subjectivity in general. When people forgive, they free themselves from the chains of guilt and a burdensome past; they can live their present lives and, finally, they can restart constructing a future of greater freedom.

This theoretical complexity, which links forgiveness both to past time and to the possibility of the future, and to the construction of subjectivity in general, was also highlighted by Hannah Arendt in her already-mentioned *The Human Condition*. In chapter 33, she gives an interesting definition of the faculty of forgiving, as the «possible redemption from the predicament of irreversibility - of being unable to undo what one has done though one did not, and could not, have known what he was doing»[7]. Then, through forgiveness, people can go out from the irreversibility of the actions, that is to say, indeed from a shackling past, and open themselves to the future also thanks to the connection with the other act of promise, which Arendt analyzes later in her text, and we will see better in the last part of the present contribution.

If forgiveness initially connects the sphere of human actions to the past, hope clearly refers to the future, not only the actions, but also the entire human subjectivity to the future. This point of view is evident in common opinion and actually characterizes a philosophical tradition that considers hope as "too human" in a negative sense, as notably underlined by Nietzsche[8] and, even earlier, by Pascal[9]. In *Presente. Una piccola etica del tempo*, Biancu rightly points out the multifaceted constitution of this notion, so historically and culturally complex that it makes it really hard to present systematically and coherently[10]; moreover, this is not the right place to give even a first general overview[11].

[7] H. Arendt, *ibid.*, p. 237.

[8] F. Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human. A Book for Free Spirits*, translated by R. J. Hollingdale, Cambridge University Press, 1986.

[9] See B. Pascal, *Pensieri*, Bompiani, Milano 2012.

[10] See S. Biancu, *Presente. Una piccola etica del tempo*, Edizioni San Paolo, Milano 2014, pp. 106-108.

[11] In order to have an overview, very short but full of suggestions and with some interesting bibliographical references, see: *ibid.*

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Anyway, also leaving aside the historically multi-layered definition of hope, following Biancu's analysis made in *Presente*, it is undoubtedly possible to see it not only as a passive disposition that, as indeed stated by Pascal, leads people to postpone their living and to live never [12]. In this sense, with a condensed expression, we could say that hope is not a passive but an "active wait".

The book *Presente* conducts an interesting and fruitful analysis of the concept of time, from a philosophical, and specifically an ethical, point of view. To fully understand why time is different from space, because it is neither an empty box to be filled, nor single or homogeneous, the author considers it in four different ways: as need, as duty, as right, and finally as virtue. In this way, it gradually emerges that time is symbolical, i.e., unavailable and constitutively "uncatchable" (far from every materialistic and anxiety-inducing command "not to let it slip away"), a succession of times differently characterized, and finally something that makes different calls to the human beings. In this perspective, the structure of hope can tell us a lot about the structure of time. Like this last one, even hope is a *need*, because it is «coessential to life» [13]; it is a *right*, that unfortunately is often denied; and finally is a *duty*, since it demands a decision, «a renunciation to the possibility [...] of desperation» [14]. However, hope, highlights Biancu, is above all a *virtue*. Far from being an idealized model or a «simple inner content (a state of mind, a passion, a belief)» [15], it is the most important virtue to respond to the just-cited "call of time".

Time indeed constantly addresses a word to the people's lives, desires, and their paths in general, and sometimes it can interrupt them in more or less negative ways: e.g., with disease, failure, betrayal, mourning. But time also brings another word, which allows the human being «to understand that first word in a wider horizon» [16]. The virtue of hope leads people to see exactly this "wider horizon", to renounce their temporary egoistic needs, not to give in to despair, and to see the whole sense of time with its promises, not remaining only in the negative challenges that time can bring. There are actually three more virtues of time - patience, perseverance, and faithfulness - but hope remains central since it has an architectonic function: i.e., it finds the

[12] Pascal, *Ibid.*, n. 168 (ed. Chevalier), n. 172 (ed. Brunschvicg).
[13] S. Biancu, *ibid.*, p. 108.
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 109.
[15] *Ivi.*
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 110.

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others, and it makes them possible, and in some ways it includes them. This particular function also tells that hope itself does not exist without patience, perseverance, and faithfulness, because it is not, as already said, an abstract hypothetical inner content and, as Biancu highlights, «we could say that all these virtues constitute one only virtue – one only moral *style* – that takes different forms according to the occasions» [17].

In the face of time, hope holds together both promise and challenge; the person who hopes knows that they are linked: in every challenge there is a promise, and vice versa. Just the opposite of the perspective that sees hope as a motionless wait, people with this "virtue of time" know the necessity of beginning to let the sense of time reveal itself: this sense remains precluded to those who do not make a decision. That is why, states Biancu, «hope is not afraid of beginning, of beginning always again» [18].

Then, from a theoretical point of view, hope reveals a constitutive and real opening of the present to the future. As we saw, absolutely not in the form of a suspension and an "absent waiting" – falling into that risk remembered by Heschel of being «absent when the time is present» [19] -, but a form of a full presence in a time "enlightened by the future" and indeed also by the past, thanks to the further connection of hope with forgiveness. On closer inspection, it actually gets ahead of a theoretical circularity between hope and forgiveness on one side, and the future and the past on the other, that can shed new light on the present.

Thanks to the theoretical analysis carried out so far, a "temporal" value of hope and forgiveness has emerged. However, they also have a practical, and specifically an "anthropological," importance that can lead the human being to better realize themselves, their societies, and, precisely, their humanity.

3. *The anthropological meaning of forgiveness*

No law or charter of rights can ever require someone to forgive. As we already saw above, at the legal-immediate and abstract level, no hu-

[17] *Ivi.* The relationship among all these virtues of time is quite articulated and fruitful to better understand time as virtue. To fully grasp the complete meaning see: Biancu, *ibid.*, pp. 95-106.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 114.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 56.

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man being can be "interrupted" by demands for forgiveness, hospitality, charity, or any other supererogatory act. Therefore, on the ethical, and precisely on the anthropological – mediate and concrete – level, a person *needs* to forgive. In fact, from the perspectives of Biancu and Arendt, forgiveness fully realizes our humanity in two senses.

In the fourth chapter of *Il massimo necessario*, Biancu states that an «anthropology that recognizes the necessary exterior mediation of subjectivity recognizes also the necessity of forgiveness»[20]. Here, the author has in mind a human subjectivity opposed to that related to the *res cogitans* of Descartes: i.e., not abstract, immediate, and always already formed, but one that gradually constructs and realizes itself through different mediations. In this sense, forgiveness, as a supererogatory act, is again a "necessary maximum" that human beings need to realize their subjectivity. As already seen, on the legal-political level, it is a maximum compared to the minimum of the chargeable rights and duties. However, precisely on the anthropological level, it is the «*necessary* maximum in view of that task that the subject represents to itself»[21]. As carefully and systematically presented by Biancu, this anthropological value of forgiveness for the human subject manifests itself across several dimensions[22].

Following the main steps of this analysis, we can first say that «*the subject who asks for and grants forgiveness is essentially time*»[23]. We will see it even better in the last part of this short essay, through the case of restorative justice where Lucia Montanino lives a strong forgiving experience of her husband's murder: the subjects involved in cases of forgiveness enter a "developing time" where they slowly, with different mediations – and not seldom with struggles –, become fully subjects. They need time to forgive and to become human subjects. Secondly, «*the subject who asks for and grants forgiveness is essentially connection*»[24]. In fact, forgiving bonds and unbinds. It unties the victim and offender from the offense (received and inflicted) and opens the way to another possible bond. Then, this subject who asks for and grants forgiveness is also «*essentially interested*»[25]. Far from being an unrealistic act, forgiveness is neither uninterested nor unmotivated: it is free insofar as it does not wait

[20] S. Biancu, *Il massimo ibid.*, p. 105. For a detailed analysis of the notion of forgiveness as a supererogatory act see the entire fourth chapter, pp. 89-108.
[21] *Ibid.*
[22] See: *Ibid.*, pp. 99-105.
[23] *Ibid.*, p. 99.
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 100.
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 102.

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for a material exchange. However, it is not indifferent, but instead «always motivated by – and interested in – a relationship to loosen or to create»[26]. Furthermore, the subject involved in the act of forgiveness is «*a mixture of innocence and guilt*»[27]. Every time a person asks for or grants forgiveness, a double experience occurs within the subject, namely, being in debt and in credit to the other person. Finally, this so complex subject of forgiving, as already seen, is «*a task for itself*»[28]: it has a genealogy and becomes a complete subject over time, into a personal and universal history. Biancu here underlines a significant aspect that will return later, in all its concrete force, with the history of Lucia Montanino. Despite all these positive and fruitful implications, understanding forgiveness as a supererogatory and anthropologically essential act does not make sense of what it can never make sense of, like inflicted and undergone suffering. However, forgiveness represents the important possible «decision of not letting that nonsense become the last criterion of judgment»[29], sharing, in this sense, the above-mentioned suspension of temporary and egoistic need of hope and, from this perspective, strengthening the fruitful circularity between hope and forgiveness.

Such a multifaceted task, described so far, of becoming a fulfilled subject is then defined even more in practical and ethical terms: in fact, the freedom that ethics assumes actually finds in forgiveness a condition of its possibility. The interruptions and the limits, in fact, as in the German idealistic tradition and, in general, in many philosophical positions that give primacy to action and the practical dimension[30], allow concrete freedom.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 103.
[27] *Ivi.*
[28] *Ibid.*, p. 104.
[29] *Ibid.*, p. 105.
[30] Thinking one of the main modern examples: i. e., the necessary confrontation with the other for the acknowledgement (Hegelian and Fichtean *Anerkennung*) that leads to the complete formation of the self-consciousness, and in general the subjectivity (as A. Honneth recognizes in his famous *Struggle for Recognition*, see: A. Honneth, *Lotta per il riconoscimento*, trad. it. di C. Sandrelli, il Saggiatore, Milano 2002, referring to, for example: G. W. F. Hegel, *Fenomenologia dello Spirito*, V. Cicero (a cura di), Bompiani testi a fronte, Milano 2000, pp. 273 275; or even to the suggestive passage of *Aesthetics*, where Hegel says: «The intensity and depth of subjectivity become all the greater the more infinite and extensive the mutual distancing of circumstances is, and the more lacerating the contradictions are [...].», Hegel, *Estetica*, trad. it. di N. Merker e N. Vaccaro, Einaudi, Torino 1967, p. 203).

However, actually, we found examples of this mediated freedom and construction of subjectivity even in other philosophers before, such as Saint Augustine with his famous and revolutionary discussion on free will, or in Vico and the meaning of the mediation for the genealogy of the human being (for an interesting overview on these last two topics see: M. De Caro, *Il libero arbitrio. Una introduzione*, Laterza, Roma 2004; S. Biancu, *La genealogia dell'umano*, pp. 18-23 and 105-120).

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We can now say that forgiveness mainly lives in the lines, it "bonds and unbinds" and creates a new sense from the process's arrest of the actions. This perspective is shared and considerably analyzed by Arendt in *The Human Condition*. In Chapter 33, she leads our attention to the fact that forgiving is the only reaction that retains something of the original character of the action: that is to say, it turns out to be a remedy against the irreversibility of the action's process. In a specific passage, Arendt links forgiveness to freedom:

> «Forgiving, in other words, is the only reaction which does not merely re-act but acts anew and unexpectedly, unconditioned by the act which provoked it and therefore freeing from its consequences both the one who forgives and the one who is forgiven. The freedom contained in Jesus' teachings of forgiveness is the freedom from vengeance, which incloses both doer and sufferer in the relentless automatism of the action process, which by itself need never come to an end» [31].

Then, without forgiveness, we would be stuck in the ever-recurring cycle of life passively, actually not as real humans with specific characteristics that distinguish us from the rest of the natural world. As the author points out, continuing the analysis, the revenge would be the natural and automatic reaction to the transgression, and, by this logic, the action process can always be predicted. On the other side, forgiveness can never be expected: it arrests the irreversible process of the action and allows the human being to create something new.

4. *An example of restorative justice for the anthropological meaning of forgiveness*

The approach of restorative justice considers the crime primarily in terms of harm to people: specifically, as Howard Zehr says in a good, complete summary of the main features of restorative justice, the crime is seen as a «violation of the people and of the interpersonal relationships» [32]. It addresses the problem of penal justice through four main elements. First, it considers the crime not in formal but in "experiential" terms, i.e., as a damage that directly and in many respects (moral,

[31] H. Arendt, *The Human ibid.*, p. 241.

[32] H. Zehr, *The Little Book of Restorative Justice*, Intercourse: Good Books, New York 2002, p. 19.

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material, emotional, relational) involves the individual persons and the community. In the second place, it assumes that, to the crime, corresponds a duty on the offender to remedy the harmful consequences actively, taking the victim's needs into account first. Then, in search of the "restorative" solution, this approach aims to foster active participation by all parties: the victim, the offender, the corresponding entourage of relationships, and civil society. Finally, it seeks a solution that, if possible, is agreed upon by such subjects.

It is, however, important to remember that Zehr points out that restorative justice is not primarily about forgiveness. It is not the first goal because this justice approach provides the context in which forgiveness might occur. Actually, some degree of forgiveness or even reconciliation does occur much more frequently than in the adversarial setting of the criminal justice system. However, it has to remain a choice entirely up to the participants, with no pressure.

Nevertheless, the accomplished restorative justice powerfully illustrates the practical and anthropological significance of forgiveness. We can see this clearly in the context of an Italian case of restorative justice involving Mafia victims, which Niccolò Agliardi evocatively describes in a podcast called *L'abbraccio che ripara*[33]. The title means "the restorative hug", and this podcast, which in its oral form allows a more profound and tangible experience of the effects implicated by the forgiveness, tells about the murder of the security guard Gaetano Montanino in August 2009, during an attempted robbery in Naples in a square with dynamics ruled by organized crime. Telling about this event in all its complexity and tragic nature, Agliardi primarily focuses on the act of forgiveness of Gaetano's wife, Lucia Di Mauro Montanino, to Antonio Rapicano, one of her husband's murderers, and at that time still underage.

In telling the several events that bring the two protagonists, their families, and the community around them together, after an arduous path to forgiveness and a new reconciliation, the author of the podcast sheds important light on the revolutionary process of restorative justice, finally full of hope and new life. Agliardi builds the story with several interviews with the people involved. The particular form of podcast reveals itself to be meaningful and precious, since it gives us the chance to hear the voices of the people moved by all the concrete emotions

[33] N. Agliardi, *L'abbraccio che ripara. Perdonare un delitto*, made by Vois (Podcast Creator Company) in collaboration with Fondazione Cariplo, Kayros, Sky TG24.

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that can come into play in the complex process of forgiving. We hear obviously about unspeakable sufferings, as well as about melancholy, or then about fear and anger - that surprisingly move from the victim to the offender, and vice versa -, and finally even about relief.

Among the different voices we hear, and that construct the so articulated framework of this event, three in particular can be chosen to highlight the ethical and anthropological consistency of the act of forgiveness. In episode 5, Agliardi reports Lucia's description of the moment when she hugs Antonio, physically initiating the process of forgiveness for both of them. The exact words, transcribed from the audio, make us feel the real involvement of humanity that forgiveness, and also what happens before, can imply:

> «He comes toward me, and I feel that this boy is as if he was walking to his death sentence. There was pain in his eyes… he was trembling… When I welcomed him into my arms, I felt he was collapsing, a lifeless body. So I held him even tighter to sustain him, and in that embrace I wanted to tell him: "Don't worry, my husband will never come back again. Whatever comes next will be for us"»[34].

Such forgiveness would surely be tough to grant, even if, here, we are only at the beginning of the forgiving process; nonetheless, this description precisely highlights the fertility of the future, and so of hope, that a person who forgives can initiate.

Then, on the other side, Antonio explains his experience of being forgiven, saying specifically that it lets him feel «more mature», which could be to say to feel able again to create and, according to the above-mentioned Arendt's analysis, to live arresting the irreversible process of a bad action.

Lastly, Agliardi also reports the voice of an Italian criminologist, Adolfo Ceretti, an expert in restorative justice, whose words highlight the opening to the future and to the "richness of the world" in general that forgiveness brings to all the people involved:

> «Forgiveness helps us live what remains of our life in a way that is more bearable, lighter, more mindful, more open to the richness of the world – a richness that so often fades away because we choose to remain confined within that experience which wounded us, or which wounded someone else»[35].

[34] *Ibid*, on episode 5 "Sette anni per un abbraccio", around min. 31.
[35] *Ibid.*, on episode 8 "L'abbraccio che ripara" around min. 15.

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"To live in a way that is more mindful" is not so different from the initial "avoid being absent when the time is present". Between a burdensome past and a future too far away, we can stay in the present, having the real chance to be fully human and create, while we are forgiving, and finally, as it will be evident in the last part of this contribution, while we are hoping, as a constitutive trait of humanity.

Conclusions: hope for society and for a mediated humanity

Looking again at chapter 33 of *The Human Condition*, we can find another important theoretical perspective that finally helps us understand how hope, in its connection with the concept of forgiveness, can stay at the foundation of human society and of the conditions that make it possible.

Here, Arendt establishes a fruitful relation between forgiveness and promise. When they are kept together, they lead people to look at the past and the future in a constructive way and to remain fully in a "positive present", similar to the "positive right" that citizens give themselves to construct societies.

If the forgiveness can then be, as we already saw, the faculty of «the possible redemption from the predicament of irreversibility», the faculty to make and keep promises contains in itself «the remedy for unpredictability, for the chaotic uncertainty of the future»[36]. That means that people without these two acts – actually, both supererogatory ones – would remain either stuck in regrets about the past or frozen by fears of the future, without thus the possibility of taking the path to realizing their humanity. When the process of forgiveness does not begin, the general human capacity to act would remain confined to a single deed from which a person can never recover, leaving them a victim of the consequences forever. On the other hand, without promises, people cannot even maintain or create their identities. The precise words of Arendt evocatively describe this fruitless and lonely condition and, by contrast, also the importance of relationships for the human subjectivity:

> «Without being bound to the fulfilment of promises, we would never be able to keep our identities; we would be condemned to wander helplessly

[36] Arendt, *Ibid.*, p. 237.

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> and without direction in the darkness of each man's lonely heart, caught in its contradictions and equivocalities – a darkness which only the light shed over the public realm through the presence of others, who confirm the identity between the one who promises and the one who fulfils, can dispel» [37].

Only the «public realm» can maintain our identities. Only with the multiple relationships implied by acts of forgiveness and promises can we dissipate the darkness of egoism and light up the nodes of that network, which characterizes both the above-mentioned "richness of the world" and the complexity of multiform time that call us in different ways. As already seen, we can adequately respond to this time by hoping, and we can now see that this present time is social and plural, full of those mediations that make us more and more human.

Then, forgiveness and promise, which are actually supererogatory acts too, deeply define the present time we have to live as human beings, as plural. Because, as Arendt remembers, they both depend on plurality, and if they are enacted in solitude or isolation, they remain without reality. That means even the main virtue of time has to be plural, and it turns out to be essential to society.

In this circularity between forgiveness and hope, analyzed and gradually discovered up to here, the human being can hence find a way to become ever more human. Hope can be considered the foundation of forgiveness, since, as we saw, opening to a broader sense of time gives the courage to let a past of revenge go, to forgive, and to create new relationships with other people and with the world. Forgiveness, in turn, can be seen as a condition of hope: in fact, it leads the actions in the present to be concretely free from the irreversibility of a single deed and thus to hope by opening to the richness of time.

As we started, we are right between past and future, right at the center of the circularity. Furthermore, it is here that we can find the present and so really build the humane.

In conclusion, with Arendt's last analysis of the act of forgiveness, we actually understand that it is in these acts that the core of the greatest humanity can lie. First, it reveals itself as a kind of "divine" one: people must experience human forgiveness to understand God's forgiveness fully. Arendt recalls that, in *Luke* 5:21-24, Jesus says: «it is not true that only God has the power to forgive»; and this act is so human that «this power […] must be mobilized by men toward each other be-

[37] *Ivi.*

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fore they can hope to be forgiven by Crod also»[38]. Even Arendt, going on, underlines the incredible power of such an act to let life express itself, and action shows its pure nature always to create new relations:

> «[...] trespassing is an everyday occurrence which is in the very nature of action's constant establishment of new relationships within a web of relations, and it needs forgiving, dismissing, in order to make it possible for life to go on»[39].

With forgiveness, we finally accept time and life, and so we can hope again. So the present will be illuminated by the future, and, by really believing in it, we can keep being hopeful, creative, and completely human. When we forgive and hope, we come to the core of humanity, and there we can find all the different, and sometimes opposing, aspects that characterize such a condition, as we can also hear in the words of Niccolò Agliardi at the opening of episode 5:

> «It is like hearing, for the very first time after the darkness, that sweetest word: relief. It is not resolution, it is truce. It is that moment when, without even knowing how, we reclaim our breath. Not through our own doing, but because life moves, it goes on, and it is stronger. The pain does not fade, the absence does not dissolve, but we learn to live with the emptiness»[40].

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 239.
[39] *Ibid.*, p. 240.
[40] Agliardi, *Ibid.*, at the beginning of episode 5 "Sette anni per un abbraccio".

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Imaginative variation on power: Ricœur's take on Utopia

Enrico Di Meo

Utopia as imaginative variation on power

As it is well known, Ricœur delivered his lectures on Ideology and Utopia in 1975 at the University of Chicago [1]. Since the introductory lecture, he makes clear that «the organizing hypothesis» underlying his project of treating ideology and utopia within a single conceptual framework, «is that the very conjunction of these two opposites sides or complementary functions typifies what could be called social or cultural *imagination*» [2]. What does Ricœur refer to when he employs this concept? Let us start by a clarification. In a private conversation with George Taylor – which is reported by Taylor himself in a footnote –, Ricœur provides an important elucidation of the meaning of the terms "social" and "cultural" as they are employed by him in the expression «social or cultural imagination». He specifies that while the social «has more to do with the roles ascribed to us within institutions», the cultural «involves the production of works of intellectual life [...] [it] has more to do with the medium of language and the creation of ideas» [3]. Notwithstanding this distinction, these two aspects of imagination are closely intertwined. Therefore, the brief enquiry I would like to conduct can be understood as follows: it will be investigated the connection between Utopia – as cultural product – and its functioning within

[1] These lectures have been taped at the time, and a *verbatim* transcript was made. This enabled their publication eleven years later. They were edited by George H. Taylor with the collaboration of Ricœur himself. See P. Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, Cambridge University Press, New York 1986.

[2] *Ibid*., 1. Even more, «the dialectic between ideology and utopia may shed some light on the *unsolved* general question of imagination as a philosophical problem». *Ibidem*.

[3] *Ibid*., 323.

the roles that both individuals and collective entities find themselves "interpreting", as it were, in the concrete institutions they inhabit. This connection is expressed by Ricœur, following Karl Mannheim [4], in the mode of «non-congruence», that is to say an active participation and a belonging to society that can, however, assume a certain distance to this latter. In so far as «social imagination is *constitutive* of social reality», indeed – states Ricœur –, it can operate «in both constructive and destructive ways, as both confirmation and contestation of the present situation» [5]. In the specific case of Utopia, this mode of noncongruence emerges from the name itself. Here Ricœur, building on a long-standing tradition, interprets the meaning of the word coined in 1516 by Thomas More as "no-where" (*ou-topos*) [6]. Utopia is understood as the name of More's Island which is nowhere, a place which exists but in no real place. In this sense utopia can constitute «a fundamental structure of the reflexivity we may apply to our social roles», to the extent that it is «the ability to conceive an empty place from which to look at ourselves» [7]. Ricœur sets in resonance the "no-where" characteristic of utopia with the "to-be-here" peculiar of the *Dasein*. «To be here, *Dasein*, I must be able to be nowhere. There is a dialectic of *Dasein* and

[4] At the time of these lectures, Ricœur recognized in Karl Mannheim the one person that had tried to put ideology and utopia in a common framework. See K. Mannheim, *Ideologie und Utopie*, Friedrich Cohen Verlag, Bonn 1929.

[5] P. Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, cit., p. 3. It is important to note, following Richard Kearney's remarks (see R. Kearney, *On Paul Ricœur. The Owl of Minerva*, Ashgate Publishing, Oxon/New York 2004), that this dialectic of construction and destruction – of confirmation and critical distancing from reality – is central to Ricœur's hermeneutic stance. «The model of the hermeneutic circle [...] can be extended to include both our *belonging* to the traditional representations of history and our critical *distance* from them». *Ibid.*, 88.

[6] Regarding the etymology and meaning of the word «Utopia» – where particular interest is aroused by the ambiguity of that initial "u" – heated debate among humanists already began in the years following the publication of More's work. Some, in fact, «believed that it [the *u*-] should be understood as a contraction of "*ou*", and that therefore the term meant "non-place" [...]. Others pointed out, however, that in Greek, negative forms are constructed by placing "*ou*" before the verbal forms and "α" before the noun forms». C. Danani, *Utopia*, in *Le parole della filosofia. Le metamorfosi del vocabolario del pensiero nella storia*, a cura di A. Motta e L. Palumbo, Federico II University Press, Napoli 2024, pp. 35-58, p. 35. Given the fact that More employs Utopia as a noun – indeed it appears in the original Latin as "*Libellus vere aureus nec minus salutaris quam festivus de optimo rei publicae statu, deque nova insula Utopia*" –, the alternative suggestion was «to read "u" as a contraction not of "*ou*" but of "*eu*": thus Utopia as *eu*-topia, "good place", happy place». *Ibidem*. Now, putting aside all the debate that developed around this ambiguity, it should be emphasised that Ricœur does not dwell on this issue at all and interprets Utopia in the most canonical way as "no-where". A simple reason for this may be the conceptual use that this more classical meaning takes on in the Ricœurian architecture. See, for instance, the development of the argument.

[7] P. Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, cit., p. 15.

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nowhere» [8]. Here resides one of the crucial points of Ricœur's interpretation. Given the incredibly varied range of content within each of the individual utopias, the unity of the concept must rather be sought in its function.

From this "no place" an exterior glance is cast on our reality, which suddenly looks strange, nothing more being taken for granted. The field of the possible is now open beyond that of the actual; it is a field, therefore, for alternative ways of living [9].

With the introduction of the dialectic between the actual and the field of possible, Ricœur explicitly compares the utopian function within social imagination to Husserl's imaginative variations concerning an essence. «Utopia», affirms Ricœur, «introduces imaginative variations on the topics of society, power, government, family, religion. The kind of neutralization that constitutes imagination as fiction is at work in utopia» [10]. Although I cannot delve into the details of this point, it is worth noting that this emphasis on imagination is considered one of the most important theoretical aspects of Ricœur's original approach to and reinterpretation of Husserlian phenomenology. As Luz Ascarate argued in her work on Ricœur – aimed at demonstrating how the latter's phenomenological perspective is original insofar «as imagination can appear as the *foundation* of phenomenology» [11] –, «imagination thus plays a practical mediating role, but only if it is understood in terms of its ability to give 'access to the possible' [...]. In other words, the practical function of imagination is nothing other than the exercise of its neutralising function in a practical field» [12]. It is precisely this neutralising function of the imagination – directed to field of human agency, i.e. *praxis* – that operates in the variations on reality produced by Utopia. From it arises the capacity to create a "non-place", a "nowhere", from which seemingly immutable structures of social institutions can be critically addressed. The connection we sought – between Utopia and its role within the positions assigned to both individuals and collective entities – find its expression here. Utopia articulates a critical capacity that, emerging from the social imagination and its cultural products, use the very same imagination to open up a field of pos-

[8] *Ibid.*, 310.
[9] *Ibid.*, 16.
[10] *Ibidem*.
[11] L. Ascarate, *Imaginer selon Paul Ricoeur. La phénoménologie à la rencontre de l'ontologie sociale*, Hermann Éditeurs, Paris 2022, p. 41.
[12] *Ibid.*, 83.

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sibilities that produce a distance from and a relativisation of the "fixed roles" established by institutions. It should be noted that, for Ricœur, the possibilities opened up by imagination, and therefore by Utopia, are not mere exercises of intellect. They represent genuine ontological alternatives which, by questioning the prevailing order of meaning, can set in motion concrete political projects and social alternatives [13]. For this reason, despite the enormous variety of content in the various utopias, Ricœur recognises the existence of a precise centre of gravity in these imaginative variations enabled by the neutralisation of reality. What is this centre of gravity? Ricœur is very clear in asserting that «what is ultimately at stake in utopia is not so much consumption, family or religion but the *use of power* in all these institutions» [14]. This implies that in the end the functioning unity of Utopia must be understood as an «imaginative variation on power» [15].

A case study: Charles Fourier's Utopia and its religious thrust.

How Ricœur's conceptual framework regarding Utopia can be tested? The shortest and simplest way is to follow his own examination of certain utopias. I chose to take as a "case study" the last lecture (18th) of the 1975 series, the one dedicated to Charles Fourier. The reason for this choice is that Ricœur himself states that «no one shows more clearly what a utopia is than Charles Fourier» [16]. Therefore, it seemed the perfect place to see emerge prominently the elements outlined in the previous section. Indeed, one of the main points of interest for Ricœur resides in the fact that «Fourier's utopia works at the level of the system

[13] As Ascarate remarks, «Ricœur proposes a phenomenology of fiction in which the referent of fiction is constituted by fiction itself, which, according to him, is capable of opening up *new ontological possibilities* thanks to the access to the possible that neutralisation modification allows». *Ibid.*, 165. And moreover, she believes «that the phenomenology of fiction constitutes another way of basing philosophy on man's capacity for constitution, emphasising his most creative and productive aspect: the ability to shape new meanings with our minds». *Ibid.*, 173-174. Ricœur himself, in the last lecture, affirms that «fictions are interesting not when they are mere dreams outside reality but when they shape a new reality. [...] In a sense all ideology repeats what exists by justifying it, and so it gives a picture – a distorted picture – of what is. Utopia, on the other hand, has the fictional power of redescribing life». P. Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, cit., pp. 309-310.

[14] *Ibid.,* 17, italics mine.

[15] *Ibid.*, 299. Ricœur admits that for him «the problem of power is the most intriguing structure of existence». *Ibid.*, 311.

[16] *Ibid.*, 301.

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of passions that rules every kind of social system»[17]. This general setting of Fourier's works is extremely significant. In order to produce an alternative social blueprint, it is necessary to unravel the essence of the hierarchical structures that takes form within a given organised group of individuals. That is why «Fourier digs under the layers of political authority and economic organization to put in question their basis in the passions»[18]. Investigating the nature and the balance among passions is tantamount to bring to the light the very heart of our concrete families, communities, economies, authorities, civic organizations, and so on. The incredible quantity of proposals, images and projects that Fourier puts forward to describe his utopia should therefore be interpreted in this light. The engineering approach with which every aspect of individual and collective life is analysed, subdivided and organised is the result of this general conviction. Thus, it clearly emerges how – in Ricœur's lexicon – this deployment of conceptual and literary forces is a great "imaginative variation on power". That is to say, an imaginative variation on how power, starting from its deepest roots, i.e. passions, takes shape within human groups and consequently how this shape can be conceived differently. Within this framework there is, however, a point that Ricœur stresses with particular emphasis:

> The aspect of Fourier's utopia that I would like to focus on is its *religious component*. Discussion of this problem will raise the larger question whether all utopias are not in some sense secularized religions that are also always supported by the claim that they found a new religion. The spiritual location of utopia is between two religions, between an institutionalized religion in decline and a more fundamental religion that remains to be uncovered[19].

In this tension between two religions, one that must be fought against and discarded and the other that has to come, utopia finds its natural terrain of expression. The imaginative variation on power, that in

[17] *Ibidem*.
[18] *Ibid.*, 303.
[19] *Ibid.*, 305, italics mine. The question that Ricœur mentions here, whether or not utopias are secularised religions, refers to an immense debate. Although of great interest, it is not possible to go into detail here, especially since Ricœur himself mentions it without elaborating too much on it. For interesting reading that links utopia with religious prophecy, see P. Prodi, *Profezia vs Utopia*, Società editrice il Mulino, Bologna 2013. Stefano Biancu offers an insightful discussion of this thesis applied to the seminal case of More's Utopia. See S. Biancu, *Tra profezia e ideologia: l'utopia. Cinquecento anni dopo Tommaso Moro*, Ricerche Teologiche, XXVIII, 1, 2017, pp. 185-196.

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Fourier has the form of a reconfiguration of the equilibrium among different passions, find in the institutionalised religion one of the main polemical targets. This has to do with the fact that the preachings of his time, in Fourier's view, were mainly focused on the repression and stigmatisation of passions – in particular of some of the most vital passions. This aspect is well represented by the emphasis on the contrast between Hell and Heaven [20]. The first is preached to condemn most of the natural aspects of human life; and the latter is an idealized afterlife that lacks all of these condemned aspects. This is why, «in one satirical passage, Fourier says that paradise as described by the preachers must be a much sadder place than life on earth, because it offers only something to see – white robes – and something to hear – celestial music – but nothing to eat and no sexual love. Paradise, he says, is not very interesting!» [21]. This whole critique has to be understood not so much in a moralistic fashion, but in the light of what emerged before. The issue at stake is that the representation of passions conveyed by institutional religion carry along a certain system of power, of domain and control over human beings that participates to a given community. A system of repression that twists and distorts the actual nature of human beings and, as it were, clips the wings of humanity, preventing it from fully developing its potential. It is here that utopia functions as a fluidifying force, as a pivot that unhinges the established system and – through imaginative variations on the consolidation of power – offers new perspectives, a view and an alternative that come from another place (from "no-where"). This is achieved in Fourier through a kind of counter-deification of precisely those passions that are mistreated and condemned by institutional religion. That is why Ricœur concludes his reading of Fourier's utopia with this remark, which completes the circle of his reflections:

> I am particularly intrigued by Fourier's notion of passion, because what seems to be denied or undermined by this religion of passions, this divinization of passions [operated by Fourier], is the *structure of power*. This observation brings us back once more to my hypothesis that ideology and utopia converge finally on one fundamental problem: the opaque nature

[20] «Fourier considers institutional religion to be fundamentally traumatizing because it is based on the image of God as essentially a cruel tyrant. It is in response to this image that Fourier calls himself an atheist. [...] His atheism is the denial of this God who represents, to Fourier's mind, the divinization of privation. Fourier advocates instead the divinization of delight». P. Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, cit., p. 306.

[21] *Ibidem*.

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> of power. [...] The problem is not how to create a good political state but how either to exist without the state or to create a passion-infused state [22].

Conclusive remarks.

Let me conclude with some general considerations on what has emerged so far. We have sought to show that, for Ricœur, utopia is neither an abstract ideal forever deferred nor a mere literary figuration of wishful fantasy, but the enactment of an imaginative variation upon the very structures of power that configure a given historical society. Through the imagination's capacity to neutralize the immediacy of *praxis* – namely the field of human action – and to project possibilities not yet inscribed within the order of the actual, utopia institutes a tension between *Dasein's* situatedness in the here and now and a view from a "non-place" that renders the familiar strange and opens up a space of critical distance. Such a dialectic between belonging and detachment lies at the heart of Ricœur's hermeneutic phenomenology. To resist the closure of understanding within the contingencies of one's own epoch, culture, or symbolic order, thought must preserve within itself the utopian moment as a power of displacement – a counter-movement always in a dialectical tension with ideology's tendency toward consolidation and self-legitimation. In this way, utopia could thus operate as a hermeneutic of hope: it dismantles the self-evidence of the present while keeping open the horizon of the possible. In this imaginative space, the promise of transformation towards a world otherwise conceived finds its most natural dwelling, as Ricœur masterfully shews in the radicality of Fourier's proposal.

[22] *Ibid.*, 309, italics mine. The radical nature of Fourier's thesis can be seen in his attempt to conceive of a power structure that is completely alternative to the State form of his epoch, or so transformed as to be difficult to assimilate (the passion-infused state mentioned at the end). Although I cannot elaborate on this point, it is interesting to note that the political climate of the years in which Ricœur was writing, in the wake of the protests of the late 1960s, perhaps felt a certain affinity with the radical critiques of the established order that came from thinkers such as Fourier.

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Language and Emptiness. Toward a Non-Foundational Soteriological Epistemology

Tomaso Pignocchi

1. *The Starting Point: Suffering and Vision*

Drawing on materials from the Buddhist tradition and on certain strands in Wittgenstein's thought, this article argues that both philosophy and spiritual practice can be understood as forms of inquiry aimed at knowledge; provided that, by *knowledge*, we do not mean a grasp or grounding of reality, but rather a pursuit of clarity regarding our condition. From this perspective, what comes into view are not the limits of our cognitive powers, but the limits of our desires, our claims upon reality, and our demand to secure it in knowledge. Philosophy, then, appears not as the building of foundations, but as the loosening of our grip on them.

For this task, I will focus on the Madhyamaka school of Buddhism and Wittgenstein's later philosophy. Both confront the same problem: deeply rooted patterns of thought and language that make reality appear inadequate when measured against self-imposed ideal terms of comparison. In the Buddhist context, this illusion appears as a belief in intrinsic natures and enduring essences: above all, in a permanent and stable self. It is from this misconception that suffering arises. In Wittgenstein's case, a similar dynamic appears as captivity within what he called "pictures": implicit frameworks that silently dictate how reality must be seen and what questions may even be asked. As he noted in his *Lectures on Religious Belief*, to inhabit a belief is to dwell within such a picture, to be held captive by it [1]. The task of philosophy, therefore, is

[1] See L. Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology, and Religious*

not to uncover hidden truths but to loosen the grip these frameworks exert on us, thereby opening the possibility of another way of seeing and knowing. In both the Buddhist and the Wittgensteinian senses, the knowledge to be pursued does not aim to construct systems; it aims to transform vision. Our hope for freedom does not arise from fleeing dependence and conditionality, but from recognizing them: that is, from becoming aware of our inescapable conditionedness.

2. *The Two Truths: Context and the Madhyamaka Critique*

Given this premise, the core philosophical question is not *what* we see, but *how* we see it: the frame that gives sense to experience. In Buddhist philosophy, this insight took systematic form in the teaching of the Two Truths (*dvayasatya*). Early Abhidharma[2] texts introduced this distinction to explain why the Buddha sometimes used everyday terms like "person" or "self", while also denying any permanent enduring subject. What began as a linguistic and exegetical strategy – probably building on the earlier hermeneutical distinction between *nītārtha* (definitive) and *neyārtha* (requiring interpretation) teachings[3] – gradually acquired ontological depth, becoming a distinction between two levels of truth and reality: conventional and ultimate. In this framework, everyday designations – such as the human self or a chariot or a jar – belonged to the conventional level, while ultimate reality was thought to consist of indivisible elements (*dharmas*) defined by inherent characteristics (*svalakṣaṇa*). This term, *svalakṣaṇa*, or specific feature, was first seen as an abstract definition. In Dignāga's work, however, it was redefined as a "unique particular", a raw sensorial data that generate inner representations. With this shift, ontological primacy moved from irreducible categories to

Belief. University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles, 1967, p. 55; and L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, § 115. Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford, 2009, p. 53.

[2] *Abhidharma* means "higher teaching" and refers to a group of scholastic traditions that sought to systematize the Buddha's teachings through detailed analysis of mental and physical phenomena.

[3] Among the scholars who have advanced this view, see: G. Newland & T. Tillemans, *An Introduction to Conventional Truth*, in The Cowherds (edited by), *Moonshadows: Conventional Truth in Buddhist Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2011, p. 5; C. W. Huntington, *The Emptiness of Emptiness: An Introduction to Early Indian Mādhyamika*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1989, p. 38; Y. Karunadasa, *The Dhamma Theory: Philosophical Cornerstone of the Abhidhamma*, Wheel Publication 412/413, Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, 1996, pp. 25-26; Y. Karunadasa, *Theravāda Version of the Two Truths*, paper presented at the *Korean Conference of Buddhist Studies*, 2006, p. 1.

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unique particulars, from the world of logic and abstraction to the world of experience and epistemic practices. The Madhyamaka school, however, rejected this kind of approach. For Nāgārjuna, its founder, ultimate truth lies not in a hidden essence behind appearances, but in emptiness (*śūnyatā*), which is nothing other than the Buddha's early teaching of dependent origination: the fact that things arise only in dependence on causes and conditions. As he writes: «Dependent origination we declare to be emptiness… [so] there is no dharma whatsoever that is non-empty»[4]. Since dependent origination and emptiness are two names for the same reality, and since dependent origination describes the conventional world, ultimate and conventional truth are not two separate realms but two perspectives on one interdependent reality.

3. *Speaking in Emptiness: Wittgenstein and Candrakīrti*

Let us now see how Candrakīrti, one of Nāgārjuna's major commentators, develops this perspective in his critique of Dignāga's foundational epistemology. Dignāga used the term *svalakṣaṇa* not simply as the defining characteristic of a *dharma*, but as a self-sufficient unit of pure perception. For Candrakīrti, this is an abstract and misleading use of the word, which must instead be brought back to its everyday use. This move, simple yet radical, resonates with Wittgenstein's reminder:

> «one must always ask oneself: is the word ever actually used in this way in the language in which it is at home?
> What we do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use»[5].

By "metaphysical use", Wittgenstein means all the uses that are connected to the traditional notions of necessity, essence, and intrinsic nature. By contrasting this with everyday use, his aim is not to give ordinary language a privileged status but to employ it as a counterpoint: a therapeutic contrast that makes the metaphysical use, and its deceptive character, visible[6]. Candrakīrti makes a similar move: in his

[4] Nāgārjuna, *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, 24.18, trans. by M. Siderits & S. Katsura, *Nāgārjuna's Middle Way: The Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, Wisdom Publications, Boston, 2013, p. 278.

[5] L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §116, cit., p. 53.

[6] See G. Baker, *Wittgenstein on Metaphysical/Everyday Use*, in *Philosophical Quarterly*, LII, 208, 2002, pp. 289-302.

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polemic against Dignāga, he shifts his attention from a theoretical model of pure knowledge back to the way words are used in everyday life. He accuses Dignāga of altering the term *svalakṣaṇa*, turning it from "that through which something is characterized" into "that which is characterized". This redefinition, contrary to both classical Sanskrit and everyday usage, turned a relational feature into an independent entity. The result is regress, since even when reified, the term *svalakṣaṇa* retains its relational structure and always presupposes a distinction between what characterizes and what is characterized. This exemplifies Wittgenstein's idea that philosophical problems often arise from non-ordinary uses of language and can be resolved accordingly:

> «We're bringing words back from their metaphysical to their normal use in language. (The man who said that one cannot step into the same river twice was wrong; one *can* step into the same river twice.) And this is what the solution of all philosophical difficulties looks like»[7].

Wittgenstein's point is that Heraclitus' mistake lies not in his idea of change, but in applying it within ordinary language, importing an abstract and analytic notion of "river" into a context where the term works in everyday discourse. Seen this way, a river is no longer the familiar body of water one can enter again, but an ongoing process of imperceptible transformation. Yet this is not how the word "river" is used in ordinary speech, where a river is indeed just a river. And of course, one can step into it twice. Dignāga makes a similar mistake: by turning a word that indicates a feature into a supposed thing, departing from its ordinary use, he creates a philosophical illusion that generates more problems than it resolves. It is often this kind of refined, technical language that gives the impression of philosophical depth:

> «The problems arising through a misinterpretation of our forms of language have the character of depth. They are deep disquietudes; they are as deeply rooted in us as the forms of our language, and their significance is as great as the importance of our language. — Let's ask ourselves: why do we feel a grammatical joke to be deep? (And that is what the depth of philosophy is)»[8].

[7] L. Wittgenstein, *The Big Typescript*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2005, p. 304.
[8] L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §111, cit., pp. 52-53.

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Therefore, the attempt to ground reality rests on a verbal illusion that reifies what is merely conceptual and relational. But, for Candrakīrti, the real problem lies in the very search for a foundation. His rejection of a final ground reflects indeed the central Madhyamaka insight: ultimate truth is not an independent reality but the unfolding of conventional truth. This brings us back to the Two Truths: if they are two kinds of reality, what, for Candrakīrti, is conventional reality? It is everyday existence, where the elements of the world remain unanalysed within experience. By contrast, Dignāga's use of *svalakṣaṇa* belongs to an abstract, analytical attempt to ground things. As Candrakīrti points out, however,

> «in worldly pragmatic usage, no such analytical investigation operates, and worldly things exist without any analytical investigation being undertaken» [9].

In the realm of conventional truth, things are "real" only as long as we do not analyze them, since analysis feeds the metaphysical temptation of a hidden reality [10]. This is precisely what Nāgārjuna rejects: ultimate truth is not another realm beneath appearances, but the emptiness revealed in dependent origination. Wittgenstein makes the same point when he notes that our philosophical unease begins with the thought that «the essence is hidden from us» [11]. In both cases, the craving for a hidden ground generates the very confusion it hopes to dispel.

The idea that the essence of things must be uncovered also contradicts core Buddhist principles, made explicit in Madhyamaka thought: the conventional world has no ultimate foundation, since everything arises through dependent origination. That is, from causes and effects without a first point of origin. Therefore, rather than seeking a final ground, we must accept what Wittgenstein calls the "bedrock": the point where further inquiry no longer makes sense, or where our capacity to go on simply reaches its limit. In philosophy, the real challenge is knowing when to stop: realizing that in many cases the solution we

[9] Candrakīrti, *Prasannapadā* 1.67.7; trans. by D. S. Ruegg, *Two Prolegomena to Madhyamaka Philosophy: Candrakīrti's Prasannapadā Madhyamakavṛttiḥ on Madhyamakakārikā I.1*, Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien, Wien, 2002, p. 117.

[10] In fact, as Dan Arnold efficiently explains, the things of the ordinary everyday world of conventional truth «have "real existence", then, only to the extent that they are unanalysed. [...] That is, what defines the conventional is precisely the absence of any analytic search for something more real than what meets the eye», D. Arnold, *Buddhists, Brahmins, and Belief*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2005, p. 160.

[11] L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §92, cit., p. 48.

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seek has already been reached, or lies right before us, making further search unnecessary:

> «Why do you demand explanations? If they are given you, you will once more be facing a terminus. They cannot get you any further than you are at present» [12].

Explanations cannot take us beyond where we already are, because philosophy, in Wittgenstein's view, does not explain but describe: it does not reveal hidden foundations but clarifies what is already present to us. Nāgārjuna makes the same point when he insists that *nirvāṇa* is not another world beyond *saṃsāra*, but this very reality freed from the urge to seek a "beyond." In both cases, our task is not to go elsewhere, but to see more clearly where we already are.

As Wittgenstein once wrote in his personal notes:

> «I might say: if the place I want to get to could only be reached by way of a ladder, I would give up trying to get there. For the place I really have to get to is a place I must already be at now. Anything that I might reach by climbing a ladder does not interest me» [13].

This remark explicitly refers to the image that closed his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, where the propositions were compared to a ladder: once they had lifted the reader to a clearer view, they had to be discarded. [14] Yet the remark itself reveals Wittgenstein's shift of perspective: needing a ladder already presupposes the existence of another level of meaning, one that seems deeper or more real than the world we live in, and it is precisely this assumption that generates metaphysical questions, together with the frustration of never being able to resolve them. Since there is no second reality to be reached, the task is simply to recognize this world as it is, with fresh eyes. This is also Nāgārjuna's point: *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* are not two separate realms but one and the same. To reify *nirvāṇa* as a distinct plane only sustains confusion, because *nirvāṇa* is not something transcendent but a clearer perspective on *saṃsāra*, just as ultimate truth is nothing more than recognizing the way things appear within conventional truth.

[12] L. Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, §315, University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles, 1967, p. 58.

[13] L. Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 1980, p. 7.

[14] See L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Routledge, London-New York, 2001, p. 89.

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Conclusions: Toward a Non-Foundational Soteriological Epistemology

Pulling all the threads together, for Madhyamaka emptiness lies at the heart of existence, but this does not mean that nothing exists. It means that everything is impermanent, interconnected, and dependent on causes and conditions. Suffering arises when we cling to things, and to ourselves, as if they were permanent, yet insight into emptiness shows that nothing lasts, not even the self. We exist, but never as fixed beings, and realizing this is the key to freedom from suffering. Buddhism and Wittgenstein help us focus on the same point: the metaphysical impulse arises from the wish to escape ordinary life, but when we reach what seems to be a "final sense", it ultimately reveals itself as an "absence of sense". This is not nihilism, but a return to where we began, only now without the illusion of something that lies beyond.

As the well-known Zen parable says:

> «Before one studies Zen, mountains are mountains and rivers are rivers. After a first glimpse into the truth of Zen, mountains are no longer mountains and rivers no longer rivers. But after awakening, mountains are once again mountains, and rivers are once again rivers» [15].

Nirvāṇa, then, is not an escape into the transcendent but the rediscovery of mountains as mountains and rivers as rivers, seen as empty of any unreachable intrinsic meaning. The same paradox appears in the Madhyamaka doctrine of the Two Truths: ultimate truth is nothing other than conventional truth. Yet the latter cannot be discarded, because the ultimate is reached only through the conventional: as Candrakīrti explains, just as we need a container to carry water, we need conventional truth to access the ultimate. Seen under this light, Buddhism appears as a soteriological path that denies any fixed ground for knowledge, while making the very act of knowing part of the path to liberation. Ultimate truth is not a hidden layer beneath appearances, but the realization that there is no hidden layer at all, and that we do not need one.

Read together, Madhyamaka and Wittgenstein point to the same direction: loosening the grip of illusion, they turn attention from what

[15] This well-known and frequently cited Zen parable originates from the words of Master Qingyuan in the *Compendium of the Five Lamps*. For a reliable translation, see U. App, *Master Yunmen. From the Record of the Chan Master "Gate of the Clouds"*, Kodansha, Tokyo-New York, 1994, p. 111.

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we think we know to the ways our knowing holds us captive. What remains is not a doctrine but a shared way: a practice that puts knowing in the service of clarity and release, and imagines an understanding that does not seek to grasp, but learns to let go.

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Hope Beyond the Apocalypse: An Ovidian Myth in The Road by Cormac McCarthy

Carlo Maria Simone

Amidst Cormac McCarthy's novel *The Road* we come across a subtle yet unambiguous sample of Ovidian reception, which is unexpected inside the *corpus* of an author who usually hides his sources [1].

Halfway into the novel and their journey through the postapocalyptic waste land, the anonymous protagonist and his son come across a ragged wanderer by the roadside: «an old man, small and bent», compared to «a vulture broken in the road», «like some storybook peddler from an antique time, dark and bent and spider thin and soon to vanish forever» [2]. To avoid any risks, the father would prefer not to give any assistance to the unknown traveller. However, the son insists on offering him food. Faced with the boy's demand, which underlines the old man's destitution and loneliness [3], the father makes the surprising observation relevant to this paper: «He stood looking off down the road. Damn, he whispered. He looked down at the old man. Perhaps he'd turn into a god and they to trees. All right, he said» [4].

In these lines the American writer unmistakably evokes the ancient

[1] Quoting Michael Lynn Crews: «Critics interested in the question [...] of McCarthy's literary interests and influences have had to sustain themselves on scraps. [...] something like Harold Bloom's anxiety of influence haunts McCarthy's creative efforts»; see M. L. Crews, *Books are Made Out of Books*, The University of Texas Press, Austin 2024, p. 1. See also N. Monk, *Intertextual and Interdisciplinary Approaches to Cormac McCarthy: Borders and Crossings*, Routledge, New York 2012.

[2] C. McCarthy, *The Road*, Vintage International, New York 2007, pp. 161, 163 and 174.

[3] *Ibid*., p. 163.

[4] *Ivi*.

myth of Philemon and Baucis [5]. Their story is invented [6] and recounted by the Latin poet Ovid in *Metamorphoses* 8:612-727 [7].

Thanks to the extraordinary and almost uninterrupted fortune of *Metamorphoses* in Western culture, the myth of Philemon and Baucis has been regarded for centuries as a famous *exemplum* of hospitality towards the gods. The story recounts how Jupiter and Mercury descended in disguise to the mortal world, in Phrygia, where they were refused hospitality by all the inhabitants of the region to whom they applied. Only Philemon and his wife Baucis, a poor couple, welcomed the two strangers. The spouses offered them the best of what little they had, seating them at their table. Once the true divine identity of the travelers was revealed, the elderly were rewarded for their good deed: their house was transformed into a temple of which they were appointed priests. Moreover, when the end of their days came, the gods granted their greatest desire: never to see the tomb of their beloved. So it came to pass: as they bid farewell, the two were transformed into trees, forever close to one another in this new arboreal form – a linden and an oak. Meanwhile, the village that denied hospitality to the gods was submerged, becoming a lake.

In the words by the father in *The Road*, «Perhaps he'd turn into a god and they to trees», we may conceivably glimpse a hint of irony; yet, as Russell Hillier has observed, the man immediately agrees to his son's insistence, and the old stranger will be given hospitality for a night. «The man's evocation of Ovid actively shapes and informs his moral decision-making» [8], just as since the Middle Ages the myth of Philemon and Baucis has been read in a moralizing key, as an *exemplum* of hospitality [9]. Moreover, the recollection of the myth of Philemon and

[5] Probably the first scholar to have noticed this Ovidian reception inside *The Road* was Lydia Cooper, although she did not grasp all of its critical implications: see R. Hillier, *"Each the Other's World Entire": Intertextuality and the Worth of Textual Remembrance in Cormac McCarthy's* The Road, in *English Studies*, XCVI, 6, 2015, p. 683.

[6] A detailed analysis of the origin of Philemon and Baucis' myth can be found in the unavoidable work by M. Beller, *Philemon und Baucis in der europäischen Literatur - Stoffgeschichte und Analyse*, Winter, Heidelberg 1967, pp. 19-36. On the Ovidian debt to Callimachus, see also M.C. Álvarez Morán-R. M. Iglesias Montiel, *Filemón y Baucis*, in *Scripta Fulgentina*, XVI, 31-32, 2006, pp. 127-30. Against the Oriental origin of the myth is M. Boillat, *Les Métamorphoses d'Ovide. Thèmes majeurs et problèmes de composition*, Lang, Berne–Francfort 1976, p. 105, n. 138.

[7] Which is in the very middle of the whole poem, just like the encounter with the «old man» is the middle of the novel.

[8] R. Hillier, *"Each the Other's World Entire": Intertextuality and the Worth of Textual Remembrance in Cormac McCarthy's* The Road, cit., p. 683.

[9] M. Beller, *Philemon und Baucis in der europäischen Literatur - Stoffgeschichte und Analyse*, cit., pp. 43-62.

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Baucis – whose greatest wish was never to witness the death of the beloved – bitterly underscores the novel's pervasive insistence that the father would never wish to outlive his son, as well as his longing to remain together forever [10]. This, however, will not come to pass, for at the conclusion of the story the father is killed, while the son continues his journey with a family of strangers who take him in.

Without detracting from Hillier's observations, I believe that the main purpose of McCarthy's recollection of Ovid in this passage is not to stress the relationship between father and son, but to suggest the son's "divinity", operating a remarkable reversal of Ovid's myth.

The Phrygian couple are not merely protagonists of a story of hospitality, but of hospitality towards the gods in disguise (a recurrent theme of capital importance in Western literature and traceable to the broader theme of recognition-*anagnóris*, from the *Odyssey* onward [11]). But in *The Road*, if we expected to read of an encounter with a god in disguise analogous to Ovid, we would immediately be disappointed. The old wanderer does indeed bear characteristics that recall the sacred: he introduces himself with a biblical name, Ely [12]; he is virtually blind, like the ancient seers, and solitary and neglected, like many "prophetic" figures scattered throughout McCarthy's works [13]. Yet, far from being a god in disguise, Ely declares that he does not believe in any god: «There is no God and we are his prophets» [14] is Ely's paradoxical assertion. Moreover, Ely is a false name [15]: thus the very nature of this character appears to parody the sacred.

The desacralizing nature of Ely is only the first half of the reversal mentioned above. Another possibility emerges: that the boy may actually be the true god in disguise.

Faced with the father's provocation («You thought he was an an-

[10] R. Hillier, *"Each the Other's World Entire": Intertextuality and the Worth of Textual Remembrance in Cormac McCarthy's* The Road, cit., pp. 683-685.

[11] Given the vast body of specialist literature, it seems appropriate to limit ourselves to citing the most authoritative contributions on the subject: T. Cave, *Recognitions: A Study in Poetics*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1990; P. Boitani, *Riconoscere è un dio. Scene e temi del riconoscimento nella letteratura*, Einaudi, Torino 2014.

[12] On comparison between Ely and prophet Elijah, see E.J. Wielenberg, *God, Morality, and Meaning in Cormac McCarthy's* The Road, in *The Cormac McCarthy Journal*, VIII, 1, 2010, pp. 2-3.

[13] F. Baucia-F. Bellini, *Luci dall'abisso: nel pensiero di Cormac McCarthy*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 2024, pp. 56-87.

[14] C. McCarthy, *The Road*, cit., p. 170.

[15] Ely is the only character in the novel with a proper name, although it is not his true name: see *ibid.*, p. 171.

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gel? [...] What if I said that he's a god?»[16]), Ely is skeptical. He replies: «I hope that's not true what you said because to be on the road with the last god would be a terrible thing so I hope it's not true. Things will be better when everybody's gone»[17].

The next day, at the moment of parting forever, Ely shows no gratitude and, even when pressed by the father, utters no word of thanks to the boy, despite the father insisting that, were it not for his son, he would never have welcomed him[18]. Ely and the father then reflect on what might have motivated the boy to insist on hosting the old man. Ely suggests that the boy may have some sort of faith: «Maybe he believes in God». To which the father responds by reaffirming the essentially mysterious nature of his son: «I dont [*sic*] know what he believes in»[19]. Father and son then set off again, leaving Ely to his fate.

As critics have noted, this is not the first suggestion in *The Road* that the boy may hide divine traits. The father seems intimately convinced of it. Not only is the boy often depicted as a sort of living *Shekhinah*[20], but he is even referred to as the hypostasis of the Word of God: for example, in the opening lines of the novel, contemplating his son at rest, the father muses to himself: «If he is not the word of God God never spoke»[21]. To the father, the boy is a «golden chalice, good to house a god»[22].

The reversal of the myth of Philemon and Baucis may shed light upon the *vexata quaestio* of the boy's divinity. By the Ovidian remembrance, we are ready to encounter a god, but clearly he is not Ely. It may be the boy instead: not literally, but figuratively; and not an ancient and punitive one, but a merciful one: a young *figura Christi*.

The son's acts of goodness are more than just «their own reward»[23]. Behind the boy's forgiving beyond reason resides a deeper hope

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 170.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 172.
[18] *Ibid.*, p. 173.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 174.
[20] R. Hillier, *"Each the Other's World Entire": Intertextuality and the Worth of Textual Remembrance in Cormac McCarthy's* The Road, cit., p. 679.
[21] C. McCarthy, *The Road*, cit., p. 5. On this statement, see E.J. Wielenberg, *God, Morality, and Meaning in Cormac McCarthy's* The Road, cit., pp. 1-2 and 18.
[22] C. McCarthy, *The Road*, cit., p. 75. As is known, the original title for *The Road* should have been *The Grail*: see *e.g.* Lydia R. Cooper, *Cormac McCarthy's* The Road *as Apocalyptic Grail Narrative*, in *Studies in the Novel*, XLIII, 2, 2011, pp. 218-9. The novel is dedicated to the author's latest son, John Francis.
[23] I am discussing the words by R. Hillier, *"Each the Other's World Entire": Intertextuality and the Worth of Textual Remembrance in Cormac McCarthy's* The Road, cit., p. 683.

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than in is father's Abraham-like blind faith [24]. While Ely represents the contemporary nihilism, in the comparison between father and son's positions the contrast between the God of the Old Testament and the merciful Father of the New Testament reverberates [25].

This is highlighted in a later and closely related passage of the novel: the pages dedicated to the thief on the beach [26]. Here one can observe the different treatment that father and son displays towards the thief, who, differently from Ely, is not just a *xénos* (stranger) to host, but a true malevolent, if pitiable, figure. Naturally, the father punishes him; "divinely", the son forgives him. To the father's warning: «You're not the one who has to worry about everything», he replies: «Yes I am [...] I am the one» [27]. The reiteration of «I am» may not be casual: bringing on this Christological reading, one can remember that inside the Gospel of John several times Jesus significantly refers to himself saying «I am» [28]. Furthermore, a similar lack of understanding between parent(s) and young Christ can be found in the Gospel of Luke [29]. One might also remember that Christ, between death and resurrection, had to descend to Hell [30]: and even if the world will «not be put back» and «not be made right again» [31], this hope will go on, increased [32], just like it has been after Christ's death.

The son's preeminence is established once for all by the father himself in the moment of his own death: «You're the best guy. You always

[24] See A. Noble, *The Absurdity of Hope in Cormac McCarthy's* The Road, in *South Atlantic Review*, LXXVI, 3, 2011, p. 103.

[25] A similar pattern was recently recognized also by M.C. Hulse, *Finding Grace in* The Road*: Moses, Messiah, and John 1:17*, in *The Cormac McCarthy Journal*, XXII, 1, 2024, pp. 75-93.

[26] C. McCarthy, *The Road*, cit., pp. 253-60.

[27] *Ibid*., p. 259.

[28] Jn. 6:35, 41, 48, 51; 8:12, 58; 9:5; 10:7, 9; 10:11, 14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1, 5; 18:5. It echoes *Exodus* 3:14.

[29] Lk. 2:41-52.

[30] See *e.g.* the *Apostles' Creed.* On this point see also S.L. Rambo, *Beyond Redemption? Reading Cormac McCarthy's* The Road *after the End of the World* 110-114, in *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, XLI, 2, 2008, pp. 110-114.

[31] C. McCarthy, *The Road*, cit., 287.

[32] By the fact that the family hosting the boy at the end of the novel have two other children. Proper attention should be given to the fact that the novel closes with this gesture of welcome and gratuitousness – a gesture more hopeful than reasonable for both. Maybe this family is something more than a *deux ex machina* (I find this definition in R. Graulund, *Fulcrums and Borderlands: A Desert Reading of Cormac McCarthy's* The Road, in *Orbis Litterarum*, LXI, 1, 2010, p. 72.)

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were»[33]. Old makes way for the new, fire is shared[34] and deflagrates into forgiveness: hope is an unhoped-for possibility, the fulfillment of something the father hesitates to embrace.

In conclusion, the myth of Philemon and Baucis is evoked by McCarthy with a twofold function.

The first is to frame the entire scene of the encounter with Ely within a clear perimeter of hospitality and divinity, in a wider context in which the whole world has already received his punishment. Moreover, the memory of the blessed fate of the two spouses echoes the father's desire to remain forever at his son's side.

The second is to invert the terms of Ovid's myth. The guest harbours nothing divine, shows no gratitude, and offers no recompense. There is no arboreal metamorphosis that will rescue the two protagonists from their mortal destiny. While in Ovid the gods manifest themselves, in McCarthy theophany remains implicit (*figura Christi*). Yet in the boy's charity lies his difference both from ancient, punitive paradigm of Jupiter and Mercury and from the father, who indeed "carries the fire", but has no hope left except his son. The man's "divine mission" [35] is «to take care» of the boy («I was appointed to do that by God»[36]), nothing more: he has «no argument» of hope in the face of his wife's reasonable intention to commit suicide[37]. Instead, the boy seems to have hope in something greater: this is why he looks interested in maintaining a relationship with God. If we are not meant to see Him[38], at least He may see us, as the boy hopes in the scene of the shoot of the flarepistol[39]. Apparently, the boy is the last living being still giving God's existence a chance: that is to say, he is the only one who still maintains hope as a criterion at the very basis of action, *in spe contra spem*[40].

[33] C. McCarhty, *The Road*, cit., p. 279. At the same time, it is crucial to highlight that the son's exceptionality would not have been without the father's efforts and love: see M. DeCoste, *"A thing that even death cannot undo": the Operation of the Theological Virtues in Cormac McCarthy's* The Road, in *Religion & Literature*, XLIV, 2, 2012, p. 82.

[34] On the recurrent image of the fire of goodness, see R. Hillier, *"Like some supplicant to the darkness over them all": The Good of John Grady Cole in Cormac McCarthy's* Cities of the Plain, in *The Cormac McCarthy Journal*, XIV, 1, 2016, pp. 28-29.

[35] See E.J. Wielenberg, *God, Morality, and Meaning in Cormac McCarthy's* The Road, cit., p. 4.

[36] C. McCarthy, *The Road*, cit., p. 77.

[37] *Ibid*., p. 57.

[38] *Ibid*., pp. 11-12.

[39] *Ibid*., pp. 246-247.

[40] Romans 4:18.

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Hope and Disquiet. Reflections on the Dialectics of Freedom

Jan Juhani Steinmann

«*In the horizon of the infinite*. – We have forsaken the land and gone to sea! We have destroyed the bridge behind us – more so, we have demolished the land behind us! Now, little ship, look out! Beside you is the ocean; it is true, it does not always roar, and at times it lies there like silk and gold and dreams of goodness. But there will be hours when you realize that it is infinite and that there is nothing more awesome than infinity. Oh, the poor bird that has felt free and now strikes against the walls of this cage! Woe, when homesickness for the land overcomes you, as if there had been more *freedom* there – and there is no more "land"!» [1]

These words by Friedrich Nietzsche point to the paradoxical openness of the present, which since modernity has been caught up in the terrible dialectics of the "horizon of the infinite", which, out of sheer freedom, turned into bondage, which, in its boundless zeal for new beginnings, committed itself to a new confinement. This confinement makes us restless, robs us of hope and at the same time mocks the freedom that overestimated itself. If we take a closer look at our fractured present, it can be described as a complex crisis in five moments: – First, as a crisis of the real, because where once being could be justified as stable and continuous in itself, today it is threatened by the extremes of nihilism or materialistic constructivism. All being is empty and therefore feasible. – Second, as a crisis of the possible, insofar as human beings, as beings with the sense of possibility, are

[1] Friedrich Nietzsche: *The Gay Science*. Cambridge University Press, 2021, p. 119.

today increasingly exposed to attacks on their supposed insubstantiality, especially from trans- and posthumanist circles. "Human beings" do not exist, so we first want to "make them possible", which means "create" them. – Thirdly, as a crisis of the impossible, insofar as God, as the possible impossibility *par excellence*, is today being called into question by godlessness or neo-soteriologies ranging from esotericism to technocentrism. God does not exist, so we ourselves set the standard for our possible salvation. – Fourthly, this manifests itself as a crisis of the language of the real, the possible and the impossible, insofar as the logos used therein corresponds neither phenomenologically nor analytically with the given. Where language is out of joint, it loses itself in the groundlessness of the infinite. – Fifthly, as a crisis of the freedom claimed therein, insofar as the unspeakability of being, humanity and religion is veiled behind a freedom of the sayable, which in turn points to the aforementioned crisis of the logos. Today, too much is expressed through the masks of an overused freedom of supposed clarity, which undermines trust in being, in humanity, in God and in language. As such, these five moments of crisis are therefore also a crisis of hope, which was lost in infinity, only to end up in a new confinement that no longer knows how to distinguish the sayable from the unsayable, the possible from the impossible, the expected from the unexpected.

What is therefore needed today is a descriptive analysis of the phenomenon of freedom as it presents itself today in the dialectics of possibility and impossibility as a reality between hope and unrest, in order to spark an understanding of freedom that is at the height of the present, but not in the shallows of its untruth.

1. *The phenomenon of freedom*

We can initially describe the natural phenomenon of freedom as unrestraint, as freedom from coercion and obligation, or independence. At the same time, however, it also manifests itself as an ability, a skill and a capacity for action that allows for self-efficacy. Where freedom comes into effect, it always transcends its basic disposition. Phenomenologically speaking, freedom transcends itself into its own excessiveness (Latin, *ex-cedere* – it goes beyond itself), and that means into the action and practice resulting from it. Freedom is therefore an excess that is itself irreducible, i.e. our epoché must refrain from all non-excessiveness in order to circle around that "thing itself" in freedom that

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goes beyond itself. This must be brought into language, even where it already touches on the unspeakable. Formally, freedom thus manifests itself as the capacity for a transition from an initial order to its disorder. Freedom is thus the potential for the extraordinary, whereby the orders to be broken are manifold in nature (the norm, the rule, the law, shame, fear, physics, tradition, etc.). This applies to concrete actions such as a first kiss, a murder, mediating between two disputing parties or deciding to embark on a daring journey; but it also applies to thinking, discovering and creating, where it attempts to penetrate the unspeakable nature of speech (from Gilgamesh to Plato to Einstein). This is *extraordinary freedom.* Vice versa, however, freedom is always also a possible practice within an existing order (to withhold the kiss, not to kill, only to observe or to remain at home), but only because the step into the excessiveness of freedom was first dared in order to "voluntarily" renounce certain possibilities and remain within the reality of the existing order. This is *ordinary freedom.* Both dimensions of freedom, the extraordinary and the ordinary, cross the threshold of excess, which means that – in relation to what is initially given – they touch the new, the different and the alien in a positive or negative way, leading to the collapse of the norm of the given (extraordinary freedom) or not (ordinary freedom). Here we are particularly interested in the transgressive potential of freedom, which breaks down normality, because this is where we see how hope and unrest are intertwined, insofar as without unrest (from freedom) no pure hope can sprout.

At this point, we now enter the realm of a much-travelled terrain, namely that of freedom as an "excess of anxiety", understood as a bodily response to the pathos of freedom. Ever since Søren Kierkegaard's analysis of the concept of anxiety (1844), human freedom of choice and the associated sense of possibility have emerged as sources of anxiety in normality. Where Kierkegaard describes this unease as anxiety of the nothingness of possibility, of *being able* to sin before God*,* this concept of the "unease of freedom" has subsequently undergone a multitude of further descriptive developments. These range from Martin Heidegger's description of rushing into the possibility of one's own being (as authenticity or inauthenticity) in *Being and Time*, to Jean-Paul Sartre's description of anxiety as the total responsibility of human action (as sincerity or insincerity) in *Being and Nothingness*, to Bernhard Waldenfels' responses register to the alienating pathos of the hyperphenomenon of impossibility. George Bataille's analyses of the heterology of impossibility and Fernando Pessoa's descriptions of uneventful turmoil

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in *The Book of Disquiet* also take up precisely this transgressive dimension of collapsive freedom. Disquiet thus arises as a consequence of our excessive freedom, because this hyperbole hints at something unspeakable for which we have no words and which therefore unsettles us.

2. *The phenomenon of freedom as a disturbing phenomenon of excess*

If we summarise what has been said so far, we can describe freedom, understood as excessive and collapse-like pathos towards the unspeakable, also as a phenomenon of responsivity. Responsivity means that the restlessness resulting from freedom is a response to the pathos of the possibilities of being free, which itself turns back into freedom. We respond to the pathos-filled possibilities of freedom (killing someone, kissing someone, embarking on a daring journey, etc.) with disquiet (what could be the consequences of killing someone, kissing someone, embarking on a daring journey) in order to calm an uncalm freedom (making the right decision within the spectrum of possibilities). Freedom is therefore both pathos and response. We recognise three moments in this: – First, the *moment of prospecting:* freedom that causes disquiet is always anticipated freedom that has not yet been realised, that is, it is prospective, meaning that it is also ahead of its time. Its hyperbolic structure is "It could be that". This is an onto-temporal incongruity that we think and say prospectively; and thus it causes unease. – Second, the *moment of existentiality:* prospective freedom is unsettling because its consequences could affect us existentially, because we would have to "live" it. This moment of freedom is thus characterised as an existential protention arising from the present tense of prospecting. Thirdly, the *moment of existential-responsive prospecting,* in which the two previous moments converge. For the existential protention arising from the present tense of prospecting is a physical response to the temporal hyperbole of our anticipation. Its disquiet, conceived with Emmanuel Levinas and Waldenfels, arises too early and too late from the diastasis between pathos and response, between being addressed and responding, and thus manifests itself as the aforementioned unease in the rift of the difference event – the double event of the experience of pathos and response. All three moments can be understood as expressions of excessiveness, from whose exaggeration the unease in freedom emerges, longing for calm.

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We could also explore these three moments in greater depth using three classic metaphysical categories. – Firstly, we can describe freedom as prospecting as *a possibility*; namely, as an existential sense of possibility and capability in practical self-deconstruction. This form of capability is the excess of my possibility as the execution of the ecstatic self. What is possible is what we are capable of. Prospecting thus becomes the possible place of being of capability, that is, the place of possible freedom. – Secondly, freedom as existentiality can be described as *reality*. It is the space of the given and the realised of the possible, as the difference realised therein. The real thus reveals itself as crystallised excess, as the place of being of accomplished freedom and all the facts of its execution. Thirdly, we can describe freedom as existential prospecting as *impossibility*. Every physical response to the pathos of freedom is itself already a realised sense of possibility, but a physical existential response to the prospectively possible and the existentially real always occurs in the timelessness and placelessness of a diastasis as the actual impossibility of itself, for the rupture of this execution is and remains hyperbolic. Furthermore, precisely for this reason, it can manifest itself as unease about the fact that even the impossible is to be made possible and realised. This implies a potential upheaval and collapse of reality, because in it the transgressive power of freedom as a disruption of normality becomes radicalised. Why? Because categorically, the impossible is actually the designation of an ontological barrier. It therefore appears as a nothingness of possibility, something that cannot be done, something intolerable, improbable, unimaginable, but which is now to become possible – for example, becoming God, as the Christian promise of theosis states.

3. *The phenomenon of freedom as hope*

Let us now take a closer look at how hope sprouts within freedom as a disturbing phenomenon of excess. Hope initially means that everything is still possible, because even the seemingly impossible could become reality. The possible prospect of a realised existentiality of impossible existential responsivity thus already contains within itself the asset structure that can nourish hope. In this inclination towards a possible future, consciousness, feeling and emotion await what is to come with confidence and trust. In this expectation, there is no longer any sense of compelling unrest; rather, the tone of a re-

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assuring promise prevails, which, as the fulfilled hope of the sense of ability and creativity, even gives rise to a desire to develop this capacity: everything could turn out for the best! However, where something is excessive and *could* only succeed, it could also *fail.* The possibility of hope presupposes the possibility of failure, because otherwise we would have no hope of success, but a guarantee. Where there is the tranquillity of hope, the disquiet of the possibility of failure nevertheless remains, so that the possibility of success (even of the impossible) is possible in its realisation. Within hope, we can be unsettled by the fact that, firstly, in all our freedom, *we could* always sin before God, even where we are allowed to be hopeful. Where hope is possible, there remains the danger of distance from God and its possible consequences, i.e. the danger of God's punishment, the danger of nameless nothingness. Secondly, we could fail to live up to our own expectations. This is unsettling because what hope holds implies the danger of self-deception, the danger of a debacle of our most intimate hopes for ourselves. Thirdly, where hope is nourished, we may always experience boundless pain, whether physical or psychological. The free space that nourishes hope also opens up the danger of hurt, distress and unbearable suffering, for example in the surrender of love. – Fourthly, where there is hope, there is life, and therefore also death, which means that we could always perish from that which gives us hope. This disquiet is therefore fuelled by the constant danger of death and self-loss. This is even paradoxical, because it also concerns the death of freedom, in which freedom is concerned about its own possible loss, which would also be the loss of all hope, at least of a world-immanent nature.

Freedom as hope therefore always carries with it the weight of freedom, which arises from the open space of possibilities that hope allows, to an invisible but no less burdensome extent above our prospective existential responsivity to existence. However, this weight does not burden freedom one-sidedly with unease, but places it in a tension *between* hope and disquiet, because *even* within the anxieties (which are necessary) new hopes can always sprout, as it were in defiance. We *could* sin before God, fail, suffer or even die, but at the same time God could *still* save us, we could triumph, remain unscathed and flourish in life. Thus, it is precisely in the rift between disquiet and hope that the justified desire for trust in salvation, eudaimonia, glory and eternal vitality always arises. Only in this tension human beings gain their freest faith, their freest confidence, their freest love and their freest strength.

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We must learn to endure and affirm the ambivalent-dialectical conflict inherent in the phenomenon of freedom in order to willingly rebel against the banality of despair, arising from the pathos of possible unwillingness to accept what we do not want. Pathos and response, calm and unrest, hope and freedom – the excess of freedom only unsettles our hope to the extent that the pathos of unwillingness is not countered by a response of the will which, without eliminating the disquiet – which is not possible, because it can only be suppressed – faces life in freedom and hope with sovereignty.

4. *The poetry of sovereign freedom*

In light of the five moments of crisis in the present mentioned at the outset, disquiet and hope arise in the tension of a freedom that breaks open the respective and actual relationship to the real, the possible, the impossible and the logos. A paradigmatic example of this is a phenomenon such as technological transhumanism, which ultimately aims to overcome death by technological means (e.g. through genetic manipulation, brain-computer interfaces, avatarisation in cyberspace, brain emulsion, etc.), i.e. it seeks to make possible what was previously impossible. This is initially reflected in a correspondingly masked language of reality. What disturbs us about the hopes promised therein is that, from a phenomenological point of view, such technocentric visions do not speak from the thing itself, but rather articulate something unachievable in relation to true being (reality), true humanity (possibility) and the true God (impossibility). This excess of the logos irritates us in its unreality because it conceives the possible prospect of a realised existentiality of impossible existential responsivity as blasphemous self-deification that misses both being and man. Where technological transhumanism denies the transcendent God, the natural self-actualisation of man and the metaphysics of eternal life in order to "obtain" eternal life for the unsubstantial human being on the basis of materialistic constructivism through a neo-soteriology of an unfounded logos of overstretched freedom, it becomes entangled in the clutches of a fruitless paradox, or more precisely: of an *impossible possibility.* What it says turns out to be an expression of the inexpressible and a making available of something unavailable, for only for God nothing is impossible, but not for technological transhumanism, which loses itself in an ideology of total feasibility. The more it tries to instil new hope,

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the more its loss of reality in language and freedom unsettles its hope and robs it of its own breeding ground. All that remains are disturbing illusions and chimeras.

In light of the excessiveness of freedom, what is needed instead is not a reduction of excess, but rather its alignment with the realm of *possible impossibility*. Linguistically, this can only be achieved through a poetry of sovereign freedom grounded in phenomenology. Such *poetic phenomenology* also strains the sense of possibility, but always from the perspective of reality. It therefore responds to the crisis of the present, in the tension between freedom, disquiet and hope, with a disturbing calm and reassuring unrest of things themselves. Its basic tone should be the sayable and showable of the transcendent, hyperbolic, transgressive and metaphysical, as it *appears* at the extremes of possibility from the things themselves. As such, it expresses a freedom of other intensity and of the unthinkable that is different from mere possibility and impossible-possible, namely *real* as possible impossibility. In this fruitful paradox, it should become the logopathos of an adequate disquiet resulting from reverence and humility towards the things themselves, which it expresses excessively. Poetic phenomenology illustrates what can *only* be shown poetically. In this way, it verbalises being, humanity, God and the logos itself in a free excessiveness of its pathos that demands a response that only existence itself can provide. For only such a phenomenology responds to the unease of freedom as excess with a mode of possible impossibility that adequately refers to being, humanity, religion, language and freedom. Adequate means, as emphasised before, from the givenness of the phenomenon itself as *phainesthai* of existentiality and through a culture of description that releases an open-compelling existential response, i.e. ultimately turns into an existential poetry in accordance with the phenomena that must be *lived*. It thus shows us the phenomenon of freedom itself as a possible impossibility that compels us to an existential concretion beyond the said unsaid. Examples of such phenomenology can be found in Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Heidegger,[2] but also in a poem such as the following, which addresses the phenomenon of the coming God from an existential-poetic perspective:

[2] See Jan Juhani Steinmann: *Be Who You Become. Poetic Phenomenology following Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Heidegger* (upcoming).

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Poetise who you are

I saw from heaven, to approach its distance,
falling into the daylight, the God in three,
to deflect my departure into the night –
O sprays of ifs, flight from words,
behold: I am.

I saw from heaven, to join its nearness,
risen in the night's act, the God in two,
to relent your debut into the day –
O sprays of ifs, abiding in words,
behold: You are.

I saw from heaven, to express its vastness,
held in the twilight, the God in one,
to halt our in-stand in the twilight –
O sprays of ifs, hesitant for words,
behold: We are.

Behold: We are, you are, I am,
but upon the flesh tree of the coming God
Gaia's dark animus bore me, too,
the compulsion of a canopied dance:
To poetise the becoming that I am.

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Flaminio Piccoli, the Christian Democracy, and South America

Giammarco Basile

Between the late 1950s and the early 1990s, Italy – specifically the Christian Democracy (DC) – attempted to play a leading ideological, political, and economic role in shaping relations among Christian-inspired parties in Europe and South America. The goal was to develop a shared platform where the different currents within the Christian Democratic world could confront each other and coordinate positions on both domestic and international political issues.

At a regional level, both Europe and South America, following the Second World War, equipped themselves with structures designed to discuss differing ideological approaches, national dynamics, and shared policies meant to guarantee greater political stability and an overall improvement in living conditions.

In Europe, in 1947, the Nouvelles Équipes Internationales (NEI) was founded, composed of

leading figures from Christian-inspired forces who had participated in the Resistance. Its purpose was to confront the complex questions of the postwar period and to train political elites attentive to supranational perspectives [1].

In South America, the Christian Democratic parties, which emerged at the end of the world conflict, founded the Organización Demócrata Cristiana de América (ODCA) in Montevideo in 1947 [2]. In 1955, the first meeting between representatives of the two organizations took place in Santiago, Chile. On that occasion, the South American delega-

[1] Istituto Luigi Sturzo, Roma, Fondo Flaminio Piccoli, *DC internazionale n.2\73*, busta 170, fasc. 1556, pp. 67-72.

[2] M. De Giuseppe,G. La Bella, *Storia dell'America Latina contemporanea*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2019, p. 172.

tes decided to establish a youth commission, analogous to NEI's, which triggered the fusion of the two youth movements into the International Union of Young Christian Democrats [3]. Following this meeting, the Italian DC – aware of the profound transformations occurring across South America, such as the emergence of mass society, the rise of the middle class, and increasing attention to fundamental rights – sought to become a point of reference for its sister parties.

Indeed, in 1957, Mariano Rumor, deputy secretary of the DC, participated in ODCA's second congress, held in São Paulo (Brazil) [4]. For the Italian DC, South America represented a major, though complex, challenge: an entire continent in rapid transformation, marked by internal contradictions such as strong populist forces and the difficulty new political parties faced in establishing themselves as mass parties. In this context, Italy's goal was to position itself at the helm of the Christian Democratic family not only in Europe but beyond the continent. During the congress, Rumor emphasized the shared Latin roots and the principles of Christian Democratic ideology; he stressed – mindful of the Cold War context – the need to fight communism. He offered collaboration and solidarity to Latin American colleagues, with the awareness that, despite differences, Christian Democratic forces operated in historically and geographically diverse environments, each with its own traditions and characteristics. The stated objective for the DC was to expand international cooperation, particularly among those South American countries where Christian Democratic values were resurfacing [5].

Within this framework, contacts between the two continents intensified, culminating in the 1961 establishment of the Mondial Union of Christian Democrats (UMDC) [6]. Only in the mid-1960s, however, did these relationships begin to yield concrete results, thanks to the ideological guidance and financial support European parties allocated to international cooperation projects, enabling Western democracies to exert influence – albeit unevenly – across South America.

[3] Istituto Luigi Sturzo, Roma, Fondo Flaminio Piccoli, *DC internazionale n.2\73*, busta 170, fasc. 1556, pp. 67-72.

[4] R. Nocera, *Il sogno infranto. DC, l'Internazionale democristiana e l'America Latina (1960-1980)*, Carocci Editore, Roma, 2017, p. 19; Cfr. *Rumor al Congresso dei partiti democristiani dell'America Latina*, «*Il Popolo*», 19 settembre 1957.

[5] R. Nocera, *Il sogno infranto. DC, l'Internazionale democristiana e l'America Latina (1960-1980)*, op. cit., pp. 20-25.

[6] M. De Giuseppe, G. La Bella, *Storia dell'America Latina contemporanea*, op. cit., p. 172; Nocera R., *Il sogno infranto. DC, l'Internazionale democristiana e l'America Latina (1960-1980)*, op. cit., p. 41.

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A turning point for European Christian Democratic forces came in the mid-1960s, starting with the 1965 Taormina Congress – where the NEI was renamed the European Union of Christian Democrats (UEDC) – and continuing with the 1968 Venice Congress, which began a process of ideological reworking. This led, in 1971, to a new statute that aimed to: promote and coordinate the international action of Christian Democratic parties; deepen doctrinal reflection and foster political studies of general interest to Christian Democracy; affirm humanistic and Christian values, as well as the principles of freedom, democracy and social justice; promote the dissemination of Christian Democratic orientations and achievements; strengthen lasting cooperation among Christian Democratic parties to shape common policies [7].

The 1970s, however – despite initial optimism about international cooperation – proved difficult for both Europe and South America, even amid a temporary détente between the United States and the USSR. Europe experienced an economic crisis following the end of the dollar–gold convertibility (a decision by the Nixon administration) and the oil crisis triggered by the Yom Kippur War. These challenges coincided with an already intense social revolution that had swept through the Western world, forcing political elites to rethink their policies in response to rapid societal changes.

In South America, the 1970s corresponded to the rise of military authoritarian regimes in Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, and Chile. The military justified their takeover not as an emergency intervention but as the only way to achieve multiple goals: economic growth, domestic security, international prestige, and eradication of the communist threat [8]. These regimes received support from the United States, which – through the National Security Doctrine – provided political and economic backing, framing leftist parties as internal enemies undermining national welfare. The regimes upheld the status quo through populist social policies and neoliberal economic programs – South America would become a testing ground for neoliberalism – ultimately worsening living conditions, reducing already limited rights and liberties and increasing repression across the continent. This era would later be called the "night of democracy" [9].

European countries attempted to respond to these military regimes by refusing to recognize their governments and condemning violations

[7] Istituto Luigi Sturzo, Roma, Fondo Flaminio Piccoli, *DC internazionale n.2\73*, busta 170, fasc. 1556, p. 70.

[8] M. De Giuseppe, G. La Bella, *Storia dell'America Latina contemporanea*, op. cit., p. 249.

[9] *Ivi*, p. 248.

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of fundamental human, political, and social rights. The reaction of the Italian DC – and of Italian politics more broadly – to the 1973 Chilean coup by General Augusto Pinochet created significant diplomatic tension between the two countries. This was due in part to the Italian government's decision – supported especially by Foreign Minister Aldo Moro – to grant refuge inside the Italian embassy in Santiago to Italian citizens and political dissidents, and to provide them safe passage to Rome [10]. The Italian DC also funded an international press agency, Interpress International [11], which enabled the clandestine survival of the Chilean Christian Democratic Party (PDC) after all political parties were banned in 1977.

Despite the complexity of the situation, in the early 1980s the Christian Democratic forces attempted to revitalize political cooperation through the reorganization of the UMDC, renamed the Centrist Democratic International (IDC). At the end of Mariano Rumor's presidency (1965-1982), the Chilean politician Andrés Zaldívar [12] – a symbol of resistance to military regimes – was chosen as the new president [13]. Within this context, Flaminio Piccoli, secretary of the Italian DC and elected vice president of the IDC, did not lose sight of the possibility of contributing to the liberation of oppressed peoples and the restoration of freedom and democratic principles - values he himself had fought for during the resistance in his native Trentino under Nazi occupation [14]. For this reason, Piccoli, with his national colleagues and his European and South American counterparts, sought to give new momentum to intercontinental cooperation by reorganizing international structures, reducing their size, and strengthening their political leadership in collective decision-making. This required revising the organization of the various institutions responsible for Christian Democratic international action, which were often ineffective due to slow decision-making processes and internal ideological diversity. As Angelo Bernassola, deputy head of international relations for the Ita-

[10] L. Giorgi, *Tra democrazia e rivoluzione. La Democrazia cristiana e la politica italiana nei giorni del golpe cileno*, Guerini e associati, Milano, 2024, p. 119.

[11] See P. Acanfora, *L'Inter press service e il nuovo ordine internazionale. Informazione e terzomondismo negli anni della Guerra Fredda*, Reality Book, Roma, 2019.

[12] R. Papini, *L'Internazionale DC. La cooperazione tra i partiti democratici cristiani dal 1925 al 1985*, Franco Angeli, Milano, 1986, p. 303.

[13] R. Nocera, *Il sogno infranto. DC, l'Internazionale democristiana e l'America Latina (1960-1980)*, op. cit., p. 135.

[14] See L. Tergher., *Gli esordi di un politico nazionale. Flaminio Piccoli, 1945-1958. Materiali per una biografia politica*, Fondazione Museo storico del Trentino, Trento, 2011; Goio M., *Flaminio Piccoli. Un uomo, una scelta*, Rusconi, Milano, 1972.

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lian DC, emphasized, the goal was to «strengthen the political role of initiative, proposal, stimulus, and impetus on major issues such as peace, Third World development, and the defence of human rights[15]». As a result, the organization established a Political Bureau composed of the principal leaders of national Christian Democratic parties. This body was to define the political direction of the movement, whose core values included «encouraging the struggle of authentic democrats of every persuasion, and discouraging and defeating authoritarian situations of right-wing, military, and leftist origin». In a continent where «thousands of Christian Democrats had been assassinated, tortured, and persecuted», this commitment represented «the strongest testament to our political identity as an authentic force for the liberation of peoples»[16]. Bernassola also criticized U.S. support for military regimes, arguing that «stability and a peaceful future for the continent could only be built upon solid democratic institutions, profound economic and social reforms, and the discouragement of military coups or the schemes of international economic groups», as such forces «stifled any autonomous expression and the ability of these peoples to use their vast natural, human, cultural, and technical resources[17]». The Italian DC consistently emphasized that the efforts of Christian Democratic parties – nationally and internationally – should focus on «a strong commitment to peace and cooperation among peoples so that no person in the world may ever again experience the fear and terror of war, massacre, hunger, or dictatorship; so that every young person may have a future chosen freely, rather than a path marked by the humiliation of their abilities»[18].

Piccoli himself pursued this mission, becoming president of the IDC in 1986 after the conclusion of Zaldívar's term[19]. During his presidency, he attempted to renew the organization's political platform

[15] Istituto Luigi Sturzo, Roma, Fondo Piccoli, Serie V, Busta 171, fasc. 1557, *UMDC, programmi di attività, partiti europei. Intervista ad Angelo Bernassola, viceresponsabile delle relazioni internazionali della DC italiana*, s.d., p. 1.

[16] *Ivi*, p. 2.

[17] Istituto Luigi Sturzo, Roma, Fondo Piccoli, Serie V, Busta 171, fasc. 1557, *UMDC, programmi di attività, partiti europei. Intervista ad Angelo Bernassola, viceresponsabile delle relazioni internazionali della DC italiana*, s.d., p.3.

[18] *Ivi*, p.5.

[19] R. Nocera, *Il sogno infranto. DC, l'Internazionale democristiana e l'America Latina (1960-1980)*, op. cit., p. 145; L. Tergher, *Gli esordi di un politico nazionale. Flaminio Piccoli, 1945-1958. Materiali per una biografia politica*, p.32; F. Bojardi (a cura di), *Flaminio Piccoli. La strategia del coraggio: Profilo ed antologia*, Rubbettino, Roma, 2005, p. 68.

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through a series of "Ideological Conferences" [20] focused on the challenges facing Christian Democracy and the world on the eve of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

At the end of his presidency, Piccoli was tasked by the IDC's Political Bureau with organizing a major ideological conference to be held in Santiago, Chile. Despite his enthusiasm, the project encountered major obstacles: Italy was engulfed in the Tangentopoli corruption scandals, leading to a lack of support from the DC; and Germany's CDU distanced itself from the IDC [21], preferring bilateral relations with South American political forces. Nonetheless, Piccoli tried to advance the organization's renewal by drafting a new statute meant to reinvigorate intercontinental political action. His efforts, however, found little support from most sister parties, except a few Latin American leaders. With difficulty, the conference was finally held in Santiago in 1994, two years behind schedule. European participation was limited, though South American parties were well represented. Still, the meeting failed to trigger the renewal Piccoli had envisioned [22].

On the contrary, the Santiago conference marked the end of the Italian DC's international ambitions. Italy lost its influence not only in South America but also within the broader Western sphere, becoming increasingly marginal in both the Atlantic Alliance and the European integration process, a trend later reinforced by the dissolution of the DC itself [23].

In conclusion, it can be said that the Italian DC – thanks to a diverse set of internal leaders and political currents – tried to promote its values, ideals, and projects to improve civil society not only nationally but internationally. Through ideological, political, and financial sup-

[20] Manila in 1986; Santiago, Chile, in 1987; Panama and Vienna in 1989; the Vienna Ideological Conference in 1989 initiated the debate on the possibility of extending cooperation to Eastern European countries, in anticipation of the end of Soviet communism.

[21] L. Tergher, *Gli esordi di un politico nazionale. Flaminio Piccoli, 1945-1958. Materiali per una biografia politica*, p.32.

[22] *Ivi*, p.33; The theme of renewal was always present in Piccoli's political thinking, since, in his political vision, the party had to be attentive to social and economic transformations and only through careful analysis of these issues was it possible to arrive at a synthesis that would allow the country's political needs to be understood and addressed. In the international context, Piccoli similarly saw the IDC and other international organisations dealing with the DC's international relations as having little impact on the evolution of global dynamics, which did not allow for a broad-based policy that would have guaranteed all member countries a general improvement in political, economic and social conditions.

[23] See G. Formigoni, P. Pombeni, G. Vecchio, *Storia della Democrazia Cristiana 1943-1993*, il Mulino, Bologna, 2023

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port to sisters' parties striving for democracy, as seen clearly in Chile [24], where Christian Democracy ensured the survival of the PDC, which returned to power after Pinochet's defeat in the 1989 referendum with Zaldívar's election as prime minister - the DC left a meaningful mark. However, outside the Chilean case, the party's many political initiatives across South America often failed to achieve the desired results, due in part to Italy's solitary action – lacking decisive support from Germany's CDU – and to the dynamics of the Cold War, which limited Italy's freedom to maneuver in foreign policy [25].

[24] L. Giorgi, *Tra democrazia e rivoluzione. La Democrazia cristiana e la politica italiana nei giorni del golpe cileno*, p. 200.

[25] A. Varsori, *Dalla rinascita al declino. Storia internazionale dell'Italia repubblicana*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2022, pp. 597-98. Cfr. U. Gentiloni Silveri, *La politica estera*, in Mondo Contemporaneo, n. 2\3, Franco Angeli, Milano 2018, pp. 267-282.

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Note sul metodo di Florenskij

Cecilia Benassi

In questo studio desidero riflettere su alcuni concetti particolarmente significativi dell'opera florenskijana avanzandone una lettura in chiave metodologica [1]. Alcuni di essi, infatti, sembrano essere stati proposti dallo stesso autore con tale pregnanza sia pratica che concettuale da risultare non solo determinanti nell'interrogazione sui metodi adeguati allo studio della sua opera, ma anche, forse, forieri di un inedito potenziale metodologico.

I parametri che ho sinteticamente cercato di indagare sono *integralità* e *organicità*; il rapporto tensivo e generativo tra *ergon* ed *energeia*. Oltre a due categorie trasversali – *metodologia simbolica* e *metodologia poetica* – che tendono a identificare gli snodi procedurali di alcune dinamiche creative della scrittura dell'autore.

1. *Integralità*

Secondo Florenskij, «dal concetto di interezza deriva tutto il resto» [2]. Si tratta di un concetto a cui ritorna in diversi passi della sua opera, e reiteratamente nelle lettere dal gulag [3]. Analisi dettagliate sull'idea di

[1] Rimando all'importante contributo sul tema di Šapošnikov: V.A. Šapošnikov, *Il desiderio di concretezza: la metodologia di Padre Pavel Florenskij e l'apologetica cristiana*, in *Il pensiero polifonico di Pavel Florenskij. Una risposta alle sfide del presente*, PFTS University Press, Cagliari 2018, pp. 159-191. Sempre di questo autore: Id., *Mathematics as the Key to a holistic World View: The Case of Pavel Florensky*, in *Lateranum*, LXXXIII, 3, 2017, pp. 535-562.

[2] P.A. Florenskij, *Lo spazio e il tempo nell'arte*, a cura di N. Misler, Adelphi, Milano 1995, p. 252.

[3] A proposito, qualcosa è già stato detto qui: C. Benassi, *Il metodo e l'intero. Note sull'eredità di Pavel Florenskij*, in *Studium-Contemporary Humanism Open Access Annals*, 2, 2024, pp. 314-316.

intero e sulla sua origine etimologica si trovano in particolare in due scritti, rispettivamente del 1917 [4] e del 1923 [5].

In ambedue i lavori, un ruolo particolarmente importante è attribuito all'indagine polifonica delle etimologie e delle accezioni semantiche del termine in alcune tradizioni culturali e linguistiche: russo, paleoslavo, latino, greco, ebraico.

L'autore mette in evidenza come l'essere sano, casto, pieno e compiuto (perfetto < *perficio*) siano le caratteristiche di ciò che è integro [6], al punto che «quanto più è profonda la perdita di integrità, tanto più profondamente si perde la saggezza, l'interezza», e «tutta questa saggezza, questa integrità interiore, se viene percepita dall'esterno è definita come bellezza» [7].

Infatti, mentre nella concezione greca l'intero è la salute, la forza di coesione (сила связующая) e la forza unificante (сила объединяющая), nella concezione latina, *totus* sottolinea il momento della pienezza di una molteplicità e, dunque, ciò che è unito (то, что объединяется) [8]. Florenskij sostiene inoltre che la forma più antica di *totus* fosse *touetos*, che significava «essere strapieno» [9].

«La concezione slava, invece, si colloca nel mezzo: essa intende l'intero come incarnazione (воплощение), come manifestazione della salute nel corpo, come *bellezza* (как красоту)» [10]; infatti, «la radice della parola целый (celyj) è la stessa che si trova nella parola greca καλός, "bello"» [11].

Come conseguenza, solo un'opera percepita nella sua integrità sarà bella, e solo in questa prospettiva si potrà conoscere sapientemente. Al contrario, frammentare un tutto organico per poterlo conoscere, porterebbe alla disintegrazione dell'oggetto conosciuto e del soggetto conoscente, e alla perdita di un sapere fecondo.

Questa prospettiva genera «la difficoltà di spiegare *astrattamente* un problema [che riguardi una forma] organica nel quale vi sia un'in-

[4] P.A. Florenskij, *Celoe*, in *U vodorazdelov mysli*, vol. 1, Akademičeskij proekt, Moskva 2013, pp. 470-475. Scritto di sei pagine dell'ottobre 1917 che apriva la terza parte dell'opera *Agli spartiacque del pensiero. Tratti di metafisica concreta* (da qui in avanti: *Spartiacque*).

[5] Mi riferisco in particolare alla lezione al VChUTEMAS del 5 dicembre 1924: P.A. Florenskij, *Istorija i filosofija iskusstva*, a cura di A. Trubačev, Akademičeskij proekt, Moskva 2021, pp. 412-422. In it.: Id., *Lo spazio e il tempo*, cit., pp. 253-263.

[6] P.A. Florenskij, *Lo spazio e il tempo*, cit., pp. 255-258.

[7] *Ivi*, p. 256.

[8] Cfr. P.A. Florenskij, *Celoe*, cit., p. 474.

[9] Cfr. P.A. Florenskij, *Lo spazio e il tempo*, cit., p. 257.

[10] P.A. Florenskij, *Celoe*, cit., p. 474, corsivo nell'originale.

[11] P.A. Florenskij, *Lo spazio e il tempo*, cit., p. 256.

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teriore totalità. Da qualsiasi parte lo affrontiamo, sarà poi necessario parlare di un'altra parte» [12].

È proprio questo, in effetti, l'approccio conoscitivo esercitato da Florenskij per tutta la vita e confidato a Kirill nella citatissima lettera del 21 febbraio 1937, scoperta e fatta conoscere per la prima volta da Michael Hagemeister nella prima riedizione degli *Immaginari* del 1985:

> «Che cosa ho fatto per tutta la vita? Ho visto il mondo come un tutto, come un unico quadro e realtà, ma in ogni momento o, meglio, in ogni fase della mia vita, da un preciso punto di vista. Ho esaminato le relazioni del mondo nella sezione con il piano definito da una data direzione, e ho cercato con ciò di capire la struttura del mondo secondo il carattere che mi interessava in quella fase. I piani della sezione cambiavano ma l'uno non annullava l'altro, bensì lo arricchiva in una continua dialettica del pensiero (un cambiamento dei piani di visione, di impostazione costante rispetto al mondo come un tutto)» [13].

Potremmo dire che questa citazione esprime parte del metodo florenskijano per non "smembrare e uccidere" – all'interno dei suoi processi conoscitivi – ciò che è vivo; un metodo che vediamo all'opera in molti passaggi dei suoi scritti.

Ad esempio, in *Empireo e empiria* e in *Il punto*. Qui l'attraversamento dei contributi e dei metodi d'approccio delle varie discipline su un medesimo argomento, rende evidente la circolarità crescente (come una spirale ascendente) ma non esaustiva della conoscenza [14], che in ultima istanza – per sintonizzarsi col fondo vivente delle cose – necessita della percezione mistica [15].

Qui si spalanca la forma di conoscenza che caratterizza una concezione del mondo profonda. In questa prospettiva,

> «questo mondo si consegna, per così dire, ad altri mondi più elevati, diventa il loro rappresentante e, in un certo senso, il loro portatore; rifiutando

[12] *Ivi*, p. 259, corsivo mio.

[13] P.A. Florenskij, *Lettera a Kirill*, 21 febbraio 1937, in Id., *Sočinenija v četyrech tomach*, a cura di A. Trubačev et alii, Mysl', Moskva 1994-1999, vol. 4, p. 672. In it.: Id., *Vi penso sempre…*, a cura di N. Valentini-L. Žak, trad. L.M. Pignataro, Mondadori, Milano 2024, p. 601.

[14] Ogni scienza, infatti, «circoscrive il campo delle sue ricerche creando gli schemi dei suoi oggetti e utilizzando in questo modo un insieme conosciuto di criteri: sono proprio questi ultimi a determinare l'oggetto della scienza in quanto tale», P.A. Florenskij, *Empiria ed empirismo*, in *Il cuore cherubico. Scritti teologici, omiletici e mistici*, a cura di N. Valentini-L. Žak, trad. R. Zugan, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo (Mi) 2014, p. 85.

[15] *Ivi*, p. 100.

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> l'autoaffermazione, il suo esistere per se stesso, esso diventa esistente per un altro mondo. Con ciò stesso, tale mondo sensibile, "dopo aver perso la sua anima", dopo esser diventato il portatore di un altro mondo, custodisce quest'altro mondo in sé, nel suo corpo, incarnandolo in sé; e con ciò questo mondo si trasfigura, si spiritualizza, trasformandosi in un simbolo, cioè nell'unità organicamente viva di ciò che rappresenta e di ciò che è rappresentato, di ciò che simbolizza e di ciò che è simbolizzato. Il mondo empirico diventa trasparente e attraverso la trasparenza di questo mondo diventano visibili l'ardore e il raggiante splendore degli altri mondi» [16].

All'interno di questa concezione trovano spazio anche altri concetti che, come questo, risultano portatori di un proprio potenziale creativo.

2. *Organicità*

La concezione organica della realtà è un tema molto ricco e complesso all'interno dell'opera di Florenskij, che meriterebbe studi ampi e approfonditi. Infatti, per l'autore, ogni realtà esistente ha una struttura organica o di derivazione organica.

Tale visione viene esplicitata con particolare chiarezza ne l'*Incarnazione della forma*, sezione degli *Spartiacque*. In uno dei saggi che la costituiscono, *Organoproekcija*, Florenskij teorizza esattamente l'idea secondo cui gli strumenti sono "proiezioni" dei nostri organi che derivano da una sorta di "azione umana trattenuta":

> «L'azione può o realizzarsi direttamente, espandendosi nella sua naturale, per così dire, grandezza e disperdendosi nel mondo circostante, oppure può trattenersi, accumularsi, accrescendo il proprio potenziale, può riflettersi, raccogliersi, dare una raffigurazione immaginaria, e tale immagine si realizza allora in un altro ambiente, che solo mentalmente si riflette nell'ambito della natura, e della natura pare una parte, ma che in realtà, essendo corpo, del corpo risulta essere una prosecuzione, una sorta di corpo umano germogliato nella natura» [17].

Con questa frase Florenskij conclude il saggio, appunto, sull'estensione dei sensi e introduce *Organoproekcija*, nel cui esordio afferma che «L'utensile è un pezzo staccato dal corpo vivo o, più precisamente, dal

[16] *Ivi*, pp. 107-108.

[17] P.A. Florenskij, *La prosecuzione dei nostri sensi*, in Id., *Il simbolo e la forma. Scritti di filosofia della scienza*, a cura di N. Valentini-A. Gorelov, trad. C. Zonghetti, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino 2007, p. 158.

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principio vitale che forma il corpo; il corpo vivo [...] è l'archetipo di ogni utensile»[18].

Precisa inoltre che questa corrispondenza tra organi umani e strumenti non deriva da un'intenzione umana cosciente, bensì dal fatto che le parti del corpo – e le loro *idee* – sono «accessibili per l'uomo a una contemplazione *sub-* o *sovra-*cosciente»[19].

All'interno del saggio porta molti esempi tra cui uno che a mio avviso stupisce per la forza anticipatrice: «Il *sistema nervoso* si proietta nei dispositivi elettrici con cui, è evidente, ha una somiglianza più che formale»[20]. Qui, egli rileva assonanze non casuali tra «i fenomeni che soggiacciono alla psiche e i fenomeni elettrici»[21], come anche la somiglianza materiale tra conduttori elettrici e nervi umani: «Ogni conduttore elettrico con un cuore di metallo e un rivestimento isolante ricorda perfettamente un nervo»[22].

Questa prospettiva ha una particolare rilevanza a livello gnoseologico ed è correlata a un altro nucleo importante del suo stile di pensiero, la tensione tra *ergon* ed *energeia*.

Siccome la dinamicità vitale che Florenskij percepisce operante in ogni cosa esistente deriva dalla tensione sempre viva tra *ergon* ed *energeia*, e siccome questa tensione viene meno in qualsiasi forma di sistematizzazione o di schema, ne risulta che tutte le letture autentiche della realtà (nelle varie discipline, storia, scienze, matematiche, ecc.) non perdono questa tensione e trovano dunque la loro espressione in forme organiche correlate alla vita.

Uno dei simboli più intensi di questa prospettiva gnoseologica si condensa nella *casa*, che egli definisce «strumento degli strumenti»[23]. Nella casa, infatti, si proietta la totalità dei nostri strumenti, e siccome ogni strumento «è il riflesso di un qualche organo del nostro corpo [...] l'abitazione ha quale suo archetipo *tutto il corpo* nella sua *interezza*»[24].

Similmente, in uno scritto del dicembre 1922, la cultura stessa nella sua totalità è considerata come la casa dell'uomo, l'ambiente in cui la personalità cresce e si nutre[25]. In quel contesto, in particolare, Floren-

[18] P.A. Florenskij, *La proiezione degli organi*, in *Il simbolo e la forma*, cit., pp. 161-162, *saltim*.
[19] *Ibid*., p. 168.
[20] *Ibid*., p. 173.
[21] *Ibid*., p. 174.
[22] *Ibid.*
[23] *Ibid*., p. 176.
[24] *Ibid*., p. 177.
[25] Cfr. P.A. Florenskij, *Bilanci*, in Id., *Il valore magico della parola*, a cura di G. Lingua, Medusa, Milano 2003, pp. 91-103.

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skij rileva come la cultura rinascimentale e la comprensione scientifica del mondo (научное миропонимание) abbiano «generato un modo di pensare che non ha mai corrisposto ai bisogni dell'uomo»[26].

Così – concludeva – alla fine l'uomo

> «decide di fare le valigie, di cambiar casa per vivere in modo meno appariscente, ma in compenso più corrispondente alle vere esigenze della sua famiglia»[27].

È piuttosto stupefacente osservare come padre Pavel applichi questa visione organica – dove la struttura costitutiva delle cose può essere visualizzata come una rete di relazioni mutue e dinamiche – anche alla matematica e alla storia. Nel corso *Sulla conoscenza storica*[28] egli propone la genealogia come chiave di lettura della storia, che si trasforma così non in una *consecutio* oggettiva di fatti inerti, ma in una "rete di persone in relazione" che si estende nel tempo e nello spazio.

Per questo motivo, per esempio, Florenskij si dedicherà alacremente a diverse ricerche genealogiche, legate alla sua persona ma anche alla vita delle persone che studiava – come nel caso di Serapion Maškin[29] – e inventa diversi modi di rappresentazione di queste reti genealogiche (ad esempio: Fig. 1)[30]. Peculiare è che, oltre a indagare le genealogie legate al sangue, padre Pavel ricostituisca delle genealogie spirituali, sostenendo che anche nel mondo invisibile della generazione spirituale vi siano strutture ramificate ed elastiche che si estendono nella storia rendendola un tessuto vivo e sempre nuovamente creativo[31].

[26] *Ibid*., p. 100.
[27] *Ibid*., p. 102.
[28] P.A. Florenskij, *Ob istoričeskom poznanii*, in *Sočinenija*, cit., vol. 3/2, pp. 8-66.
[29] Cfr. P.A. Florenskij, *Dannye k žizneopisaniju Archimandrita Serapiona (Maškina)*, in *Bogoslovskij vestnik*, 1, n. 2/3, 1917, pp. 317-354.
[30] L'immagine è un disegno di Pavel Florenskij realizzato tra la fine degli anni Dieci e l'inizio degli anni Venti, ove ricostruisce la genealogia degli antenati di Kostroma dei Florenskij. In: *Obretaja put'*, vol. 2., a cura di P.V. Florenskij, Progress-Tradicija, Moskva 2015, p. 181.
[31] Cfr. per esempio: *Ibid*., p. 673, in cui l'autore scrive i nomi di persone che hanno contribuito alla sua formazione interiore come rami di un albero che intitola: «Albero del bene o del male o Albero della vita?». Su questo tema rimando a: V. Šapošnikov, *Kategorija čisla v konkretnoj metafizike Pavla Florenskogo*, in *Cislo. Sbornik statej,* a cura di A.N. Kričevec, MAKS-Press, Moskva, pp. 362-363.

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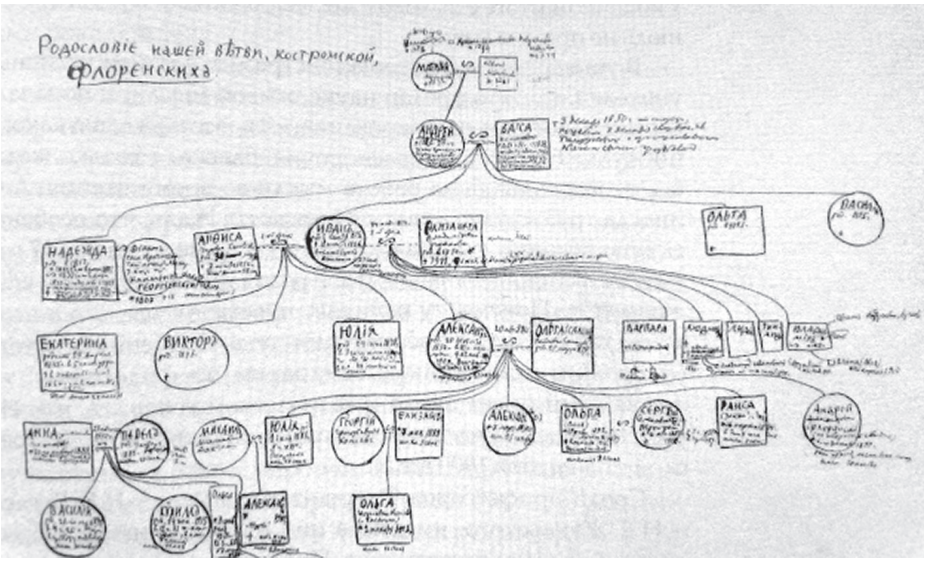

Fig. 1. - P. Florenskij, Genealogia degli antenati dei Florenskij di Kostroma.

Alla luce di quanto visto, diviene dunque chiaro che, nella prospettiva di padre Pavel, ogni realtà – così come ogni opera – è

> «un organismo vivo, in cui ogni cellula è legata all'altra e ogni immagine si presenta come il centro di rapporti multiformi con l'altra, si presenta come un simbolo, e il simbolo è una realtà superiore alla realtà stessa, giacché porta in sé l'energia di altre realtà»[32].

Come scrive infatti in quello che può essere ritenuto una sorta di testo metodologico programmatico, destinato a introdurre gli *Spartiacque*,

> «I legami tra i singoli pensieri sono organici e sostanziali; [...] Questi legami [...] *non* sono perni e travi di strutture astratte, ma fasci di innumerevoli fibre, di innumerevoli filamenti e ragnatele che vanno da un pensiero non solo ai più vicini, ma a molti, al maggior numero, a tutti gli altri. La struttura di una tale tessitura mentale non è lineare né a catena, ma reticolare (сетчатое), con innumerevoli nodi di singoli pensieri legati in coppia [...]. Questa molteplicità e multiformità delle connessioni tra i pensieri rende

[32] P.A. Florenskij, *La concezione cristiana del mondo*, a cura di A. Maccioni, Pendragon, Bologna 2011, pp. 146-147.

> la stessa tessitura solida e duttile, tanto indissolubile quanto adattabile a ogni esigenza particolare, a ciascuna struttura mentale individuale. Di più: in questa tessitura reticolare, nemmeno a colui che l'ha pensata sono completamente né immediatamente visibili tutte le connessioni dei singoli nodi e *tutto* ciò che contiene in potenza – le mutue connessioni dei centri (средоточия) del pensiero [...]»[33].

In una tale prospettiva, nessuna opera – così come nessuna realtà – «può essere razionalizzata in un unico filo, perché tirandolo è inevitabile spezzare tutto il resto, che nel contempo è anche vitale»[34].

La lettura organica, inoltre, si accorda al metodo antinomico, ove tesi e antitesi non attendono una risoluzione futura ma convivono in un'armonia polifonica e stratificata che costituisce così *una verità vivente*. Lo dice Florenskij stesso sempre nel testo *Vie e centri:*

> «I temi si rincorrono l'un l'altro, si raggiungono l'un l'altro, si sostituiscono l'un l'altro, per poi, cessato di risuonare, lasciare il posto a *nuovi* temi. Ma nei nuovi risuonano i vecchi, i già stati. Sbocciando in evoluzioni ancora inedite, intrecciandosi tra loro in diverse forme, essi sono simili ai tessuti di un organismo che, pur eterogenei, formano un unico corpo [...]. I legami sono qui molteplici (многократны), vitali e organici, in contrasto con quelli formali, numerabili e inventariabili dei sistemi razionali, sistemi che si impongono alla mente alla stregua di un meccanismo burocratico»[35].

In questo senso, lo sguardo sintetico-organico non aspira a enucleare letture della realtà mediante schemi precostituiti[36] o a maturarne una qualche forma di presentazione sistematica. Al contrario, frequentando a lungo l'opera di questo autore, diviene chiaro come il metodo da lui suggerito in questo scritto identifichi lo stesso metodo che, nel corso della vita di Florenskij, ha dato forma alla sua attività gnoseologico-creativa.

Scrive infatti:

> «"O, grammatico! Nei miei versi non cercare i sentieri, cerca i loro centri (средоточия)". Questa chiave per la comprensione di Paul Claudel, data dallo stesso poeta, deve essere tenuta saldamente in mano da colui che intende penetrare nel pensiero non sistematico (di sistema), ma organico»[37].

[33] P.A. Florenskij, *Puti i sredotočija*, in *Sočinenija*, cit., vol. 3/1, p. 35.
[34] P.A. Florenskij, *La concezione cristiana*, cit., p. 147.
[35] P.A. Florenskij, *Puti i sredotočija*, cit., p. 37.
[36] P.A. Florenskij, *Autoreferat*, in Id., *Il simbolo e la forma*, cit., p. 5.
[37] P.A. Florenskij, *Puti i sredotočija*, cit., pp. 38-39.

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3. *Ergon ed energeia*

Un'acuta intuizione di Nina Kaučiščvili coglie un nesso profondo tra il procedimento della lezione [38] inteso da Florenskij e l'antinomia *energeia/ergon*, che affiora in numerosi passaggi del suo pensiero.

Scrive la Kaučiščvili:

> «Una *lekcija* va dunque avviata dall'esposizione esauriente di una data problematica, e per esporre tutte le sfaccettature di tale problematica bisogna mettere in evidenza ogni singola fase dell'evoluzione storica. Solo allora si riuscirà a raggiungere la verità scientifica entro un determinato problema, e cioè quando si compiono sforzi continui affinché essa venga identificata con *energeia*, e cioè con una dinamica inarrestabile. Al contrario, se ci si limita ad una semplice esposizione dei fatti, viene ostacolato lo slancio dell'autentica creatività e si finisce per fossilizzarsi nell'*ergon*. Il criterio metodologico e la serietà scientifica esigono che l'oggetto venga contemplato da svariati punti di vista, perché si riesca ad individuare l'angolatura che permetta di spingere l'analisi così in profondità da arrivare all'individuazione della protoforma [...]: solo così si può sperare di superare l'aspetto visibile per cogliervi il mistero invisibile» [39].

La prospettiva colta dalla Kaučiščvili intende mettere in guardia da due rischi opposti: da un lato, quello di confondere il lavoro scientifico con la semplice descrizione dell'oggetto, dall'altro quello di ragionare su di esso trattandolo come un'astrazione a-storica e a-contestuale.

Secondo Florenskij, entrambe queste derive si attivano quando il pensiero sceglie di spostarsi «al di fuori del grembo dell'umanità» e di «sbarazzarsi di Dio», trasformando così «la nostra realtà in qualcosa che prende corpo come per incanto da un tocco di bacchetta magica», rendendola in primo luogo irreale e in secondo luogo composta di indizi.

In questa prospettiva noi diveniamo gli artefici della stessa realtà. E, uscendo dal pensiero concreto, il mondo si fa "meonico": «resterà soltanto la ragione stessa con la sua struttura. Ma nella misura in cui la realtà della ragione si affievolisce, alla ragione stessa mancherà il terreno sotto i piedi. Se il mondo è meonico, anche l'uomo viene liquidato» [40].

[38] P.A. Florenskij, *Lezione e* lectio, in *La Nuova Europa*, II, 350 (2010), pp. 19-23.

[39] N. Kaučiščvili, *La cultura e l'unità dei cristiani in Pavel Florenskij*, in *Studi ecumenici*, IV, 3-4, 1986, pp. 325-326.

[40] Per questa e le citazioni del paragrafo precedente: P.A. Florenskij, *La concezione cristiana*, cit., pp. 148-149.

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La prospettiva enunciata fa comprendere l'inopportunità di approcci sistematici e pone il problema di proposte metodologiche più aperte alla lettura dinamica e interconnessa della *complessità* del reale[41]. Questo mira a trasformare l'avventura della conoscenza in una partecipazione personale al processo di manifestazione dell'oggetto studiato, in quanto «nella conoscenza si esprimono l'autentica espansione del soggetto e l'autentica unione della sua energia (nell'accezione trecentesca del termine) con l'energia della realtà conoscibile»[42].

4. *La forma elastica*

Ne *La legge dell'illusione*, Florenskij considera i diversi modi di rapportarsi alla relazione tra l'intero e le parti nell'analisi di un'opera. Sebbene in quel frangente, l'autore si riferisse all'opera d'arte, vale la pena riferire le sue considerazioni anche all'*opera maior* che è il mondo: la realtà e lo scibile.

Padre Pavel parte dalla constatazione che «l'integrità-interezza (целостность) dell'opera d'arte fa presupporre un legame e una dipendenza reciproca tra i singoli elementi»[43]; tuttavia, se «l'opera esiste come un qualche intero-totalità (целое)», non potrà essere formata passivamente dai singoli elementi ma dovrà bensì dominarli, indirizzarli, e farli partecipi della sua interezza[44].

Questo rilievo mette in luce un paradosso: da un lato i singoli elementi devono possedere una loro forma autonoma ed essere percepiti nella forza specifica che ne deriva; allo stesso tempo, però, l'intero di cui fanno parte deve essere in grado di sottomettere a sé e di pervadere tutti i suoi elementi. Se infatti non assolve a questo compito, esso è un non-essere, giacché, come cita Florenskij, «secondo le parole dei santi Padri, "solo il non-essere non possiede energia"»[45].

Conseguentemente,

> «al di là delle singole correlazioni con tutti gli altri elementi simili in una certa opera, ciascun elemento non deve essere percepito, nella nostra coscienza, allo stesso modo in cui viene percepito insieme agli altri»[46],

[41] Su Florenskij e il tema della complessità: L. Žak, *Lo stupore della complessità. Introduzione al pensiero complesso di Pavel A. Florenskij*, Mimesis, Milano-Udine 2025, in stampa.
[42] P.A. Florenskij, *Autoreferat*, cit., pp. 7-8.
[43] P.A. Florenskij, *Lo spazio e il tempo*, cit., p. 375.
[44] Cfr. P.A. Florenskij, *La legge dell'illusione*, in *Ibid*., p. 205.
[45] *Ibid*.
[46] *Ibid.*

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cioè in quanto sottomesso al tutto.

Di conseguenza, la percezione della forma propria al singolo elemento è essenziale perché l'intero possa essere definito autenticamente tale; infatti, un intero composto da elementi privi di una forma propria, lo rivelerebbero privo di quell'*energeia* indispensabile a distinguerlo da un qualsivoglia non-essere.

Ne deriva che, se è necessario che i singoli elementi abbiano una forma propria, essa non potrà essere rigida se non a prezzo di ledere la funzione di sostenere l'intero e di adeguarsi ai suoi fini. Per tale motivo, agli occhi di un osservatore, la forma di un intero così connotato sarà percepita come *elastica*.

L'intero, dunque

> «giunge alla coscienza soltanto per la presenza di una deformazione elastica, quando cioè in primo luogo esiste una forma autonoma dei singoli elementi in quanto tali, e, in secondo luogo, pur restando sempre la loro forma, essa è modificabile dalle forze dell'interazione reciproca» [47].

L'*illusione* che intitola il saggio sta tutta in questo scarto tra la percezione dei singoli elementi in quanto parte di un autentico intero e la loro conoscenza in quanto separati e autonomi da esso.

Secondo l'autore, è proprio sulla capacità di comprendere questa *illusione* nella sua *legge*, ovvero nel suo funzionamento costitutivo – e non invece, come un inganno percettivo "insostanziale" – che si dividono gli approcci capaci di sguardo sintetico e quelli che invece non ne sono capaci.

La comprensione comune e quella scientifica generalmente intesa, secondo Florenskij, non hanno familiarità con la sintesi, in quanto preferiscono concentrarsi sui singoli elementi nella loro funzionalità pratica (nel primo caso) o su schemi astratti e teorie che poco hanno a che spartire con la sintesi percettiva cui si riferisce (nel secondo caso).

È invece nell'«attività artistica» che la «sintesi delle percezioni è tutto mentre i singoli elementi, considerati di per sé, sono niente. Il suo compito è proprio il collegamento e la sottomissione dei singoli elementi al fine di costituirne il corpo dell'intero» [48].

In effetti, il vero intero è ritenuto da Florenskij «infinitamente più grande e più ricco di contenuto di quanto non sia razionale» [49] ed è da

[47] *Ibid*., p. 206.
[48] *Ibid.*
[49] P.A. Florenskij, *Il significato dell'idealismo*, a cura di N. Valentini, trad. R. Zugan, Rusconi, Milano 1999, p. 67.

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lui descritto come un concreto vivente:

> «Esso è circondato da una ghirlanda i cui rami si intrecciano con i rami di altre esistenze e spande intorno a sé un fragrante profumo. Ha una profondità che si estende con lunghe radici fino a penetrare negli altri mondi, e dai quali riceve la vita. La sua tonalità sonora non è quella del secco e isolato *diapason*, ma è una viva armonia che si incarna in un insieme di toni melodici, alti, svariati...»[50].

Si deduce che l'approccio artistico creativo è l'unico appropriato a cogliere la legge dell'illusione operante in un *intero*. E solo questo sguardo sembra capace di cogliere anche la forma elastica costitutiva di ogni intero, riconducibile all'antinomia tra *ergon* ed *energeia*.

5. *Metodologia simbolica*

Con il termine "metodologia simbolica" ci si vorrebbe riferire a un aspetto della scrittura di Florenskij che sembra legato tanto alla sua mente complessa, quanto alla sua propensione a contrapporre una sorta di ontologia gnoseologica al pensiero scientifico.

Secondo Florenskij

> «Il pensiero scientifico è totalmente edificato sui nomi di genere, si occupa di singoli generi, di relazioni e di caratteristiche, ma si comporta con indifferenza nei confronti della realtà, anzi vede in essa un ostacolo alla costruzione dei suoi schemi. Il pensiero scientifico cerca "il suo proprio"»[51].

Tuttavia,

> «Esiste la conoscenza simpatetica, la dedizione amorevole a ciò che è da conoscere [...]. Questa *conoscenza concreta* non è un infinito e casuale accumulare singole caratteristiche nel cui vortice viene attirata la ragione: questa, al contrario, tende a contrapporre alla frammentazione della conoscenza astratta l'unità, la compattezza e l'interezza dell'oggetto da conoscere quale essenza particolare; tende a contrapporre alla linea infinita la sfera, al segno la persona»[52].

[50] *Ibid.*
[51] P.A. Florenskij, *La venerazione del nome come presupposto filosofico*, in Id., *Il valore magico*, cit., pp. 36-37.
[52] *Ibid.*

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Tra i fondamenti di questo approccio sembra esserci anche il principio energetico della teologia delle energie di Gregorio Palamas.

L'energizzazione della realtà conosciuta corrisponde al suo essere attraversata da una forza divina che, manifestandosi in essa, raggiunge e si unisce all'energia del soggetto conoscente. Questo concetto, che emerge in diversi passaggi dei suoi scritti, a volte esplicitamente citato e altre solo implicitamente alluso, assume grande rilevanza nel suo saggio sull'*imeslavie*[53] come presupposto filosofico.

In questo saggio, Florenskij afferma che

> «chi conosce e ciò che dev'essere conosciuto sono autenticamente uniti [...] e sono altrettanto autenticamente autonomi. Nell'atto della conoscenza il soggetto non può essere separato dal suo oggetto. [...] La formula teologica «non mescolati e non separati» adottata nel concilio di Calcedonia, è pienamente applicabile alla correlazione gnoseologica di soggetto e oggetto»[54].

Secondo Florenskij, infatti, l'*essere* ha due lati, uno interno e uno esterno, che sono un'unità originaria con due direzioni differenti[55]:

> «Nell'antica terminologia questi due lati dell'essere vengono chiamati sostanza o essenza (*ousia*), e attività o energia (*energeia*). [...] Quando i pensatori medioevali dicono che ogni essere possiede la propria energia e che soltanto il non-essere non la possiede, allora questo assioma ontologico è pienamente valido anche per la comprensione comune, perché ciò significa che tutto quel che veramente è, porta in sé vita e la rivela, e testimonia la propria esistenza con la rivelazione della vita e la testimonia non solo agli altri, ma anche a se stesso. Questa rivelazione della vita è anche l'*energia dell'essenza*»[56].

Se, dunque, la conoscenza viva si fonda sull'unione di due esseri che, pur tuttavia, rimangono legati nella loro essenza e non riducibili né dissolvibili l'uno nell'altro, tale *unione* può essere pensata come una "comunione di energie". Non, dunque, una somma di attività o un contatto meccanico, ma un vero e proprio "compenetrarsi di energie" che, con Florenskij, può essere denominato *synergia*[57].

[53] Имеславме, la venerazione del Nome, riferito alla disputa onomatodossa di inizio secolo.

[54] P.A. Florenskij, *La venerazione del nome*, cit., pp. 24-25.

[55] P.A. Florenskij, *Imeslavie*, in *Sočinenija*, cit., vol. 3/1, pp. 252-287.

[56] P.A. Florenskij, *La venerazione del nome*, cit., pp. 25-26.

[57] Cfr. *Ibid.*

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Il concetto di *synergia* permette di pensare la correlazione tra i vari esseri «non meccanicamente, ma organicamente e [...] ontologicamente»[58]; la loro "co-azione" rivela attraverso se stessa sia l'uno sia l'altro essere, senza essere identica a nessuno dei due ma rappresentando «*qualcosa di nuovo*»[59].

Questo *qualcosa di nuovo* corrisponde a ciò che Florenskij definisce *simbolo*:

> «Una realtà che è più di se stessa. Questa è la definizione fondamentale del *simbolo*. *Il simbolo è qualcosa che manifesta qualcosa che esso stesso non è, che è più grande di lui e che, tuttavia, si rivela essenzialmente attraverso di lui*. Apriamo questa definizione formale: *Il simbolo è un essere la cui energia, congiunta, o meglio, cresciuta insieme con l'energia di un altro essere più prezioso, porta in sé in questo modo quest'ultimo*»[60].

In virtù di questo processo vitale e partecipativo, il soggetto conoscente non accumula nozioni ma riceve un nutrimento vivo, che diventa per lui fermento capace di penetrare e trasformare i successivi atti di conoscenza.

In questo senso, i contenuti studiati non sono materia inerte da analizzare ma si trasformano in nuovi potenziali metodologici che, interagendo con gli strumenti precedenti e applicandosi ai nuovi *case studies*, producono un sapere inedito.

L'opera di Pavel Florenskij è piena di esempi di questo modo di procedere, in cui l'autore perviene alle sue conclusioni "balzando" tra discipline diverse per vie inusuali che, alla luce delle osservazioni qui svolte, possono essere raccolte sotto il titolo di *metodologia simbolica*.

6. *Metodologia poetica*

La concezione che Florenskij ha della poesia sembra distaccarsi da quella di un lirismo formale per avvicinarsi a una concezione performativa del linguaggio, di cui la creatività poetica è una rappresentante eminente.

L'autore, infatti, è convinto che l'opera poetica sia tale solo se attesta di essere frutto di creatività libera[61], e se manifesta nella forma e nel contenuto una visione filosofica e spirituale.

[58] *Ibid.*
[59] *Ibid.*
[60] P.A. Florenskij, *Imeslavie*, cit., p. 257, corsivo dell'autore.
[61] Cfr. P.A. Florenskij, *Spiritizm, kak antichristianstvo*, in *Sočinenija*, cit., vol. 1, p. 131.

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Inoltre, egli ritiene che l'opera poetica sia una *incarnazione della forma*[62], ove il ritmo formale è un'incarnazione del *ritmo interiore*[63] dell'opera. In questo senso, l'autentica poesia tende alla trasparenza che permette di vedere attraverso se stessa le immagini[64] e il concreto: «la poesia, nella sua integralità, è teurgismo simbolico»[65].

Infine, l'autore è particolarmente interessato alla scoperta – tramite Belyj – della sinfonia come forma poetica, che secondo lui offre alle «forze molecolari della lingua» la possibilità di seguire i propri percorsi naturali giungendo a creare un intero armonico e organizzato dal di dentro[66]: «Le opere consuete possono essere paragonate alla musica monodica, questa, invece, andrà raffrontata con la polifonia...»[67].

Come nota la Ivanova, l'autore sembra rinvenire in questa forma l'andamento del proprio pensiero e il modo del suo realizzarsi sulla pagina. Tale struttura, infatti, si rintraccia nella sua tesi – *La colonna e il fondamento della verità* – e sarà da lui stesso esplicitata nel discorso per la difesa di essa, il 19 maggio 1914:

> «Lo sviluppo dialettico del pensiero non può essere raffigurato come una semplice melodia di rivelazioni per voce sola. La vita dello spirito, e in particolare una vita scandita dalla fede, è un intero incomparabilmente più interconnesso, che ricorda un tessuto o un merletto dove i fili si intrecciano in *pattern* variegati e complessi»[68].

Due anni dopo, il 27 marzo 1916, scrive in una pagina di diario:

> «Mi sembra che la mia vera vocazione non sia la scienza né la filosofia, ma la musica. [...] Essa è presente in me, risuona dal mio interno, da me creativamente riplasmata, in me costruita (ricostruita). Non posso nemmeno dire di amare la musica, giacché vedo in essa una parte di me stesso, la mia vita. Fin dall'infanzia, dalle profondità stesse dell'infanzia, complesse composizioni orchestrali mi risuonano nella testa e nel cuore – non saprei come dire – e per ore intere ho ascoltato la musica interna del mio essere. Mi sembra che se potessi registrarla, così come suona dentro di me, ne de-

[62] Titolo di una sezione degli *Spartiacque*.

[63] «Il ritmo delle immagini, il ritmo del significato», *Ibid*., p. 139.

[64] Florenskij utilizza il termine образ (*obraz*), che significa anche icona. Rimanda alla vocazione iconica della poesia.

[65] P.A. Florenskij, *«Zoloto v lazuri» Andreja Belogo. Kritičeskaja statja*, in *Sočinenija*, cit., vol. 1, 1994, p. 697.

[66] P.A. Florenskij, *Spiritizm*, cit., p. 137.

[67] *Ibid*., 140.

[68] P.A. Florenskij, *Razum i dialektika*, in *Sočinenija,* cit., vol. 2, 1996, p. 142.

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riverebbero grandiose epopee musicali. [...] Ma più di tutto mi è affine la musica orchestrale, sinfonica» [69].

Ritmo, polifonia e teurgia si intrecciano nella concezione florenskijana della poesia, con l'effetto di spostare la riflessione da una considerazione formale dei generi letterari e degli stili compositivi a un approccio sostanziale e, più propriamente, ontologico.

In Florenskij, come rileva Gej,

«La parola a un certo livello si presenta concreta ("il Verbo si è fatto carne"). In essa il significato assume una forma materiale [...] poiché è presente all'interno di un determinato "corpo" (тело); e il "corpo" stesso, a sua volta, si espone alla contemplazione mentale in qualità di uno specifico significato incarnato (воплощенный смысл). Qui "cielo" e "terra" si congiungono a un livello ideale» [70].

Questo livello ideale è esattamente quello della creazione artistica (parola, immagine, poesia, opera d'arte in generale), che si presenta come un agglomerato di energie sintetizzanti di materializzazione (овеществление) e di spiritualizzazione (одухотворение) [71].

All'interno di questa prospettiva si può osservare una tensione antinomica tra l'elemento dinamico dell'aggregazione di forze – l'energia – e il fatto che la sua azione porti non solo a una spiritualizzazione ma anche a una incarnazione materiale, caratterizzata da evidenti elementi di staticità.

Questa antinomia, nella visione di Florenskij, presiede l'articolazione della realtà e dell'attività umana, e il linguaggio ne è un rappresentante eminente [72]. In esso, infatti, si distingue tra il carattere monumentale e quello creativo della lingua, così come tra la parola "rigida" (твердое) e la parola "fluente" (текущее) [73]:

«In contrapposizione alla legge della logica $A=A$, la parola poetica e, a maggior ragione l'immagine, proclamano in realtà la legge secondo la quale $A \neq A$» [74].

[69] P.A. Florenskij, *U grani mirov*, in Id., *Iz moej žizni*, a cura di A. Trubačev, Akademičeskij proekt, Moskva 2021², pp. 375-376.

[70] N.K. Gej, *La parola e l'immagine nella concezione di P.A. Florenskij*, in *La parola nella cultura russa tra '800 e '900. Materiali per una ricognizione dello slovo*, a cura di D. Ferrari Bravo-E. Treu, Tipografia Editrice Pisana, Pisa 2010, p. 311.

[71] Cfr. *Ibid.*

[72] Cfr. P.A. Florenskij, *Le antinomie del linguaggio*.

[73] N.K. Gej, *op. cit.*, p. 312.

[74] *Ibid.*

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Per Florenskij, dunque, la natura della parola si fonda sull'ontologia organica universale e sulla datità concreta individuale [75]. Come conseguenza, l'uomo che abita coscientemente una parola siffatta, e partecipa della sua natura creatrice con le proprie energie creative, esce dal mondo isolato e dai confini della descrizione scientifica del mondo.

Questa fuoriuscita, se da un lato lo riconduce agli archetipi – facendo «risalire alla protoimmagine, dal ἔτυπος (*etypos*) al τύπος (*typos*), e dal τύπος al πρωτότυπος (*prototypos*) – dall'ectipo, per il tipo, al prototipo» [76] – dall'altro lato, in virtù dell'idea dell'«incarnabilità del Senso Assoluto dell'essere» [77], lo rende *sub* e *co*-creatore.

Infatti,

> «L'arte non è psicologica ma ontologica, è veramente la rivelazione della protoimmagine. L'arte veramente manifesta una realtà fino a questo momento a noi ignota, veramente eleva *a realibus ad realiora, et a realioribus ad realissimum*. L'artista non crea da se stesso un'immagine, ma solo toglie il velo a un'immagine già esistente, e per giunta premondana: non appone colori sulla tela, ma è come se la ripulisse dalla patina estranea, "scritture" della realtà spirituale. E in questa sua attività, come colui che apre la vista sull'incondizionato, egli stesso, nella sua attività artistica, è incondizionato: l'Uomo, nella sua attività, è incondizionato» [78].

Ma in che modo prenderà forma – particolarmente nel testo scritto – questa «creazione di vita» [79]?

Come diceva sempre nelle *Vie e centri*, la premessa agli *Spartiacque*:

> «Sì, non è dato qui alcun sistema... Ma ci sono numerose domande intorno alle radici stesse del pensiero. Dalle intuizioni primarie del pensiero filosofico sul mondo sgorgano primariamente ebollizioni, mulinelli, vortici, gorghi [... che] costituiscono le sorgenti stesse della vita. Da essi si cristallizzano in seguito le tesi solide – è necessario studiare i gorghi di pensiero che si formano così come di fatto sono, nelle loro risonanze immediate, nella loro manifesta pre-scientificità, pre-sistematicità. Senza di essi, senza le chiavi delle sorgenti del pensiero che sgorgano dalle profondità pre-intellettive, non si capirebbero nemmeno i grandi sistemi, come noi non capiremmo noi stessi» [80].

[75] Cfr. *Ibid.*, p. 313.
[76] P.A. Florenskij, *Molennye ikony Prepodobnogo Sergija*, in Id., *Istorija i filosofija*, cit., p. 145.
[77] *Ibid.*
[78] *Ibid.*
[79] *Ibid.*
[80] *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

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Quella che denominiamo dunque *metodologia poetica* identifica l'aspirazione di Florenskij a creare opere in cui, non solo nell'atto creativo ma anche in quello fruitivo, non si perda mai il legame con l'energia sorgiva.

7. *Conclusioni*

Emergono, a mio avviso, due aspetti concomitanti implicati da quanto è stato fin qui osservato. Da un lato, le peculiarità metodologiche che si è cercato di enucleare e illuminare, vorrebbero individuare alcuni nuclei fondamentali del laboratorio creativo di Pavel Florenskij. Dall'altro lato, questi stessi nuclei possono essere dei criteri guida nell'avvicinare l'opera del nostro e nell'impostare approcci ermeneutici non troppo difformi dalle sue premesse creative.

In altre parole, per lavorare onestamente con l'opera di Florenskij occorre abitare *in danza* il rapporto tensivo tra la genesi e l'intero [81].

Infatti,

> «la discretezza (дискретность) [82] della realtà conduce al riconoscimento della forma e dell'idea (in senso platonico-aristotelico) come un *uno* intero [83] che "precede le sue parti", e che le identifica per mezzo di sé senza essere da esse composto» [84].

Dal canto loro, le singole parti, sono «un ἓν (uno) che noi vediamo qui e ora, da cui si tendono innumerevoli fili verso l'altro», verso l'intero. «E questi fili – sono fili vivi. Sono arterie e nervi che partono dall'ἓν estratto e isolato, il quale è un organo vivo di un soggetto vivo» [85].

Nonostante le difficoltà che tali provocazioni metodologiche possono porre, ritengo altresì ch'esse si offrano come strumento conoscitivo appropriato a quest'*opus* cui l'autore ha voluto conferire una «struttura di carattere organico e non logico, dove le formulazioni particolari non possono essere isolate dal materiale concreto» [86].

[81] Rimando a: C. Benassi, *La genesi e l'intero. Florenskij tra poesia e metodologia poetica*, in *Rivista di Letterature Moderne e Comparate e Storia delle arti*, LXXVII, 3, 2024, pp. 277-297.

[82] La natura discreta cui qui si riferisce è relativa alla concezione del *continuum* scientifico, a cui egli contrappone «la discontinuità quanto alle correlazioni e la discretezza quanto alla realtà», P.A. Florenskij, *Avtoreferat*, in *Sočinenija*, cit., vol. 1, p. 41.

[83] Единое целое, *edinoe celoe*: letteralmente "un uno intero"; si potrebbe rendere anche come "un tutto indivisibile".

[84] *Ibid.*

[85] P.A. Florenskij, *Smysl' Idealizm*, in *Sočinenija*, cit., vol. 3/2, p. 84.

[86] P.A. Florenskij, *Avtoreferat*, cit., p. 38.

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Infine, vorrei suggerire la possibilità che la proposta culturale di Florenskij e le sue peculiarità metodologiche siano ritenute intuizioni profetiche, semi fecondi per la cultura e l'umanesimo contemporanei.

Se, dunque, da un lato il presente studio intende contribuire agli studi florenskijani, alla comprensione della sua opera e della proposta culturale da essa implicata, dall'altro lato auspica che i suoi risultati – tematici e metodologici – possano essere presi in considerazione dalle attuali prassi gnoseologiche e creative.

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Maine de Biran on the Limits of Science and the Self

Sarah Horton

According to Maine de Biran, we know ourselves through effort, which is constituted by a force and a resistance. The human person is the union between the soul (hyperorganic force) and the body (organic resistance). How the soul and body relate to each other is therefore a central question in Biran's thought. In short, the soul, or the hyperorganic force, is that which determines all conscious action – though it is essential to understand that consciousness requires both body and soul, since the will acts in and through the body.

The physical does not truly act on the moral (nonphysical) aspect of the human being because the physical is not the *source* of the will; the physical does, however, indirectly *influence* the moral – far more, indeed, than we wish it did. In fact, the soul can be wholly overwhelmed by the physical, as in madness (alienation), drunkenness, the state of being drugged, and even the ordinary case of sleep.

The Biranian rejection of materialism is not a "hyperorganicity of the gaps", as if future scientific discoveries could potentially refute it. The sentiment of effort by which I discover myself as the union of a hyperorganic force and an organic body is the primitive fact of consciousness, called primitive because it is prior to any representation or reasoning. Being immediate, it is irrefutable. I am directly given to myself such that I immediately know my will to be the source of all conscious action, including thought, and the will is given in subjective experience as not determined by the physiological. Physiology deals with what is objective and can say nothing about subjectivity.

One surprising conclusion that Biran draws from this understanding of the human person is that in madness, which he prefers to call *alienation*, the intellectual faculties are wholly destroyed because all thought has its source in the soul, which is one and indivisible. He

argues, therefore, that

> «[a] being of our species, having the external forms of man, but who neither knows nor possesses himself, does not exist for himself. Thus it is justly said in the vulgar language that, in such a state, man is outside himself [*hors de lui*] and foreign to himself (*alienus*), whence the justly coined word 'alienation', to which we can attribute a degree of generality greater than that which it has in the ordinary sense of physiologists or doctors. This term would indeed be well suited to all the states proper to the soul and organized body that carry with them the complete, momentary or permanent, absence of the sentiment of the myself, although the vital and sensitive functions experience no interruption» [1].

It is crucial to understand that alienation is common to us all. Even if we do not all experience insanity, insanity remains a possibility for us all; in the words of Emmanuel Falque, «even though we are not all *traumatized* (or alienated), we are at least all, without exception, *traumatizable* (or alienatable)» [2]. Moreover, we all do undergo the experience of alienation in *sleep* – and, indeed, while many forms of alienation are certainly not to be desired, sleep assuredly is. Biran affirms the continued humanity of the alienated person:

> «Even the soul that is the most mixed with flesh, the most dominated by the instinctive tendencies of animal sensibility, the most obscured by the passions, is still a human soul, of which the character and proper type imprinted by the Creator can never be completely effaced» [3].

The view that the intellectual faculties are entirely extinguished in alienation was already controversial in Biran's day, and it was contested by his friend, the doctor Antoine-Athanase Royer-Collard, who comments,

> «The myself, and especially free activity, are more or less altered, weakened, obscured, according to the greater or lesser intensity of these degrees, but they are destroyed and extinguished only in the last of these degrees, that is, in complete idiocy» [4].

[1] Maine de Biran, *Nouvelles considerations sur les rapports du physique et du moral de l'homme*, in *Œuvres de Maine de Biran*, vol. IX, ed. B. Baertschi, Paris, Vrin, 1990, p. 5.

[2] E. Falque, *Spiritualisme et phénoménologie : le cas Maine de Biran*, Paris, PUF, 2024, p. 162.

[3] Maine de Biran, *Nouvelles considerations sur les rapports du physique et du moral de l'homme*, cit., p. 50.

[4] *Ibid.,* p. 269.

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Biran, however, maintains his view in response:

> «So long as there is some degree of *conscium* and of *compos*, there is freedom to the same degree, and in consequence the possibility of reflecting or judging one's internal state and, as a result, of making an effort against being carried off by images. The first curative means in these partial alienations would be to exercise oneself mastery over oneself. And as long as this mastery subsists even in the lowest degree, there is no alienation properly so called»[5].

This view of insanity poses a problem of interpretation, however, given Biran's approval of a method of treatment known as the *moral treatment*. The moral treatment was pioneered in France by Jean-Baptiste Pussin (1746-1811), a superintendent at Bicêtre (similar work was being done in other countries), and it was taken up and given a theoretical foundation by the doctor Philippe Pinel (1745-1826). Moral, in this context, means not "ethical" but "having to do with the non-physical aspect of human being". The key theoretical idea underlying this approach is that the mad are not wholly mad but still have a remainder of reason to which the psychiatrist can appeal. By appealing to the patient's reason, the psychiatrist may be able to convince the patient of the irrationality of his or her delusions, thereby delivering the patient from insanity. In other words, the patient, *while delusional*, still *retains* some *capacity to reason,* and the doctor must try to enable the patient to use this remainder of reason to reject his or her delusions. Biran, commenting on the moral treatment, writes,

> «Who does not know of the admirable effects that the moralist doctor [Pinel] produces solely by the art with which he takes hold of the imagination, the sentiments, or the ideas of a sick person»[6].

How, though, can Biran endorse the moral treatment while rejecting its theoretical foundation? Because he rejects the idea of a partial alienation, he cannot account for its successes in the same way that Pinel did. What, then, can Biran say is happening when the moral treatment succeeds?

My proposed solution to this problem, though not explicit in Biran's texts, is consistent with the arguments that he makes. I propose

[5] *Ibid.,* p. 269.

[6] Maine de Biran, *Rapports du physique et du morale de l'homme*, dans *Œuvres de Maine de Biran*, vol. VI, ed. F.C.T. Moore, Paris, Vrin, 1984, p. 114

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that for Biran, true alienation may in some cases recur repeatedly, but with moments of respite. One may be aware that one is on the verge of being carried away or that one has just been carried away. The task of the doctor is thus to appeal to the patient's reason in those moments when the patient is reasonable in order to help him or her «exercise» mastery over him- or herself so that he or she is not then carried away.

Contemporary neurosciences poses an even deeper problem, however, for the contemporary reader and interpreter of Biran, inasmuch as contemporary neuroscience insists that different intellectual faculties do belong to different areas of the brain. Moreover, contemporary psychology and psychiatry attests, as did Royer-Collard in Biran's day, to the existence of patients who seem to exercise certain intellectual faculties and not others. Consider, for instance, the famous case of *The Man who Mistook his Wife for a Hat*, a patient of the neurologist Oliver Sacks. This man, according to Sacks, showed the ability to reason, while having a very limited ability to form judgments:

> «I had stopped at a florist on my way to his apartment and bought myself an extravagant red rose for my buttonhole. Now I removed this and handed it to him. He took it like a botanist or morphologist given a specimen, not like a person given a flower.
> "About six inches in length", he commented. "A convoluted red form with a linear green attachment."
> "Yes", I said encouragingly, "and what do you think it is, Dr P.?"
> "Not easy to say." He seemed perplexed. "It lacks the simple symmetry of the Platonic solids, although it may have a higher symmetry of its own. ... I think this could be an inflorescence or flower"»[7].

Biran could, perhaps, insist that this case is one of pure automatism, in which the patient is speaking like a parrot or a robot without having any idea of what he was really saying. But even if we accept that all *third-person observations* suggesting that an insane person retains some ability to reason are actually observations of automatic processes with no underlying consciousness, what are we to make of *first-person accounts* of insanity, which should not exist if insanity and conscious experience are mutually exclusive? Yet there exist first-person accounts even of psychosis, which seems to be a clear case of alienation[8].

[7] O. Sacks, *The Man who Mistook his Wife for a Hat*, New York, Summit, 1985, p. 14.

[8] See, for instance, P. Fusar-Poli et al., « The lived experience of psychosis : a bottom-up review co-written by experts by experience and academics » *World Psychiatry*, 21, n 2 (2022), p. 168-188.

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It is necessary to emphasize again that Biran's critique of materialism is by its very nature not subject to scientific refutation. And if there are cases that seem to pose a problem for his ideas, it bears noting equally that there exist puzzling cases that challenge a too-easy linking of the intellectual faculties with specific regions of the brain. Consider, for instance, the case of a 44-year-old Frenchman with hydrocephaly that had «had squeezed his brain into a narrow layer around the outside of the fluid» [9]: he likely had this condition from birth, yet was a married civil servant with two children and a measured IQ of 75. Consider also the cases of a boy who only has the right half of his brain following treatment for seizures [10], or a boy born with 2% of normal brain mass, who had nearly 80% brain mass by age 3 [11]. Both boys developed normally – a fact that is surprising if one supposes the intellectual faculties to be seated in the brain, but which Biran can explain perfectly well thanks to his rejection of materialism.

But does an analysis of these cases touch on the point that is most crucial here? Such an analysis has its place, and those who would continue in the way Biran has shown us ought to take an interest in them, given Biran's own extensive knowledge of the medicine and psychiatry of his day, but it would be possible to discuss this or that case unto infinity, in an attempt to "save Biran", without even stopping to ask whether he needs such a "saving", which he indeed never asked for. The question of the possibility of a partial destruction of the intellectual faculties is not, in the end, what matters most: the essential, for Biran, is that thought has its seat in the soul rather than in the body – which, again, no scientific discovery can ever falsify, since the primitive fact reveals it to us directly. If a resistance arising from a certain part of the brain is usually necessary for, say, the exercise of judgment but not for the exercise of reasoning, it does not follow that these activities take place or have their seat in the brain, but only that the relation between the hyperorganic force and the organic resistance is more complex than could once have been guessed. And in that case, we ought, not to attempt to guess what Biran would have said if he were still alive, but to

[9] L. Buckley, «The man with a hole in his brain», *Nature*, le 20 juillet 2007, doi :10.1038/news070716-15; see also L. Feuillet, H. Dufour et J. Pelletier, « Brain of a white-collar worker », *The Lancet* 370 (2007), p. 262.

[10] L. Nichols, «Living a whole life with half a brain», *Happier, healthy lives blog, Stanford medicine children's health*, March 31 2021, https://healthier.stanfordchildrens.org/en/living-a-whole-life-with-half-a-brain/.

[11] *The boy with no brain*, documentary produced by H. Cooker, directed by K. Monaghan, Channel 5, october 2016.

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continue to follow the pathway that he began so well. We must above all avoid falling into the trap of a materialism whose contradictions he has shown, yet which is too often presupposed today, despite the testimony of the primitive fact that is often covered over by a scientism that attributes conclusions to the sciences that in fact they can neither demonstrate nor refute.

What is most essential, then, is that Biran teaches us to recognize a limit of the physical/physiological sciences, and also a limit of human beings. Since we are not purely material beings, we cannot be thought in exclusively physical or physiological terms: despite their importance, the sciences can never plumb all the depths of human existence. And Biran shows us a limit of the self, for he shows us that to be human is always to be at risk of losing oneself. As Luís António Umbelino puts it, «for Biran […] it is existence itself that is defined by *the possibility of alienation*» [12]. One could almost say that there is nothing more human than the loss of oneself, except the fight that we must carry out to find again, each day, that «mastery of oneself» that is as precious as it is ephemeral.

In some respects, this emphasis on limits may seem odd when the focus of this conference is hope. Ultimately, however, the limits to which we are subject are constitutive of our being, and it is through embracing them that thought advances. As Biran himself wrote,

> «Hardly anyone but unhealthy people sense themselves existing; those who are in good health and even philosophers are more occupied with enjoying life than with researching what it is; they are hardly surprised to sense themselves existing» [13].

The struggle – the effort – to maintain conscious life constitutes human existence, and we may justly hope that through this struggle we will come to understand, increasingly profoundly if always imperfectly, what it means to be human.

[12] Luís António Umbelino, *Somatologia Subjectiva : Apercepção de si e Corpo em Maine de Biran*, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 2010, p. 391.

[13] Maine de Biran, *Écrits de jeunesse*, in *Œuvres de Maine de Biran*, vol. I, ed. B. Baertschi, Paris, Vrin, 1998, p. 104.

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Hope and optimism among Italian Catholic university students after the Second World War

Francesco Marcelli

Starting from the analysis of *Ricerca*, the journal of the Federation of Italian Catholic university students (Fuci), a general sense of optimism can be observed among young Catholic élites following the end of the Second World War. In fact, even during the final years of the conflict, some Italian Catholic university students harboured hopes for the construction of a new order that would replace the nazi-fascist regime [1]. It is significant that, between 18 and 23 July 1943, shortly before the fall of the fascist regime, reflections developed at the Camaldoli Monastery would later lead to the drafting of the Camaldoli Code. This was a programmatic code of political, social, and economic guidelines that Catholic intellectuals, including members of Fuci and Movimento laureati di Azione cattolica, proposed for the reconstruction of the country [2]. It profoundly influenced the drafting of the Constitution of the Italian Republic [3]. Once the conflict was over, many young Catholics' hopes for reconstruction spread more easily throughout Italy.

Six months after the end of the war, a member of Fuci, Carlo Alfredo Moro, wrote an important article for the periodical *Ricerca*, which stressed the need for young people to regain hope and love after the tragedies of the war, and thus also the desire to rebuild a new society with confidence and optimism [4]. He stated that with the end of the war, confidence

[1] L. Pomante, *«Fidudia nell'uomo e nell'intelligenza umana». La Federazione Universitaria Cattolica Italiana (FUCI) dalle origini al '68*, Eum, Macerata 2015, pp. 208-215.

[2] T. Torresi (edited by), *Il Codice di Camaldoli*, Studium, Roma 2024.

[3] M. Margotti (edited by), *Dal Codice alla Carta. I cattolici italiani tra Resistenza, realtà internazionale e impegno costituente (1943-1948)*, Edizioni Camaldoli, Camaldoli 2024.

[4] C.A. Moro, *Uomini… (e no?)*, in *Ricerca*, 15 October 1945, n. 12, p. 1.

in the future seems to have returned among people and «tanta fede nella vita, tanto coraggio, tanto amore» could be seen in the spirit of many young people[5]. When Carlo Alfredo Moro became president of the Federation, he also wrote another important article entitled «Vita nuova»; a significant title, as it invited readers to consciously begin a new life[6]. In this text, the author emphasised the importance of looking to the present with optimism despite current problems, because every historical period has hardships and opportunities, and people have to improve society, starting from the good things that life at present offers. Furthermore, the author identified in young people a desire to seek a profound reason for every action they take. Starting from this premise, young people are encouraged to act, in their studies, at work and in every other area, as if they were engaged in a mission for the benefit of society[7].

In the articles written by the members of Fuci, what emerges above all, is the urge to rebuild and relaunch Italy, starting from the new opportunities for active participation in democratic life that arose with the establishment of the Italian Republic. For example in June 1947, a member of Fuci, Vittorio Bachelet, wrote: «abbiamo fiducia nel nostro avvenire e cerchiamo di costruircelo migliore: per questo siamo convinti che la vita, anche oggi, vale la pena di essere vissuta»[8]. These are words full of hope for the future, written by a «uomo positivo» with a «ottimismo sereno», as Ernesto Preziosi described him[9]. Vittorio Bachelet, recounting the final years of World War II and the years immediately following, emphasised the enormous material and moral disasters Italians faced during this complex period. However, the difficulties were often accompanied by hope for a new future. It was probably the presence of problems to be tackled combined with hope and optimism for the future that made some young Catholics mature people capable of facing life with determination. In fact, in an article written in 1952, Bachelet stated:

> «abbiamo sentito il dovere della ricostruzione dello Stato nuovo, per il quale la fatica della democrazia non volevamo fosse una vuota parola ma un apporto consapevole e reale di tutti. Abbiamo sentito la necessità di donare energie nuove per questi ideali, la necessità di chiarire a noi stessi questi ideali, di

[5] *Ibid*.
[6] Id., *Vita nuova*, in *Ricerca*, 1 May 1947, n. 9, p. 1.
[7] *Ibid*.
[8] V. Bachelet, *Valori positivi*, in *Ricerca*, 1 June 1947, n. 11, p. 1.
[9] E. Preziosi, *Vittorio Bachelet: un uomo capace di ascoltare nella fatica del rinnovamento*, in VV. AA., *Vittorio Bachelet: un cristiano per il mondo*, AVE, Roma 1982, pp. 83-89.

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viverli» [10].

These new energies of those who contributed to building the new State, can be identified with the daily action and professional commitment of individuals. In fact, it is significant that Sergio Paronetto, in an article published in 1944 for the Catholic graduates' journal *Studium*, underlined the importance of the practice of the profession in order to lay the foundations of a «nuovo ordine sociale», the fruit of a «rivoluzione costruttiva», which would have to start from the bottom and then branch out into every area of society [11]. It was a clear strategy of Catholic presence in the human community through the commitment and diversified action of individual believers.

As Pietro Scoppola pointed out, the idea of a «successione cattolica» to fascism arose from a cultural background rooted in the thinking of many young Catholics, particularly influenced by the integral humanism of Jacques Maritain [12]. The French philosopher, through his palingenetic theories, advocated the need for the laity to build a new humanity based on the principles of personalism, in opposition to the totalitarian model of society [13]. Two articles written in 1947 for the journal *Ricerca* by Leopoldo Elia, a member of Fuci, express hope for the construction of a new order as well as the ideal of a "new Christian civilization" promoted by Maritain [14]. Elia, drawing on Maritain's teachings, invites readers to look «col desiderio e con la speranza, alla nuova civiltà cristiana, che gli uomini di buona volontà dovrebbero un giorno edificare» [15]; a new society in which there is cooperation between people and the divisive distinction between social classes disappears. He argues that before *Humanisme integral*, Maritain's most famous work, no book had so encouraged the new generations of Catholic university students and intellectuals to embrace their «responsabilità culturali» towards society [16]. Maritain's thought certainly had a fundamental influence on the formation of Italian Catholic university students and

[10] V. Bachelet, *I maestri, i giovani e la storia*, in *Studium*, March 1952, n. 3, p. 134.

[11] S. Paronetto, *Professione e rivoluzione*, in *Studium*, January-February 1944, n. 1-2, pp. 3-12.

[12] P. Scoppola, *La «nuova cristianità» perduta*, Studium, Roma 1986, pp. 11-51.

[13] See e.g. J. Maritain, *Humanisme intégral*, Fernand Aubier, Paris 1936; Id., *Man and the State*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1951.

[14] L. Elia, *Esempio di Maritain*, in *Ricerca*, 1 May 1947, n. 9, p. 3; id., *Interclassismo?*, in *Ricerca*, 1 November 1947, n. 20, p. 1.

[15] Id., *Interclassismo?*, in *Ricerca*, 1 November 1947, n. 20, p. 1.

[16] Id., *Esempio di Maritain*, in *Ricerca*, 1 May 1947, n. 9, p. 3.

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graduates [17]. In fact, the first edition of *Humanisme integral* translated into Italian was significantly edited by Giovanni Battista Montini, the ecclesiastical assistant of Fuci from 1925 to 1933. Montini and Maritain shared a profound bond rooted in close friendship [18]. It was mainly thanks to Montini's re-elaboration of Maritain's theses that the members of Fuci studied the works of this philosopher in depth.

Paolo Trionfi, co-director of the journal *Ricerca* between 1954 and 1956, invited young Catholics to cultivate Christian hope even in the most challenging times [19]. According to Trionfi, hope is a «virtù» and a «dono soprannaturale» that enables us to understand the power of God, so as to hope in Him, who alone can make human efforts bear fruit. Therefore, according to Trionfi, hope is not merely «fiducia umana nel futuro» or «confidenza ingiustificata nelle proprie forze», but a «dono sprannaturale» that leads us to trust in God's resolving action [20]. This is a Christian conception of hope, in which humanity, because of free will, has an active role, but it is only through God that human beings can concretely realise their plans. According to the Christian conception, the terms faith and hope are therefore closely linked.

Agostino Giovagnoli highlighted the presence of common «linee di spiritualità» among many Catholic intellectuals, which in the post-war period translated into a broad and diversified professional commitment aimed at improving society as a whole [21]. During the reconstruction phase several Fuci members expressed a creative optimism, emphasizing the importance of improving society through work carried out according to a Catholic professional ethic [22]. In fact, according to the Fuci president, Carlo Maria Gregolin, only by looking with hope to the destiny of humanity will the individual be able to fully fulfil his or her duty in university

[17] See R. Moro-M. Papini, *L'influenza di Maritain nella formazione dell'antifascismo degli Universitari e dei Laureati cattolici*, in VV. AA., *Jacques Maritain e la società contemporanea*, edited by R. Papini, Massimo, Milano 1978, pp. 204-219; G. Campanini, *Montini e Maritain*, in *G.B. Montini e la società italiana (1919-1939)*, Ce. Doc., Brescia 1984, pp. 83-95.

[18] See P. Chenaux, *Paul VI et Maritain. Les rapports du «Montinianisme» et du «Maritanisme»*, Studium, Roma 1994; P. Viotto, *Paolo VI – Jacques Maritain. Un'amicizia intellettuale*, Studium, Roma 2014.

[19] P. Trionfi, *La speranza cristiana nel tempo del timore e della disperazione*, in *Ricerca*, 1 February 1955, n. 3, pp. 1-2.

[20] *Ibid*.

[21] A. Giovagnoli, *Le premesse della ricostruzione. Tradizione e modernità nella classe dirigente cattolica del dopoguerra*, NIEI, Milano 1982, pp. 206-212.

[22] G. Marcucci Fanello, *Storia della F.U.C.I.*, Studium, Roma 1971, pp. 269-270.

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studies or in the practice of a profession useful to society[23]. He literally stated that «urge che ciascun cristiano scopra qual è la vocazione che Dio ha pensato per lui, e a quella si abbandoni con attiva speranza»[24]. The president of Fuci then emphasised the importance of fully understanding one's personal vocation in life, whether it lay in practising a profession or having a family. Once a person understands their specific vocation, they must act without hesitation and with active hope, aiming to improve the human community.

As Renato Moro noted, during the 1940s and 1950s the Substitute of the Vatican Secretariat of State, Giovanni Battista Montini, played a fundamental role in uniting new Catholic energies to realize a «penetrante influenza dei cattolici nel sociale e – attraverso esso – nelle classi dirigenti»[25]. In fact Montini always advised and helped Catholic university students and graduates in Italy and the rest of the world, often influencing their actions[26]. In a long speech delivered in Rome during the Jubilee of 1950 in the presence of young Catholic intellectuals and university students from all over the world, Montini underlined the importance of an optimistic spirit and a strong vitality capable of changing human society for the better[27]. Montini argued that,

> «in questi anni decisivi per l'umanità, i cattolici che studiano, che pensano, che scrivono, che lavorano nei posti direttivi della società, siano delle persone convinte, che abbiano una veduta chiara e attiva del vero senso della vita; che professino i loro principi e la loro fede»[28].

According to Montini, precisely because Catholics are driven by the hope for a better world, they should believe that their profession has a «dimensione sociale», capable of being translated into «servizio alla comunità umana»[29]. The word "service" is central to understanding the mentality that some Italian Catholics had in practising their profession in the postwar period. Indeed, the professional formation offered by Fuci

[23] C.M. Gregolin, *Il posto della speranza*, in *Ricerca*, 15 July 1957, n. 14, pp. 1-2.
[24] *Ibid*.
[25] R. Moro, *La formazione della classe dirigente cattolica (1929-1937)*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1979, p. 253.
[26] See F. De Giorgi, *Mons. Montini. Chiesa cattolica e scontri di civiltà nella prima metà del Novecento*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2012; id., *La Repubblica grigia. Cattolici, cittadinanza, educazione alla democrazia*, La Scuola, Brescia 2016.
[27] G.B. Montini, *Certezza dell'atto di fede*, in *Ricerca*, 1 September 1950, n. 17, pp. 1-8.
[28] *Ibid*.
[29] A. Giovagnoli, *Le premesse della ricostruzione. Tradizione e modernità nella classe dirigente cattolica del dopoguerra*, cit., p. 210.

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embraced this kind of Christian thinking, in which work was seen not only as a means of making a living, but also as an instrument of apostolate and a way of fostering the human community[30].

Conclusion

To conclude, hope, optimism and a desire to act were central to the commitment of many Catholic university students and intellectuals during the political, social and economic reconstruction of Italy and Europe. Therefore, the thesis of this analysis is to show the presence of a volitive and an optimistic spirit among the Catholic university students and intellectuals of that period, which helped them to rebuild, through different professions, a new society after the war. It is likely that many members of Fuci, animated by a spirit of service, undertook important professional roles in post-war Italian society because of the training they received in the Catholic association. Indeed, this optimistic spirit, often perceptible in their youthful words, probably helped to promote a volitive mentality in them.

[30] See *Enciclopedia cattolica*, Città del Vaticano, Ente per l'enciclopedia cattolica e per il libro cattolico, 1951, vol. VII, p. 972.

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The Non-person
Benveniste and Ortigues on the Role of the Third Person

Gianluca Michelli

1. *Introduction*

The article *Structure des relations de personne dans le verbe* by Benveniste [1] marked a breakthrough in linguistic studies on the category of the person, whose impact stretches far beyond the linguistic domain. Benveniste [2] maintains that first and second person pronouns–*je* and *tu*–are self-referential, directly pointing to entities existing within the « intrinsic reality of language » [3]. *Je* refers to the unique speaker of the current utterance, and similarly *tu* refers to their unique addressee. By contrast, third person pronouns (*il, elle*) refer to entities outside of discourse, and potentially to different entities in the same discourse [4]. They mark the Absent, viz., those who are not present in the speech act, and for this reason Benveniste classifies the third person as "the non-person".

Benveniste's work has stimulated direct engagement in the French-speaking academic world, both within and outside the linguistic milieu. While Ortigues first aligned with Benveniste's positions [5], he later

[1] É. Benveniste, *Structure des relations de personne dans le verbe*, in *Problèmes de linguistique générale*, vol. I, Gallimard, Paris 1966, pp. 225-236.

[2] Id., *La nature des pronoms*, in *Problèmes de linguistique générale*, vol. I, Gallimard, Paris 1966, pp. 251-257.

[3] Id., *La forme et le sens dans le langage*, in *Problèmes de linguistique générale*, vol. II, Gallimard, Paris 1974, pp. 215-229.

[4] Id., *De la subjectivité dans le langage*, in *Problèmes de linguistique générale*, vol. I, Gallimard, Paris 1966, pp. 258-266.

[5] E. Ortigues, *Le discours et le symbole. Essais en Sciences Humaines: Réflexions Philosophiques*, Beauchesne, Paris 2007 (1st ed. 1962).

developed a « dialogical philosophy of personal identity »[6], which reassesses the importance of the third person for the reciprocal recognition of the first and second persons[7]. The debate on the necessary place of the third person within the system of the person, ideally initiated by Benveniste and Ortigues, echoes in contemporary work at the crossroads between philosophy and anthropology, as observed in Hénaff in particular[8]. Accepting Benveniste's intuition that the third person differs essentially from the first two, Hénaff elaborates the figure of an anonymous third party, coinciding ultimately with the shared world between interlocutors. The third person, as an anonymous third party, plays a role that is analogous to that of a witness, beholding the symbolic pact attested by the gift-exchange practices famously described by Mauss[9]. The degree of anonymity of such a third party, however, might be disputed. Some scholars have highlighted that while the third person marks absence with respect to discourse[10], it does not per se depersonalise or objectify its referent–as is evident, for instance, in the case of direct and indirect quotation[11].

Given the far-reaching influence of Benveniste's negative characterisation of the third person, it is necessary to reassess his assumptions and to consider whether alternatives are available. The present paper does so by assuming the point of view of the philosophy of language. This may be justified by recalling the interdisciplinary nature of the academic discourse already surrounding Benveniste's work–and the articles grouped in *Problèmes de linguistique générale* in particular, which also include his contributions on the matter at issue here. I will identify two main assumptions in Benveniste's argument. First, I show how, in interpretation, third person pronouns are not as ambiguous as they may appear within *langue*. Once referentially resolved, *il* and *elle* refer

[6] The expression is introduced by V. Descombes, *Edmond Ortigues et le tournant linguistique*, in *L'Homme*, CLXXV-CLXXVI, 2005, pp. 455-474.

[7] Cfr. E. Ortigues, *Qu'est-ce qu'une personne? Prolégomènes à la question de la communication*, in *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, XXIII, 90, 1969, pp. 460-473; Id., *Identité et personnalité*, in *Dialogue*, XVI, 4, 1977, pp. 605-628.

[8] Cfr. M. Hénaff, *I/You: Reciprocity, Gift-Giving, and the Third Party*, in *Meta: Research in Hermeneutics, Phenomenology, and Practical Philosophy*, II, 1, 2010, pp. 57-83; Id., *Il dono dei filosofi. Ripensare la reciprocità*, F. Fisetti (ed. by), ETS, Pisa 2018.

[9] M. Mauss, *Essai sur le don: forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques*, F. Weber (ed. by), Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 2023.

[10] V. Descombes, *Une philosophie de la première personne*, in *Le parler de soi*, Gallimard, Paris 2014, pp. 231-251.

[11] Cfr. P. Ricœur, *Individu et identité personnelle*, in P. Veyne et al. (eds. by), *Sur l'individu*, Le Seuil, Paris 1987, pp. 54-72.

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to unique individuals, just as *je* and *tu*. Second, I argue that an analysis of the third person does not necessarily become reduced to an analysis of personal pronouns. By contrast, I suggest considering proper names as the paradigm for the analysis of the third person [12]. My argument builds on intuitions from Ortigues' book *Le discours et le symbol*e as well as later articles, assigning the third person a necessary role, alongside the first two, in the constitution of personal identities. It is concluded that the positive nature of the third person is evidenced only when one steps beyond a purely structural-semiotic level, engaging with the external world and the possibility of an objective reality.

2. *Benveniste on the category of the person*

2.1. The third person: the Absent, the non-person

In his seminal paper [13], Benveniste's declared aim is to examine the category of the person, which pertains, so it is argued, only to two classes of words, namely verbs and (personal) pronouns. Following the structuralist method, his analysis is directed towards the recognition of systems of distinctive oppositions. It is the position that the different persons occupy within these systems that define their value. Firstly, in any speech act the first person (*je*) stands in opposition to the second person (*tu*). This is what Benveniste refers to as the « correlation of subjectivity », opposing the speaker and the addressee [14]. What is shared by both pronouns in this opposition is the property of self-referentiality [15]. Together with other markers of deixis, *je* and *tu* contribute to the construction of what Benveniste calls the « reality of the discourse » [16]. Specifically, the two personal pronouns attest to the presence of speaker and addressee in the dialogue. According to Benveniste, what lies at the core of personhood is the reciprocity inherent to the correlation of subjectivity:

> « La conscience de soi n'est possible que si elle s'éprouve par contraste.

[12] In linguistics, the term 'proper nouns' is typically used to denote a grammatical category of nouns, often synonymous with 'name'. However, I use the term 'proper names' here, as it is more prevalent in philosophical literature.

[13] É. Benveniste, *Structure des relations de personne dans le verbe*, cit., p. 225.

[14] *Ibid*., p. 232.

[15] É. Benveniste, *La nature des pronoms*, cit., pp. 252, 253.

[16] *Ibid*., p. 252.

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> Je n'emploie "je" qu'en m'adressant à quelqu'un, qui sera dans mon allocution un "tu". C'est cette condition de dialogue qui est constitutive de la personne [...] »[17] (É. Benveniste, *De la subjectivité dans le langage*, cit., p. 260)

Secondly, Benveniste identifies the « correlation of personhood », which sets apart first and second person pronouns from third person pronouns (*il, elle*)[18]. This opposition is inspired by the observation, indebted to Arab grammarians, that while the former mark the presence of the interlocutors in the dialogue, the latter mark « those who are absent »[19]. *Je* and *tu* refer to persons who define themselves dialogically through their opposition to each other, and who arguably exist only in this way. *Il* and *elle*, on the other hand, refer to someone or something that is not present in the speech act, and has objective existence[20]. Consequently, the third person is not just the category of the Absent, but that of the non-person, as made explicit in a few passages[21].

Benveniste advances a number of linguistic cues that demonstrate the peculiar status of the third person, setting it apart from the first two[22]. All things considered, he concludes that « the 3rd person is fundamentally different from the other two in its status, function and distribution of forms »[23]. One feature of the third person deserves emphasis here, given its influence on successive authors–particularly Hénaff, as outlined in the Introduction. While *je* and *tu* refer to the unique utterer and co-utterer in a speech act, the third person pronouns can refer to different individuals within the same utterance[24]. Hence,

[17] « Self-awareness is only possible if it is experienced through contrast. I use 'I' only when addressing someone, who, in my speech, will be a 'you'. This dialogic condition is constitutive of the person [...] » . All translations from French are my own.

[18] É. Benveniste, *Structure des relations de personne dans le verbe*, cit., p. 231.

[19] *Ibid*., p. 228.

[20] É. Benveniste, *La nature des pronoms*, cit., p. 255.

[21] Id., *Structure des relations de personne dans le verbe*, cit., pp. 228, 231.

[22] Here are Benveniste's main observations (É. Benveniste, *Structure des relations de personne dans le verbe*, cit.): 1) Absence of verbal inflection for the 3rd person [in French]; minimally, asymmetry with 1st and 2nd person inflections, cf. the English "I play" vs. "She play*s*"; 2) Only the 3rd person is used for impersonal forms, e.g., "It rains"; 3) From the point of view of *parole*–that is, from the point of view of individual language uses–the 3rd person is sometimes used to mark either reverence or contempt towards the addressee–marking a position above or below the personal status. Further evidence for a categorial difference is discussed in É. Benveniste, *L'antonyme et le pronom en français moderne*, in *Problèmes de linguistique générale*, vol. II, Gallimard, Paris 1974, pp. 197-214.

[23] É. Benveniste, *L'antonyme et le pronom en français moderne*, cit., p. 214.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 202. Benveniste provides some examples illustrating the versatility of the third person pronoun in French:

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the third person is characterised by a certain "indifferentiation", or "anonymity", attested by the underspecification of the referent, setting it apart from the first two.

2.2. Two assumptions

One can recognise at least two assumptions in Benveniste's argument:

I. Only personal pronouns and verbal conjugation are relevant to the analysis of personhood[25].
II. *Il*, *elle* can have multiple referents, while *je* and *tu* have unique referents, who exist only in particular enunciations Benveniste's notion of « linguistic individuals »[26].

I begin by assessing Premise II, drawing on insights from formal semantics, and dedicate the next Section to a discussion of Premise I. While studying personal pronouns, one may first distinguish their indexical nature, and then the process of semantic saturation required for their interpretation. According to Kaplan[27], personal pronouns are indexicals, viz., words for which « the referent is dependent on the context of use and [whose meaning] provides a rule which determines the referent in terms of certain aspects of the context »[28]. While *il* and *elle* are true demonstratives, requiring a demonstration in addition to

a. *Il dit qu'il va partir* (= Pierre annonce son départ)
He says he is going to leave (= Pierre announces his own departure).
b. *Il dit qu'il va partir* (= Pierre annonce le départ de Paul)
He says he is going to leave (= Pierre announces Paul's departure).
c. *Il dit qu'il va pleuvoir*
He says it is going to rain.

In these examples, the referent of the first *il* is always the same, namely Pierre, while the second *il* refers alternatively to Pierre (1a), to someone else (1b), and even to no one (1c).

[25] This is because, as Benveniste puts it: « Verbs, along with pronouns, are the only type of words that are subject to the category of the person » (É. Benveniste, *Structure des relations de personne dans le verbe*, cit., p. 225).

[26] Id., *L'appareil formel de l'énonciation*, in *Problèmes de linguistique générale*, vol. II, Gallimard, Paris 1974, p. 83.

[27] D. Kaplan, *Demonstratives: An Essay on the Semantics, Logic, Metaphysics and Epistemology of Demonstratives and Other Indexicals*, in J. Almog - J. Perry - H. Wettstein (eds. by), *Themes from Kaplan*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1989, pp. 481-563.

[28] *Ibid*, p. 490. For a first overview on indexicality and its relation to deixis–which is the terminology adopted by Benveniste–see Levinson (2006). In the following, I will assume that everything Kaplan writes regarding the English pronominal system is applicable, mutatis mutandis, to the French one.

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their meaning to get a referent[29], *je* and *tu* are pure indexicals; in order to determine their referent « no associated demonstration is required, and any demonstration supplied is either for emphasis or is irrelevant »[30]. Benveniste's intuition can hence be reformulated as follows: while all pronouns are indexicals, only *je* and *tu* are pure indexicals (self-referential)[31].

The second notion to recall is that of semantic saturation, introduced by Frege[32]. A linguistic expression is saturated if and only if its meaning is fully determined, unsaturated otherwise. Some classes of words are semantically saturated, since their meaning–in Fregean terms, both their sense and their reference[33]–is independent of their context of use. A paradigmatic case is that of proper names: the word 'Mary', for instance, refers rigidly to the same individual, Mary, in all contexts[34]. By contrast, if considered out of context, *je*, *elle*, and similar indexicals are unsaturated. In a given speech act, however, they become saturated through reference resolution: once the referents of *je* (the current utterer) and *elle* (e.g., Mary) are identified, their meaning is fully determined.

At this point one could raise an objection to Benveniste's analysis of personal pronouns. What would distinguish *je* and *tu* is their uniquely determined reference, in contrast to the indeterminate reference of the third person. In order to determine the unique referent of *je* and *tu*, however, a context needs to be provided. But if contextual information is taken into account, the analysis is moving from the virtual plane of

[29] Kaplan takes a demonstration to be « typically, though not invariably, a (visual) presentation of a local object discriminated by a pointing. » (D. Kaplan, *Demonstratives*, cit., p. 490)

[30] *Ibid*., p. 491.

[31] Anscombe famously claimed that the first person pronoun does not refer to anything in the ordinary sense (G. E. M. Anscombe, *The First Person*, in S. D. Guttenplan (ed. by), *Mind and Language*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1975, pp. 45-65.). On the contrary, it serves a logical-grammatical function, signifying a position in discourse rather than an object in the world. A similar claim was recently defended by V. Descombes (*Le Marteau, le Maillet et le Clou*, in *Le parler de soi*, Gallimard, Paris 2014, pp. 252-294). More cautiously, some argue that while first and second person pronouns are referential expressions, they differ essentially from third person pronouns in how they refer–Cfr. J. Perry, *The Problem of the Essential Indexical*, in *Noûs*, XIII, 1, 1979, pp. 3-21. The issue, however, falls outside the scope of the present discussion and will be addressed in a dedicated paper.

[32] G. Frege, *Logical Investigations*, P. T. Geach (ed. by), Blackwell, Oxford 1977.

[33] Id., *On Sense and Reference*, in P. Geach - M. Black (eds. by), *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege*, Blackwell, Oxford 1948, pp. 56-78.

[34] Cfr. S. A. Kripke, *Naming and Necessity: Lectures Given to the Princeton University Philosophy Colloquium*, D. Byrne - M. Kölbel (eds. by), Harvard University Press, Cambridge (MA) 1980.

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the system of signs (*langue*) to that of actual use (Saussure's *parole*[35] or, in Ortiguesean terms, *discours*). Only at this level does *je* refer to those who have uttered it in the current utterance. On the plane of *discours*, however, also third person pronouns refer to unique individuals[36].

The tension that underlies Benveniste's early attempts to contrast first/second and third person–a tension that is made explicit in later works[37]–is that between a semiotic, or intra-linguistic, and a semantic treatment of linguistic signs, which can not dispense with the referential component of meaning. In the following Section, this tension emerges considering a class of words which, to the best of my knowledge, was not extensively discussed by Benveniste: the class of proper names.

3. *Time, objective reality, and proper names*

3.1. Ortigues: linking persons to time and reality

Before considering the case of proper names, I shall contrast the different ways in which first/second and third persons refer to time. According to Benveniste, *je* and *tu*, together with other markers of deixis, serve the function of fixing the space and time of discourse. The latter in particular is, so to speak, an « eternal present »[38]. *Il* and *elle*, on the other hand, refer to extra-linguistic entities and events, inscribed in an objective chronology[39].

In a chapter devoted to the category of the person, Ortigues appears to endorse similar positions[40]. Explicitly following Benveniste, Ortigues first characterises the third person as representing the Absent, and, consequently, the non-person[41]. In his own words, the third person is the category of « what we speak about », that is, of the object of discourse[42]. Two distinct registers are identified: the « interlocutive/allocutive register » involves only first and second persons, whereas

[35] F. de Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale*, C. Bally - A. Sechehaye (eds. by), Payot & Rivages, Paris 2016 (réimpr. éd. orig.).

[36] For simplicity, I leave aside cases of ambiguous reference, which mark the exception rather than the rule.

[37] É. Benveniste, *La forme et le sens dans le langage*, cit.

[38] Id., *De la subjectivité dans le langage*, cit., pp. 262, 263.

[39] *Ibid*., p. 265.

[40] E. Ortigues, *Le discours et le symbole.* cit.

[41] *Ibid*, p. 167.

[42] This, however, does not imply objectification per se, as shown, among others, by Descombes (*Une philosophie de la première personne*, cit.).

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the « delocutive register » additionally involves the third one. Ortigues urges that such differentiation among registers ought not be considered as external but rather as a movement internal to the person. While endorsing Benveniste's characterisation of self-referentiality, Ortigues takes *je* to be inherently future-oriented, hence introducing a temporal movement within the system of the person [43]. Moreover, *je* has no semantic content per se, since the meaning of the sentence is determined by the verb, together with its direct and indirect objects [44]. By contrast, *il* and *elle* are past-oriented, as indicated by the differentiation between genders–which is missing in the first and second persons [45].

Every discourse combines the two registers, interlocutive and delocutive, therefore unfolding the whole structure of linguistic time–which coincides, according to Ortigues, with our inner, human time. This temporal structure is presented as « the retrieval of the past into the present in anticipation of the future » [46]. As Ortigues puts it: « it is not the present that is in time; it is time that is in the present » [47], which means that, other than the current time of discourse, « personal presence includes reference to the past or future » [48].

The complementary ways in which each person relates to time is connected with the ultimate function of the system of the person. As a means for the emergence of subjectivity [49], language establishes the structure of the person in order to allow for the mutual recognition of speaker and addressee. Stepping beyond Benveniste, however, Ortigues shows how this can be accomplished only by means of a mediation through the third person [50]. As the mediating term between interlocutors, the value of the third person is logically implied–alongside first

[43] E. Ortigues, *Le discours et le symbole.* cit., p. 172.

[44] *Ibid*., p. 171.

[45] *Ibid.* Ortigues notes that there is linguistic variation in this regard: in Hebrew and Arabic, the allocutive forms also differentiate the gender. These languages are hence, in a sense, more "objectifying" than French or English.

[46] E. Ortigues, *Le discours et le symbole.* cit., p. 241.

[47] Id., *Edelman et la conscience humaine*, in *Critique*, DCCIII, 2005, p. 922.

[48] This is reminiscent of Benveniste's claim that time is produced by the enunciation, which first introduces the present (É. Benveniste, *L'appareil formel de l'énonciation*, cit., p. 83). However, just as in the case of the third person, also regarding time Benveniste seems to endorse a rather negative conception of non-present tenses. « They are not at the same level of time as the present » (Id., *Le langage et l'expérience humaine*, in *Problèmes de linguistique générale*, vol. II, Gallimard, Paris 1974, p. 74) and « do not refer to time, but to views of time, projected backwards and forwards from the present point. » (*Ibid*., p. 75). By contrast, according to Ortigues, reference to the past and future is essential to linguistic time.

[49] É. Benveniste, *De la subjectivité dans le langage*, cit.

[50] E. Ortigues, *Le discours et le symbole.* cit., p. 93.

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and second persons–for their mutual recognition:

> « Nous savons que, pour être conçu dans son intégrité, tout rapport doit être réversible sans rétour en arrière, mais en constituant une progression orientée. [...] On voit cependant que la catégorie de la personne ne peut effectuer la réflexion du dit dans le dire que parce qu'elle enveloppe aussi son contraire, la catégorie de l'objet (ou "chose dont on parle"), de sorte que les hommes n'ont de rapport entre eux que par l'intermédiaire de leur rapports au monde [...] »[51] (E. Ortigues, *Le discours et le symbole.* cit., pp. 168, 169)

The third person serves its function by anchoring discourse to reality, which can be taken to be « that which exists independently of us »[52]. By situating the interlocutors within a shared past, it allows reference to extend beyond linguistic reality and ultimately ensures the possibility of stating the truth of the phenomenon[53].

In later works, Ortigues[54] defines a person as an individual capable of occupying all three positions that constitute the communicative act: speaker, addressee, and object of discourse. The most natural way of referring to persons is through proper names. Like third person pronouns in both French and English, proper names require the third person form of the verbal paradigm. Accordingly, any comprehensive account of personhood must incorporate an analysis of proper names. This is the focus of the next Subsection.

3.2. Proper names as the paradigm for the third person

Both Benveniste and Ortigues maintain that proper names cannot be analysed as part of a language system in isolation. They are inherently linked to social structures[55]. Furthermore, they do not possess a se-

[51] « We know that, in order to be conceived in its entirety, every relation must be reversible without regression, while constituting a directed progression. [...] However, it is clear that the category of the person can only achieve the reflection of what is said in the act of saying because it also contains its opposite, the category of the object (or 'thing spoken about'), so that human beings have relations with one another only through their relations to the world [...] »

[52] E. Ortigues, *Le monothéisme: la Bible et les philosophes*, in P. Lequellec-Wolff - J.-Y. Marquet (eds. by), *Le temps de la parole et autres écrits sur l'humanité et la religion*, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, Rennes 2012, p. 128.

[53] Id., *Le discours et le symbole.* cit., p. 78.

[54] Id., *Qu'est-ce qu'une personne? Prolégomènes à la question de la communication*, cit.; M.-C. Ortigues - E. Ortigues, *Œdipe africain*, L'Harmattan, Paris 1984.

[55] E. Ortigues, *Le discours et le symbole.* cit., p. 171.

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mantic content of their own, but fulfill a purely vocative function [56]. As such, proper names serve primarily as tools for interpersonal recognition [57].

Although proper names undeniably carry social significance, they are also fundamentally linguistic entities. What, then, is their connection to the category of the person? Benveniste develops a contrastive analysis of the distribution of atonic and tonic pronominal forms in French according to three variables [58], namely: the person (1st/2nd vs. 3rd), the mode of the verb (non-imperative vs. imperative), and the grammatical function of the pronoun (direct vs. indirect object). It is observed that the tonic forms can never be substituted with the corresponding atonic ones. On the contrary, tonic forms are found in syntactic configurations that are typical of proper names. The two classes are, therefore, « functionally homogeneous » [59]. From this observation, Benveniste is inclined to treat tonic pronouns as a special case of proper names. The tonic pronouns *moi*, *toi*, *lui/elle* are « antonymes », viz., proper names of the speaker/addressee/object of discourse within the current speech act. Proper names such as 'Pierre' are, instead, « anthroponymes », viz., proper names permanently associated with individuals [60].

The same homogeneity is not found in the case of the atonic pronouns, whose distribution differs entirely from that of proper names. The etymology of the word 'pronoun' would in this case be misleading [61]. As Ortigues notes, atonic pronouns do not replace names; rather, it is proper names that stand for persons. While these are identified first with entities capable of saying *je* and *tu* in a dialogical situation [62], in successive work Ortigues makes a further, decisive step. In order to be recognised as persons, interlocutors need to relate their individual speech act to a linguistic and human history preceding and succeeding their present situation of discourse. They need, in other words, to step

[56] *Ibid*., p. 188.

[57] É. Benveniste, *L'antonyme et le pronom en français moderne*, cit., p. 200.

[58] *Ibid.* It should be recalled that the French language distinguishes among two series of personal pronouns: *je, tu, il/elle*, which are the so-called "atonic forms", and *moi, toi, lui*, the "tonic forms".

[59] *Ibid*., p. 200.

[60] *Ibid.*, p. 201.

[61] 'Pronoun' derives from the Latin *prōnōmen*, itself formed from *prō* meaning 'for' or 'in place of', and *nōmen* meaning 'name'. Thus, etymologically, a pronoun stands "in place of a noun". This etymology reflects the grammatical function of pronouns as substitutes for nouns or noun phrases.

[62] E. Ortigues, *Le discours et le symbole.* cit., p. 171.

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beyond the « intrinsic reality of language »[63], and connect the former to reality tout court. This linkage is formally expressed precisely by proper names, which pertain both to language and to society, encompassing the whole of human reality.

The third person is not the category of the non-person. By its instantiation through the use of proper names, the third person opens the possibility of participating in objective reality. In this way, it allows the structure of the person to fulfil its ultimate function, which is the interior and reciprocal recognition of personal identities.

4. *Conclusions*

In this paper, I have revisited Benveniste's influential claim that the third person marks the non-person. Throughout several articles, Benveniste argues that first and second person pronouns on the one hand, and third person pronouns on the other, show entirely different linguistic behaviour, indicating a fundamental difference of status. While *je* and *tu* are the signs that allow for the emergence of subjectivity–thanks to their property of self-referentiality–*il* and *elle* refer to entities outside of discourse, which are therefore, by definition, non-persons. Benveniste's argument relies on two main assumptions: I) the category of the person is fully understood by analysing personal pronouns and verbal conjugation alone, and II) third person pronouns, as opposed to first and second person pronouns, have heterogenous referents–i.e., they can refer to different individuals within the same discourse.

The second assumption was challenged by introducing the notions of indexicality and semantic saturation from formal semantics. It was argued that all personal pronouns are indexicals, therefore requiring contextual, extra-linguistic information in order to refer. Even the first person pronoun demands perceptual information in order to be associated with the current utterer. But then, if first and second person pronouns are considered in context, there appears to be no principled reason for avoiding resolving the reference of third person pronouns, too. Excluding cases of ambiguous reference, *il* and *elle* refer–just like *je* and *tu*–to unique individuals. Moreover, it was observed that saturated third person pronouns–and French tonic pronouns in particular–function similarly to proper names. Stepping beyond Benveniste's first

[63] É. Benveniste, *La forme et le sens dans le langage*, cit., p. 225.

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assumption, it was argued that a comprehensive analysis of personhood ought to consider the role played by proper names, which, together with third person pronouns, instantiate the third person. The double nature of proper names, as linguistic units as well as identificatory tools within society, clarifies the true function of the third person, opening up the intrinsic reality of language to what exists independently of us–i.e., to reality.

The position espoused in this paper is indebted to seminal intuitions by Ortigues, later developed in a number of papers devoted to the category of the person. Moving from a semiotic to a semantic treatment of personhood makes it possible to reassess the necessary role of the third person as the mediating term that stands between the interlocutors, thus allowing their reciprocal recognition. As exemplified in a number of different contexts (from religious rituals to ceremonial gift exchanges, to everyday dialogues) the third person fulfils a "symbolic function". Abandoning the immediacy of a dual relation–which, in the case of dialogue, would correspond to the reversible relation between I and You of the kind described by Benveniste–the symbol establishes a ternary relation in which subjects can no longer identify with the unique position they momentarily occupy. As stressed by Ortigues, the constitution of personal identities requires a discursive structure, or a reversibility that also constitutes an oriented progression unfolding through time. Individual enunciations need to be connected to each other, encompassing an open-ended succession in which individuals assume alternatively one of the positions that constitute the act of communication: speaker, addressee and object of discourse. Recognising oneself as the same individual throughout all these different situations is the mark of the personal. In conclusion, the importance attributed to the third person highlights the differing perspectives of the structural linguist–focused on the signs that enable the expression of subjectivity–and the structural philosopher, who investigates the role of symbolism in shaping personal identity.

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Stillness and movement (or life and death) in Anne Imhof's *Natures Mortes*

Federico Rudari

Anne Imhof's artistic practice and body of work present an intricate and non-linear nature. Often, they are shaped as exhibitions, but they are also installations, performances (and performance settings), architectural interventions, and collaborative practices, all at once.

Justine Prince writes that the experience of *Natures Mortes* (Still Lives, 2021), Imhof's 'carte blanche' show at the Palais de Tokyo, is akin to labyrinthine disorientation [1]. Not canonically pleasant – on the contrary, quite unsettling – the disorientation one experiences when navigating a maze stems from the loss of the sense of unity that typically characterises a recognisable path or a well-defined direction to aim towards [2].

Natures Mortes was indeed an exhibition built on discontinuities. Media overlapped and blurred in an at times uncomfortable polyphony. Deeply marked by the sense of isolation that has both distanced and united us on a global scale during the COVID-19 pandemic, Anne Imhof reproduced in *Natures Mortes* the city emptied of the living flesh of its inhabitants, and she materialised within it the sprawling and almost schizophrenic landscape that we populate online with its infinite scrolling possibilities.

Given its maze-like design, *Natures Mortes* cannot be framed as a single, linear body. Visitors were induced on different occasions to make alternative movement choices, sometimes even by repeatedly re-

[1] J. Prince, *L'expérience esthétique à l'épreuve de l'égarement labyrinthique*, in *Le Philosophoire : L'Expérience esthétique*, 59, 2023.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 80.

tracing their path. Rather than a line, *Natures Mortes* was composed of different nuclei that shared a consistent supportive architectural structure, bringing all pieces together, as if its configuration and design constituted the central work Imhof showcased in the Palais de Tokyo. «Anne's work [...] is so much self-determined than in most traditional [...] settings», Eliza Douglas, Imhof's long-time artistic and life partner, claims in an interview with Vittoria Matarrese, co-curator of the show, that «[a]n audience member has so much choice in terms of what they look at, which I think is simultaneously thrilling and anxiety-producing» [3].

Natures Mortes well exemplified the "narrativist" shift often explored in contemporary exhibition practices, in comparison to a heavily object-oriented tradition. This idea could even be taken further and argue that *Natures Mortes* was grounded on both a unitary narrative and artistic object: precisely in function of its composite nature, the 'exhibition', as an environment, an experience, a discourse, and a concept, was Imhof's actual employed artistic medium. On this subject, Tristan Garcia and Vincent Normand write that exhibitions' «ontological ground» has often been considered weak and impure, especially because «decidedly not autonomous, often deemed merely a "frame"» [4]. This idea is effectively summed by the words of curator and writer Mary Coyne, who writes that «[c]apturing the twenty-first-century cultural shift towards experience over study, her [Imhof's] work is intended to be attended live, as opposed to experienced through documentation» [5].

Additionally, the co-presence of Imhof and Douglas with thirty other artists challenged the notion of a 'solo show' (the way the 'carte blanche' format had always been interpreted before in the Palais de Tokyo's history) [6] through the juxtaposition, collaboration, and clash of different, at times cohesively merged and at times purposefully dissonant, individual artistic practices and voices. Despite the provoking suggestion made by the title, the exhibition was not conceived to echo a seventeenth-century perfectly assembled still life composition; rather,

[3] E. Douglas, *Eliza Douglas interviewed by Vittoria Matarrese*, in A. Imhof (guest-edited by), *PALAIS – The magazine of the Palais de Tokyo (Natures Mortes – Anne Imhof)*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris 2021, p. 56.

[4] T. Garcia-V. Normand, *Introduction*, in T. Garcia-V. Normand (edited by), *Theater, Garden, Bestiary: A Materialist History of Exhibitions*, Sternberg Press, London 2019, p. 13.

[5] M. L. Coyne, *Under the Pier: Staging Anne Imhof's Sex*, in *Performance Research*, 26, 1-2, 2021, p. 103.

[6] The previous 'carte blanche' shows featured Ugo Rondinone (2007), Philippe Parreno (2013), Tino Sehgal (2016), Camille Henrot (2017), and Tomás Saraceno (2018).

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it comprised many that interacted and intertwined, mismatched and harmonised. Longing for life amid a scenario of death (the exhibition was repeatedly postponed due to the global sanitary crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic), the exhibition was constructed on elements of a world from before, which invited bodies in motion for dwelling and exploration. Stripped of the superfluous, *Natures Mortes* was shaped in a balanced equilibrium between two distant but inseparable poles: what is alive and what is no longer.

The exhibition as a maze: meaning-making through disorientation

Anne Imhof's *Nature Mortes* was a multimedia exhibition, halfway between an installation and a group show, that occupied the entirety of the Palais de Tokyo (Paris) between May and October 2021. Four years after being awarded the Golden Lion at the 2017 Biennale di Venezia for her *Faust*, Imhof was invited to the Palais de Tokyo for a 'carte blanche', an exhibition framework that grants complete freedom to invited artists. Emma Lavigne, co-curator of the show, describes Imhof's approach as a practice that «fuses space and bodies, music and painting, and her works with those of accomplices Eliza Douglas and 30 other guests» [7]. «Within the bare structure of the Palais de Tokyo, she adds, stripped down to its fragile carcass with its topography exposed, she sets up a glass maze which fragments the space, while generating new perspectives» [8]. The space was organised according to multiple tensions expressed through various media, from painting to sound installations, from performance to architectural tools. Life and death, interior and exterior, as well as movement and stillness, construction and abandonment, are just a few of the dichotomies that Imhof addressed through this exploration, which occupied the different floors of the Parisian museum.

The labyrinthine disorientation that Prince associates with Imhof's exhibition relates to the show's physical and architectural layout, the semiotic dimension of the artistic objects it featured, and the materiality it embodied [9]. This idea evokes a series of contradictions that distinguish *Natures Mortes* from traditional exhibition structures and

[7] E. Lavigne, *Editorial*, in A. Imhof (guest-edited by), *PALAIS – The magazine of the Palais de Tokyo (Natures Mortes – Anne Imhof)*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris 2021, p. 9.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] J. Prince, *L'expérience esthétique à l'épreuve de l'égarement labyrinthique*, cit.

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narratives. While unity has played a central role in aesthetic theory (especially among theorists of the Kantian tradition), Imhof rejected coherence and singularity in favour of possibilities and fragmentation. This approach not only questions the validity of a unique path – and meaning, interpretation, experience, etc. – in exhibition-making, but also discards the possibility of directing visitors and their experiences into a single, pre-defined physical flow and order of signification.

Imhof's premises rejected the idea of a predefined path, and therefore predetermined narrative and meaning, as the exhibition was built around the audience's intentionality and, consequently, the different possibilities of experiencing a space-time frame. This approach directly draws on the work of Merleau-Ponty, who describes intentionality as something that exists before cognition and consciousness (or even as non-cognitive and non-conscious), as a way to explore the physical world solely through the body and because it has a body [10]. Imhof regarded the visitor's body as essential to bridging inner reflection and the external world, an abandoned realm that called for a motor and sensory, yet also non-verbal and spiritual, form of meaning. As the exhibition challenged spatial organisation (through a maze-like setup) and sound (via distorted and constantly changing compositions), its sensory and bodily exploration not only shaped meaning but also served as a means to question our habits and relationships with our surroundings.

Most importantly, the decision to structure the exhibition around a labyrinthine design emphasised the importance of the body as an essential component of the constructed environment (without a disoriented body, there would be no disorientation and, therefore, no maze). As Douglas explains, this stance «emphasizes differences, and engages with the difficulties and potentials of a multilinear narration, one that you can dive into, that you can get lost in» [11]. This multilinear narration thus relied on the understanding that the exhibition space, as well as the labyrinth or the city it evoked, or, by extension, spatiality itself, could not be seen as separate sensitive objects from the body that perceives them, but rather as an interconnected unity.

This idea does not oppose the centrality of thinking of the exhibition as a cohesive whole, but evokes instead the possibility of shaping multiple and different cohesive wholes grounded on the material

[10] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, translated by D. A. Landes, Routledge, London and New York (1945) 2012.

[11] E. Douglas, *Eliza Douglas interviewed by Vittoria Matarrese*, cit., p. 48.

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and symbolic articulation of the exhibition itself. In the case of *Natures Mortes*, these differences and opportunities, as many as the visitors, were grounded on featured artistic objects, their display and organisation, the shape of the museum environment, and, perhaps above all, the fact that the audience physically occupied the same space or, in other words, «the same bracket of psychological and architectural space, the same interval: *here*» [12].

The phenomenological understanding of *Natures Mortes* brings us to the second dimension of time that the exhibition enacted. In the exhibition, the relationship between death and perpetual stasis was extended towards both the city, reproduced like a skeleton, and the museum, an institution whose practices are deeply linked to death, dead bodies, and even cultural paralysis when perpetuating uncritical approaches. However, as Jen Walklate points out, death is also a form of othering, suggesting its transformative and creative capacity to contribute to the temporalities that a body once inhabited and enacted [13].

Imhof aimed for visitors to respond to this decay, asserting one's own (im)possibility of action and reaction to the witnessed death and the possibility of an after-the-death, or simply of death as an essential part of life. As Wood writes, inside «Imhof's work, we alternate between [...] being carried by, or moving with time and [...] stillness [...], as we recognise shared moments of mortal beauty that we can make, and within a space of delay, inhabit, but cannot keep» [14].

Due to its complexity and non-linear layout, it is hard to exhaustively describe *Natures Mortes* within a couple of paragraphs. As a way to discuss the exhibition comprehensively, without dwelling on details, I'm borrowing two of the four strands that Susan Broadhurst includes in her analysis of Imhof's work, which are relevant to approaching and discussing *Natures Mortes*. Among other aspects, she describes the artistic practice of the German artist as hybrid and total [15].

[12] C. Wood, *Anne Imhof: Stilled Life*, in A. Imhof (guest-edited by), *PALAIS – The magazine of the Palais de Tokyo (Natures Mortes – Anne Imhof)*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris 2021, p. 101.

[13] J. A. Walklate, *Time and the Museum: Literature, Phenomenology, and the Production of Radical Temporality*, Routledge, London and New York 2023, p. 11.

[14] C. Wood, *Anne Imhof: Stilled Life*, cit., p.103.

[15] S. Broadhurst, *Hybridity and Experimental Aesthetics in the Performances of Anne Imhof*, in *Body, Space & Technology*, 20, 1, 2021.

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Natures Mortes *as a hybrid work*

Broadhurst addresses hybridity as «a "family resemblance concept", which is not governed by an "intension", a closed set of predicates» but «consists of a loose set of intersecting properties none of which are universally applicable to all examples» [16]. Imhof's hybrid approach is twofold. The exhibition combined not only different media but also artistic practices, including music, dance, painting, video, and architecture, into a unitary work. This leads to an evasion of artistic classification and separation, as well as a clear distinction between time and meaning, the exhibition and the permanent museum architecture, performers and audience, and a defined exhibition path.

The title itself evoked the seventeenth-century European still-life pictorial tradition, which was inscribed in the broader artistic production of the *vanitas*, objects that functioned as *memento mori* (from Latin, "remember you will die"), reminding viewers of life's caducity and, therefore, carnal pleasures' threats. «This is the overriding dynamic of her work», Wood argues, «which – without any Christian morality – [...] remind[s] us of what we cannot have, and what will fade and disappear. Sometimes Imhof deliberately obscures or blocks sight-lines, exacerbating – via longing, and its frustration – the desire to possess by seeing» [17].

Still lifes, both in semio-symbolic and material terms, have been inscribed in the history of Western art for centuries, playing a specific role in exhibition practices. Imhof built *Nature Mortes* upon the awareness that the death of nature is entrenched and even constitutive of the urban milieus we live in and their integral apparatuses, among which the museum. Natural elements are extracted, turned into glass and concrete, while we consume resources at an ever-increasing rate to support our technological, consumption, and development ambitions. The only object included in the exhibition that responded to the traditional features of a still life, Adrián Villar Rojas's *Untitled* (2017), from the series *Rinascimento*, depicts frozen food in an open freezer, which wastes resources to prevent the decay and deterioration of its contents. Nature dies to enable life in the city, where human bodies and technology are part of the same ambiguous continuum that encompasses both materiality and discourse, while extending today's indistinguishable human bodiedness increasingly dependent on these prosthetics [18].

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 4.
[17] C. Wood, *Anne Imhof: Stilled Life*, cit., p.102.
[18] R. Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, Polity Press, Cambridge 2013.

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Nature Mortes did not rely on a necroaesthetic imaginary – on the contrary, it quite opposed it. Imhof non-rhetorically and non-religiously evoked death as a necessary condition for life, an invitation to not gaze in adoration but occupy the carcass of what is now abandoned as if the difference between life and death was the remains of a reluctant possibility of movement. What is dead is not necessarily deemed to be perpetually motionless; it can be animated if inhabited by another life, in this case, visitors' and performers' bodies (or their awaiting anticipation).

Inside the Palais de Tokyo, Imhof shaped her work at an unprecedented scale: the exhibition occupied the entire brutalist environment of the Palais de Tokyo, encompassing the building itself, from its entrance to the basement, floors, ceilings, colonnade, mezzanines, and everything in between. This idea was enhanced by the co-presence of dozens of artists whose work merged and was completed in an at once unitary and composite complexity. Imhof blended domains of life and semiotic spheres: "high art" and underground countercultures, everyday metropolitan life and ephemeral environments, bodily sensoria and technological tools, musical soundscapes, urban noises and human voices, natural entities and human-made objects, and many more.

Natures Mortes *as a total work*

Totality is another term Broadhurst employs to discuss Imhof's work, a concept she borrows from the Wagnerian definition of *Gessamtkunstwerk* (which translates from German as 'total artwork') and which engages with Imhof's practice, echoing the elements-blending «intermedial work»[19]. A methodology (if not a whole life philosophy) widely employed by the modernists, 'total' works (and Imhof's no less) «combine all their means into a vastly complex yet intrinsically unified effect that does not privilege any one of them [...,] referring not only to the work itself but also the communal collaborations necessary for its production»[20]. In the case of *Natures Mortes*, works were not showcased in a traditional exhibition format, in which objects are tied together through a discursive, mainly artistic or historical, narrative thread. Still, they were shaped into a singular, composite installation that relied on visitors' movement to create a relational dependency as opposed to the autonomy of intrinsic value.

[19] S. Broadhurst, *Hybridity and Experimental Aesthetics in the Performances of Anne Imhof*, cit., p. 4.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

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By designating different architectural elements, caught between installation and exhibition design, emblematically as *Street* (2021) or *Stage* (2021), Imhof suggested that they could only serve their intended purpose through bodily occupation. A concrete parallelepiped functioning both as a step and a support to load-bearing walls of the building could then become both a stage and *Stage* thanks to those who climbed on it to perform (or the eventuality that a performance could take place). Similarly, the space created between two rows of glass and metal structures became both a street and *Street*, or a passage and *Passage*, because it facilitated the movement of bodies, leading them from one place to another. The Modernism and the Modernist Environment exhibition format appear to be a central reference in this context. Researcher Henrique Grimaldi Figueredo argues that the exhibition, «between the staticity of still life and the supra-sensoriality of a continuous action» (translation by the author) [21], proposed itself as a horizontal and collaborative experience. Although I believe that horizontality was a key concept behind *Nature Mortes*'s conception and design (more in material than socio-relational terms), I would argue that the exhibition evoked a perpetual sense of incompleteness rather than a call for collaboration. Imhof asked for visitors to react, even if in a disordered manner, as if the scenario of the abandoned city she staged symbolised the failure of Western democracies and, with them, the museum participatory model. The final piece that Imhof demanded to complete her still life (and *Natures Mortes*) was not for people to collaborate but rather for visitors, individually or in group, to occupy, explore, and get lost inside the maze she shaped.

In this totality, Imhof mixed layers of signification, evoking habits (or rules) of use/situation and our relationship with architecture as both coercive and freeing. The exhibition thus relied on collective and collectivised ways of attributing functions to certain forms, not in an endorsement of the "form follows function" modernist hymn, but rather calling for visitors to sense forms and bodily react accordingly. Despite the centrality of the direct references Imhof made to the Western urban social organisation, its partial failure and collapse, and the emergence of dissonant voices and countercultures, she looked at visitors primarily as bodies trained to act, enact, react, and counter-react

[21] «entre a estaticidade da natureza-morta e supra sensorialidade de uma ação continuada». H. Grimaldi Figueredo, Henrique, *Tempo de performance, tempo da performance: impressões sobre Natures Mortes, Carte Blanche à Anne Imhof*, in *MODOS: Revista de História da Arte*, 6, 2, (2022), p. 574.

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to forms, blurring the boundaries between rules (social and museum alike), improvisation, collectivity, and personal trajectories of memories and discourse. In this respect, musicologist Benjamin Piekut writes that Imhof «stages arenas, fields of play, and the player is you» [22].

In a maze, which is also *Maze* (2021), visitors moved in search of the artworks that were part of the exhibition. Although partially made of glass, Imhof's maze was not see-through, leading visitors to question where they were, how to find a way forward, and eventually finding themselves twice in the same spot. Among many other artworks, paintings by Imhof on canvas and aluminium, in shades of grey and black and scratched with irregular lines reminiscent of those on a keyed car, set a landscape for dialogue to unfold. Photographs by Alvin Baltrop, portraying the New York queer community between the 19070s and 1980s around the abandoned Hudson River's piers and warehouses, seemed to respond to the works by Cy Twombly, for instance, the photograph *Bed Room Buena Vista* (N.D), in which a bed appears empty, devoid of the bodies that once inhabited it. The show included the large painting *La Grande Vallée XX (Jean)* (1983) by Joan Mitchell, one of a series of twenty-one paintings representing abstract flowers in shades of blue, lilac, and yellow which almost seemed to be moving to the wind, sketches by Géricault for the study of his famous painting *The Raft of the Medusa* (1818-1819), and a sculpture by Paul Thek, *La Corazza di Michelangelo* (Michelangelo's Breastplate, 1963), a plaster breastplate which Thek painted and shaped with wax patterns reminiscent of organic tissues, subverting the interior/exterior relationship that subsists between flesh and armour through an hybrid juxtaposition of organic and human-made, protection and vulnerability, and, once again, life and death.

After traversing a series of smaller spaces shaped by a maze and structured around the dialogue Anne Imhof designed between her work and that of other featured artists spanning various centuries and media (including Klara Lidén, Francis Picabia, Giovanni Battista Piranesi, and Rosemarie Trockel), a metal staircase led visitors to an underground floor, the final environment of the exhibition. Titled *Ground* (2021), the last bastion of the Palais de Tokyo, the buried heart of the building, was not spared but conquered and contaminated by the imagery and objects that Imhof introduced in the museum.

[22] B. Piekut, Benjamin, *Anne Imhof in Three Acts, an Improvisation: Hunter, Writer, Lover*, in *Flash Art*, Spring 2021, p. 51.

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The Long Road to the EPP: a Historical Overview of Christian Democratic Cooperation in Europe

Riccardo Maria Sciarra

Introduction

This research aims to offer an overview, from an historical perspective, of the long and gradual process that led some International Christian Democratic Movements across Europe to converge toward the foundation of the European People's Party (EPP).

The study thus focuses on the period extending from the emergence of the Christian Movements across Europe in the nineteenth century to the twentieth century, tracing the trajectory through which these Movements, often beginning outside established parliamentary dynamics with the intent to reform them, gradually gained entry and transformed into governing parties, ultimately coming to exert a form of political and cultural hegemony on the broader European stage.

The objective will be to clarify what is meant by Christian Democratic Movements and to highlight how these parties, despite being rooted in different historical experiences, institutional settings and social traditions, were nonetheless able to identify a set of shared values.

The contribution will therefore seek to retrace how these common principles gradually emerged through informal exchanges, international meetings and early forms of parliamentary and organizational coordination.

Although this cooperation was not free from tensions or divergences, it provided the bases for a more structured dialogue that ultimately encouraged the creation of a unified political platform in view of the first direct elections to the European Parliament in 1979.

In doing so, this paper will try to show how the founding of the EPP, resulted from the transnational cultural and political dialogue between different Movements.

At the same time these Movements, while characterized by distinct national traditions, shared enough common ground to sustain a durable form of cooperation at the European level.

A first definitional attempt

It is important to acknowledge that, although several scholars have sought to define Christian Democracy, delineating its contours in an exhaustive and definitive manner remains challenging. This difficulty stems from the fact that such political formations must be understood within the specific national and historical contexts in which they emerged and articulated their political programs.

For this reason, any attempt to provide a definition that describes in detail all Christian Democratic movements seems to be an excessively ambitious exercise.

For instance, the definition attributed to Georges Bidault [1] describes Christian Democracy as a political force that seeks «to place itself at the center in order to carry out, with right-wing voters, a left-wing policy», but this definition seems reductive, only taking into consideration the parliamentary strategy of this political formation.

Michael Patrick Fogarty defines [2] Christian Democracy as «a movement of lay people who take an interest in, and assume responsibility for, solving political, economic, and social problems on a Christian basis, and who, from such foundations and from concrete experience, infer that democracy represents the best form of government in the modern world» [3].

Equally interesting is the definition given by the philosopher Étienne Bourne of the Christian Democrat as someone «who opposes politics becoming an autonomous and self-sufficient universe, and believes that politics acquires meaning and substance only thanks to so-

[1] *See* H. Maier, *Revolution und Kirche. Studien zur Frühgeschichte der Christlichen Demokratie*, Rombach Verlag, 1965, p.104.

[2] M.P. Fogarty, *Christian Democracy in Western Europe 1820-1953*, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1966, p. 461.

[3] *See* E. Bourne, *Éthique et Politique*, in Portelli H. & Jansen T. (ed), *La Démocratie Chrétienne, Force Internationale*, cit., pp. 131-140.

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mething beyond itself. The denial of this "beyond" of politics [...] has become a central principle in many political theories and ideologies. If a Christian Democratic doctrine exists and has its own distinctive peculiarity, it lies precisely in denying this denial. In a word, the Christian Democrat, with all the conviction within him, wishes to be the anti-Machiavelli» [4].

This definition, which adopts a critical approach toward Machiavellianism, has been reiterated more recently by Wilfried Martens, who, as reported by S. Van Hecke, stated: «For if we conflate the ethics of conviction with the ethics of responsibility, we will relapse into Realpolitik, into a form of Machiavellianism that stems from a continual confusion of ends and means [...]».

Numerous factors have made the experience of Christian Democracy vary significantly from one country to another. In this respect, we can consider the impact of the national party system: in some cases characterized by two dominant parties (such as the German CDU or the Austrian ÖVP), in others by a multipolar configuration (as in Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Italy prior to the final phase of the Democrazia Cristiana), or by systems in which Christian Democratic parties were comparatively weak and compelled to integrate into coalitions often led by conservative forces (as in France and Spain) [5].

The lack of homogeneity within Christian Democracy can also be seen in the very fact that the Christian-inspired parties that contributed to the foundation of the EPP bore different denominations: in some cases, following Luigi Sturzo's model of "popolarismo", there is a reference to the people in their names [6]; in others, the emphasis is placed on Christianity [7], social issues, democracy [8] or labor.

There are, however, some common points that unite the majority of the Christian-inspired parties that proliferated in Europe from the nineteenth Century, many of which were initially founded with the cle-

[4] My translation.

[5] *See* J.D. Durand, *Storia della Democrazia Cristiana in Europa*, Guerini e Associati Ed., 2006, p. 290.

[6] For example the "Mouvement républicain populaire" (MRP) in France or the Austrian Popular Party (Österreichische Volkspartei, ÖVP).

[7] It is the case of the Italian "Democrazia Cristiana" (DC) or the German "Christlich Demokratische Union" (CDU).

[8] Like the French-speaking Belgian "Parti Social Chrétien", which in 2002 changed its name to Centre Démocrate Humaniste (cdH). In 2022 the Party changed its name again to "Les Engagés".

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ar aim of defending the rights and freedoms of the faithful and of the Church against the post-revolutionary secularist policies.

Despite the considerable heterogeneity of the movements and parties that make up the Christian-democratic tradition in Europe, it is nonetheless possible to identify a number of common features that help to delineate its political and cultural identity [9].

First of all, these actors share a Christian foundation [10], understood not so much as strict confessional adherence, but rather as a cultural and anthropological matrix informing their view of the human person and of society.

Among these common features it is also certainly possible to find a commitment to the democratic form [11], a particular relationship between social engagement and faith, interclassism, a communitarian organization of society, and subsequently the idea of achieving a united Europe [12].

Within this framework lies the influence of "personalism" [13], a conception derived from the thought of Emmanuel Mounier, which emphasizes the notion of the person over the more reductive category of the individual, placing human dignity and relationality at the center.

On a theoretical level, an equally significant contribution is offered by the thought of Jacques Maritain and his project of "integral humanism".

This orientation has been further shaped, philosophically, by Neo-Thomism and, socially, by the teachings of the Social Doctrine of the Church [14], from which several core principles follow: the centrality

[9] For a comprehensive overview of the philosophical origins of Christian Democracy, see S. Van Hecke, *Some reflections on the DNA of Christian Democracy*, in K. Welle & F. Ottavio (ed.), *Christian Democracy, Conservatism and the Challenge of the Extremes*, Eburon Utrecht, 2025, pp. 79-85.

[10] As highlighted in the political program of the EPP adopted in Brussels in March 1978, which states: «*Noi fondiamo la nostra politica su una concezione dell'uomo che si ispira ai valori fondamentali del Cristianesimo e trova la sua espressione nella dignità, nella libertà inviolabile e inalienabile della persona umana nella sua responsabilità. Ciò presuppone l'eguaglianza nella diversità, l'impegno per la realizzazione di noi stessi e la consapevolezza della nostra imperfezione*». *See* Democrazia Cristiana-SPES-Ufficio Esteri, *Programma politico del Partito Popolare Europeo*, 1978, p. 2.

[11] On the role and relationship between popular Catholicism and democracy in pre-Fascist Italy, see: N. Antonetti & L. Giorgi (ed), *Democrazia e fascismo. A Cento anni dal Congresso Ppi di Torino (1923),* Rubbettino Ed., 2023.

[12] P. Morisi, *The Role of Christian Democracy in Support of European Integration*, in "Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review", Vol. 93, No. 369, 2004, pp. 45-53.

[13] *See* J.D. Durand, Storia della Democrazia..., pp. 106-114.

[14] *See* Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, consultable at https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html.

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of the human person, the common good as the ultimate aim of political action and the preferential option for the poor are among the main ones.

Another recurrent feature of Christian-Democratic parties is their particular emphasis on the role of local communities. This orientation gives rise to a marked preference for forms of regionalism or federalism which, in line with the principle of subsidiarity [15], are regarded as more respectful of territorial autonomy and social pluralism than the highly centralized structures that characterized the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century.

This principle is integrated into European Union law, stipulating that decisions must be taken at the lowest level feasible, close to the citizens. Higher-level intervention is permitted only when required for reasons of efficiency (vertical subsidiarity), always trying to involve civil society in political and economic processes (horizontal subsidiarity).

Complementing these elements is an economic vision that rejects both state collectivism and unrestrained liberalism, advocating instead an economy placed at the service of the person and the community, exemplified in the so-called "Social Market Economy" [16].

This perspective intersects with the tradition of Catholic solidarity, which understands social cohesion as a shared responsibility and as a moral obligation towards the most vulnerable members of society.

It was precisely by focusing more on the commonalities, rather than on the differences that distinguished these political movements within their respective national contexts, that certain Christian Democratic figures began to seek forms of international dialogue, which over time gradually evolved into patterns of supranational cooperation.

[15] This principle acquired general scope with the Maastricht Treaty, even though already before the Treaty of Lisbon, Article 2, last paragraph, of the old TEU established that «gli obiettivi dell'Unione saranno perseguiti [...] nel rispetto del principio di sussidiarietà definito all'articolo 5 TCE [...]», adding that «la Comunità interviene secondo il principio della sussidiarietà, soltanto se e nella misura in cui gli obiettivi dell'azione prevista non possono essere sufficientemente realizzati dagli stati membri e possono dunque, a motivo delle dimensioni o degli effetti dell'azione in questione, essere realizzati meglio a livello comunitario». This latter provision is now incorporated, with slight adaptations, into Article 5, paragraph 3 of the new TEU. *See* R. Adam & A. Tizzano, *Lineamenti di Diritto dell'Unione Europea*, IV Ed., Giappichelli Ed., 2019, quote pp. 341-342.

[16] In the book "*Capitalism, Collectivity and Participation",* written by the former Secretary and Chairman of the italian "Democrazia Cristiana" Amintore Fanfani, however, one can find a conception of economic life that is rooted in Christian moral doctrine, yet not wholly analogous with the standard model of the Social Market Economy. While maintaining a Christian orientation, the work advances a distinct perspective that places democratic participation and social responsibility at the center of economic organization. *See* A. Fanfani, *Capitalismo, Socialità e Partecipazione, Mursia Ed., 1976. Cf.* J.D. Durand (ed.), *Christian Democrat Internationalism. Its Action in Europe and Worldwide from post World War II until the 1990s*, Vol. I, P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2013, pp. 13-19.

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A Brief Overview of the Evolution of Christian Democratic Cooperation in Europe

The gradual and progressive secularization of both State and society across Europe was catalyzed by the French Revolution (especially following the approval of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy in July 1790) and the Industrial Revolution [17], the latter of which precipitated the emergence of the "Social Question": it is in this historical context that the term "Catholic Movements" began to be used [18].

These Movements often arose in Europe [19] with the explicit aim of defending the religious liberty of the faithful against the secularist and anticlerical tendencies of modern States.

A clear example of this phenomenon is the Italian case [20], where the capture of Rome following the Breach of Porta Pia in September 1870 opened a long-running *querelle* between the Catholics of the Peninsula and the young Kingdom of Italy, initiating the "Roman Question" [21].

Only with the passage of time would Christian-inspired parties lose their nature as "parties of Catholic defense" [22], gradually emancipating themselves from the Church and, at times, welcoming within their ranks members belonging to other Christian denominations [23] or even non-believers [24].

It is relevant to underline that, unlike other political forces that emerged in the twentieth century, such as the Socialists, Christian-Democrat movements did not arise from an internationalist impetus [25]:

[17] *Cf.* R.C. Allen, *The British Industrial Revolution in Global Perspective*, Cambridge University Press, 2009.

[18] *See* J.D. Durand, *Storia della Democrazia...*, p. 21.

[19] It is possible to cite the hostility towards the Church and believers promoted by the Kulturkampf in Bismarckian Germany. It is in this context, for example, that the German Zentrum was founded in 1870, thus becoming one of the first institutionalized European Catholic parties. *See* Galli G., I Partiti Politici Europei, Mondadori Ed., 1979, pp. 87-124; G. Aliberti & F. Malgeri, *Da Popolo a Cittadini. Gli europei (1815-2005)*, Edizioni universitarie di lettere economia diritto, 2006, pp. 200-202; For Italy, *see* F. Malgeri (ed.), *Storia del Movimento Cattolico in Italia*, Vol. I, Il Poligono Ed., 1981, pp. 319-336, 363-371; For France, particularly regarding the consequences of the Enlightenment in the religious sphere, *see* D. Outram, *The Enlightenment*, Cambridge University Press, third edition, 2013, Ch. IX, pp. 151-170.

[20] F. Malgeri (ed.), *Storia del Movimento...,* pp. 1-272.

[21] The question would only be definitively resolved in 1929 with the signing of the Lateran Treaty. *See* G. Formigoni, *L'Italia dei cattolici. Dal Risorgimento a oggi*, Il mulino, 2010, pp. 13-54.

[22] *See* J.D. Durand, *Storia della Democrazia...*, p. 26.

[23] As imposed by Konrad Adenauer in the German CDU after the Second World War.

[24] This was the case of the French *Mouvement Républicain Populaire,* which opted to extend its composition to include Muslims, Jews and non-believers.

[25] *Cf.* R. Papini, *The Origins of Christian Democrat Internationalism*, in J.D. Durand (ed), *Christian Democrat Internationalism...,* p. 119.

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cooperation among European Christian Democrats initially coalesced around discussions on "social thought", preceding the formal development of unified political parties.

This trajectory of international Catholic engagement can thus be traced through several key organizations. For instance, the International Union of Fribourg began organizing a series of scientific congresses starting in 1848 with the aim of promoting contacts among Catholics in different countries. Later, amidst First World War, two significant bodies emerged in 1917: the International Katholische Union, founded in Zurich and composed of parliamentarians from several Central European countries, and the Union Catholique d'Études Internationales (UCEI), which was established in Fribourg with the precise goal of protecting Catholic interests within international organizations, most notably the League of Nations [26].

With the conclusion of the First World War, in a context marked by the echoes of the Bolshevik Revolution, social tensions and nationalist and reactionary pressures, Marc Sangnier's Democrat International (1919) was founded: it was a non confessional, Christian inspired movement that had as a primary objective to reach a French-German reconciliation.

In the same years, the international political thought of Father Luigi Sturzo [27] began to take shape: the Sicilian priest and politician advocated the overcoming of national selfishness and the recognition of the League of Nations as a mechanism to prevent new conflicts [28].

From the very first *Partito Popolare Italiano* [29] Congress, held on 14 June 1919 in Bolonia, the Party expressed the need to create international links with other Catholic parties, as the final motion of that Congress still testifies.

To this end, in the summer of 1921, Sturzo traveled to Germany [30] with Alcide De Gasperi to promote a project of international coopera-

[26] *See* F. Malgeri, *Dall'idea originaria al PPE: partito elettorale o organico strumento politico dei cristiano-democratici?,* in T. Di Maio (ed.), *La DC nella cooperazione internazionale cristiano-democratica. Prospettive di ricerca,* Res Publica n. 33, 2023, pp. 9-17.

[27] For a bibliography of Father Luigi Sturzo, see, among others, F. Malgeri (ed.), *Profilo bibliografico di Luigi Sturzo*, Edizioni Cinque Lune, 1975.

[28] *See* G. De Rosa (ed.), *Opere scelte di Luigi Sturzo. La comunità internazionale e il diritto di guerra (Vol. VI)*, Laterza, 1992.

[29] The Party was founded in 1919 by Father Luigi Sturzo; for a complete study on Luigi Sturzo's Ppi, *see*, among others G. De Rosa, *Il Partito Popolare Italiano,* in *I Cattolici dall'Opera dei Congressi alla Democrazia Cristiana. Dal 1870 al 1986*. Vol. II, Laterza, *1987.*

[30] Sturzo was deeply concerned by Germany's isolation following WWI, and sought to foster international ties to mitigate its solitary confinement. *Cf.* R. Papini, *The Origins of Christian Democrat Internationalism*, in J.D. Durand (ed), *Christian Democrat Internationalism...*, p. 125.

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tion among Christian Democratic parties, an initiative further advanced during the International Conference of Genoa in 1922, where he hoped that the agreements already reached in the trade union and cooperative spheres could be extended to the parliamentary and political level.

In 1924, Luigi Sturzo was forced into exile from Italy, initiating a long period that led him, among other destinations, to the United Kingdom and the United States. His stay in these democratic countries significantly reinforced his conviction regarding the validity and efficacy of democratic systems and his political program, positioning him in sharp contrast to the totalitarian regimes that were then overshadowing much of Europe.

It is no coincidence that, despite the inherent challenges of exile, this period proved exceptionally productive for establishing personal connections with other relevant figures, relationships that deeply contributed to Sturzo's subsequent internationalist vision.

In 1925, on the occasion of the meeting of the French Christian Democratic Party in Paris, Father Luigi Sturzo drafted the statute of a Christian Democratic International, which materialized with the foundation of the International Secretariat of Democratic Parties of Christian Inspiration (SIPDIC).

The limited homogeneity of the parties [31] that joined the SIPDIC, united with the Organization's limited criticism [32] of the European Totalitarian Regimes, deeply disappointed Sturzo, leading him in 1929 to transfer its leadership to Luigi Ferrari [33].

During the 1930s, cooperation among Christian Democratic formations suffered a setback due to the rise of fascism in Italy and Nazism in Germany.

Yet, as Jean-Dominique Durand observes [34], those years of conflict and upheaval laid the groundwork for the principal achievements of

[31] As Roberto Papini observes, *«SIPDIC's difficulty to articulate unitary positions is clear and It was significant that the Congresses often finished without common resolutions. Within the Secretariat there was a lack of historical references and a common political culture». See* . R. Papini*, The Origins of Christian...,* quote p. 127.

[32] In this regard, the Italian historian Gabriele De Rosa observes: *«it was not a question of Christianity or not; in good faith many chose the way of risky compromises with totalitarianism because they lacked a strong democratic belief [...]»* opting *«for a moderate position in the misleading idea that in it there resides the guarantee of survival». See* G. De Rosa, Preface, in R. Papini, *Il Coraggio della Democrazia. Sturzo e l'Internazionale Popolare tra le due Guerre*, Rome, Studium, 1995, quotes from pp. 7-8.

[33] *Cf.* F. Malgeri, *Dall'idea originaria al PPE..., pp. 12-13.*

[34] *See* J.-D. Durand, *La mémoire de la Démocratie chrétienne en 1945. Antécédents, expériences et combats,* in E. Lamberts, *Christian Democracy in the European Union (1945-1995)*, Leuven, 1997, cit, p.26.

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the postwar period: «the necessary affirmation of democracy as a remedy to totalitarianism, the rediscovery of Christianity as a safeguard of human dignity, and the aspiration toward a united Europe as a means of securing peace».

The Nouvelles Équipes Internationales emerged in 1947, at the Lucerne and Chaudfontaine meetings, in response to this new context.

The NEI was not composed of national parties, but of individuals, functioning as a movement dedicated to integrating the defense of Christian values and the social doctrine of the Church with the active promotion of democratic Institutions.

In 1965, this initiative evolved into the *Union européenne des Démocrates-Chrétiens* (UECD), aimed at consolidating cooperation among Christian Democratic parties in Western Europe. The movement has been known since 1971 as the "Christian Democrat European Union").

The Christian Democratic Internationalist project saw further development in 1947, with the Foundation of the ODCA (Christian Democratic Organization). The same year, through the Declaration of Montevideo, the organization proclaimed its ambition to be a «supranational movement with common foundations and denominators».

Subsequently, in 1950, the Christian Democratic Union of Central Europe (UCDEC) was formed in New York, consisting of exiles from Countries already under Communist regimes.

The primary goal of this new Movement was to create a united front against the burgeoning atheist-Marxist threat.

In July of the same year, the three organizations (NEI, ODCA and UCDEC) convened in Chile to establish the "World Christian Democrat Union", which later evolved into the "Christian and Democrat International".

Finally, in September 1975, in Luxembourg, the Political Committee of the Christian Democratic parties of the member states of the European Economic Community initiated a reflection on the creation [35] of a genuine European Christian Democratic Party, in anticipation of the first elections to the European Parliament [36].

With the official foundation of the European People's Party on 26 January 1976, and the consequent approval of its statute in Brussels,

[35] A Christian Democrat Group already existed at the Common Assembly of the ECSC since June 1953. *Cf.* T. Di Maio, *The Origins of Christian Democrat Internationalism*, in J.D. Durand (ed), *Christian Democrat Internationalism...*, p. 164.

[36] *Cf.* G. Di Federico (ed.), *Alla (Ri)scoperta del Parlamento Europeo. 1979-2019*, Giappichelli Ed., 2021, pp. 15-46.

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on 29 April 1976, a new phase of Christian Democrat internationalism began, leading twelve European CD Movements to join the new unified party.

This milestone offered a new «*organic political tool in a Parliament elected by universal suffrage and better possibilities for a Parliament elected by common ideological elaboration*»[37].

From its very beginning, the EPP advocated the strengthening of the European Parliament as a means to achieve the Union's democratization: its Group was destined to become the largest and most influential parliamentary Group at the European level, a primacy it still has to this day[38].

Conclusions

In conclusion, this article has provided a concise yet analytical historical overview of the evolution of transnational relations among Christian Democratic parties in Europe, tracing their trajectory from ideological origins to the eventual establishment of the European People's Party (EPP).

The discussion began with a necessary definitional clarification aimed at circumscribing the heterogeneous nature of Christian Democratic formations.

Subsequently, the historical analysis highlighted the identitarian and programmatic plurality that characterizes these parties across the European landscape.

Despite this diversification, the study then isolated the elements of doctrinal and value-based continuity that permitted a constant dialogue to be established and maintained among the various national entities.

Finally, the research summarily reconstructed the genesis and development of the transnational collaboration networks that represent the practical outcome of this dialogue over time, culminating in the current European structure.

[37] T. Di Maio, *The Origins of Christian Democrat Internationalism*..., quote p. 176.

[38] It was in the 1999 elections that the EPP Group surpassed the Socialist Group in the European Parliament in terms of seats, achieving a primacy that has remained unchallenged to this day. *See*, K. Welle & S. Pini (ed.), *The EPP's Way to Number 1. The Rise to Europe's Leading Political Force and Lessons Ahead,* Springer, 2026.

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Some Notes for a Genealogy of Confession: Foucault on Christian Veridiction

Giuseppe Vena

Introduction

These notes represent an initial attempt to outline the conceptual terrain for a longer research project. They are not intended as a finished or comprehensive study, but rather as a series of provisional reflections and thematic sketches meant to guide future inquiry. As such, certain sections may appear tentative or incomplete, pointing toward questions and lines of investigation that will be developed more fully in the course of the project.

In tracing the genealogy of confession in Michel Foucault's thought, I draw inspiration from Philippe Büttgen's [1] observation that the notion of confession evolves across Foucault's work – from an early concern with mechanisms of discourse and surveillance toward a broader and more complicated genealogy of the subject. In this later phase, especially in the Collège de France lectures (*On the Government of the Living*, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*) and in *Confessions of the Flesh*, confession becomes a key site where the relation between truth and subjectivity is forged. No longer conceived merely as a disciplinary practice, it emerges as an ethical and spiritual exercise through which the individual is called to constitute himself in relation to truth. Christianity thus appears as a historically specific regime of truth [2], organizing the ways in which

[1] P. Büttgen, *La verità della confessione*, in «materiali foucaultiani» a. X, n. 19-20, gennaio-dicembre 2021, pp. 137-163.

[2] On the notion of "regime of truth", see P. Chevallier, *Michel Foucault et le christianisme*, ENS Editions, Lyon 2011.

subjects are formed through practices of obedience, renunciation, and self-examination. This transformation in Foucault's analysis signals a broader shift from the framework of power/knowledge (the one used for example in *Discipline and Punish*) toward that of *alèthurgy* – the study of the concrete procedures through which truth is manifested and made binding.

From Power/Knowledge to Alèthurgy

Foucault's shift in the mid-1970s, from analyses of power/knowledge toward a genealogy of *alèthurgy* – the ritualized procedures by which truth is disclosed – marks an important moment in the history of philosophy. "Alèthurgy," as Foucault defines it, refers to the diverse operations, gestures, and codified acts whereby truth is made visible and affirmed within a social context. «Alèthurgy is the set of possible procedures, however diverse and heterogeneous they may be, that are implemented so that truth is manifested» [3].

This paradigm reconfigures truth-telling: it is no longer a passive or merely descriptive act, but a technology of governance that organizes relations, stabilizes identities, and generates obligations. Within Christianity, alèthurgy underpins a complete governmentality, directing the faithful not just in theological belief but in the most mundane details of daily existence.

Confession thus emerges as the emblematic *acte de vérité* demanded by Christianity. It is neither private nor spontaneous; rather, it is a codified act involving both the penitent and an authorized confessor. «Confession is not the spontaneous speech of the subject; it is a codified and highly asymmetrical structure in which the subject is constituted through the expectation of truth» [4].

> «It is often said that behind all power relations, there is ultimately something like a core of violence, and that if we strip power of its trappings, what we find is the naked game of life and death. Perhaps. But can there be power without trappings? In other words, can there really be power without the interplay of light and shadow, truth and error, real and fake, hidden and obvious, visible and invisible? Can power be exercised without

[3] M. Foucault, *On the Government of the Living. Lectures at the Collège de France, 1979-1980*, Picador, London 2016, p. 5.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 179

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a ring of truth, without an alethurgic circle that revolves around it and accompanies it?»[5]

Confession and Direction of Conscience

A genealogical approach reveals that confession always presupposes a relational structure – the direction of conscience – that is fundamentally dialogical. The penitent addresses a confessor, spiritual guide, or pastor, who listens, interprets, and issues directives. This relationship is asymmetrical and codified, embedded within broader structures of power and interpretation.

In *Omnes et Singulatim*, Foucault gives the latin formula (everyone and each individually) to capture the dual logic of pastoral power: it holds the whole flock in view while simultaneously addressing each individual member of it. This model of power breaks with older conceptions of the sovereign over territory: the shepherd-pastor governs the lives of individuals in their daily existence, not merely their actions on a territory.

«Christian pastorship implies a peculiar type of knowledge between the pastor and each of his sheep. This knowledge is particular. It individualizes. It isn't enough to know the state of the flock. That of each sheep must also be known. The theme existed long before there was Christian pastorship, but it was considerably amplified in three different ways: the shepherd must be informed as to the material needs of each member of the flock and provide for them when necessary. He must know what is going on, what each of them does – his public sins. Last and not least, he must know what goes on in the soul of each one, that is, his secret sins, his progress on the road to sainthood. In order to ensure this individual knowledge, Christianity appropriated two essential instruments at work in the Hellenistic world: self-examination and the guidance of conscience»[6].

A new experience: the discovery of the Flesh

Confession incarnates a process of moral transformation: beyond revealing transgressions, the subject is required to scrutinize their desires,

[5] *Ibid.*, p.18.

[6] Foucault, Michel. *Omnes et Singulatim: Towards a Criticism of Political Reason* in The Tanner Lectures on Human Values, by S. McMurrin, Vol. II, Univ. of Utah Press, 1981, p.232.

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intentions, and spiritual condition. «In Christianity, truth is not simply there to be known; it demands to be lived, practiced, and manifested in the form of a life»[3]. The process of subjectivation thus involves a transformation of the inner life – what he will define as a *hermeneutics of the self* – operating through iterative acts of confession. In this sense, confession should be undestood not a single act but a continuous mode of existence, a spiritual discipline through which the believer learns to read, interpret, and govern his own soul. The self becomes both the object and the site of an ongoing interpretive labour, bound to a regime in which the production of truth coincides with the production of the subject.

Foucault's 1980 lecture *About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self* clarifies the historical singularity of this process. There, he contrasts two ancient models of self-relation: the Delphic injunction to "know yourself", and the Christian imperative to "renounce yourself". The Christian hermeneutics of the self, according to Foucault, transforms self-knowledge into a practice of radical obedience: the subjects must tell the truth about themselves not as a path to autonomy (not to become subjects of true speeches, as in the Greek model) but as a means of submission and purification (in a way, to embody and manifest truth). Confession thus becomes the central ritual through which the self is bound to truth under conditions of dependence – its knowledge inseparable from an act of obedience to authority. The *exomologēsis* and *exagoreusis* of early Christianity mark, for Foucault, the moment when truth ceases to be contemplative and becomes penitential, when the manifestation of the self before God or the confessor becomes the condition of salvation. *Exomologesis* is the public confession of sins before a religious authority, while *exagoreusis* is the private disclosure of faults aimed at personal spiritual insight.

Foucault's reading of *la chair* (*the flesh*) in *Confessions of the Flesh* deepens this genealogy. «The flesh is not simply the body; it is the place where the subject's desires are experienced and problematized, where they are not only lived but also interpreted and judged»[7]. This marks a crucial shift from moral systems that regulated external behaviour to one that interiorizes moral inquiry. The Christian regime of truth extends accountability to the most intimate movements of the soul – its desires, intentions, and temptations – transforming interior life into

[7] M. Foucault, *Confessions of the Flesh. The History of Sexuality, Vol. 4*, Pantheon, New York 2021, p. 93

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a permanent object of scrutiny. The ethical demand is not only to act rightly but to *think* and *feel* rightly, to submit even the invisible impulses of the heart to a truth-practice that judges, disciplines, and purifies.

Through this mechanism, Foucault identifies the emergence of a specifically Christian form of selfhood [8]: one in which salvation and ethical perfection depend upon a ceaseless deciphering of the self's hidden motivations. The subject, under this regime, is responsible not simply for external conduct but for the inner landscape from which actions and temptations arise. The confessional imperative thus installs an economy of vigilance and self-surveillance, where the believer's relation to truth becomes inseparable from the care – and control – of the self.

Subjectivation and the Ethics of Truth

Foucault insists that confession is not only a tool of control or surveillance but also a space of ethical labor, in which the subject engages with truth as a modality of transformation – a process often described as *metanoia*, a radical reorientation or conversion [9]. In this sense, the confessional act exemplifies what Foucault, in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, calls *spirituality*: the ensemble of practices, exercises, and transformations through which the subject becomes capable of truth. For Foucault, spirituality is distinct from philosophy as pure knowledge: it presupposes that truth is never simply given to a neutral subject but must be earned through a modification of the self. Access to truth requires a conversion, an *askēsis*, a work upon oneself that reshapes desire, conduct, and being. «Well, if we call that "philosophy", I think we could call "spirituality" the search, practice and experience through which the subject brings about the necessary transformations within themselves in order to gain access to the truth» [10].

From this perspective, confession belongs to a broader history of *spiritual exercises* – techniques that bind truth to transformation. It is an *alèthurgical* act not merely because it discloses truth, but because

[8] P. Chevallier, *Michel Foucault et le "soi" chrétien*, *Astérion* [En ligne], 11.

[9] « Vous savez que le mot même de *metanoia* veut dire deux choses : la metanoia c'est la pénitence et c'est aussi le changement, changement radical de la pensée et de l'esprit». M. Foucault, *L'hermeneutique du sujet. Cours au Collège de France 1981-82*, Gallimard, Paris 2001, p.202.

[10] M. Foucault, *The hermeneutics of the Subject. Lectures at Collège de France 1981-82*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2005, p. 27.

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in doing so it produces a subject capable of bearing that truth. The penitent, by articulating their inner life, participates in an economy of transformation: speech becomes both revelation and purification. As Foucault puts it, «the telling of the truth is a practice by which the subject transforms himself: it is a mode of spiritual exercise through which the subject attests to the truth and in doing so becomes a subject of truth» [11].

This logic intensifies in Foucault's later analyses of *parrēsia* – frank and courageous truth-telling in the Greco-Roman tradition, the core interest of his later years – which he juxtaposes to Christian confession. In *parrēsia*, truth is not extracted through obedience or confession of faults, but freely uttered as an act of ethical courage. Here, spirituality takes on a different form: it no longer requires submission to an authority but rather fidelity to one's own reason and life. «Parrēsia implies a correspondence between the truth one says and the truth one lives; it is a practice that demands the subject to live according to what he says, making truth an embodied ethical commitment» [12].

By reading confession and *parrēsia* together, Foucault delineates two modalities of spirituality in the Western tradition: one grounded in obedience, renunciation, and self-examination; the other in autonomy, courage, and self-affirmation. Both, however, share the conviction that truth is not merely to be known, but to be *lived* – that access to truth requires a transformation of the subject who seeks it.

The tension of confession: between coercion and ethics

The confessional act is marked by a fundamental ambiguity: it is simultaneously coercive and transformative. Confession compels the subject to disclose their inner life while providing a framework for ethical self-formation, creating a productive tension between obedience and introspection, constraint and agency. Far from accidental, this duality is central to regimes of truth that aim to produce ethical subjects.

This dynamic is vividly illustrated in Foucault's analyses of Herculine Barbin (the 19th-century intersex individual, discussed in *Herculine Barbin: Being the Recently Discovered Memoirs of a Nineteenth-Century French Hermaphrodite*, 1980) and Pierre Rivière (the 19th-century

[11] M. Foucault, *The Courage of Truth. Lectures at Collège de France 1982-84*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2011, p.22.

[12] Ibid., p. 40.

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parricide, examined in *The Abnormals*, 1975, whose public confession was prefaced by Foucault). In both cases, confession and professional mediation – legal, medical, or religious – demanded full self-disclosure, scrutinizing desires, intentions, and identity. These acts simultaneously imposed external norms and enabled the subject to engage in self-examination, illustrating how confession produces subjects intelligible to power while offering the possibility of ethical transformation. In confessing his crime on his own terms, Rivière's discourse interrupts the normalising flow of power-through-confession and opens a space of counter-conduct where the act of truth-telling becomes an act of refusal of the constituted subjectivity imposed by judicial and medical regimes.

Thus, confession operates as a crucible where power and ethics converge: the subject is both governed and capable of self-governance. It is neither a mere instrument of surveillance nor a purely voluntary ethical exercise, but a disciplined space in which the individual is called to confront, interpret, and shape their own being. The tension between coercion and transformation, external norm and interior ethical labor, renders confession central to understanding how subjectivity is formed within a regime of truth.

Conclusion

Foucault's genealogy of confession demonstrates that the logic of confessing – submitting one's inner life to scrutiny, narration, and transformation – extends far beyond the religious sphere. Contemporary practices such as psychotherapy, pedagogical reflection, and digital self-expression continue to operate within a confessional paradigm, where self-fulfillment is linked to the externalization and articulation of inner truth before an authority or audience. These practices promise coherence, authenticity, and transformation, yet they also carry risks of exposure, surveillance, and disciplinary control.

Christian confession, as Foucault shows, establishes truth as an ethical and existential demand: truth is not passively discovered but actively performed, interpreted, and cultivated through power relations. Its enduring relevance lies in this dual aspect – as both a technology of power and a practice of self-transformation. The challenge today is to imagine alternative truth-practices that preserve the capacity for ethical agency while mitigating the coercive and disciplinary effects inherent

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in traditional confession, allowing subjects to engage with truth in ways that are reflective, autonomous, and generative.

In early Christian practices, speaking the truth about oneself embodies a productive ambiguity: confession opens a path to salvation while simultaneously functioning as a mechanism of power that shapes, categorizes, and regulates the subject. The act of confessing is never purely personal or neutral; it enacts both spiritual self-fashioning and the reinforcement of social and moral norms. This tension reveals that truth-telling is inseparable from the practices and relations that produce it, showing how the same act can be a means of both guidance and control, of liberation and subjection. Such an understanding invites a reflection on the ways in which the formation of the self is always entwined with the regimes of truth that structure our lives.

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Invisibility and Passibility of Aesthetic Experience: Perspectives from Michel Henry and Henri Maldiney

Lorenza Zucchi

1. *Phenomenology of the Invisible: An Aesthetic Phenomenology?* [1]

Returning to the question of aesthetic experience constitutes a crucial task in sketching a phenomenology of the invisible. Indeed, the phenomenological interest in invisibility is inscribed within a long tradition that goes back to Husserl and Heidegger [2], and finds explicit development in contemporary French thought, particularly in the works of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Michel Henry, and Jean-Luc Marion.

A common denominator that allows us to approach the dimension of invisibility, whether it precedes the ek-static horizon or remains concealed within visibility itself, can be grasped most aptly through aesthetics, understood in its original sense. The term *aesthetic*, derived from the Greek *aisthesis* (sensation, the sensible), inevitably refers to

[1] All translations from French are my own.

[2] In Husserl's philosophy, the question of invisibility is internal to the phenomenon itself, and it is not explicitly addressed in his thought. He writes: "[…] the invisible determinations of a thing, we know with apodictic evidence, are necessarily spatial, like all the determinations of the thing: this provides us with a rule in accordance with the laws that govern the possible ways of completing, in space, the invisible sides of the thing that appears." (E. Husserl, *Idées directrice pour une phénoménologie et une philosophie pure (1930),* Paris, Gallimard, p. 478; my translation.) By contrast, the question of the invisible is taken up by Heidegger in his concept of a phenomenology of the unapparent, which appears quite late, in the *Zähringen Seminar* (1973), and which is drawn from Parmenidean thought on presence: "That which enters into presence: entering into presence itself." (M. Heidegger*, Questions IV,* trans. K. Axelos, J. Beaufret et al., Paris, Gallimard, 1976, p. 337 ; my translation.)

the experience of feeling. Although ordinary language tends to distinguish between *sensitivity* and *sensation*, philosophy does not truly separate these two notions. As Gabriel Dufour Kowalska affirms, both belong to the universal dimension of feeling [3].

Invisible by essence, feeling does not merely constitute the medium through which we are affected by the (sensible) encounter with alterity. It appears, rather, to possess a double dimension: on the one hand, its transcendent character enables it to aim toward that which manifests itself within the ek-static dimension; on the other hand, it makes possible a form of self-manifestation -that is, the capacity to feel oneself (*se sentir soi-même*) [4]. It is since this double movement, oriented both outward and inward, that it becomes conceivable to trace a phenomenology -namely, a phenomenology of aesthetic experience.

Before being a study of the phenomenon from an aesthetic, or more precisely artistic point of view, the description of objects within the phenomenal horizon -whether this horizon be one of light or of darkness, refers to *aisthesis* as an originary dimension, one that precedes any transcendental analysis of the phenomenon. This approach thus distinguishes itself from that of Mikel Dufrenne, who establishes a close link between the aesthetic object and perception, thereby founding an aesthetic phenomenology centered on perceptual experience [5].

The thesis defended here, however, aims to (re)think not only aesthetics in general, but also aesthetic phenomenology -not merely as a phenomenology of perception, but as a phenomenology of *feeling* (*sentir*), insofar as feeling always precedes the perceived.

From this original posture – prior to any experience of the perceived – it becomes possible to rethink aesthetic experience as the very essence of phenomenal donation. In this respect, the connection with the artistic sphere becomes evident: art is aesthetic insofar as it engages an experience of feeling and experiencing (*sentir* and *ressentir*). Through the presence of the aesthetic-artistic object, a form of the invisible is revealed – one that, while manifesting itself in the work, simultaneously seizes the *pathos* felt by the subject.

[3] Cf. G. Dufour-Kowalska, *L'art et la sensibilité. De Kant à Michel Henry,* Paris, Vrin, 1996, p.17.

[4] I refer, on the one hand, to Maldiney's position, who finds in the *pathic* the essence of transcendent existence, and, on the other hand, to the key concept in Michel Henry's philosophy, "Life experiences itself", both of which will be further explicated in what follows.

[5] Cf. M. Dufrenne, *Phénoménologie de l'expérience esthétique. Tome premier : L'objet esthétique* (1953)*,* Paris, PUF, 1967.

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It is precisely here that the passage from *feeling* (*sentir*) to *experiencing* (*ressentir*) assumes crucial importance: it is across this bridge between sensation (*aisthesis*) and affect (*pathos*) that it becomes possible to delineate an aesthetic phenomenology unfolding within the invisible dimension of phenomenality.

Pathos, a fundamental concept in Greek philosophy, possesses a double meaning: derived from the verb *paschein*, it signifies both "to experience, to feel" and "to suffer." As affection, *pathos* is in itself invisible, since it always belongs to the realm of lived experience.

Yet if invisibility is the *conditio sine qua non* of affectivity, how does affectivity reveal itself to phenomenality? This question opens onto two major phenomenological perspectives, in which *pathos* constitutes the very essence of manifestation: that of Michel Henry, who conceives affection in the *how* of appearing -that is, in its immanent self-donation- and that of Henri Maldiney, who elucidates the link between *pathos* and art as a "flash of being."

On the one hand, in Michel Henry's thought, the phenomenology of the invisible is explicit: *pathos* manifests itself as the very essence of manifestation, within transcendental Life itself, outside of any worldly appearing. On the other hand, although it is more difficult to relate his thought to aesthetics in the strictly artistic sense, it nonetheless remains profoundly fertile for thinking an aesthetics of feeling [6].

In contrast, for Henri Maldiney, art is inseparable from phenomenology: because it is essentially affective, it situates itself at the very heart of the worldly horizon, within the field of existence. Yet, identifying within his thought the elements necessary to outline a phenomenology of the invisible remains a complex undertaking.

Although these two approaches differ fundamentally in their points of departure, they converge on one essential insight: art appears as the visible trace of an invisible element. Not only does it transcend the subject–object dualism, abolishing the distance and separation it entails, but it also reveals the living and affective origin of existence itself.

[6] M. Henry, who devoted his aesthetic studies primarily to Wassily Kandinsky and to two other contemporary abstract painters, August Von Briesen (*Dessiner la musique. Théorie pour l'art de Briesen* (1985)) and Pierre Magré (*Peindre l'invisible* (1989)), published an essay on the Russian painter, *Voir l'invisible. Sur Kandinsky* (1988), as well as other articles collected in *Phénoménologie de la vie III*: *La métamorphose de Daphné* (1977); *Kandinsky et la signification de l'œuvre d'art* (1986); *La peinture abstraite et le cosmos (Kandinsky)* (1989); and *Kandinsky : le mystère des dernières œuvres*(1993).

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The aesthetic experience, which persists in the Night[7], traces a path through the artistic sphere, immersed in affectivity.

2. *Sketch of a Reflection on the Relation Between the Pathetic and the Aesthetic in Michel Henry*

When approached through the work of Michel Henry, the question makes it possible to discern the outlines of a phenomenology of feeling. As early as *The Essence of Manifestation* (1963), Henry takes a clear distance from Husserl and Heidegger, particularly regarding the notion of *ek-stasis*, through which transcendence unfolds within the world. According to Henry, both thinkers remain attached to a phenomenology of exteriority, grounded in a horizon of openness where the manifestation of meaning always occurs at a distance. Intentional consciousness in Husserl, as well as Heidegger's *Dasein*, are both defined by this openness to the world, understood as the condition of any appearing of phenomena.

Henry's major critique targets precisely this conception of subjectivity: by exposing itself outwardly, within worldliness, subjectivity becomes alienated. Against this logic of exteriority, the French phenomenologist asserts the primacy of a mode of appearing that belongs to pure immanence, one in which every phenomenological distance, understood as mediation or separation between lived experience and what is given, is abolished.

This immediate appearing, which Henry designates as the *how* of appearing, is that of affectivity: an invisible donation, anterior to all objectification, through which the phenomenon manifests itself to itself. This is what he calls *Life*: an immanent and pathic dimension that constitutes the originary foundation of all phenomenality. In it, *auto-affection* is primary: feeling feels itself before any form of perception or representation.

[7] The term is used by both authors: « […] Cette vie est invisible, ne se proposant jamais sous la forme d'un objet qu'on pourrait rencontrer dans le monde, ne se donnant à sentir qu'en nous, dans la nuit de cette expérience muette que chacun fait de lui-même à tout instant » M. Henry, *Peindre l'invisible,* dans A. Jdey, R. Kühn (eds.), *Michel Henry et l'affect de l'art. Recherches sur l'esthétique de la phénoménologie matérielle*, Brill, Leiden 2012, p. xxxviii) ; « L'espace de la nuit s'apparente, d'autre part, à l'espace du paysage, dans lequel nous sommes perdus, *ici*, sous l'horizon du monde entier – dans un ici absolu qui exclut tout système de repérage ou de référence. Mais, de plus, dans la nuit l'horizon est sur nous, sans possibilité d'éloignement » H. Maldiney, *L'art, l'éclair de l'être* (1993), Éditions du Cerf, Paris, 2012, p. 183.

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Thus, Henry's phenomenology does not unfold within the horizon of the world, but within that of living immanence, where feeling reveals itself as a primary and irreducible experience. What, then, is Life? Henry writes:

> «Life reveals in such a way that what it reveals never stands outside of itself – never being anything external to it, other, or different, but precisely itself. Hence, the revelation of life is a self-revelation, this originary and pure 'self-experiencing' in which that which experiences and that which is experienced are one and the same [8]».

"Life experiences itself": such is the fundamental discovery of Henry's thought, which opens the way for a genuine phenomenology of feeling. In experiencing itself, Life manifests as a transcendental life -non-intentional, non-ecstatic, but immanent and acosmic. This mode of appearing proper to Life constitutes the very condition of possibility for the horizon of worldliness itself: an horizon that must not be confused with Husserl's *Lebenswelt* or with Merleau-Ponty's *chiasm*, but rather understood as a life that gives itself according to an originary and invisible mode of appearing.

Conversely, Henry's conception of the aesthetic proceeds directly from this understanding of Life. Life, understood as a *self-feeling*, represents the *pathos* of embodied existence. By *pathos*, one has understand the internal structure of Life itself -its essence as the ontological determination of Life's invisible, phenomenal self-revelation. In Henry's thought, the *pathetic* thus unfolds as feeling insofar as it feels itself -that is, as originary and irreducible auto-affection.

Considering this conception of subjective life, the *pathetic* dimension opens the possibility for reflection on the work of art. Indeed, if art belongs to the order of feeling, it is because it partakes of this immanent self-revelation of Life. As Henry writes in his 1989 article *Painting the Invisible*:

> «Invisible life traverses us with its invincible movement, casting us into ourselves within that pathetic trial which is our birthplace and makes us living beings. A mute power of feeling, of suffering, and of rejoicing defines our being: a power with which we coincide, from which it is impossible to withdraw or take leave. It is this plenitude of a life overwhelmed by itself and intoxicated with itself that painting expresses [...] this constitutes its "content"» [9].

[8] M. Henry, *Incarnation, Une philosophie de la chair*, Paris, Seuil §23 p. 173.

[9] M. Henry, *Kandinsky : le mystère des dernières œuvres*, dans *Phénoménologie de la vie V*, édités par J. Leclercq et G. Jean, PUF, Paris, 2015, p. 225.

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The many essays and studies that Michel Henry devotes to Wassily Kandinsky testify to the importance that aesthetic reflection holds within his thought. Already in *On the Spiritual in Art* (1910), Kandinsky assigns to abstract painting a singular task: to render visible that which, by essence, cannot be seen. Invisibility thus becomes the foundation of a genuine aesthetic theory, one that is not limited to surpassing figurative painting, but which above all expresses the invisibility of Life itself.

From this perspective, art appears as a privileged medium granting access to the pathic and invisible dimension of phenomenal reality. By following the polar dialectic between interior and exterior in Kandinsky, and the corresponding one between the invisible and the visible in Henry, it becomes evident that artistic experience constitutes a sensible mode of the revelation of feeling-that is, of originary affective tonality.

Henry formulates it thus: «The aim of painting is to make us feel what we are -this life in the ordeal of its passion, its anguish, its suffering, and its joy. Its substance -the substance of colors and forms- are fragments of this life, of its exalted dynamism» [10].

Hence, painting – and art in general – does not necessarily belong to the substantial or factual world. Rather, according to Henry, it reveals a deeper reality: that of affectivity and invisibility, which is not foreign to the world but, on the contrary, constitutes the very horizon from which the world becomes possible. Art is thus the sensible and visible expression of an element that is at once metaphysical and pathic: *Life*, as the source and origin of the cosmos.

3. *The Open and the Pathic in Maldiney's Aesthetic Thought*

If, in Michel Henry's philosophy, the question of affectivity and passibility immediately manifests an aesthetics of the invisible at the very origin of the worldly horizon, the reflection on invisibility takes on a more complex configuration in Henri Maldiney's thought. For Maldiney, sensing (*le sentir*) is understood above all as an event, an opening of the subject to the world. The world, originally, is given not as a mere framework of objectivities, but as a phenomenon that both transposes and renders them possible. It is in and through the world that the sub-

[10] M. Henry, *Kandinsky : le mystère des dernières œuvres*, dans *Phénoménologie de la vie V*, édités par J. Leclercq et G. Jean, PUF, Paris, 2015, p. 225.

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ject encounters and perceives things: «it is a world that is already there, before the "universal exposition" of things» [11].

Faced with this articulation between world and subject, Maldiney reformulates Heidegger's concept of *Dasein* (being-there or being-in-the-world) by reconceptualizing it as a being-with-the-world. This fundamental relation, which may be described as *presence* in the specific sense of Maldiney's terminology, rests upon an originary presence to the world -nothing other than sensing itself.

Drawing upon analyses from Erwin Straus's phenomenology, Maldiney emphasizes that sensing possesses no intentional character and cannot be reduced to a sensible datum (*sensum*). It is a prereflective, non-objectifying sensing, through which the existent opens itself originally to the world. Maldiney illustrates this clearly: «Sensation is fundamentally a mode of communication, and in sensing we live, in a pathic mode, our being-with-the-world» [12].

Here, Maldiney introduces the central concept of the *pathic*. This notion carries a dual meaning. On the one hand, he associates it with *Stimmung* [13], conceived as a moment of *Befindlichkeit*- that is, as affection in the sense of a lived trial, a pathos. The pathic, in this sense, designates an attunement, a fundamental tonality of existence.

On the other hand, the "trial" (*épreuve*), which can be traced back to the Greek *pathein*, aorist of *paschein* (to undergo, to suffer, to experience), refers to a sensing that is essentially passible. It is not merely the experience of a feeling, but the experience through passibility itself. Hence, passibility constitutes both an ontic and an ontological moment: ontic, insofar as it refers to the lived experience of affection; ontological, it opens a world from within that very experience.

It is within this context that Maldiney introduces the notion of *transpassibility*, in which *transpassible* is « the receptivity, which belongs not to the order of projection but of welcoming, of openness, and which admits no a priori, which, expecting without expecting anything, remains open beyond any possible anticipation» [14]. Through transpassibility, one may understand openness to the

[11] H. Maldiney, *Art et Existence*, Paris, Klincksieck, 2003, p. 23.

[12] H. Maldiney, *Regarde, Parole, Espace* (1973), Éditions du Cerf, Paris, 2012, p. 164.

[13] It should be recalled that *Stimmung* derives from the verb *stimmen*, meaning "to tune," especially in reference to a musical instrument: thus, the human being is attuned to the world as an instrument is to its resonance.

[14] H. Maldiney, *Penser l'homme et la follie,* Grenoble, Jérôme Million, 1991, p. 143.

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world, of the world, and beyond the world, not as an actuality but as a possibility [15].

This pathic receptivity implies a radical openness, a welcoming of the event that each time discloses another world, wherein the being-there is transformed. The Open thus becomes the condition of possibility for every manifestation: it does not appear, but rather makes all appearance possible. It remains invisible precisely because it is first felt before it is perceived, undergone before it is thematized.

Within this interlacing of the pathic and the Open, Maldiney confers upon art a genuinely ontological scope. If sensing, as an originary mode of access to the world, is already aesthetic, as we have previously established, then art appears as the very truth of this sensing – its sensible fulfillment.

Maldiney writes:

> «Art is the truth of sensing, the unveiling of the buried ground from which objective perception is severed and which it represses to *aisthesis*. The word 'aesthetic' has two meanings: one refers to art, the other to sensible receptivity. Artistic-aesthetics is the truth of sensible-aesthetics, whose being finds its revelation in the being-work. The significant dimension of *there*, in its perpetual state of originary birth, in the event of its advent, gives itself in a double appearing, whose directions of meaning are the spatio-temporal articulations of presence» [16].

This double appearing is not as explicitly formulated in Maldiney as in Michel Henry's thought, where the distinction between the visible and the invisible is rigorously articulated. Indeed, Maldiney rarely develops this cleavage directly. What he seeks to show is that aesthetic experience, *invisible* in essence, in that it opens onto what is not immediately given, constitutes the very origin of artistic experience. Both belong, in his view, to the fundamental structure of existence.

Art, from the Maldineyan perspective, thus appears as the expression of this transpassible existence. Maldiney identifies this experience with what he calls *rhythm*. Although it is not possible here to unfold this notion in its full breadth, it is nevertheless crucial to emphasize its essential character: rhythm, in Maldiney's thought, is by no means reducible to a mere cadence or ordered succession of times. It designates

[15] Cf. C. Serban, *Du possible au transpossible*, dans *Philosophie. Henri Maldiney*, numéro 130, Paris, Les éditions de minuit, huins 2016.

[16] H. Maldiney, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

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an originary movement, an *auto-movement* through which presence to the Open is articulated -that is, the fundamental attunement of the existent to the world.

Cézanne's *Montagne Sainte-Victoire* perfectly illustrates this conception. Through each of his representations, Cézanne does not seek to reproduce an empirical landscape but to bring forth the very essence of the mountain, as it comes into being as event. The painter succeeds in manifesting it because he *feels*, because he is co-present to a pathic and originary texture that conditions every opening to the world.

Art, in this sense, presents itself as an aesthetic experience manifesting in a "flash of being." The work of art is not a mere object, a product detached from the experience that gave rise to it; it is not, in Maldiney's words, a "piece of art." The being-work-of-art belongs to the same order as existence itself: it shares its ontological structure and reveals, through its presence, the pathic truth of being.

4. *Conclusion*

In conclusion, Michel Henry and Henri Maldiney each develop, along distinct paths, the foundations of a non-intentional aesthetic phenomenology. In both thinkers, *sensing* unfolds as a prereflective mode, freed from all objectification, and belonging to an invisible dimension of the phenomenon: in Henry, this invisibility is experienced immediately within the immanence of Life; in Maldiney, it is inscribed in the concept of the Open (*l'Ouvert*).

Yet an essential divergence appears in the way they articulate the relation between sensing and the world. For Henry, *feeling* implies a *self-feeling* (*se-sentir*), that is, an auto-affection immanent to Life itself. For Maldiney, by contrast, sensing and the feeling of this sensing together constitute the very movement through which the world opens and with it, our mode of "being-with-the-world."

The passage through art thus appears as a decisive moment for understanding the phenomenality of sensing: through the visible and sensible work of art, it becomes possible to unveil -or rather, to let come forth- the hidden origin of all aesthetic experience. This origin, though it remains invisible, is nonetheless revealed in the very trial of *pathos* that grounds both art and, more broadly, existence and life itself.

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Challenges in Integrating Civic and Citizenship Education and Education for Sustainable Development in Initial Teacher Education for Pre-Primary and Primary Education: Preliminary Findings from Two Italian Case Studies

Marco Valerio

1. Introduction

In recent years, Citizenship and Civic Education has emerged as a subject area of growing international relevance and interest [1]. The continuous transformations occurring within both national and international contexts, together with emerging global challenges such as climate change and migration, expose contemporary societies to new and unprecedented issues [2]. Teachers play a fundamental role in shaping future citizens and in fostering the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that enable students to participate actively and responsibly in society [3]. CCE represents a key means through which teachers can prepare younger generations to face emerging global challenges by equipping them with critical understanding, ethical awareness, and the capacity for engagement [4]. However,

[1] W. Schulz, J. Fraillon, B. Losito, G. Agrusti, J. Ainley, V. Damiani, T. Friedman, *IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study 2022 Assessment Framework*, Springer, 2023.

[2] UNESCO, *UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005 – 2014: The DESD at a glance*. UNESCO, Paris: 2005.

[3] The Council of the European Union, *Council conclusions on effective teacher education*, in *Official Journal of European Union*. 183, 14.6.2014, pp. 22-25. And M. Santerini, *Educazione civica e alla cittadinanza. Le proposte delle organizzazioni internazionali*. In *Scuola Democratica* (Fascicolo Speciale). 2021, pp. 233-242.

[4] W. Schulz, J. Fraillon, B. Losito, G. Agrusti, J. Ainley, V. Damiani, T. Friedman, *IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study 2022 Assessment Framework*, Springer, 2023.

the effective implementation of CCE requires teachers to possess not only a solid understanding of its content but also a clear awareness of its aims, principles, and suitable pedagogical approaches[5]. Due to the multifaceted and multidimensional nature of this subject area – which integrates cognitive, attitudinal, and participatory dimensions – its teaching demands an interdisciplinary and cross-curricular perspective[6]. For this reason, initial teacher education constitutes a crucial stage in ensuring that future teachers are adequately prepared to integrate CCE into their professional practice. Well-designed teacher education programs are therefore essential to guarantee that teachers are equipped both in terms of disciplinary knowledge and in their ability to translate CCE principles into meaningful classroom practices[7].

Another subject area strongly related to CCE is Education for Sustainable Development. Since the launch of *UNESCO's Decade of Education for Sustainable Development*[8] and with the international endorsement of the *2030 Agenda*[9], ESD has begun to play a central role in the educational policies of countries worldwide[10]. ESD aims at transforming educational systems by embracing a holistic teaching paradigm grounded in the principles of sustainable development, in which not only the curricular content but also the learning environments, spaces, and the broader community surrounding educational institutions convey teachings and experiences that promote and embody sustainability[11].

Within this global framework, increasing attention has been devoted to the integration of both CCE and ESD into pre-service teacher education programs, highlighting the need for teachers to acquire not only disciplinary and pedagogical competences, but also the capacity

[5] European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, *Citizenship Education at School in Europe*. Eurydice Report. Publications Office. 2017

[6] C. Bîrzéa, *Education for democratic citizenship: A lifelong learning perspective*. Council of Europe. Council for Cultural Co-operation (CDCC). Project on "Education for Democratic Citizenship". Strasbourg, 20 June, 2000. P. 21.

[7] T. Huddleston, *Teacher training in citizenship education: Training for a new subject or for a new kind of subject?*, in *Journal of Social Science Education*, 4(3), 2005, pp. 50-63.

[8] UNESCO, *Shaping the future we want: UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005–2014); final report*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. 2014.

[9] United Nations (2015). *Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015. Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*

[10] A. E. J. Wals, *Review of contexts and structures for education for sustainable development: Learning for a sustainable world.* UNESCO. 2009.

[11] UNESCO. *Roadmap for implementing the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Paris. UNESCO. 2014.

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to promote critical thinking, democratic participation, and sustainable behaviors among their students [12].

However, despite the growing international consensus on the importance of pre-service teacher preparation in these areas, the way in which national education systems translate such principles into practice varies considerably.

For instance, initial teacher education programs for pre-primary and primary school teachers in Italy, regulated by *Law No. 249 of 2010*, are highly prescriptive in both their structure and content, leaving universities very limited autonomy in curricular design. Although the decree formally allows for the inclusion of disciplines addressing topics related to CCE and ESD, these subject areas are neither explicitly mentioned among the program's objectives nor clearly integrated into its curricular framework. As a result, CCE and ESD remain marginal and largely implicit within teacher education, appearing only indirectly through specific disciplinary areas – such as biological or ecological sciences – rather than as distinct and systematically developed components aimed at preparing future teachers to promote active citizenship and sustainable development in their professional practice [13].

However, in Italy *Civic Education* is a compulsory curricular subject, amounting to a total of 33 annual hours delivered cross-curricularly from primary to upper secondary school, as established by *Law No. 92 of 2019*. This reveals a misalignment within the Italian legislative framework concerning the coherence between primary teacher education and the actual teaching requirements in schools. Such a misalignment can largely be attributed to the fact that *Civic Education* became a stand-alone subject only with the 2019 reform, whereas the teacher education law dates back to 2010 – when CCE was still considered a transversal area integrated mainly into the historical and social studies curriculum rather than an independent discipline [14].

Given this legislative background, it remains unclear how higher education institutions prepare future teachers for the teaching of CCE, which constitutes a compulsory subject area in their future professional practice. For this reason, the present study aims to investigate how, and

[12] T. Huddleston, *Teacher training in citizenship education: Training for a new subject or for a new kind of subject?*, in *Journal of Social Science Education*, 4(3), 2005, pp. 50-63.

[13] Ministro dell'Istruzione, dell'università e della Ricerca, *Decreto 10 settembre 2010, n. 249*. Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana. 2010

[14] Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito. *Linee guida per l'insegnamento dell'educazione civica*. 2024

to what extent, such preparation takes place within two specific contexts of pre-primary and primary teacher education.

2. *Study Design*

2.1. Methodology and university selection criteria

This study is part of the doctoral research project *Learning to Teach Civic and Citizenship Education and Education for Sustainable Development During Pre-service Teacher Training*, conducted in collaboration with Universidade Católica Portuguesa. The project adopts a multiple case study and mixed-methods design, combining document analysis, interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups to examine how CCE and ESD are integrated into initial teacher education programs in four universities – two in Italy and two in Portugal. The triangulation of these data sources enables a comprehensive understanding of how these subjects are embedded in curricula and perceived by pre-service teachers.

Universities were selected according to specific inclusion criteria, namely the explicit presence of courses addressing CCE and ESD, or the integration of related themes within the broader curriculum of pre-service teacher education programs. Based on these criteria, two universities were selected within the Italian context. To accurately trace the actual training pathways followed during teacher education, the study focuses on final-year students, who are completing their preparation to enter the teaching profession.

The present contribution focuses exclusively on the Italian cases and presents the first findings of the research through the analysis of selected elements from the interviews conducted with university professors involved in the study. All data analyses were carried out using the qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA.

2.2. Italian University

The two universities selected for the Italian context are both public institutions offering degree programs in pre-primary and primary teacher education. The first institution (hereafter referred to as U1) is located in a major city in the north of Italy, while the second (U2) is based in a major city in central Italy. Each university enrolls approximately 300 students per

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academic year in its teacher education program. For this study, the reference cohort includes students who began their studies in the 2020/2021 academic year and who, at the time of data collection (2024/2025), are attending the fifth and final year of their initial teacher training.

2.3. Interview structure

To capture the perspectives of university professors, semi-structured interviews were conducted. Each interview was divided into two sections: the first focused on CCE and the second on ESD. This separation was introduced as a conceptual facilitation. Although many CCE- and ESD-related themes overlap, in the present study – following the main references in the relevant literature and international research frameworks – ESD is considered a subarea of CCE. This clarification was explicitly communicated to each interviewee at the beginning of the interview to prevent misunderstandings. The interviews were conducted with professors teaching courses attended by students of the cohort enrolled in the academic year 2020/2021, whose course descriptions explicitly addressed themes related to either CCE or ESD. The questions were adapted to the specific course taught by each interviewee and aimed to capture both explicit and implicit references to these educational areas.

The first section focused on CCE, exploring whether and how professors connect their course content – such as topics on inclusion, diversity, migration, and gender equality – to the broader framework of CCE, as well as the methodologies and materials employed. It also examined if and how students are trained to design, implement, and assess CCE-related learning activities.

The second section addressed ESD, investigating whether sustainability is treated as an independent or cross-curricular theme, which issues are discussed, and how the environmental, social, and economic dimensions of sustainable development are integrated. Questions also concerned references to the 2030 Agenda (particularly Target 4.7), adopted pedagogies, and extra-curricular initiatives related to sustainability and ESD.

2.4. Interviewees profile

Below is a table summarizing the number of professors interviewed for each university, their disciplinary area, and the title of their course.

Table 1. - U1 University professor interviews.

Participant	Disciplinary Area[15]	Course Title
P1	GEOG-01/A	Geography and Didactics of Geography
P2	BIOS-03/A	Elements of General Biology
P3	PHYS-06/B	Elements of Physics and Didactics of Physics
P4	BIO-05/A	Elements of Ecology
P5	CHEM-03/A	Elements of Chemistry and Didactics of Chemistry
P6	HIST-03/A	History of Contemporary Society
P7	PAED-01/A	Intercultural Pedagogy
P8	PAED-02/A	Special Pedagogy for Inclusion
P9	PAED-02/A	Didactics Innovation and Educational Technologies
P10	SDEA-01/A	Cultural Anthropology

Table 2. - U2 University professor interviews

Participant	Disciplinary Area	Course Title
P11	GEOG-01/A	Geography and Didactics of Geography
P12	BIO-05/A	Ecology and Didactics of Ecology
P12	BIOS-01/A	General Biology
P13	PAED-01/A	Intercultural and Citizenship Education
P14	PAED-02/A	Inclusive Didactics
P15	PEMM-01/B	Artistic-expressive and Audiovisual Disciplines
P16	GSPS-06/A	Sociology of Education and Childhood
P17	PSIC-02/A	Developmental Psychology for Inclusion
P18	PAED-01/B	Childhood Literature

[15] In Italy, the disciplinary area is indicated by the scientific disciplinary sector code (SSD) in accordance with Annex B of Ministerial Decree No. 639 of May 2, 2024

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3. *Results*

3.1. Insights from U1 University Professor Interviews

In the first Italian university (U1), three main trends emerge from the analysis of the interviews with university professors. First, most professors within the disciplinary area of natural sciences and geography explicitly address the concept of sustainable development, establishing clear connections to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as to topics traditionally associated with ESD, such as climate change and ecological footprint. Within this group, however, two distinct approaches can be observed. Some professors adopt a comprehensive understanding of sustainability, explicitly referring to the concept of sustainable development and integrating its environmental, social, and economic dimensions into their teaching. Others, by contrast, tend to focus almost exclusively on the environmental dimension, neglecting the broader social and economic aspects. Secondly, when sustainability-related topics are discussed, some professors make explicit and intentional references to the teaching of CCE at school level, recognizing potential links between the two areas. However, others address these topics without establishing any explicit connection to CCE. Thirdly, professors addressing CCE-related themes tend to connect them to the general idea of citizenship, yet without situating these topics within the specific conceptual and curricular framework of CCE.

These trends can be further illustrated through selected excerpts from the interviews, which provide concrete examples of how university professors conceptualize and integrate sustainability and citizenship-related issues within their teaching practice.

For instance, the professor teaching *Elements of Ecology*, when asked whether the sustainability-related topics covered in her course were also linked to the social and economic dimensions of sustainable development, stated:

> «No, let's say that I described this when, in the lesson, I was explaining what sustainability is, it only at the ecological level» (P4, my translation).

The same cannot be said for the professor of *Geography and Geography Didactics*, who not only provides an in-depth explanation of the concept of sustainable development during his lectures, but also dedicates a significant part of the course to deconstructing students' misconcep-

tions and critically examining sustainability issues through a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of certain actions. His approach explicitly takes into account the three pillars of sustainable development and aims to foster students' critical thinking on the topic. Moreover, through the *Geography Laboratory*, he provides practical inputs and strategies for teaching these themes to future pre-primary and primary school students.

> «The fundamental idea is to have a critical view of sustainable development. Critical does not mean conspiracy theorist or denier. Absolutely not. [...] We need to have this kind of view, which is critical but not extremist in nature. I always tell my students this» (P1, my translation).

An integrated approach is shared by the *Elements of Physics and Didactics of Physics* professor and the *Geography and Geography Didactics* professor, who make explicit references both to CCE and to the official guidelines for the teaching of Civic Education issued by the Italian Ministry of Education. These professors actively relate sustainability-related topics to CCE learning pathways, emphasizing the interdisciplinary connections between Education for Sustainable Development and the disciplinary fields of Geography and Natural Sciences.

By contrast, other professors address sustainability without establishing explicit connections to CCE or to its curricular framework. For instance, the professor of *Elements of Chemistry and Didactics of Chemistry*, when asked whether her teaching on sustainability-related topics included references to CCE, acknowledged:

> «A little less, a little less. Let's say that I don't really have the skills to deal with these aspects as well, so let's say not directly» (P5, my translation).

While some professors address themes such as *intercultural education*, *the Italian Constitution*, or *human rights* without making explicit their connection to the specific subject area of CCE, the *History of Contemporary Society* professor links directly some of her course topics to the civic education curriculum area.

> «I try to explain that it's not just history, but citizenship education through history, which I believe is an important system. In other words, I don't see citizenship education as separate from history» (P6, my translation).

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3.2. Insights from U2 University Professor Interviews

In U2, university professors limitedly address both the concept of sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda with its Sustainable Development Goals. The topics remain largely in the background within courses belonging to the Natural Sciences disciplinary area, where sustainability-related themes are only implicitly connected to the broader concept of sustainable development and the social and economic dimensions of these themes are almost totally absent. Additionally, when addressing topics related to ESD, references to CCE are rather sporadic, except for the *Geography and Didactics of Geography* professor, who explicitly connects the content of his course to potential learning activities for CCE. A similar pattern can be observed in disciplines related to intercultural pedagogy and new technologies, which – albeit to varying degrees – address issues pertaining to CCE, with the extent of connection to this subject area largely depending on the individual professor's approach and pedagogical focus.

The following excerpts from the interviews exemplify these trends, highlighting diverse ways of interpreting and linking ESD and CCE themes within their respective disciplinary contexts.

For example, the professor of *Ecology and Didactics of Ecology* and *General Biology*, when asked whether there was a direct link between the topics covered in her course and sustainable development said:

> «It's implicit, it remains implicit. Obviously, I teach them a lot […] we develop it as a way of making children more aware of the environment, of climate change, so all strategies for teaching children, yes. (P12, my translation).

Likewise, the professor of *Geography and Didactics of Geography*, although he addresses the concept of sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda, the social and economic dimensions of sustainability are virtually absent:

> «When we talk about the three pillars of sustainability, the economic and political aspects are less prominent in my course, simply for technical reasons, namely that the fundamentals of economics, governance, and regional studies are less prominent. The closest topics are those of environmental sustainability» (P11, my translation).

Links between sustainability-related topics and CCE appear limited and inconsistent. For instance, when asked whether she made any reference

to CCE while discussing the themes of her *Ecology and Didactics of Ecology* course, the professor responded as follows:

«Sometimes, but it's not a constant thing. It's something that has happened sporadically. Sometimes I make some reference to it, sometimes I don't. Because I certainly refer a lot to ethical behavior» (P12, my translation).

This is not the case for the professor of *Geography and Didactics of Geography*, who includes within his course a practical exercise with the students aimed at designing a learning pathway that can be ascribed to the curricular area of Civic Education.

Likewise, other professors, when discussing their disciplinary area, make explicit reference to CCE and to how the content of their courses can be applied within teaching pathways related to CCE. For instance, *Artistic-expressive and Audiovisual Disciplines* professor addresses explicitly the subject area of CCE.

> «We talk about civic education in a broader sense and then, of course, we reflect on what civic education means today, that is, how it is a concept that, with social and cultural changes and technological changes in particular, is expanding and becoming more complex. So yes, I make a direct reference to it, absolutely yes» (P15, my translation).

5. *Discussion*

Despite some promising examples of integration, the preliminary findings from both universities reveal that CCE and ESD remain marginal and inconsistently embedded within initial teacher education programs. What clearly emerges is that the extent to which topics related to sustainable development, the 2030 Agenda, and the Sustainable Development Goals are explored - as well as the attention given to preparing future teachers to implement these themes in their professional practice - depends mostly on the individual interests and objectives of each university professor.

Another aspect emerging from these first findings concerns the lack of a systematic integration between ESD and CCE, which is likewise largely left to university professors' individual approach. This separation reflects a limited understanding of their potential intersections, despite international policy frameworks emphasizing their interdependence. Moreover, citizenship-related contents – when addressed, including tho-

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se connected to ESD – often appear fragmented and lack explicit pedagogical articulation, with no clear reference to the CCE subject area, thereby reducing their visibility and coherence within the broader teacher education curriculum.

Overall, the presence of ESD and CCE in pre-service teacher training curriculum largely depends on individual professors' disciplinary interests and personal sensitivity to civic or sustainability-related issues rather than on a coherent institutional or curricular strategy.

These preliminary findings will be complemented by the analysis of the course content included in the educational provision of the universities under study, as well as by the examination of interviews with the coordinators of the teacher education programs, focus groups with students, and quantitative analysis of the student questionnaires. The triangulation of these data will make it possible to integrate the present results into a broader and more comprehensive perspective.

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