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In the past few decades, the subject of trust has attracted increasing interest among academics. In more recent times, philosophers above all, being phenomenologically-oriented for the most, have emphasized that trust is not reducible to a cognitive strategy of the subject – a tool that an autonomous and rational subject can use at will, on the basis of rational calculation. Trust represents a much earlier mode of experience: trust establishes and structures our original, primary, elementary relationship with the world, with others and with ourselves. In this sense, trust is one of the conditions of possibility not only of living in society, but also of becoming a real subject – a person. The aim of this paper is to show that trust somehow precedes the subject and constitutes one of the very conditions of becoming a subject.

Ronan Sharkey, *Trust Through Thick and Thin*

Trust is both interpersonal and social, strong and weak, "thick" (between people who know each other intimately) and "thin" (invested in structures and stable institutions). Throughout all these variables, it is possible to recognize a single concept that descends to us from Cicero and Aquinas, that laid the basis for the fiduciary form of government adumbrated by Locke and that remains, though weakened, in contemporary democracies. Nevertheless, despite the explosion of trust studies that we have witnessed over the last four decades, the enigma of the persistence of trust in the context of totalitarian regimes such as the Soviet Union during the 1930s remains as a philosophical challenge to our understanding, both ethical and anthropological.

Teresa Bartolomei, *Trust in the Unexpected*

Trust is the emotional and behavioral manifestation of the subjective consciousness of the objective ontological and anthropological surplus inherent in the intersubjective and finite constitution of the subject. It is therefore produced both epistemologically and ethically, as a transactional self-regenerative response to a condition of limitation and dependence on the other and on others that

triggers positive dynamics of self-transcendence. The gnoseological rationale of trust is analyzed in this paper with reference to Descartes, Wittgenstein, and the theory of linguistic acts. The reconstruction of the essential epistemological functionality of trust will contribute to the analysis of the structural causes of its current crisis in the framework of a cultural and social context characterized by the imperative self-determination of the individual (Kant) and by estrangement (Hegel), in the sign of the progressive and irreversible disintegration of traditional forms of community. The recognition of this evolutionary condition, both individual and collective, confronts us with the need to promote new modalities – not naive, not fusional, not linear, and tribal – of trust, which do not fixate on the known, on the near, on the similar, on the customary, but address the new, the distant, the different, the foreign, the unexpected.

Robert Cheaib, *Between Religious Faith and Basic Trust. The Contributions of Hans Urs von Balthasar and John Henry Newman*

In many languages, faith and trust come from the same linguistic root. It is the case in Hebrew with the root ‘aman, in Greek with pistis and in Latin with fides. This association between faith and trust goes far beyond lexical proximity. Faith has an existential dimension deeply rooted in human trust. This paper explores some aspects of the “fiducial” structure of faith “fides” in dialogue with two theologians: Hans Urs von Balthasar and John Henry Newman. The former’s intuitions on the initium fidei (genesis of faith) as interpersonal trust springing from the symbolic experience of the response of a child to his mother’s smile, and the latter’s focus on the intimate and psychological dynamics that hinder, obstruct, and even prevent faith, constitute both a valid stimulus to reflect on the existential interdependence between anthropological trust and theological faith. The exploration of faith from the angle of original and originating trust can reknit the broken thread between anthropology and Christian faith.

Silvia Conti, *Rebuilding Trust. The Texture of Values and Images in Iris Murdoch*

This contribution aims to delve into the philosophical and moral reflections of Iris Murdoch, highlighting the crucial role she assigns to trust in social cohesion and shared morality. The analysis unfolds in two phases: a historical-critical examination identifies the causes that Murdoch attributes to the actual current erosion of the social bond and trust, particularly focusing on a neoliberal tendency. In the second, more substantial and constructive phase, the text aims to elucidate the strategies that Murdoch promotes to restore bonds of trust through her ethics of vision. According to Murdoch, intrinsically valuable realities, such as virtuous individuals, great art, and perhaps the

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very idea of goodness, which possess authoritative and unifying imaginative power, may restore the meaning of human existence and thereby renew social trust.

Christophe Herzog, *Not a Wager: the Real Presence as Poetic Trust*

This article endeavors to reconsider George Steiner's wager on transcendence and its consequent use of the notion of real presence as analogical to literary meaning. By considering it a question of trust, we draw attention to its relation to the question of responsibility, thereby identifying a possible influence of Martin Buber on Steiner. We then briefly analyze a literary (The Little Prince) and a religious (the institution of the Eucharist) example to consider trust in its poetic enactment.

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This essay conceptualizes the category of "divine trust" within the institutional framework of the Islamic Republic of Iran to show how democracy interacts with oligarchic or even authoritarian mechanisms. By analytically assessing the complex management of popular sovereignty and theocratic constitutionalism, the aim is to underline the peculiarities of the Iranian republican constitutional and institutional system.

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In the Whole-School Approach, school governance is characterized by educational leadership based on respect for democratic principles and equitable community participation in decision-making. In the present research carried out in Italy and Portugal, teachers' Organizational Trust perception affects their participation. Initial results show that democratic school governance creates a trust-based school climate that promotes interpersonal relationships and students' outcomes.

Gael Trottmann-Calame, *Renewing Trust in Life: Dionysus or the Affirmation of the Human Possible*

After the proclamation of the "death of God", it is safe to say that confidence in morality, in the human figure, in life and in "God" have been shaken. But far from sounding the death knell for all possible hope (nihilism), Nietzsche, beyond the "death of God", announces a new "dawn": a new, free horizon is

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revealed, a space open to the attempt of a new subjectivity, to a recasting of values, to a new interpretation of life, and especially to a reconsideration of the divine figure: Dionysus, inviting the human being to be no longer just a creature, but also a creator.

Pierangelo Bianco, *The Grammar of Faith in the Community of Trust. An Excursus from Ludwig Wittgenstein to George Lindbeck*

Contemporary philosophy of religion, questioning the relationship between philosophy and theology, offers new possibilities of an answer that seem capable of going beyond the traditional Western dispute between faith and rational understanding. A deeper comprehension of human rationality, supported by the so called 'linguistic turn' in philosophy, has began to engage with what we may call a 'narrative turn' in theology. The following text will analyze the possibilities of a similar encounter, starting from Ludwig Wittgenstein's statement of a "Theology as grammar" and considering the sense in which it was developed by George Lindbeck's postliberal theology.

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This article explores the assessment of students' multimodal writing competencies, emphasizing the crucial role of writing in shaping scientific knowledge. It delves into the multidimensional nature of writing and the utilization of various modes of communication in science. The study underscores the necessity for standardized tests to evaluate writing-related competencies and their role in supporting effective instruction and enhancing educational justice. The article also advocates for a comprehensive understanding of science genres, the integration of multimodal language support, and the development of reliable and valid measurement instruments.

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This article deals with the question of the possibility and necessity of a poetic phenomenology to complement conventional phenomenology. It is assumed that a poetic language of description allows a more intensive presence of the "Sache selbst" due to its ability to let the phenomenon shine through the language in such a way that it leads to concrete bodily responses in the reader.

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Victoria Bauer, *Why do we need Posthuman Ethics instead of Humanism?*

The self-modification of human beings has a certain historical tradition, as has humanism. In the light of modern phenomena of human enhancement, I argue in this paper for a posthuman ethics as a regulative mechanism instead of the theoretical framework of humanism. The main thesis is that its anthropocentric tendencies have already led to a number of crises and also feed the risks of a transhumanism project.

Federico Rudari, *On Why Architecture Matters: the Exhibition Experience*

Starting from the three most basic components of the exhibition experience, namely subject, aesthetic object, and context of fruition, this work moves from traditional aesthetic philosophical theories to acknowledge the centrality of space and architecture, weather built or temporary, in the way we make sense of artworks and their interrelation. While exhibitions have been evolving from a mere economic and historical value-based perspective to embrace new social, didactic, and artistic goals, research in phenomenology first and neurocognitive sciences later has addressed the centrality of bodily perception and environmental affordances in our experience of artistic objects. As an integral part of my current doctoral research, this contribution addressed the evolution of the exhibition form in contemporary times, both in its conceptualization and implementation, together with our understanding of the way we experience and make sense of it.

Marco Tassella, *Rebuilding Responsibility through Artificial Moral Advisors and Moral Assistant Systems*

In recent years, as scholars reexamine the foundations of moral decision-making in our increasingly interconnected world, moral philosophy has witnessed a significant paradigm shift. The demand for swift, well-informed choices that align with our evolving moral standards poses a considerable challenge, calling for a blend of moral experience, logical acumen, and conceptual clarity. This paper introduces the category of "Artificial Moral Advisors" (AMAds), novel AI-based systems that could be developed to provide humans with moral assistance. With their "Moral Organizer", "Moral Observer", and "Moral Expert" roles, these advisors may augment individual moral autonomy and practical decision-making by integrating moral information and suggesting alternative scenarios. The learning-by-doing approach will support individuals in enhancing their moral judgment and decision-making abilities, with the potential to extend these benefits to the collective sphere. Adopting AMAds and their grounded moral reasoning might also help us to rebuild social trust,

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based on a renewed faith in the reliance of human moral responsibility and robust ethical systems. This shift opens to new possible avenues for collective moral growth by providing accessible tools for moral decision-making.

Costanza Vizzani, *Ectogenesis in the Feminist Debate. The Bioethical Limits of Artificial Gestation*

Abstract: In this article I highlight some of the bioethical limitations of full ectogenesis. As a first step, I offer a definition of this reproductive technology from a comparison with 'surrogacy'. Then I define the essential features of ectogenesis and I illustrate several areas of its application. Finally, I carry out an analysis of the internal debate within feminism divided over the permissibility of ectogenesis. In particular, I focus on the debate that pits the instances of 'technophilic' feminism, which considers ectogenesis a technology with high emancipatory potential, against the instance of 'technophobic' feminism, which highlights its limitations and dangers.

Jérémie Supiot, *Vers une démocratisation des sciences et des techniques avec Bruno Latour*

Bruno Latour's constructivism has long been criticized for its relativist implications. However, his symmetrical anthropology does not implie an absolute relativism of facts and values; on the contrary, it is more demanding in the collective construction of truth, eliminating the illusions of modernity. For this reason, we will seek to explain how the Latourian analysis of sciences and technology opens up an interesting path towards a constructivist meta-paradigm able to respond to the challenges of democratizing sciences.

Le constructivisme de Bruno Latour a longtemps été critiqué pour ses implications relativistes. Or, son anthropologie symétrique n'implique en rien un relativisme absolu des faits et des valeurs, mais se montre à l'inverse plus exigeant dans la construction collective du vrai, en éliminant les illusions de la modernité. C'est pourquoi nous chercherons à expliquer en quoi l'analyse latourienne des sciences et des techniques ouvre une piste intéressante vers un méta-paradigme constructiviste à même de répondre aux enjeux de démocratisation des sciences.

Cecilia Benassi, *Chi è Pavel A. Florenskij? Status quaestionis e prospettive*

In questo contributo si rilevano alcune delle difficoltà che permangono nel valutare la portata complessiva del pensiero di Pavel Florenskij e si segnala

l'urgenza di individuare un nuovo metodo di studio della sua opera, un approccio che accolga il suo lavoro come un intero inadatto, come tale, a brevi esposizioni sistematiche. Lo scritto suggerisce che la chiave per l'accesso unitario all'opera di Florenskij, tanto ampia quanto complessa, vada ricercata nella sua intenzione di plasmare una nuova visione del mondo in cui tutte le scienze e le attività pratico-noetiche dell'uomo sono legate in una correlazione ontologicamente fondata, una metafisica concreta che manifesta una profezia di fondamentale importanza per la cultura e l'umanesimo contemporanei. Dopo una breve indagine preliminare (destinata ad ulteriori sviluppi) su alcuni fattori storico-contestuali e stilistici che hanno finora influenzato la percezione di Florenskij, si propone l'avvio di una nuova fase degli studi sull'autore che si fondi su una ricostruzione del mondo di Florenskij e si avvalga di un approccio di critica genetica.

This contribution highlights some difficulties that still hinder a full understanding of the breadth of Pavel Florenskij's thought and signals the urgency to identify a new method of studying his work, an approach that can embrace his oeuvre as a whole, a body of work that does not lend itself to brief systematic expositions. My paper suggests that the key to a unified access to Florenskij's work, as broad as it is complex, should be sought in his intention to mould a new worldview in which all sciences and man's practical-noetic activities are linked in an ontologically grounded correlation, a concrete metaphysics that manifests a prophecy very important for contemporary culture and humanism. After a brief preliminary investigation (destined for further development) on some historical-contextual and stylistic factors that have so far influenced the perception of Florenskij, it proposes the start of a new phase of studies on this important thinker and scholar, based on a reconstruction of Florenskij's world that also sees the author at work in a perspective of genetic criticism.

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Why Trust Matters
(and Why We Should Take Care of It)

Stefano Biancu

In the past few decades, the subject of trust has attracted increasing interest among academics. As Jean-Luc Marion recently put it, trust is the more precious to us the more we lack it, as individuals and as a society. [1]

What happens with trust is just the same as what happens with other human phenomena: when the experience underlying them is in crisis, we feel the need to think more deeply about their concept; we start critically thinking an experience that has become problematic, but whose indispensability is somehow felt. A similar case is, in many ways, that of authority. For a century now, there has been talk of a crisis of authority: at the same time, writings on the subject have multiplied – to the point where the philosopher Joseph M. Bocheński even stated that we live in the age of authority, "Wir leben im Zeitalter der Autorität". [2] It is no accident that the experience of authority and that of trust are in many ways interlinked and complementary: authority lives on trust and dies if trust is absent.

The scenario of trust studies is complex and my aim in this paper is certainly not to offer a review of it. I will confine my remarks to a rather cursory observation: something is changing in the studies on the subject. Since the 1960s, especially among sociologists, a functionalist and cognitivist approach had prevailed: trust was seen as a cognitive strategy useful when other forms of knowledge are not possible. If I cannot have direct knowledge of something, I trust someone else's judgement.

[1] "La confiance nous devient d'autant plus précieuse que nous en manquons, nous et, à l'évidence, la plupart de nos sociétés" (J.-L. Marion, *Crisi, nichilismo e fiducia - Crise, le nihilisme et la confiance*, Idee LUMSA 4, Studium, Roma 2023, p. 7).

[2] J.M. Bocheński, *Was ist Autorität? Einführung in die Logik der Autorität*, Herderbücherei, Freiburg i.B. 1974, p. 9.

To borrow the title of a famous book by Luhmann, trust was seen as a strategy to reduce complexity.[3]

In more recent times, this view of trust has come across as partial and inadequate. Philosophers above all, being phenomenologically-oriented for the most, have emphasized that trust is not reducible to a cognitive strategy of the subject. From their standpoint, trust represents a much earlier mode of experience: trust establishes and structures our original, primary, elementary relationship with the world, with others and with ourselves.[4] The title of another book, this time written by a philosopher, Mark Hunyadi (professor at Louvain-la-Neuve), is emblematic of this different approach: *Au début est la confiance* (in the beginning is trust).[5]

On this point, which is of fundamental importance, I would like to make a rather banal preliminary observation: the proof of the initial character of trust is given by the fact that children do not need to be taught how to trust – they do it very well in a completely spontaneous manner. Rather, they need to be taught *not* to trust. "Don't take candy from strangers" is an educational cliché: we teach children that trust can be disappointed or even betrayed and should therefore not be given too easily. We teach them that not everything that looks promising, is true or good, and therefore worthy of trust. Man cubs do not need to learn how to trust: they do it spontaneously. It is the adult who sometimes needs to learn to trust again, recovering an original ability they lost as a result of the trauma caused by a disappointed or betrayed trust. But trust is not only initial in that it chronologically precedes its opposite, distrust. Trust is also initial in that it underlies all our choices and actions. In this sense, trust is one of the conditions of possibility not only of living in society, but also of becoming a real subject – a person. In other words: trust is not simply a strategy and a tool that an autonomous and rational subject can use at will, on the basis of rational calculation. Trust somehow precedes the subject and constitutes one of the very conditions of becoming a subject. Trust produces humanity – it has an anthropogenetic function.

I would like to illustrate this point by abandoning the argumentative register for a moment and moving onto a more narrative one.

[3] See N. Luhmann, *Vertrauen. Ein Mechanismus der Reduktion sozialer Komplexität* (1968), UVK, Konstanz 2014.

[4] For an overview of phenomenological studies on trust, see A. Pugliese, *Fiducia ed etica pubblica. Una prospettiva fenomenologica*, Carocci, Roma 2021.

[5] See M. Hunyadi, *Au début est la confiance*, Le bord de l'eau, Lormont 2020.

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I would like to do so with the help of a children's fairy tale: *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, written by Carlo Collodi – pseudonym of Carlo Lorenzini – exactly 140 years ago, in 1883.

Fairy tales are the myths of our time. [6] They are the myths for a time in which it is not considered acceptable for adults to listen to myths. We are all familiar with Foucault's famous judgement: humans have started to find out they can do without myths. [7]

Foucault's judgement is clearly a myth in its turn – it is not true that we can live without myths. We are symbolic animals. Even reason itself needs a symbolic and mythical space within which it can function. In fact, we are not only surrounded by symbols and myths, but also instituted and constituted by them. But the hegemonic figure of an autonomous and rational subject prevents us from recognizing this. It thus happens that, being unable to deny the existence of symbols and myths, we reduce them to a child's matter.

As Tzvetan Todorov put it, "It is as if a vigilant censor has had authorized us to speak of the symbolic only if we were to use borrowed terms such as 'insanity', 'childhood', 'savages', 'prehistory'": "as it is difficult to ignore the symbol altogether, we declare that we – normal adult males of the contemporary West – are exempt from the weaknesses linked to symbolic thought, and that the latter exists only among the others: animals, children, women, the insane, poets (those harmless lunatics), savages, our ancestors – who, in turn, know no form of thought but this." [8]

Myths are symbolic tales. They do not tell a *true story*, yet they do not tell lies. They express through narration *the truth of human history*, which rational argumentation cannot reach and grasp. Their purpose is not to *inform* about real events, but to *form* real human subjects and relationships. They allow us to experience the truth of our humanity and to recognise ourselves in it. Fairy tales perform the function that myths have always performed in human history, in the only way this is considered legitimate in our time: by speaking to children.

[6] See G. Marchianò, *Pinocchio come sistema metafisico virtuale*, in *C'era una volta un pezzo di legno: la simbologia di Pinocchio. Atti del Convegno organizzato dalla Fondazione nazionale Carlo Collodi di Pescia*, Emme edizioni, Milano 1981, pp. 143-155.

[7] "L'humanité commence à découvrir qu'elle peut fonctionner sans mythes" (*"Qui êtes-vous, professeur Foucault?"*, in M. Foucault, *Dits et écrits (1954-1988)*, tome I (1954-1975), Texte n. 50, pp. 601-620: 620; or. ed. in P. Caruso, *Conversazioni con Claude Lévi Strauss, Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan*, Mursia, Milano 1969, pp. 91-131).

[8] T. Todorov, *Théories du symbole*, Seuil, Paris 1977, p. 262; English Translation by C. Porter, *Theories of the symbol*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1982, p. 223.

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We – even we, the healthy, adult, civilised people – are symbolic animals, just as children, primitives, madmen and poets are. In those fairy tales, as in the myths of all times, we can recognise ourselves and experience what it means to be human. It is certainly no coincidence that in these 140 years *The Adventures of Pinocchio* has had an incredible *Wirkungsgeschichte*, inspiring literature, cinema, theatre, music... By addressing children, it has spoken to adults.

As we know, *The Adventures of Pinocchio* tells the story of a marionette who has and wants to become a real boy. *The Adventures of Pinocchio* tells the journey he makes, amidst a thousand vicissitudes, to become himself – to become a real human being.

This dialogue between Pinocchio and the Blue-Haired Fairy, in Chapter XXV, is emblematic:

> "But you cannot grow."
> "Why?"
> "Because marionettes never grow. They are born marionettes, they live marionettes, and they die marionettes."
> "Oh, I am tired of being always a marionette,"
> cried Pinocchio, hitting himself on the head. "I
> want to become a man."
> "And you will become one if you deserve to." [9]

Each of us can recognize themselves in this journey in which Pinocchio has to deserve to become a real human being. Now, in Pinocchio's journey towards his own humanity, trust plays a fundamental role. The adventures of Pinocchio are actually the adventures of trust – a trust that time after time is given, reciprocated, but also misplaced, denied, disappointed, even betrayed.

Let us therefore look at some aspects of trust through some of Pinocchio's adventures. The tale begins with an episode of disappointed trust. We are in Chapter I, at the very beginning of the book:

> Once upon a time there was a piece of wood. It was not fine wood, but a simple piece of wood from the wood yard, – the kind we put in the stoves and fireplaces so as to make a fire and heat the rooms.
> I do not know how it happened, but one beautiful day a certain old woodcutter found a piece of this kind of wood in his shop. The name of the old man was Antonio, but everybody called him Master Cherry on account of the

[9] C. Collodi, *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, translated by W.S. Cramp, The Athenæum Press, Ginn & Company, Cambridge (Massachusetts) 1904, p. 121.

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> point of his nose, which was always shiny and purplish, just like a ripe cherry. As soon as Master Cherry saw that piece of wood he was overjoyed; and rubbing his hands contentedly, he mumbled to himself, "This piece of wood has come in good time. I will make from it a table leg."
> No sooner said than done. He quickly took a sharpened ax to raise the bark and shape the wood; but when he was on the point of striking it he remained with his arm in the air, because he heard a tiny, thin little voice say, "Do not strike so hard!"
> Just imagine how surprised good old Master Cherry was! He turned his bewildered eyes around the room in order to see whence that little voice came; but he saw no one. He looked under the bench, and no one; he looked in a sideboard which was always closed, and no one; he looked in the basket of chips and shavings, and no one; he opened the door in order to glance around his house, and no one. What then?
> "I understand," he said, laughing and scratching his wig; "I imagined I heard that little voice. I will start to work again."
> He took up the ax and again gave the piece of wood a hard blow.
> "Oh! you have hurt me!" cried the little voice, as if in pain.
> This time Master Cherry became dumb, with his scared eyes nearly popping out of his head, with his mouth opened wide, and with his tongue hanging down on his chin, like a gorgon head on a fountain. [10]

We find here a first and very basic form of trust. It is the trust in the fact that the world around us will not disappoint our expectations, which are largely based on our previous experiences. We expect the world to have a certain stability and to ensure some continuity. We get out of bed in the morning and stand up because we trust that the floor will not collapse under our feet, that our legs will support us, that our home is a safe and secure place. And we trust many other things.

This very basic kind of trust is rooted in the experience of proven reliability. It is the experience of a solidity, which the German word "Vertrauen" and the English word "Trust" somehow underline: they both have the same root as the English term "Tree". [11] Trust is based on the experience of a stability and solidity of the world and of the others. This aspect has been emphasized by many philosophical studies within the phenomenological tradition, conducted starting from the Husserlian notion of *Lebenswelt* (world of life). [12]

[10] C. Collodi, *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, cit., pp. 1-3.

[11] See A. Fabris, *Can We Trust Machines? The Role of Trust in Technological Enviroments*, in A. Fabris (ed.), *Trust. A Philosophical Approach*, Springer, Cham 2020, pp. 123-135.

[12] See A. Pugliese, *Fiducia ed etica pubblica. Una prospettiva fenomenologica*, cit.

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That piece of wood disappoints Master Cherry's expectations: it does not allow him to work on it as he would expect. This is why Master Cherry is quite happy to get rid of it by giving it to Master Geppetto. Geppetto will make a marionette out of that animated wood, to whom he will give the name Pinocchio. Pinocchio will be for him the son he never had.

The relationship between parents and children is all about trust made up of mutual expectations and gambles. This is also true in the case of Pinocchio. Geppetto trusts Pinocchio, but Pinocchio betrays his father's expectations and trust in many ways. Geppetto gives his all for his son. He sells the only jacket he has to buy him the spelling book that will enable him to go to school and study. Pinocchio pays back Geppetto by running away, getting him arrested and selling the spelling book to get the four pennies he needs to see Mangiafuoco's marionette show.

In spite of all this and so much more, Geppetto constantly renews his trust in Pinocchio, i.e. he renews his expectations and gambles on this son, who keeps promising he will become a good boy. But who also continues to betray his father's trust.

On his side, Pinocchio also has his own experiences of given, denied, disappointed or betrayed trust. In particular, Pinocchio is ready to trust those who offer him easy solutions, and conversely, he does not trust those who present him a life of commitment. Unfortunately, his expectations are all the time disappointed and his trust betrayed. It is precisely these negative experiences, however, that will allow him to grow.

Among the characters Pinocchio does not listen to, because they present him a life of commitment, there are first and foremost the Talking Cricket and the Blue-Haired Fairy.

The first encounter with the Cricket occurs in Chapter IV:

> Pinocchio turned around and saw a large cricket that walked slowly up on the wall.
> "Tell me, Cricket, who are you?"
> "I am the Talking Cricket, and I have lived in this room for more than a hundred years."
> "To-day, however, this room is mine," said the marionette, "and if you wish to do me a favor, go away immediately, without even turning yourself around once."
> "I will not go away from here," said the Cricket, "without telling you a great truth."
> "Tell it to me and be gone."

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"Woe to boys who rebel against their parents, and who foolishly run away from their homes. They will never get along well in the world, and sooner or later will bitterly repent of their actions."
"Sing on, little Cricket, if it pleases you; but I know that to-morrow, at the dawn of day, I shall go away, because if I remain here, what happens to all other boys will happen to me. I shall have to go to school and be made to study; and I will tell you in confidence that I have no wish to study at all, and I propose to play and run after butterflies and climb trees and take the little birds out of their nests."
"Poor little stupid thing! Do you not know that in doing so you will become a donkey, and that everybody will make fun of you?"
"Calm yourself, bad Cricket of ill omen!" cried Pinocchio.
But the Cricket, who was a patient philosopher, instead of becoming angry at this impertinence, continued in the same tone of voice: "And if it does not please you to go to school, why not at least learn a trade, so as to be able to earn honestly a piece of bread?"
"Do you wish me to tell you?" replied Pinocchio, who began to lose patience; "because among the trades of the world there is only one that suits my genius."
"And what trade may that be?"
"That of eating, drinking, sleeping, and amusing myself, and of living, from morning to night, an easy life."
"Those who live that way," said the Talking Cricket with his usual calmness, "always end in the hospital or in prison."
"Take care, bad Cricket of ill omen! If you make me angry I pity you."
"Poor Pinocchio! you make me pity you."
"Why do I make you pity me?"
"Because you are a marionette; and, what is worse, you have a wooden head."
At these words Pinocchio jumped up enraged, and taking a hammer from a bench flung it at the Talking Cricket.
Perhaps he did not believe himself capable of doing such a thing; but unfortunately the hammer struck the Cricket in the head so suddenly that he had only the breath to say "Cri-cri-cri," and then remained stuck fast to the wall. [13]

The Cricket tells Pinocchio the truth. But it is a demanding, uncomfortable truth – to become a man, Pinocchio will have to study and work hard. Otherwise, he will become an ass.

[13] C. Collodi, *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, cit., pp. 16-18.

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Here we can appreciate the inadequacy of understanding trust as a strategy to reduce complexity. It seems to me that theories of this kind enable us to understand the pathologies of trust, rather than trust itself. What Pinocchio does is precisely to implement a strategy of complexity reduction: he chooses to only trust those who offer him the easiest way to reach his goals. He chooses, therefore, to trust not the Cricket, but the Cat and the Fox, who offer him easy and magic solutions that require no effort.

Pinocchio has just received five coins from the puppeteer Mangiafuoco when, along the way, he meets the Cat and the Fox. We are in Chapter XII:

> They walked along a short distance when the Fox, stopping suddenly, said to the marionette, "Should you like to double your money?"
> "What do you mean?"
> "Should you like to make of those miserable five pieces, ten? a hundred? a thousand?"
> "Why, of course! And how can you do it?"
> "It is very easy. Instead of going home, come with us."
> "And where do you want to take me?"
> "To the Country of the Owl."
> Pinocchio thought a little and then said resolutely: "No, I will not go. My father expects me. Who knows but that the poor old man, when I did not return yesterday, was worried and wept for me? I have been a bad boy, and the Talking Cricket was right when he said, 'Disobedient boys never get along well in this world.' I have had one experience because I was bad. Only last night, at the house of Fire Eater, I was in great danger. Brrr! It makes me tremble to think of it."
> "Then," said the Fox, "you want to go home? All right! Go home, but it will be the worse for you."
> "Yes, it will be the worse for you," said the Cat.
> "Think well, Pinocchio, for you have thrown away a fortune."
> "A fortune," said the Cat.
> "Your five pieces might be two thousand by to-morrow."
> "Two thousand," repeated the Cat.
> "But how is it possible that they can become so many?" asked Pinocchio, holding his mouth open as if stupefied.
> "I will explain to you," said the Fox. "You must know that in the Country of the Owl there is a blessed field called 'The Field of Miracles.' You make a little hole in the ground and you put inside, for example, one piece of gold. Then you cover over the hole with a little earth, water it with a few drops of water from a fountain, put on a little salt, and go to bed and sleep quietly. In the meantime, during the night, the gold piece begins to grow

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> and blossom; and the next morning, returning to the field, guess what you find? Why, you find a tree loaded with gold pieces!" [14]

We know how this story ends: the Cat and the Fox have a lavish dinner at Pinocchio's expense and then try to kill him to steal his coins. Finally, they trick him into burying the gold coins so that they will multiply magically.

By trusting the Cat and the Fox, Pinocchio puts his life at serious risk and loses all his coins. Pinocchio does not trust those who offer him a life of commitment and instead trusts those who promise him a magical world, in which he can obtain everything immediately without any engagement or effort.

Theories of trust as a strategy for reducing complexity help us understand the pathologies of trust and, as a consequence, some phenomena of our time: the various conspiracy theories, for example, or the cogency of fake news. We tend to trust those who offer us easy, and even magic, solutions to complex problems. We trust them because it is convenient for us and it relieves us of all commitment and effort. These theories may help us understand why sometimes – like Pinocchio – we misplace our trust, but they do not explain what trust actually is. They help us understand the pathologies of trust, not trust itself.

Even more decisive will be Pinocchio's encounters with the Blue-Haired Fairy and Lampwick. The Fairy shows him the way to become a boy like any other – the way to become human. It is, once again, a path of commitment and self-commitment. Lampwick, on the contrary, promises him an easy life in Toyland: a place of pure fun where no commitment is required. This is in Chapter XXIX:

> "I will pardon you this time; but woe to you if you ever do it again!" said the Fairy.
> Pinocchio promised and swore that he would be good. He kept his promise the rest of the year. In fact, at the examinations he took the first honors, and the Fairy was so happy that she said to him, "To-morrow you shall have your wish."
> "And that is?"
> "To-morrow you shall stop being a marionette and become a real boy." [15]

[14] C. Collodi, *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, cit., pp. 49-51.
[15] C. Collodi, *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, cit., p. 151.

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Pinocchio commits himself and so everything now seems ready for his evolution into a real boy. But once again, he prefers to trust those who promise him an easy and magic life that requires no commitment.
In Chapter XXX, Pinocchio meets his friend Lampwick and invites him to the party to be held the next day to celebrate his desired transformation into a human being. But Lampwick makes him an alternative and quite irresistible invitation:

> "To-morrow I shall no longer be a marionette; I shall become a boy like all the rest."
> "Good luck to you!"
> "But I want you to be there."
> "I have told you that I am going away to-night."
> "At what time?"
> "Shortly."
> "Where do you go?"
> "I am going to live in a new country that is the most beautiful place in all the world. It is a true land of plenty."
> "What do they call it?"
> "They call it 'The Country of Playthings.' Why won't you come?"
> "I? No, indeed."
> "You are wrong, Pinocchio. Believe me, if you do not go away, you will be sorry. Where can you find a better place for boys? There are no schools; there are no teachers; there are no books. In that blessed country they never study. On Saturdays you do not go to school here, and there every day is a Saturday except one, which is Sunday. Just think, the vacation begins the first day of January and ends the last day of December! That is the country for me. That is what I think all countries should be like." [16]

As we know, Pinocchio will choose to trust Lampwick and follow him to Toyland – a land of pure fun, in which, however, Pinocchio will not only lose the chance to evolve into a real human being, but also the little humanity he already possesses, turning into an ass. Pinocchio has not only failed to fulfil himself, but also lost himself completely.

However, these painful negative experiences will open his eyes and convince him he needs to change his life. The easy way of disengagement is the way to perdition – the way to lose himself. On the contrary, the way of commitment is the way to find himself. Pinocchio is very much like the prodigal son in the Gospel parable: after hitting rock

[16] C. Collodi, *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, cit., p. 154.

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bottom, he realizes how true the advice and warnings of Geppetto, the Talking Cricket and the Blue-Haired Fairy were. He comes to his senses and goes in search of his father, who in turn has gone in search of his prodigal son, ending up in the belly of an enormous sea monster.

So, when will Pinocchio finally become a man? When he commits himself to the path of love and generosity, taking care of his father Geppetto, who is ill, and of the Blue-Haired Fairy, who has also fallen into disgrace. We are in Chapter XXXVI, the last chapter of *The Adventures of Pinocchio*:

> And while he slept he thought he saw the good Fairy, all beautiful and happy and smiling, who, after giving him a kiss, said: "Good Pinocchio! For your good heart I pardon all your misdeeds. Boys that help their parents lovingly in their troubles always deserve praise and affection." Just here Pinocchio's dream ended and he awoke with his eyes opened wide.
> Now imagine, little readers, the great surprise of Pinocchio, upon waking, to find that he was no longer a wooden marionette, but that he had become a boy like all the others! [17]

The adventures of Pinocchio come to an end when the marionette finally becomes a real human being. This happens when Pinocchio no longer trusts those who offer him easy and magic ways and decides to commit himself to love and generosity. One becomes human by loving, by committing their life to a supererogatory generosity, which is not demandable and yet necessary. [18] It is no coincidence that one of the meanings of the term "human" is "benevolent". [19] Love is not only one of the many options of freedom, it is the condition of possibility of truly becoming human and free. Only if you act out of love, are you truly free and human.

It is clear that the whole fairy tale is built on an oversimplified retributive scheme: if you act well, life will reward you and you will live happily, if you act badly, you will bear the consequences. Unfortunately, we know that things are not necessarily like that: human history is full of people who acted well and received no reward, and of people who acted badly and bore no consequences. But in this tale there is an underlying truth: the fulfilment of our humanity comes through trust. Trust

[17] C. Collodi, *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, cit., pp. 210-211.

[18] See S. Biancu, *Il massimo necessario. L'etica alla prova dell'amore*, Mimesis, Milano 2020.

[19] V.R. Giustiniani, *Homo, humanus, and the Meaning of Humanism*, «Journal of the History of Ideas», 46:2 (1985), pp. 167-195: 168.

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is not the easy-going attitude of those who blindly bank on people who offer them the simplest and the least arduous solutions. Trust is always a gamble, which requires a commitment of oneself.

What, then, is trust? It is the fundamental condition of our choices and actions. We always decide and act on the basis of the gamble, often implicit, sometimes explicit. Sometimes our expectations are confirmed, and the gamble is won. Sometimes they are disappointed: that is Master Cherry's experience with that untamable piece of wood. Sometimes our expectations are even betrayed: that is Pinocchio's experience with the Cat and the Fox. When this happens, it is difficult to again trust not only the person who betrayed our expectations, but anyone else. Sometimes it is we who disappoint or even betray someone's expectations, and in these cases there is nothing sweeter (and more humiliating at the same time) than being forgiven: it is the experience that Pinocchio has many times with Geppetto and the Blue-Haired Fairy.

Trust is a gamble in the absence of guarantees. And it is certainly no coincidence that trust is in crisis in a time marked by security ideologies and a widespread mania for control. We seek and demand certainty and absolute security. In doing so, we do not give up trust altogether: we simply end up putting our trust in those who promise us magic and unrealistic solutions. We trust and rely on sellers of illusions: on the Lampwick and the Cat and Fox of the day.

Our human existence is played out on choices and decisions that commit us and that are all based on trust, on a gamble in the absence of guarantees. All this makes us hopelessly vulnerable. But this vulnerability is precisely the gateway to the deepest experiences of our lives. In this, love is the paradigmatic experience of the whole of human existence. There is a speech by Alan Watts, a British-American non-academic philosopher (1915-1973), whose title is *Divine Madness.* It speaks of trust – even of faith – as the gamble that underlies all our decisions and choices. A gamble that implies giving up control:

> [...] all life is an act of faith and an act of gamble
> And the moment you take a step
> You do so on an act of faith
> 'Cause you don't really know that the floor's not going to give under your feet
> The moment you take a journey, what an act of faith
> The moment that you enter into any kind of human
> Undertaking in relationship, what an act of faith
> See, you've given yourself up

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But this is the most powerful thing that can be done, surrender
See, and love is an act of surrender to another person
Total abandonment
I give myself to you
Take me
Do anything you like with me
So, that's quite mad
Because you see it's letting things get out of control
[...]
So, actually, therefore, the course of wisdom
What is really sensible, is to let go
Is to commit oneself, to give oneself up and that's quite mad
So we come to the strange conclusion that in madness lies sanity.

For sociologists à la Simmel and à la Luhmann, trust was ultimately about calculating risks to reduce the complexity of reality. Actually, as Hunyadi put it,[20] to trust is not to calculate risks, but to take them. And the risk, as Plato already said, is beautiful – Καλὸς γὰρ ὁ κίνδυνος.[21]

[20] "Faire confiance, ce n'est pas calculer des risques, c'est les prendre" (M. Hunyadi, *Au début est la confiance*, cit., p. 93).

[21] *Phaedo*, 114D.

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Trust Through Thick and Thin

Ronan Sharkey

> "Without trust human society cannot be preserved, since it is necessary that one man believe in the promises of another and in his testimony and so on, for this is necessary if they are to live together; therefore trust [*fides*] is indispensable for mankind."
>
> Thomas Aquinas [1]

> "Trustworthiness, the capacity to commit oneself to fulfilling the legitimate expectations of others, is both the constitutive virtue of, and the key causal condition for, the existence of any society. It is what makes human society possible."
>
> John Dunn [2]

> "I'm done for. I don't trust anyone. I don't even trust myself."
>
> Joseph Stalin [3]

I

The first two of these quotations, though written in different languages and separated by seven centuries, express a recognizably single thought: that human social life rests in the final analysis on relations of interpersonal and institutional trust. Without the sort of basic confidence that our familiar world will for the most part remain familiar, that our relations with others will follow predictable patterns, that promises will be kept, that trains will run on time or, if late, be predictably late, we might rapidly (as the third quotation suggests) lose our sanity. We con-

[1] Aquinas, *On Boethius's De Trinitate* (*Super Boethium de Trinitate*), q. III, art. 1.

[2] "'Trust' in the politics of John Locke", in Dunn, *Rethinking Modern Political Theory*, Cambridge, CUP, 1985, p. 42.

[3] As quoted by N.S. Krushchev, *Vospominaniia : vremia, liudi, vlast* ("Memories: time, people, power"), Moscow, Moskovskie Novostie, 1999, ii, p. 77 (cited in G. Hosking, *Trust, a History*, Oxford, OUP, 2014, p. 17).

fidently assume that our workplaces and our homes will remain where they were yesterday, that planes will stay in the sky when and for as long as they are meant to be there and that the powers that govern us will act in the predictably unsatisfactory ways we have become used to. And although we don't trust other people blindly in matters great (love, electoral promises, threats or the denial of threats) and small (telling the time, indicating directions, giving the right change), we mostly trust our own sense of the trustworthiness of others: the more we know them, the more we can feel confident in our judgement that they are trustworthy (or not, as the case may be). Even when we meet strangers, the basic predictability of human interaction means that in most cases we give them the benefit of the doubt. If we were suddenly afflicted by a sort of general cognitive blindness, an inability to sense when and whom not to trust, social life would become so anxiogenic as to be unlivable. We can imagine that in such circumstances individuals and groups might wish to opt out of the shared and institutional bases that enable us to call ourselves a society and set up smaller, semi-autarkic communities of like-minded individuals, perhaps armed and ready to defend themselves against threats of incorporation. [4]

An objection to the picture of trust developed in the previous paragraph comes from one of the pioneers of the contemporary study of trust, the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann. In his monograph *Vertrauen*, initially published on its own but later paired with a second essay and translated as *Trust and Power*, [5] Luhmann calls trust a "constancy", in other words a diachronic disposition (which he contrasts with an event). Because trust is continuous it is often little noticed. But the fact of being little noticed (except by sociologists like himself) has the effect of confusing two, as he thinks, quite distinct social phenomena: trust (*Vertrauen*) and confidence (*Zutrauen*). Confidence is essentially affective, a feeling of being shielded from harm. To experience confidence, the agent need do nothing particular; indeed the newborn infant, whose agential qualities will not develop for some time, can feel confidence just by being in its mother's arms. "At this most basic level", says Luhmann, "confidence is a natural feature of the world." [6] This contrasts, he thinks, with trust proper, by which he means the dispo-

[4] Think of "survivalist" and similar groups in the United States, a country which has been prone since its beginnings to collective withdrawals from social and institutional norms.

[5] Niklas Luhmann, *Trust and Power*, tr. Howard Davis, John Raffan and Kathryn Rooney (modified by C. Morgener and M. King), Cambridge, Polity Press, 2017.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

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sition of an agent when contemplating the kind of complex decision that is distinctive of life in modern societies. The purpose of trust is, he says, to "reduce complexity", in other words to enable individuals to manage large quantities of information in a way that will enable them to make effective decisions without being cognitively overwhelmed. Thus, someone wanting to travel from one city to another has to trust a source of information (say, Internet) that will provide her with the cheapest method of transport or the times of trains; similar questions arise about the comparative safety of air travel and rail, or the nutritive value of a processed food, or the cost of renting accommodation or the documents required for renewing a passport, and so on. Internet is thus an instance of complexity-reduction, and therefore a source (we hope, provided we know how to use it) of trustworthy information.

Luhmann is certainly in part correct to say that the trust, or at least part of the trust which characterizes modern technology-based societies, is distinctive and represents a significant change when compared to trust in the premodern world. But his reasons for doing appear to some extent semantically artificial and have the effect of emptying the concept of a significant part of its psychological content, thereby rendering problematic our understanding of early philosophical approaches to trust. Since the philosophical history of trust is notable for its discontinuities, he may have wished to claim that no significant premodern thinker devoted any significant writing to the concept. This is untrue, as we shall see. But before turning briefly to this history, we need to make somewhat clearer in what ways trust has changed and is changing in the context of late-modern societies.

II

Two related distinctions have become commonplace in contemporary discussions of trust.[7] The first is between "thick" trust and "thin", the second between "strong" trust and "weak". Thick trust is trust in those who are closest or at least well known to us.[8] As I suggested above, the more we know someone, in particular if our relations are those of marriage or kinship, the more we will be aware of their trustworthiness or untrustworthiness. So thick trust isn't equivalent to more

[7] Geoffrey Hosking, *Trust, a History*, Oxford, OUP, 2014, p. 46 ff.

[8] Described as "individually based belief" by Bernard Williams, "Formal Structures and Social Reality" in *Making Sense of Humanity*, Cambridge, CUP, 1995, p. 116.

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or to "strong" trust; it merely indicates that we know, in terms of the person's trustworthiness, where we stand. Social proximity, and *a fortiori* intimacy, are indicators of a clear cognitive positioning in matters where trust is important. Strong trust doesn't preclude ignorance (of adultery, for example) or disappointment (at someone's failure to live up to expectations); it merely sets out the proximate boundaries within which trust can be seen to operate. A corollary of thick trust understood in this way is that its absence is equally "thick", taking in many cases the form of betrayal. Agamemnon's trust in Clytemnestra can be characterized as thick in this sense, even though he had no idea of the terrible fate she had prepared for him on his return from Troy.

Thick trust is characteristic of small, closely-knit tribes and semi-isolated communities where relative consanguinity is more often the rule than the exception. Ernest Gellner's brilliant studies of what he calls "the republic of cousins", the way of life of Muslim Berbers living an austere pastoral existence in the Moroccan Upper Atlas, illustrate how closely related are thick trust and betrayal. One imagines such societies to be violent and lawless; they are indeed, as he says, "anarchical"; but their way of life is not less governed by custom and ritual, so that even treason is ritualized. Thick trust, violence within prescribed limits and in retaliation for specific wrongs, and agreed processes of mediation are here interdependent strands of a *Lebensform*, one that, even as Gellner was doing his original fieldwork in the 1950s, was being supplanted by an urban, literate and vertically structured version of Islam which promoted efficient government and in which trust, as understood by the pastoral tribes of the mountains, could have no place. [9]

"Thin" trust is the trust we have in those we don't know or have no reason to know, but with whom we are obliged to co-operate in order to exist in any society of any minimal degree of complexity. It is the trust that, increasingly over the period since the industrial revolution, has characterized modern societies. Its strength lies precisely in the fact that it is "unreflective". [10] We are indeed, as Geoffrey Hosking explains, scarcely aware that it is at work:

"Social scientists deal mainly with reflective and conscious trust, that is, cases where an individual has to make a conscious choice about whether to trust a particular individual or institution [...] Unreflective

[9] Ernest Gellner, "Trust, Cohension and the Social Order" in Diego Gambetta, ed., *Trust: the Making and Breaking of Co-operative Relations*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1985; *Muslim Society*, Cambridge, CUP, 1981.

[10] Hosking, *Trust*, cit., p. 23.

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trust is at least as important in shaping the way societies function. Indeed, precisely because it is unreflective, it becomes part of the deep grammar underlying our beliefs and practices." [11]

In this sense, money and commercial transactions generally exemplify "the strong, thin trust that lubricates today's complex economy". [12] Its uses are so varied and its employment so frequent that we scarcely notice it. But beneath this ubiquity of thin trust, a major shift of habits and mentalities has taken place and continues to take place. A final quotation from Hosking's book enables us to see the double dialectic thick/thin, weak/strong in a fuller perspective:

"In all these developments what has been happening has been a broadening of the radius of trust, upwards from local warlord to monarch; from confidence in the honour and courage of a superior to confidence in his social skills and capacity for realistic and judicious action; from narrow-minded insistence on one's own beliefs to acceptance and tolerance of others'; and from short-sighted and greedy acquisitiveness to participation in the mutual exchange of markets. [...] One result, though, is that nowadays we know less well the larger entities with which we are dealing. [...] The downside of enlarging the boundaries of trust, then, is that the resultant organizations are larger, more remote and usually more impersonal [...] When we can, we still prefer to replace trust in institutions by trust in persons. But on the whole, forms of trust in the modern world tend to gravitate towards the 'strong thin' mode; it is a ubiquitous and crucial lubricator of the social mechanisms within which we all interact nowadays." [13]

III

Although the twin themes of trust and betrayal are perennial in European literature since Homer, philosophical reflection on the social importance of trust appears relatively late and only at intervals separated by long centuries of neglect. It emerges in later antiquity in the writings of Cicero, whose Latin term for trust is *fides*, "good faith", the most basic of all the Stoic virtues: "The keeping of faith is the ground of justice, that is constancy and truth in what is said and agreed" (*De*

[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 88.
[13] *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

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Officiis, I, §23).[14]. In other words, it isn't enough for something to be stated or even agreed upon: what is needed is to go on agreeing, to make the agreement perennial, to establish a sustainable agreement. A relationship of trust is one from which "all untruthfulness" has been removed (*De Officiis*, III, §61)[15] as well as "all craftiness ... and also the ill-will that wants to be seen as good sense, but is in fact different and very far removed from it" (*De Officiis*, III, §71).[16] In commercial relations, "reason demands that nothing be done insidiously, deceptively or with pretence" (*De Officiis*, III, §68).[17] Cicero illustrates his discussion by reference to property transactions in cases where the law failed to protect the buyer from a dishonest seller.[18] He was thus conscious that there is only so much that the law can do – "so few will be found who can refrain from injustice when granted both impunity and absolute secrecy" (*De Officiis*, III, §72)[19] – so that ultimately it is from "the law of nature" that we learn the evil of "ill will posing as intelligent behaviour":

"How valuable are the words 'That I may not be caught or deceived because of you and my faith in you'. How golden are these, 'One must act well, as among good men, and without fraudulence'. (But who the good are and what is acting well is a large question). Indeed Quintus Scaevola, the Pontifex Maximus[20], said that there was very great force in all judgments where the words 'out of good faith' were added. He thought that the expression 'good faith' had very wide application, that it was relevant to guardianships, to business fellowships, to trusts, to commissions, to purchases, to sales, and to hiring or letting. The fellowship of life consisted in these things" (*De Officiis*, III, §70).[21]

This text is remarkable in at least three ways. Notice, first, the subtlety of Cicero's moral psychology, with its fine-grained distinction between words and intentions, its sensitivity to the slipperiness of language and its insistence on truthfulness, opposite to the vice that uses

[14] Cicero, *On Duties* (*De officiis*), ed. and tr. M.T. Griffin & E.M. Atkins, Cambridge, CUP, 1991, p. 10.

[15] *Ibid*., p. 123.

[16] *Ibid*., p. 126.

[17] *Ibid*., p. 125.

[18] Cicero's discussion demonstrates the remarkable sophistication of Roman Law in this area, which in his lifetime made malicious fraud a punishable offence: *On Duties*, cit., pp. 121-127.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 127.

[20] Literally, the "great bridge-builder": the title was given to the head of the Roman college of (pagan) high priests, later of course inherited by the Catholic Pope or "Pontiff".

[21] Cicero, cit., p. 126.

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literal meaning to dissimulate dishonesty. Secondly (though as far as I know he is not given any credit for it), Cicero draws attention to what J.L. Austin two millennia later would call the performative or "illocutionary" force of certain verbal formulae, in this case of the words "out of good faith". It's also interesting that he is here quoting a priest in the context of a discussion of legal transactions, two professions for which (as Austin recognised) the performative and pragmatic dimensions of language have more importance than the strictly semantic. In other words, not only does trust cover the distance between the inner recesses of the mind and the *vinculum societatis*,[22] it provides us with the means to understand language as itself social, as active and not merely descriptive. More importantly still, the striking phrase "fellowship of life", reveals what we might call Cicero's proto-sociological understanding of trust, a trust that is not so much betrayed as corrupted, resulting in a negativity, "trustlessness" (what Annette Baier calls "anti-trust"[23]). Cicero is thus perhaps one of the first thinkers to understand that what binds human beings together is neither the perimeter of the city nor "civic friendship" as such (which presupposes trust but can't create it), but a human need expressed through, though often distorted by, the medium of language broadly understood. Understood in this way, trust covers a wide range of human interactions from the intra-subjective to the explicitly promissory. At least in its ordinary condition, human existence is permeated by *fides*, social trust.

When Aquinas, with due acknowledgment to Cicero, writes of this fundamental character of trust, his reflections are different in kind from the Aristotelian philosophy that was his main inspiration in political thought. The question at issue in this case (the quotation with which I began) is not, as it was for a long tradition of political thinking from Plato to Kant and including his own *De regno ad regem Cypri*, that of the best regime or the most virtuous (or effective) ruler. Rather, his reflections belong to social, as distinct from political philosophy. What is interesting is not just Thomas's clear identification of and emphasis on the social bond, but the fact that he intends *fides* to be understood as a social rather than a theological, virtue, a point on which he is explicit later in the same text.[24] *Fides* is thus misunderstood if we translate it simply as (religious) "faith": it refers to faithfulness in all its forms, fidelity over time to God, to those to whom we are bound by kinship or

[22] The formula is quoted from Locke: see below n. 28.
[23] Annette Baier, "Trust and Anti-trust", *Ethics* XCVI (January 1986), pp. 231-260.
[24] Aquinas, cit., art. 2 "Whether faith should be distinguished from religion: Response".

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friendship, and to those with whom we have established contracts and agreements. Referring to Cicero, Thomas writes that "in human society trust (*fides*) is necessary in order that one man give credence to the words of another, and this is the foundation of justice, as Tullius says in his book *De Officiis*".[25]

A bare chronology of treatments of trust through the ages has no interest as such: instead, the point is to underline the way the Ciceronian and Thomist treatments of trust are ultimately sociological: trust becomes interesting to these thinkers because, unlike the Greek philosophers of the 4th century B.C., they do not live in small city-states whose close and familiar perimeters can, so they think, be taken for granted. They are instead subjects of imperial or quasi-imperial powers, the centre of which in both cases is Rome. In both the imperial and Catholic ("universal") contexts, the question thus arises as to what a human society is and what keeps it together. But though the question is important, and their replies are interesting, they lack the urgency that characterised the conditions in which the third great historical proto-sociologist of trust lived: John Locke[26] was born in the middle of a parliamentary crisis that was both theological and cosmological in its importance, and grew up just as the old semi-feudal world that outlasted the Tudor dynasty collapsed and was replaced by a Puritan tyranny. As a believing but unorthodox Calvinist, he had no wish to return to the *status quo ante*; but as a gifted intellectual with scientific interests, he felt little affinity with the religious "enthusiasts" who shared his confession but wished to impose it on everyone.

The problems Locke faced, and to which his large and varied body of work was a response, were all to some extent epistemological. In other words, they pertained to knowledge, its foundations and the distinction between the true, the hypothetical and the believed. Of these epistemological problems, the one that most preoccupied him was religion. Forty years previously, Hobbes had put forward his own philosophy as a model of how the understanding should rid itself of religious superstition and embrace the new Galilean science of causes (Hobbes equates philosophy itself with a correct understanding of causality).

[25] *Ibid.*

[26] Here I rely heavily on John Dunn's interpretation of Locke – see *The Political Thought of John Locke*, Cambridge, CUP, 1969, pp. 162, 167-8; and "'Trust' in the politics of John Locke", cit. – and more generally the lessons he draws from it for the understanding of the problems specific to political modernity, particularly in "Trust and Political Agency" in Dunn, *Interpreting Political Responsibility*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1990, pp. 26-44; and "Trust" in Dunn, *The History of Political Theory and other Essays*, Cambridge, CUP, 1996, pp. 91-99.

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Locke's position is that of a deist sceptic for whom our knowledge of the world is grounded only in the way our minds represent it; and since those minds are the minds of persons individually subject to error, confusion and intolerance, their grasp of reality is at best uncertain and at worst liable to become a cause of conflict. In his eyes, if belief and, in particular, fervent religious belief is all we have to bind us together, we are, in social terms, lost.

Fortunately, this need not be the case. By understanding the precarious and uncertain character of our beliefs and convictions, we can acquire a degree of intellectual modesty in matters political and religious and thereby to learn tolerate beliefs that are not our own: "It is a decisive implication of Locke's epistemology", writes John Dunn, "that over much of the field of human belief there is no possibility in principle of escaping the need to rest one's beliefs on epistemically insufficient grounds." [27] It is this radical impossibility of doxastic certainty that creates an indispensable space for toleration and trust. As early as 1660 and in a direct rebuttal of the agonistic political ideas of Machiavelli and Hobbes, Locke writes that "The duties of life are not at variance with one another, nor do they arm men against one another"; otherwise "all society is abolished and all trust, which is the bond of society" (*tollitur omnis societas et societatis vinculum fides*). [28] If, "when all is done, [men] must be left to their own consciences", [29] and if "the public good is the role and measure of all law-making", [30] the link between the two must take a fiduciary form, the "bond of society".

IV

With the notable exception of Hegel [31], modern political philosophy since Locke has for the most part studiously avoided the subject of trust. This, as Dunn has remarked, is particularly true of contemporary Anglophone political philosophy, whose almost exclusive preoccupation

[27] Dunn, "'Trust' in the politics of John Locke", cit., p. 53.

[28] John Locke, *Essays on the Law of Nature*, ed. and tr. by W. von Leyden, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1954, pp. 212-213.

[29] *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. John Horton and Susan Mendus, London, Routledge, 1991, p. 32.

[30] *Ibid*., p. 33.

[31] Limitations of space and personal incompetence preclude an adequate treatment of Hegel's thought here. Anyone wishing to go further should certainly explore Robert Brandom's monumental *A Spirit of Trust*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard, 2019.

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with the inability of modern democracies to make good their promise of social equality lends it an air of studied parochialism.[32] The contemporary understanding of trust has instead been the product of developments outside philosophy proper, a fruit of the post-Enlightenment emergence of the idea of society as an organic reality distinct from the political community, its rulers and its subjects. The significant modern advances in the understanding of how trust and social norms are linked formed the subject matter of the new science of sociology and are only as old as Durkheim and his school in the last decade of the 19th century. Durkheim saw that in a world in which traditional modes of action and self-understanding were fast disappearing, societies needed stable and sustainable normative structures of symbolic exchange and identification. The mental world of human agents receives its own structure in this way, leading them to act and think as though determined by external and objective forces.[33] Currency, language, dress codes, rules of etiquette and behavior towards others, employment structures and school curricula, religion and leisure, all form institutions that contribute to standardizing behavior and creating the normative framework within which individuals achieve self-understanding through social understanding. Trust, for Durkheim, is built into this process, it is an immanent reality, though one that is always at least partly contingent on being able to control the speed of social change. War or a sudden acceleration of economic growth can thus produce a condition of *anomie*, the (relative) absence of a normative framework, with, according to Durkheim, a consequent increase in depressions and suicides.

Whether or not Durkheim was right in inferring from accelerating social change an increase in depression and suicide,[34] his fundamental point remains powerful and valid: "*Si le lien qui rattache l'homme à la vie se relâche, c'est que le lien qui le rattache à la société s'est lui-même détendu*".[35] Social trust, the most basic component of social belonging, is for the most part an unconscious or semi-conscious collective state of mind, something we are at least as much as something we do. But it is

[32] Dunn, "Trust", cit., p. 92.

[33] Émile Durkheim, *Les règles de la méthode sociologique*, ed. Jean-Michel Berthelot, Paris, Flammarion, 2010, p. 75.

[34] For a penetrating, Wittgenstein-inspired, critique of Durkheim's methods and conclusions, see in particular Peter Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science*, London, Routledge, 1958.

[35] Émile Durkheim, *Le suicide,* livre II, ed. Anita Hocquart, Paris, Garnier-Flammarion, 2014, p. 143.

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not invulnerable; or perhaps we should say that its vulnerability manifests itself in circumstances where theorizing needs to be supplemented by phenomenological description.

Human societies are more or less homogeneous groupings of people collectively bound by rules and conventions that enable them to pursue co-operative activities. Whatever the nature of these activities – defensive, prospective, productive, commercial, scientific, creative, expressive, sporting, religious, alimentary, sexual, and so on – their pursuit requires a tacit acceptance on the part of those that take part in them that they will follow certain patterns of predictability. This is the case even of open-ended and exploratory activities such as artistic creation and sex, where a certain indeterminacy is built into the nature and meaning of the activities themselves. We are rule-following creatures, but, in Wittgenstein memorable phrase, the rules that we follow do not have the character of "rails invisibly laid to infinity". [36] There is nothing, either intrinsic to rules themselves or transcending them, that binds us to blind obedience.

Rules have two kinds of function. Their social function is to assure predictability and stability; their cognitive function is to enable us to think, not only rationally but creatively. This bivalent character of thinking is what differentiates us from the other mammals that most resemble us: we are rational rule-followers who have the unique ability to subvert the narrow confines of strict rationality in order to uncover a richer and subtler understanding of what it means to be reasoners. [37] Intelligence is, among other things, the ability to identify the limits that rules can impose on rationality.

To the extent that co-operative activities require minimal predictability, we can loosely say they are characterised by trust. But the concept of trust can't just mean predictability, otherwise an ant colony could be taken to exhibit trust. When I say I trust someone, I can mean that I'm sure she'll turn up on time; but if she always turns up on time, my "trust" has more the form of a barely conscious inductive inference, like the expectation that the sun will rise tomorrow. If on the other hand a parent says to her teenage children that she trusts them to look after the house in her absence, not to invite crack-sniffers or

[36] *Philosophical Investigations*, §218.

[37] The anthropologist Mary Douglas puts the point nicely when she writes of the "code-breaking, jigsaw puzzle-solving activity of the human mind." (Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood, *The World of Goods. Towards an anthropology of consumption*, London, Routledge, 1996, "Preface", p. viii).

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Hell's Angels or kill the cat, her words have a performative character: she isn't ordering them or constraining them to be responsible, she is "responsibilising" them, extending and (potentially) enriching the mutual understanding between parent and children so that it no longer depends on her continued presence. And in so doing she is deepening their mutual conception of free rational agency, hers as much as theirs.

Trusting one's children to act responsibly means giving them the space and the freedom to do so. The parent wouldn't be trusting them if she secretly stayed in the garden shed with a pair of binoculars to observe what was going on: to trust them she must leave them to get on with it. Dunn expresses well the anxiety implied by this "hands off" requirement when he writes that "the synthesis of trust (the creation and sustaining of trust) remains, and will always remain, an indispensable human contrivance for coping with the freedom of other men".[38]

To trust is to take the risk of another's freedom: in trusting I make a choice to believe that the person trusted will, in what concerns me, make responsible use of this freedom. I trust him to do what he has said (or promised) he will do. And if in this case and in many others, in small matters and in great, trust is rewarded, everyone gains. But oddly everyone gains even more if only most acts of trust are rewarded, since not only will the effect be to reinforce the general social impression of trustworthiness, but equally the liberty taken by those who fail to be trustworthy will confirm and reinforce the reality of an alternative. If absolutely everyone acted in a perfectly trustworthy way, we would certainly wonder if they were truly free to act otherwise; and if that doubt persisted as a consequence of their impeccable trustworthiness, we might conclude that trust was not really at work at all: these people were simply obeying, it never occurred to them to think or act otherwise. Trust is, as Dunn rightly says, a "human contrivance", subject to a necessary degree of imperfection; necessary, that is, to its correct functioning. Trust is thus an expression both of emancipatory reason and of "accepted vulnerability".[39] It's only if my trust can be abused that it can genuinely be said to exist.[40]

In personal matters, we take this risk knowingly, because what is at stake is both social life itself (which cannot function normally if sub-

[38] A contrivance he attributes to Locke: Dunn, "'Trust' in the Politics of John Locke", cit., p. 54.

[39] Baier, "Trust and Anti-trust", cit., p. 235.

[40] Baier quotes Hume: "'Tis impossible to separate the chance of good from the risk of ill" (*A Treatise on Human Nature*, ed. Nidditch, Oxford, OUP, 1978, p. 497).

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jected to excessive control) and the maturing or adaptation to social norms of those who are, to a greater or lesser degree and for periods of differing duration, dependent on us: children of course, trainees and apprentices within limits set by professional activity, perhaps also in some cases refugees who feel lost in an unfamiliar culture; and most difficult of all, adults subject to addiction. What we all aspire to, for ourselves as much as for others, is to be able to exercise freedom in a way that does not jeopardize the trust that undergirds social life, that is in fact the key to its continued functioning.

Both our qualities and our deficiencies develop, they *become*, which means that they are bound up with contingency and change, within agents (who mature or decide otherwise or both) and in circumstances (they evolve). Some children mature more quickly than others; but even the precociously mature and trustworthy *become* so, they aren't born like that. If a gene was identified that enabled some individuals to be more trusting or more trustworthy than others,[41] this would not in any way diminish the importance of temporality and contingency in human maturing. The assumption of trust and the temporality of its deployment at the micro-level of my own actions and of my anticipation of the actions of proximate others thus require an understanding which is not just sociologically but psychologically complex, my self-understanding and my understanding of others interacting and serving to reinforce an implicit picture of stable and intelligible belonging as well as action. An adolescent child can betray what a parent (let's say a father) hoped was their mutual understanding and the trust the latter placed in the former, in which case their relations will provisionally become snakes rather than ladders. But unless he learns that his child is sniffing crack (no laughing matter), ladders will sooner or later become available and he will be disposed actively to trust once again, tentatively at first, then with (one hopes) growing confidence in the bond between them. In other words, he will begin to venture outside his comfort zone and wager that the freely chosen actions of his child will at last manifest intelligible patterns that he can count on. This is what we mean by educating someone: you can't program them, you can only make use of measures

[41] Apparently it has, at least according to one recent evangelist for the neuroscientific determination of all things human, Paul Zak: see his "The Neurobiology of Trust", *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, MXXXII, [1], pp. 224–227. Zak's findings are, hardly surprisingly, hotly disputed. See, e.g., Gideon Nave, Colin Camerer and Michael McCullough, "Does Oxytocin Increase Trust in Humans? A Critical Review of Research", *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, Vol. X, No. 6 [November 2015], pp. 772-789.

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of freedom that open them to the possibility of discovering that, correctly understood, freedom is the – occasionally dangerous – condition of growing. Of course, in some cases, tragically, it doesn't work.

V

The philosopher who, more than any other, understood the importance as well as the difficulty of the fruitful tension between freedom and reason was Kant. However, Kant's strictly moral philosophy deliberately excludes all reference to empirical psychology and therefore any rational evaluation of human growth and maturity. Kant's is a moral theory for fully rational adults and an implicit condemnation of those who that are not:

"All moral philosophy is based entirely on its pure part; and when it is applied to the human being it does not borrow the least thing from acquaintance with him (from anthropology) but gives to him, as a rational being, laws *a priori.*" [42]

Inversely, what he calls "acquaintance", i.e. "anthropology" in Kant's sense of empirical, psychological, knowledge of human life, growth and development, involves abstracting completely both from moral principles and from "pure practical reason", as he says in his *Anthropology* (published in 1800):

"Wisdom, as the idea of a practical use of reason that conforms perfectly with the law, is no doubt too much to demand of human beings. But also, not even the slightest degree of wisdom can be poured into a man by others; rather he must bring it forth from himself. The precept for reaching it contains three leading maxims: 1) Think for oneself, 2) Think into the place of the other (in communication with human beings), 3) Always think consistently with oneself." [43]

Since, according to Kant's own estimate, human beings only reach wisdom (when they do) after the age of 60, and since the mean age at death in Europe around 1800 was little more than 35, pure practical reasoners must have been thin on the ground, except perhaps in Konigsberg. Short of complete wisdom, Kant recommends autonomy (don't let the clerics think for you), logical consistency, and putting oneself in other people's shoes. In appearance, at least, freedom and

[42] *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. M. Gregor, CUP, p. 3.
[43] Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, CUP, §43, pp. 94-5.

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rationality are for Kant an all or nothing affair, which goes some way to explaining the paucity of references to trust in Kant's work and Kant's notable absence from the voluminous literature on trust that has appeared over the last forty years. [44]

The reason for Kant's rejection of trust and trust-building from the central core of his ethical outlook is precisely what for most of us should count in its favor: the naturalness of basic trust in those closest to us. It is of a piece with his rejection of what Hume calls "natural virtue" [45], the central example of which is the mother's care for her infant child. Trust develops out of this instinctive protection and affection, this "ontological security" [46] with which parents surround their infant children. Children deprived of this initial bond of basic security, as Bowlby's "attachment theory" shows, have difficulty establishing and maintaining relationships of trust as they grow older. [47]

It's important to keep a hold on the idea that the root of trust is in this sense "ontological", in other words physical and neurological, part of the way the brain is formed so that it functions optimally. [48] This idea encounters resistance from philosophers who tend to over-intellectualize trust, who are concerned to establish a perspicuously clear concept, distinct from other related concepts. Simon Blackburn, for example, rightly points out that "children become trusting and trustworthy by practice. We rely on them in little things, reward them when the reliance is well placed, and success builds on success until a habit is generated". [49] More restrictively, Niklas Luhmann, who uses the metaphor of an "advanced payment" to characterize trust, insists that "trust is *only* involved when the trusting expectation makes a difference to a decision; otherwise (he says) what we have is a simple hope". [50] But these transactional ways of understanding trust are only possible once the basic, foundational ability to trust has been laid in very early infancy. It seems to most of us natural to speak of the infant's "trust" in

[44] An exception is an interesting but ultimately unconvincing paper by Peter Schroeder, "'Irgend ein Vertrauen ... muss ... übrig bleiben': The Idea of Trust in Kant's Moral and Political Philosophy" (https://www.academia.edu/32013262/The_Idea_of_Trust_in_Kants_Moral_and_Political_Philosophy).

[45] Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, III, iii, §1-5.

[46] Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1991.

[47] John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*, 3 vols., London, Pimlico Books, 1997.

[48] See Peter Hobson, *The Cradle of Thought: exploring the origins of thinking*, Oxford, OUP, 2004.

[49] Simon Blackburn, "Trust, Co-operation, and Human Psychology" in *Practical Tortoise Raising and Other Philosophical Essays*, Oxford, OUP, 2010, p. 96.

[50] Luhmann, *Trust and Power*, cit., p. 27 (my emphasis).

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its mother, and even to take account of the primitive and provisional nature of the bond, of its physicality and of the child's need to emerge from it and grow and develop its own transactional abilities. We are not programmed either to be trusting or to be trustworthy; instead, the human form of life is that of embodied thinking subjects in the development of whose capacity to extend trust to others the growth of the nervous system is a necessary but not a sufficient condition. In this sense it's difficult to disagree with Annette Baier:

"Some degree of innate, if selective, trust seems a necessary element in any surviving creature whose first nourishment [...] comes from another, and this innate but fragile trust could serve as the explanation both of the possibility of other forms of trust and of their fragility". [51]

Trust does nevertheless have an affinity with Hume's "artificial" virtues such as justice or promise-keeping [52]: it is something we can fall short of and need to improve or repair. It does not only exist as a sort of background condition of human co-operation; it has in many cases to be chosen, given and accepted voluntarily; and it is unwise, to say the least, to give it to those who are likely to betray it.

In explicitly commercial and more generally co-operative relations trust is in many instances established by a decision, an agreement, in other words an event. But this act of giving one's trust, of saying, or implying, "I trust you (to φ)", is a transactional extension of the link that underwrites the existence of social relations as such, perhaps even of all human relations. [53] This is not to say that the trust implicit in the social bond is invulnerable, far from it; but the expectation and reciprocation of trust are surprisingly resilient. Betrayal dissolves some social relations, or some parts of some of them: a couple can separate because of an infidelity while trusting each other to respect arrangements for alimony or periods of child-minding. But the fabric of social relations, rather than relationships within this fabric, is not and cannot be entirely destroyed by mere betrayal. Even for it to be seriously damaged, something quite out of the ordinary has to take place.

What I want briefly to try to do in the rest of this paper (and this will mean that I shall come to no conclusions, but rather leave the reader to meditate on the contents of my final section) is to convey the

[51] Baier, "Trust and Antitrust", cit. p. 242.

[52] Hume, *Treatise*, *cit.*, III, ii, §5.

[53] As T.M. Scanlon suggests in his example of the exchange of hunting tools between the marooned sailor and the native in his *What We Owe to Each Other*, Cambridge Mass., Harvard UP, 1998, pp. 296-7.

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unique quality of the experience of living in a social world where what we have called "thick" trust (trust in those we are close to) no longer shades gradually – through routines and symbolic exchanges such as money – into "thin" trust in strangers and people who are less familiar. Instead, this centrifugal effect, whereby strangers benefit from a diluted version of the trust we have in those close to us, is inverted, so that a kind of atavistic distrust in the unknown (in people's intentions and motivations) gradually contaminates – "centripetally" as it were – the stable, familiar world of family and friends. Soviet society from the 1930s up to Stalin's death was a world where thin trust in neighbors, night porters, guardians, work colleagues, tram drivers and their passengers, people in the street, etc., was more or less obliterated. Anyone and everyone could be a spy, denunciation could only be avoided by a total conformism of heart, mind and language, and even then there was no guarantee it would suffice. Thick trust was "thinned out". Though it's possible to try to imagine the effect of this process on the minds of those who lived through it, there is no substitute for reading the accounts of the survivors: it is a uniquely eye-opening and deeply moving experience, not without parallels in similar regimes, but as far as I know without parallel in literature.[54]

VI

The Russian poet Osip Mandelstam was arrested in 1934, even before the vast acceleration of repression from 1936 to 1938 known as the Great Terror or *Yezhovschina* (after the name of its principal operative). He was accused of having written a poem critical of Stalin (he did and it was). His widow Nadezhda Mandelstam (1899-1980), acutely conscious of the risk that her husband's entire *œuvre* might disappear into the archives of the Lubyanka, memorized all of it. Clearly gifted with an exceptional memory anyway, as well as invincible courage and an acute sense of the absurd, she braved, in addition to the death of her husband, internal deportation, isolation, poverty, denunciation by

[54] There have been distinguished attempts to recreate this experience in novels that are not Russian, notably George Orwell's *1984*. But it's the uniquely authentic quality of personal testimony that I'm referring to. Solzhenitsyn writes: "We have lived through so very much, and almost none of it has been described by its right name [...] Of course, much of the texture of this life is bound to be quite unknown to Western writers." (*The Gulag Archipelago*, trans. Thomas Whitney, Glasgow, Collins/Fontana, 1974, p. 541).

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colleagues and betrayal by friends from the middle thirties until Stalin's death in 1953. She wrote about these experiences in two volumes, *Hope against Hope* and *Hope Abandoned*, both published in the west in 1974. In their unique quality as testimonies to integrity and truth in a universe of lies, they bear comparison with Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago*, though she was never herself a *zek*, a Gulag inmate.

At the beginning of *Hope against Hope*, Osip's arrest is recounted factually. In contrast, and far more than the cruelty and injustice of arresting and torturing a poet for being a poet (poets criticize), it is Nadezhda Mandelstam's own experience, or rather two aspects of it, that are striking: the upheaval of her inner, mental world; and her perception of the outer world, the world created by the Chekists (later the NKVD), which was not new in 1934 and to which the arrest only added a degree of immediacy and intensity. Following the arrest, she writes of "an acute sense of being doomed", where

"time, as such, had come to an end – there was only an interlude before the inescapable swallowed us up with our 'Europe' and our handful of last thoughts and feelings [...] Having entered a realm of non-being, I had lost the sense of death. In the face of doom, even fear disappears. Fear is a gleam of hope, the will to live, self-assertion. It is a deeply European feeling, nurtured on self-respect, the sense of one's own worth, rights, needs and desires. A man clings to what is his, and fears to lose it. Fear and hope are bound up with each other. Losing hope, we lose fear as well – there is nothing to be afraid of." [55]

This sense of paralysis – an "atmospheric pressure [...] heavier than lead" [56] – is palpable in her descriptions of her contacts with the functionaries of the regime and its vast web of spies and informers: all around her, she is aware of people she cannot trust, grey, characterless

[55] Nadezhda Mandelstam, *Hope Against Hope*, trans. Max Hayward, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1975, pp. 47-48. "Our 'Europe'" and "a deeply European feeling" can seem odd expressions to us. Or, on the contrary, perhaps obvious. Both reactions miss the mark: Russian literature from the Enlightenment onwards was indeed deeply European and educated Russians (who conversed easily in French and whose royal family had links of consanguinity to the crowns of European states) felt more affinity with the inhabitants of Paris and Berlin and London that with the peasant classes and the far East of their own country. The October revolution and the policies of Lenin and then Stalin aimed, among other things, at the systematic destruction of this connivance with the comfortable, sophisticated, aristocratic and bourgeois worlds of 19th century Europe (though Stalin himself was a big reader of 'European' literature, and a number of Soviet leaders, notably Trotsky and Anastas Mikoyan, had strong affinities with European culture). The recent emergence from the ruins of universal socialism of a virulently anti-European Russian nationalism shows how successful they were.

[56] Mandelstam, *Hope Against Hope*, *op. cit*., p. 50.

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men and women who speak in a formulaic language and whose facial movements and gestures are drilled into them and calibrated to produce predictable effects (she speaks of them as being in a kind of "hypnotic trance"). To her surprise she is invited to the Lubyanka to meet the man in charge of Osip's interrogation: he is strangely polite, even in a sense considerate; but politeness is so out of place in this building which is the incarnation of state terror. What can politeness mean when her broken husband is brought in to hear that he is not after all going to be shot, but merely exiled to some remote provincial backwater to which she can accompany him? She feels relief but isn't fooled: every word is calculated to create instability, strangeness, a sense that the accused and his family are isolated, alienated from any fixed point on the social map, free-floating and timeless, infinitely vulnerable. Not the consented vulnerability of a relationship of trust, but a boundless subjection to a way of thinking that has lost its moorings in reality, while proclaiming that it has recreated a new, timeless reality that must replace the "illusion" of what went before.

Simon Sebag-Montefiore's book *Stalin: the Court of the Red Tsar*,[57] is an instructive account of the dictator's immediate entourage, a milieu which was scarcely less paranoid than that of the unfortunate ordinary members of the Communist Party base who were so mercilessly sacrificed in the years of the *Yezhovschina*. The atmosphere created by these men who, directed by Stalin, send out daily lists of individuals to be tortured and shot, is indeed "heavier than lead": it is suffocating and depressing. Nadezhda Mandelstam's memoir, by contrast, has the uplifting and edifying quality of truth. The reader sees Soviet society through the eyes of someone who was not fooled, who saw through the lies and propaganda and self-deception and had the courage to put up a stiff mental resistance. The title of her second volume, *Hope Abandoned*, is in this sense misleading, even when she finds herself, on the eve of Stalin's sudden and unexpected death in March 1953, hauled out in the middle of the night to face trial and expulsion from her job by mediocrities who accuse her of absurd "crimes" such as sitting on a windowsill instead of a chair.[58]

The second example is also uplifting and hopeful, at least in its *dénouement*. Elena Bonner (1923-2011) was a pediatrician, married

[57] Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Stalin: the Court of the Red Tsar*, London, Phoenix Books, 2003.

[58] Nadezhda Mandelstam, *Hope Abandoned*, trans. Max Hayward, Harmonsdworth, Penguin, 1975, pp. 429-433.

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to the physicist and father of the Soviet thermonuclear bomb, Andreï Sakharov. Her early experience of persecution led her to go out of her way to help the families of those that came under suspicion during and after the *Yezhovschina*. After they got married and until well into the 1980s, the couple became the incarnation of dissenting opposition to the Soviet regime and were harassed and persecuted, including under Gorbachev.[59]

Half a century earlier, in May 1937, Elena's mother had been informed that the NKVD were about to conduct a search of the family apartment, with the probability that she and her husband, Elena's adoptive father and the founding first secretary of the Armenian communist party, would be arrested (they were, and he was shot the following year for "participation in a counter-revolutionary terrorist organization"). So she took the precaution of sending the fourteen year-old Elena to what she thought would be safety with her aunt and uncle. When he opened the door to the child, her terrified uncle became hysterical and refused to let her cross the doorstep. The spirited Elena shouted "scoundrel" at him – at which he turned white – and promptly returned to the now empty parental home. The British historian Orlando Figes, who tells this story, comments:

"There are countless such stories of abandonment by friends and neighbours and even by kin following the arrest of a close relative. People were afraid of making contact with the families of 'enemies of the people'. They crossed the street to avoid them, did not talk to them in the corridors of communal blocks and forbade their children to play with theirs in the communal courtyard. People removed the photographs of friends and relatives who had disappeared, sometimes even tearing out or scribbling over faces in family portraits."

He immediately follows this by quoting Solzhenitsyn:

"The mildest and at the same time the most widespread form of betrayal was not to do anything bad directly, but just not to notice the doomed person next to one, not to help him, to turn away one's face, to shrink back. They had arrested a neighbour, your comrade at work, even your close friend. You kept silence. You acted as if you had not noticed."[60]

[59] Sakharov was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1975. He was also identified by Yuri Andropov as "domestic enemy number one", something he was probably at least equally proud of.

[60] Orlando Figes, *The Whisperers. Private Life in Stalin's Russia*, London, Penguin, 2007, pp. 285-286.

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"Mild" or perhaps "soft" betrayal is not Judas-like; it does not involve active denunciation or participation in a show-trial or conspiracy to murder, still less pulling the trigger. Soft betrayers scarcely enter the picture and would prefer not to enter it at all. They are content to let the secret police arrest anyone on any charge whatever, on any pretext, provided that there's as little fuss as possible and no fallout on their side of the hedge. It's an example of everyday cowardice, something we can find anywhere (including in ourselves, unthreatened though we may be); but under a totalitarian regime it becomes the norm.

Why is soft betrayal interesting? Certainly not because of the character of the betrayer: he or she is either indifferent to the fate of the betrayed (in which case amoral) or more probably terrified (understandable but unedifying). No, it's because the totalitarian destruction of trust has the effect of deepening and radicalizing social vices such as cowardice and conformism while at the same time involuntarily stimulating a unique quality or ability, the virtue – in the strong sense of the Latin root *vir* – of supererogation, going beyond the call of duty, sometimes at the risk of one's life. Soft betrayal is interesting because it's the mediocre backdrop, the colorless horizon against which extraordinary acts of discrete heroism can be seen for what they are.

No purely moral scheme, no set of norms can prescribe or dictate supererogation. And indeed, the presence of trust renders it pretty much redundant. But when, as in Stalin's Soviet Union or Hitler's Germany or Mao's China trust is subject to a full-frontal assault, when the bases of social predictability are all but destroyed and the inner core of strong trust weakened, supererogatory acts constitute not, certainly, a solution, but a testimony that humanity will in the end be victorious over evil. Orlando Figes' remarkable book *The Whisperers* and others like it contain numerous examples of this kind, examples of ordinary people who were ready to help in extraordinary ways when no one else would dare to: school teachers, in particular, but also others who "turned a blind eye" to indiscretions or remarks critical of the party or its leader, or who discretely enabled families to have enough to live on and children to continue their education though their parents were treated as pariahs, exiled or murdered. Elena Bonner herself relates the story of the director of the school she attended, Klavdiia Alekseyeva. An old and respected member of the Party (not at all a status that would have protected her during the purges, quite the contrary), she stubbornly resisted increasing pressure from above and all sides to purge the children of disgraced families (often children orphaned be-

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cause their parents had been shot). She stood up to those who urged the removal of children who had refused to denounce their own parents, cunningly using the tactic of selective quotation from Stalin himself to the effect that "sons do not answer for their fathers" (given his record, this remark on Stalin's part was utterly hypocritical). Her example was therefore not just one of courage, but of practical intelligence (perhaps there is a unity to the virtues after all). And the most remarkable thing of all is that this modest woman of diamond-hard integrity managed, by her example, to create trust where in theory none should have existed.

Klavdiia Alekseyeva was Elena Bonner's teacher, as she was that of Ida Slavina and nine other girls, eleven in total out of twenty-four, whose parents had been arrested. In her memoir, *Mothers and Daughters*, Bonner writes:

"We all knew who we were, but we did not talk, we did not want to draw attention to ourselves, but just carried on as normal kids [...] I am almost certain that every one of those eleven children finished the tenth class at the same time as me – they were all saved by the director of the school." [61]

This school and others run by similarly disposed individuals, people of basic decency, generosity and exceptional courage, became as a result places of safety for the children of "enemies of the people", islands of trust in an apparently boundless sea of suspicion, terror and mediocrity. [62] It isn't given to everyone to do what Klavdiia Alekseyeva did. But it's important to recognize that she wasn't just a good person with remarkably steady nerves; she was an "old Bolshevik", a stalwart of the Communist Party she had given her life to, a believer in an ideal which she saw betrayed by a toxic combination of pathological distrust and mindless obedience. Unlike the torturers in the Lubyanka, unlike the "mild betrayers" on every street corner and in every shop, library and laboratory, she was a believer. Her pupils almost certainly did not share, or very soon lost, the ideals that animated her (this was certainly the case with Elena Bonner); but it seems highly probable that without those ideals, the ideals of a universal socialism of trust, Klavdiia Alekseyeva would have been unable to act as she did.

In Stalin's Soviet Union, trust was reduced to the bare minimum of necessary but insufficient co-operative action: the currency held up (more or less and provided it wasn't in competition with the dollar): the

[61] Quoted in Figes, *The Whisperers*, cit., p. 296.
[62] Figes, *The Whisperers*, cit., pp. 296-7.

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trams kept running, people went to work, fell in love and had children; shops were often empty and queues long, but for the most part people didn't starve unless Stalin wanted them to. Those who queued were mostly too afraid to speak to each other: those who spoke out or protested (and many who didn't) ended up in the Gulag or as anonymous corpses in a pit. But society didn't break down: there was no anarchy. Stalinism is a sort of absurd, ghastly caricature of Niklas Luhmann's idea of "system trust": trust, not as a quality of relations, but as a means to an end, that of reducing the unmanageable complexity of a colossal society that, in its leader's warped mind, needed to be broken before it was fixed, whatever the cost.

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Trust in the Unexpected

Teresa Bartolomei

Introduction: the self-criticism of the critical spirit

> "Wars. So many wars. Wars outside and wars inside. Cultural wars, science wars, and wars against terrorism. Wars against poverty and wars against the poor. Wars against ignorance and wars out of ignorance."
>
> (B. Latour, p. 225) [1]

With these words, Bruno Latour begins his highly influential article devoted to the *critique of the critical mind*, describing a historical context that, unfortunately, remains as dramatic, if not more so, twenty years later. The strength of Latour's text lies in its uncomfortable, not at all obvious, *self-critical* dimension. The author wonders whether the increasing polarization of societies, of conflicts incapable of dialogue, the crisis of a shared notion not only of the common good but also of the common truth, under the impact of a generalised distrust in institutions, forms of associative life, other individuals, has not only systemic causes (economic and social erosion of community ties and symbolic traditions, anthropological impoverishment of identity and socialization devices, disintegration of normative codes in face of multicultural competition, the distorting impact of new media and social platforms in reshaping the public sphere [2)], but also purely cultural ones. What, asks Latour, are the causes of the aggressive proliferation of *doxa* that we see flourishing in social media (for which emotion is as valuable as, if not more valuable than, argument)? What are the causes of the systematic delegitimization of scientific knowledge (which reached a

[1] *Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern*, in *Critical Inquiry*. XXX (2), 2004, pp. 225-248, doi:10.1086/421123. S2CID 159523434.

[2] See M. Calloni, *Nuove dimensioni della sfera pubblica tra reale e virtuale. La pandemia e il cambiamento delle visioni del mondo*, in M. Calloni (ed.), *PANDEMOCRAZIA. Conoscenza, potere e sfera pubblica nell'età pandemica*, il Mulino, Bologna 2023, pp. 105-126.

socially and politically divisive climax during the Covid pandemic), the subversive discrediting of the legal rationality embodied in the institutions of the democratic state, all phenomena that progressively reduce the level of cohesion of our societies? Are we to attribute their causes solely to the manipulative "wickedness" of unscrupulous politicians (à la Trump) and imperialist strategies of disinformation (à la Putin); to the sordid economic calculations of those who reduce information (see R. Murdoch) and communication (see M. Zuckerberg and E. Musk) to a mere source of profit; to the hidden interests of the multinationals (from the fossil energy moguls who encourage climate denial; to the food giants who encourage environmental and social degradation through deforestation, monocultures, intensive agriculture, pesticide use, price cartels)? Is it possible that this epistemic degradation of coexistence, which manifests itself in a deep and pervasive distrust of rationality (scientific, ethical, legal), is also due to a misguided paradigm of rationality established in modern culture, the bearer of a misguided critical instance that ends up turning against itself?

> "What has become of the critical spirit? Has it run out of steam? Quite simply, my worry is that it might not be aiming at the right target.
> [...]
> "Do you see why I am worried? I myself have spent some time in the past trying to show '*the lack of scientific certainty*' inherent in the construction of facts. I too made it a 'primary issue.' But I did not exactly aim at fooling the public by obscuring the certainty of a closed argument—or did I? After all, I have been accused of just that sin. Still, I'd like to believe that, on the contrary, I intended to *emancipate* the public from prematurely naturalized objectified facts. Was I foolishly mistaken? Have things changed so fast?
>
> *"In which case the danger would no longer be coming from an excessive confidence in ideological arguments posturing as matters of fact—as we have learned to combat so efficiently in the past—but from an excessive distrust of good matters of fact disguised as bad ideological biases!* While we spent years trying to detect the real prejudices hidden behind the appearance of objective statements, do we now have to reveal the real objective and incontrovertible facts hidden behind the *illusion* of prejudices."
>
> (B. Latour, *op. cit*. pp. 225, 227, italics added)

It is a serious social and political problem when good "matters of fact" (Latour mentions climate change, which is denounced as an

ideological fabrication by a section of public opinion and its political leaders) become the object of "excessive distrust", discredited as social constructions, unrecognised in their real phenomenal force, which escapes all symbolic and social manipulation. If one suspects that all reality is a fetish, Latour continues, and "does not realize that scientific objects cannot be socially explained" (*Ibid*., p. 242), that they have their own 'natural', extra-cultural, objective consistency, then one loses the notion of truth (of all shareable and shared knowledge) and one loses a fundamental cultural condition of common life.

This is why it is more urgent than ever, as Latour rightly points out, for the intellectual, the critical thinker, to ask whether there are specific cultural reasons, epistemic distortions, that have contributed to this social discrediting of rationality? Whether critical thought, instead of strengthening it, has undermined the rationality it claims to possess? Is it possible that the exercise of gnoseological verification, which seeks to guarantee authentic knowledge, ends up disabling it, if it is modelled on the basis of a distorting radicalization of the certifying instance, which claims to remove trust as an obstacle, a kind of noise, a subjective component to be neutralized in the cognitive process that seeks true knowledge (which perhaps ends up denying all truth, in the paroxysmal culmination of the critical model embodied by the masters of suspicion of Ricoeurian designation)? [3] This doubt is the starting point of a philosophical path that calls itself "postcritical", [4] and finds a suitable incubator in feminist thought, evoking the fruitfulness of a hermeneutic and cognitive approach that is sympathetic and generative rather than alienating and negative. If the roots of this strand of research in Gadamerian hermeneutics (with its opposition of truth to method and its emphasis on prejudice and belief as key vectors of understanding) are obvious and robust, what is innovative and refreshing is its valorization of gender difference as an epistemic variable and its focus on a 'paranoid' temptation inherent in the critical tradition [5] that

[3] See P. Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation* [1965], ed. by D.Savage, Yale University Press, New Haven1970 and Id., *Le Conflit des interprétations. Essais d'herméneutique I,* Le Seuil, Paris 1969.

[4] See E. Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, Duke University Press, Durham & London 2003; R. Felski, *The Limits of Critique*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2015; AA.VV., *Critique and Postcritique*, ed. by Rita Felski-Elisabeth S. Anker, Duke University Press, Chapel Hill 2017.

[5] See E. K. Sedgwick, *Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You,* in Id., *op. cit.* 2003, pp. 123-151.

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exacerbates doubt into suspicion, distrust into mistrust, problematization into delegitimization. The basic insight here is that a "critical interrogation of the critical tradition" can contribute to restoring the epistemic value of trust as an essential condition of the possibility of knowledge, a factor without which the cognitive mechanism becomes blocked, producing not knowledge but illusion. The difference between doubt and suspicion is the lack of trust inherent in the latter, but while knowledge feeds on doubt, suspicion stifles it, as the philosopher Francis Bacon observed, contrasting suspicion not with faith [6] but precisely with knowledge, characterizing it as an index of ignorance:

> "There is nothing makes a man suspect much, more than to know little; and therefore men should remedy suspicion, by procuring to know more, and not to keep their suspicions in smother."
>
> (F. Bacon, *op. cit.*, pp.146-147)

1. *Systematic distrust. From doubt to suspicion. The Cartesian paradigm of absolutely sovereign consciousness*

At the dawn of the philosophical and scientific revolution, Bacon's suspicion of suspicion outlines an alternative critical path to that of René Descartes. Both thinkers share the founding gesture of a radical break with the *potestas* of tradition, the resolute anti-idolatrous attitude that emancipates scientific rationality from any critical submission to what is known because it is believed, because it is transmitted; but in Descartes the suspension of belief embodied in doubt is dramatized into suspicion: In the *Meditations on First Philosophy*,[7] the possibility of dismissing empirical evidence as fallacious appearance/belief, suggested by the traditional sceptical argument of the indistinguishability of dreams from waking (R. Descartes*, op. cit.*, 19ff., pp.14ff.).[8] is extend-

[6] "The Italian says, *Sospetto licentia fede*; as if suspicion, did give a passport to faith; but it ought, rather, to kindle it to discharge itself" (F. Bacon, *The Essays of Francis Bacon* [1597]. Gale, Detroit - New York - San Francisco - New Haven, Conn - Waterville, Maine – London 2014, p. 147).

[7] *Meditations on First Philosophy: With Selections from the Objections and Replies* [1647], Translated with an Introduction and Notes by M. Moriarty. Oxford University Press, Oxford | New York 2008.

[8] "Let us then suppose* that we are dreaming, and that these particular things (that we have our eyes open, are moving our head, stretching out our hands) are not true; and that perhaps we do not even have hands or the rest of a body like what we see" (*Ibid.*, 19, p. 14).

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ed to the possibility of dismissing the external world as a whole as the manifestation of a deceptive plot woven to the detriment of the subject, the ultimate victim of a metaphysical conspiracy that reduces all knowledge, even logical-mathematical knowledge, the human experience of being a body, and the holistic postulate of the existence of an external world as such, [9] to a misleading illusion:

> "However, there is a certain opinion long fixed in my mind, that there is a God who is all-powerful, and by whom I was created such as I am now. Now how do I know that he has not brought it about that there is no earth at all, no heavens, no extended things, no shape, no magnitude, no place—and yet that all these things appear to me to exist just as they do now?* Or even—just as I judge now and again that other people are mistaken about things they believe they know with the greatest certitude—that I too should be similarly deceived whenever I add two and three, or count the sides of a square, or make a judgement about something even simpler, if anything simpler can be imagined?
> But perhaps God has not willed that I should be so cheated, for he is said to be supremely good.—But if it were incompatible with his goodness to have created me such that I am perpetually deceived, it would seem equally inconsistent with that quality to permit me to be sometimes deceived. Nonetheless, I cannot doubt that he does permit it.""
>
> (*Ibid.*, 21, p. 15)

The fact that we are all deceived from time to time makes it plausible to suspect that a higher being, endowed with supreme if not unlimited powers, allows us (or even deliberately compels us) to deceive ourselves systematically. If not God (because the idea of perfection associated with this supreme being makes it incompatible with the perverse intention of

[9] "By the same token, even though these general things–eyes, head, hands, and so forth–might be imaginary, it must necessarily be admitted that at least some other still more simple and universal realities must exist, from which (as the painter's image is produced from real colours) all these images of things–be they true or false-that occur in our thoughts are produced. In this category it seems we should include bodily nature in general, and its extension; likewise the shape of extended things and their quantity (magnitude and number); likewise the place in which they exist, the time during which they exist, and suchlike. From all this, perhaps, we may safely conclude that physics, astronomy, medicine, and all the other disciplines which involve the study of composite things are indeed doubtful; but that arithmetic, geometry, and other disciplines of the same kind, which deal only with the very simplest and most general things, and care little whether they exist in nature or not, contain something certain and indubitable. For whether I am waking or sleeping, two plus three equals five, and a square has no more than four sides; nor does it seem possible that such obvious truths could be affected by any suspicion that they are false" (*Ibid.*, 20, p. 15).

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deceiving us), then an *evil genius* ("genius *malignus*") [10] can be suspected as the author of a grandiose metaphysical conspiracy that traps us in a terrifying cage of falsehood, from which the *Meditator*, [11] the cybernetic archetype of Neo in *The Matrix*, struggles with all his might to escape:

> "I will therefore suppose that, not God, who is perfectly good and the source of truth, but some evil spirit, supremely powerful and cunning, has devoted all his efforts to deceiving me.* I will think that the sky, the air, the earth, colours, shapes, sounds, and all external things are no different from the illusions of our dreams, and that they are traps he has laid for my credulity; I will consider myself as having no hands, no eyes, no flesh, no blood, and no senses, but yet as falsely believing that I have all these;* I will obstinately cling to these thoughts, and in this way, if indeed it is not in my power to discover any truth,* yet certainly to the best of my ability and determination I will take care not to give my assent to anything false, or to allow this deceiver, however powerful and cunning he may be, to impose upon me in any way."
>
> (*Ibid*., 22-23, pp. 16-17)

> "—But there is some deceiver or other, supremely powerful and cunning, who is deliberately deceiving me all the time.— Beyond doubt then, I also exist, if he is deceiving me; and he can deceive me all he likes, but he will never bring it about that I should be nothing as long as I think I am something. So that, having weighed all these considerations sufficiently and more than sufficiently, I can finally decide* that this proposition, 'I am, I exist', whenever it is uttered by me, or conceived in the mind, is necessarily true."
>
> (R. Descartes, *Second Meditation*, *op. cit.,* 25, p.18)

2. *Othello and the Meditator. Suspicion as a very effective way of fooling oneself*

What a tragic spectacle, epically frescoed by Descartes, is this 'I', barricaded in a reality that could all be just a *great illusion*, distorted by a supernaturally powerful, if not omnipotent, enemy. What metaphysical desolation looms over this 'I', plunged into the vertiginous solitude of being nothing more than a *thinking thing* (*res cogitans*), possibly the

[10] For a philosophical-philological analysis of this figure in Descartes, see T. Gregory, *Dio ingannatore e Genio maligno. Note in margine alle "Meditationes" di Descartes*, in *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana*, s. IV, LIII (LV), 1974, pp. 477-516.

[11] This is the conventional designation adopted by commentators to refer to the 'I' of the *Meditations* (see R. Descartes, *op. cit*., Introduction by M. Moriarty, p. xxii).

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prisoner of a fictitious body, an immaterial rational agent who must rid himself of the idea of having – of being – the hands, the eyes, the flesh, the blood, the senses that give body to his 'I', if he is not to fall into the trap set for him by the Great Enemy. The sophisticated epistemologist can elegantly argue that the difference between illusion and reality falls away as meaningless when generalized holistically to the complex of the external world, as argued by Wittgenstein in *On Certainty* and by Putnam in his *famous brains-in-a-vat* thought experiment.[12] The solipsistic *Meditator* in search of unassailable certainties, convinced that he can only find them within himself, will not yield to the argument of the epistemological irrelevance of a distinction that elenctically[13] disqualifies the autonomy of the external world into a weapon of war of a mythical (phenomenologically unavailable, historically indemonstrable) spiritual enemy agent. The archetypal figure of the Great Deceiver (who has been peering out of the Tree of Good and Evil since the beginning of time) is too powerful to be destroyed by reason, however impeccable it may be. Victimhood is an anthropological invariant inherent in the very structure of the sovereign ego, and the conspiratorial reading of reality as a hostile cabal against the ego is an original key to reading history, which from Eve ("Then the LORD God said to the woman, 'What is this that you have done?' The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate"", Gen 3:13, *Bible*, *English Standard Version*) to Descartes and QAnon, flourishes in ever newer versions – political, religious, philosophical – much closer to each other than the protagonists themselves can and want to admit.

The paranoid radicalization of (methodical) doubt into (hyperbolic) suspicion goes far beyond the epistemic need to suspend uncertainties, exposing a neurotic dimension proper to the self-referential, supposedly totally self-sufficient subject, which expands into a cognitively problematic, sumptuously phantasmagorical pseudo-theological mythology.

As pointed out by Pierre Gassendi, one of the critical interlocutors of the *Meditations*:

[12] See H. Putnam, *Brains in a Vat*, in *Reason, Truth and History*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge1981, pp. 1-21.

[13] The self-contradictory circularity of Cartesian doubt and its fideistic solution (God, as the supreme perfect being, is both the greatest threat and the ultimate guarantor of the truth of knowledge) is a recurring argument of the opponents of systematic scepticism; see R. Foley, *Self-Trust*, in J. Simon (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Trust and Philosophy*, Routledge | Taylor & Francis, London and New York 2020, pp. 231-242.

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> "One thing alone I do not clearly grasp: why it is you did not think it sufficient simply and succinctly to declare your previous knowledge uncertain, so that you could subsequently pick out the beliefs that turned out to be true, instead of declaring them all false, and thus not so much divesting yourself of an old prejudice, as espousing a new one. And note how you found it necessary, in order to convince yourself of this, *to imagine* a deceiving God, or some deluding evil genius, when it would have seemed sufficient to invoke the darkness of the human mind, and the mere weakness of our nature."
>
> (R. Descartes, *op. cit.*, Objs. 5 on F.M., 257-258, *op. cit.*, p. 166, italics added)

On the threshold of modernity, analysis gives way to imagination in the victim neurosis of the solipsistic ego, barricaded in the interiority of a solitary consciousness that claims to control the world through the self-referential criterion of certainty, but realizes the vanity of this endeavor and therefore desperately chooses to expel whole prairies of reality ("the sky, the air, the earth, colours, shapes, sounds and all external things". And even my body, my hands, my eyes, my flesh, my blood, and my senses") as untrue, in order to preserve a shred of absolutely self-centered, self-founded certainty, absolutely mine: "and he can deceive me all he likes, but he will never bring it about that I should be nothing as long as I think I am something."

The *Meditator* ends up a prisoner of himself, in a sea of unreality, and stands, lonely and tragic, as a stand-in for the other great suspecter portrayed by Bacon's contemporary and countryman, in a significantly convergent warning about the cognitive dysfunctionality of paranoid systematic suspicion. Othello, the hero of Shakespeare's eponymous tragedy (written around 1604, a few years after the publication of Bacon's essay), embodies the paradoxical insight that it is *the great suspecter* who is ultimately *the most gullible*, and therefore *the most deceived*. Othello is the victim of a cunning evil spirit, not a god or a demon, but a demon in the flesh, a man like himself, whose trap is to make him believe not that illusion is reality (like Descartes' evil Genius), but that reality is illusion (Desdemona's genuine, real fidelity is suspected and ultimately twisted into a lie by Othello). Five centuries later, Shakespeare's play remains a formidable handbook for analyzing paranoid conspiracy syndromes, depicting with incomparable power the not-so-innocent naivety of the victims and the sordid, hypocritical strategic cunning of the instigators.

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3. *The paranoid drift of the anti-fiduciary paradigm of critical thought: irrationalist conspirationalism*

The last stronghold of the heroic conscience, ready to renounce heaven and earth, denounced as a tricky illusion, in order to save the absolute certainty of itself, is nevertheless as fragile as a Fort Apache. [14] The strategy of securing the autonomy of the subject by treating the other from itself as an insidious threat, as a source of deception, ends in tragic failure. The sovereign consciousness of idealist rationalism crumbles under the blows of the suspicion that it has established as an epistemological measure of certification and domination, and ends up being in turn destroyed as an illusion by that external and internal reality (history in Hegel, the flesh in Nietzsche, matter in Marx, the unconscious in Freud) that it had contemptuously discarded as an unnecessary hypothesis for establishing its own truth. Rationality then decrees that consciousness itself is the cunning trickster that deceives us, and that only by emancipating ourselves from it, by treating it as a great illusion, can we gain access to authenticity. The genealogical deconstruction of a gnoseology, of an ethics and an aesthetics modelled on the absolute normativity of consciousness, of a certification that prescinds from any dimension external to solipsistic intentionality, leads to the conclusion that the truth is that there is no truth, that justice involves the dissolution of all forms of law, and that beauty is an escapist dissimulation of the human condition from which one must distance oneself.

In the twilight of modernity, doubt radicalized into suspicion in the suspension of all forms of trust, collapses rationally in the self-deconstruction of all rational normativity, or emancipates itself from its rationalist roots to maintain only its own paranoid-mythological virulence in the irrationalism of mass conspiracy When reason is deprived of normativity, emotion is as valid as argument, one opinion is as valid as another, every epistemological hierarchy is abolished. The sci-fi imagery of *The Matrix* becomes the code for reading history for conspiracists (No Vax, QAnon, climate deniers) who *do not believe in matters of fact* because *they do not trust reality*, rejecting it as the gigantic trick of a *cunning deceiver* (be it the Dr Strangeloves of science, the Deep State politicians or the occult directors of international finance).

[14] This is the allegory depicted in John Ford's famous Western of the same name (1948).

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The aleatory dynamic, at once global and fragmented, of communication and the transmission of (dis)information through social media exacerbates this extrapolation of suspicion from any rational certification, reinforcing its identity function and driving force Suspicion becomes the emotional vector that governs the relationship, the source of a certainty that is increasingly alienated from the truth, in the paranoid escalation of a dystopian mythology, individual and collective, that replaces a rationally delegitimized and emotionally adverse reality.

How can we emerge from this socially, politically, existentially, and culturally destructive spiral? If the structural solutions are complex but clearly oriented towards the promotion of knowledge (because, as Francis Bacon wisely recommended, "men should remedy suspicion, by procuring to know more") and the reestablishment of functional, non-sectarian, inclusive, and emancipatory community bonds, it is also necessary to work on the front of theoretical reflection. In this field, it is necessary to reactivate modes of critical thinking capable of protecting the autonomy of the subject in its insertion into forms of common, shared and sharable rationality.

The path to be followed is that of reconstructing the normatively binding nature of instances of truth, justice and beauty that are universally relevant (if not universally acknowledged), intrinsically conjugated in intersubjective dynamics of a fiduciary nature, identified solely through a critical exercise that does not systematize doubt into suspicion, nor neutralize the collaborative and synergetic dimension constitutive of cognitive, interpretive, and communicative processes. The fundamental objective, as Latour suggests, is not to abandon critical thinking, but to renew and relaunch it, explicitly articulating the essential complementarity of doubt and trust, certification and belief, estrangement and proximity, separation and association, conflict and cooperation, not falsifying every expression of normativity into arbitrariness, every instance of truth into an exercise of power, every demand for recognition into a struggle for domination.[15]. The philosophical tradition, even the most recent, offers a substantial body of reflections that orient thought in this direction, laying the foundations for a critical rehabilitation of trust as an indispensable episte-

[15] To reduce the need for recognition to a struggle for domination is the reductionism that undermines Hegelian intuition and severely conditions its reception (See G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, [1807], T. Pinkard (ed. & transl.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2018, IV, A).

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mological key to the production of meaning,[16] a rational vector without which knowledge, understanding and action come to a standstill.[17]

4. *Hegel: Culture as Alienation. The constitutive role of otherness*

A fundamental stage in this path of revision of the anti-fiduciary model of critical thought, which limits truth to certainty, eradicated from any gnoseological and relational reliance is, paradoxically, the Hegelian critique of idealist consciousness, denounced as a reductive and self-contradictory subjectivism, incapable of recognizing its own rational and substantial rootedness in the other of itself. The existence of the world and the reality of self-consciousness cannot be separated; on the contrary, they must be considered together as poles of the movement of alienation of consciousness produced as culture:

> "However, the existence of this world as well as the actuality of self-consciousness rests on the movement of self-consciousness relinquishing itself of its personality and thereby engendering its world. By doing so it relates to it as something alien so that it henceforth must take possession of it. However, the renunciation of its being-for-itself is itself the engendering of actuality, and therefore in that renunciation self-consciousness immediately takes possession of actuality. – Or, self-consciousness is only something, it only has reality insofar as it alienates itself from itself."
>
> (G.W.F. Hegel, *op. cit.*, p. 284)

It is in opposition to external reality, and in the dynamics of the alienation of *natural being* inherent in its institutionalization as culture, that consciousness establishes both itself and that same reality: negativity is the condition that articulates the cognitive (and self-knowing) moment of self-consciousness:

> "–Or, self-consciousness is only something, it only has reality insofar as it alienates itself from itself.

[16] Although the approach of this paper falls within the "*relationalist*" perspective criticized by B. Tognon (*Natura, sede, modelli, filosofia della fiducia*, in *Educating in Trust, Educating for Trust*, ACISE-LUMSA Workshop | Rome, LUMSA 27-28 January 2023, forthcoming), the underlying assumption of the undeniable epistemic functionality of trust converges with the framework outlined by the phenomenological analysis developed by the author.

[17] For a useful general overview of current thinking on trust in philosophy, psychology, and sociology, see *The Routledge Handbook*, *op. cit.*, 2020.

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> 488. It is cultural formation through which the individual here has validity and actuality. The individual's true original nature and his substance are the spirit of the alienation of natural being. Hence, this self-relinquishing is as much his purpose as it is the existence of his natural being."
>
> (*Ibid*., pp. 284-285)

The paranoid syndrome of deception in which the solipsistic self-referential consciousness becomes entangled, when, having lost all traditional ontological and religious certainties, it seeks its certainty only in its own absolute state of thinking being, dissolves in the reconstruction of this act as an alienation that can only be postulated in the externalization of the object as a negativity that removes self-consciousness by constituting it as other than itself:

> "489. What in relation to the single individual appears as his cultural formation is the essential moment of the substance itself, namely, the immediate transition of its universality, as having been thought, into actuality, or into the simple soul through which the in-itself is something recognized and is existence. Hence, the movement of individuality culturally educating itself is the coming-to-be of such an individuality as universally objective essence; i.e., it is the coming-to-be of the actual world. This world, although having come to be through individuality, is for self-consciousness immediately alienated and has the form of an unshakeable actuality for it. However, at the same time, self-consciousness, which is certain that this is its substance, sets about to take possession of it.
>
> "490. To itself, the self is only actual as sublated. Hence, to itself, the self does not constitute the unity of the consciousness of itself and its object; rather, to itself, the object is the negative of itself.–"
>
> (*Ibid*., pp. 285-286)

The *thinking thing*, which in Descartes stands proudly as the only ontological certainty, could not think of itself without the opposition that sets it against reality and alienates it from itself as culture, the 'historically external' body of knowledge and social institutions, internalized as the semantic grammar of cognitive activity, but genetically and functionally irreducible to the individual subject. External reality, in short, constitutes the self as much as the self constitutes it. Thought is a movement of reciprocity, of mediation, between the self and the other, which is produced as distinction, mutual alienation, and precisely for this reason as cognitive internalization. Only by thinking itself as other

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than itself, in the other than itself, can the *thinking thing* think itself. The mediating relationality between the self and the other from itself is the very law of thought that inscribes the truth of consciousness in the historical process of the alienation of the self in the other, as a vector of knowledge and self-recognition.

In order to break out of the paranoid fortress of consciousness, besieged by the uncertainty of that metaphysical deception which can be all that it is not, the ego must not, as Descartes claimed, "*relinquish all reality*", by setting itself up as an absolute entity, the only instance of certainty, but must "*relinquish precisely itself*", alienate itself in order to appropriate what it is, insofar as it is *recognized*.

5. *The intersubjective form of rationality and its fiduciary dynamics*

In this foundational phenomenological gesture, Hegel sweeps away the solipsism of the illusory sovereign consciousness in order to show off its historical genesis, the grammar of its cultural and institutional matrix, paving the way for a critical reconstruction of the intersubjective form of rationality and thus of its essential fiduciary dimension, which is inconceivable in the simple key of voluntaristic entrustment, be it to superior traditional authoritative instances (according to pre-modern logic) or to associative-collaborative forms of a contractual nature (according to the logic of political-legal modernity). The fiduciary law of rationality is pre-voluntarist because it is inherent to a dimension of alienation of subjectivity, which must come out of itself in order to recognize its dependence on the other from itself and, consequently, to rely on this dependence as a positive genetic condition of its own subsistence and functionality. From this perspective, trust is the emotional and behavioral manifestation of the subjective awareness of the objective ontological and anthropological surplus inherent in the intersubjective and finite constitution of the subject. It is therefore produced, epistemologically and ethically, as a transactional self-regenerative response to a condition of limitation and dependence on the other and on others, which triggers a positive dynamic of self-transcendence.

The linguistic turn in philosophical thought, anticipated by marginal but significant currents of German Romanticism (J.G. Herder, W. von Humboldt) and carried out in the last century in extremely heterogeneous but turbulently converging theoretical horizons (from analytic philosophy to structuralism, from Heideggerian post-metaphysical

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analysis to Gadamerian hermeneutics, from transcendental pragmatics to deconstructivist post-structuralism), has taken a path of reconstruction of the intersubjective form of rationality. Intentionality is analyzed within the framework of a relational, historically determined, transcendentally functional network of semantic-pragmatic mediations between self and other: between subject and object and between subjects. In this perspective, methodological doubt – the epistemic key to critical thinking – cannot in principle degenerate into suspicion, distrust (as a conditional suspension of trust) cannot degenerate into aprioristic and holistic mistrust, because meaning is not given to the extent of subjective intentionality, but only to the extent of intersubjective interaction with the world (the relation between subjects is meaningful only in its interrelation with external reality). I cannot think alone, because I think only through the linguistic code assimilated through interaction with other selves in an external physical environment. I make use of the linguistic device that enables me to think (a semantic-grammatical code of cultural-historical origin, external to me, in which I have to become alienated in order to be able to appropriate it: my parole cannot exist without everyone's langue) thanks to the transmission of it by my community. I can distrust this community as much as I want, but I cannot distrust it to the point of depriving myself of the language in which I am constituted as intentionality. (Of course, a native speaker can choose to reject his own language in order to speak exclusively in another, but he cannot deprive himself of the mental code established by his linguistic socialization, unless he regresses into idiocy, the inability to relate to anything, even to himself.)

As Wittgenstein showed in his *Philosophical Investigations*,[18] to speak a language (to act and think) is to be able to play *language games* that are embedded in shared forms of life. The idea of a "*private language*" is nonsense because we may well imagine that someone takes the trouble to invent an artificial language that only he knows, but such an invention will always be *derivative* of the linguistic socialization that enabled him to enact such an invention. We speak, we think, relying on the body of interpretations of the world, knowledge, symbolic codes, practical rules, condensed in the language(s) in which we express ourselves and interact in a community. It is part of our freedom and responsibility as rational subjects to promptly question the interpretations,

[18] L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* [1953], G.E.M. Anscombe (transl.), Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1986[3].

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habits, evidence and particular theoretical and axiological assumptions conveyed by the language games in which we are engaged, but we cannot sensibly suspend the underlying certainty associated with the exercise of these games: that is, that they operate holistically, enabling us to practice a reliable relationship with the external world, with others and with ourselves (in the coherence and stability of their propositional representation of the world, in the pertinence of their expressive outfit, in the expectation that others will follow the same rules as we do).

This is the reason why, as Wittgenstein argued again in his last work, *Of Certainty*, hyperbolic doubt (doubt raised to suspicion in the radical suspension of all forms of trust) is pointless, as is universal skepticism, because without a general trust – however contextually fallible and therefore correctable – in the reciprocity of the observance of rules and in the semantic and expressive reliability of language games that depend on shared forms of life, there is no parole, there is no intentional activation of language as thought, action and communication. This underlying certainty, embodied in the holistic trust in the reliability of language and other speakers, is a pragmatic and not a theoretical certainty, it is not the equivalent of the scientific certainty sought by Descartes, but of such scientific certainty it is a necessary precondition. The certainty that *this is my hand* (to take a very famous example from the diatribe on skepticism that Wittgenstein takes from G.E. Moore (*A Defence of Common Sense* [1925], in *Philosophical Papers*. Collier Books, New York 1959, pp. 32-59) does not properly constitute knowledge (since the empirical evidence can be questioned from various points of view), but a linguistically formalized rule of behavior in the guise of an empirical proposition, which extrapolates a series of situations in which the speaker uses the thing (the extensional referent) designated by the name of "hand" according to a set of rules learnt in the forms of community life in which he has been socialized. The speaker's unquestionable certainty that what he is showing is a hand does not depend on the epistemic status of the designated thing, but on the set of behavioral routines associated with it within his own linguistic community. Of course, the speaker can always discover that the language in which he has been trained is, as in Orwellian dystopia, manipulated as a big lie by a big deceiver.[19] The deceptive distortion

[19] In his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, G. Orwell describes the grandiose project of the totalitarian superstate of Oceania to replace "Oldspeak" (standard English) with "Newspeak", an artificial language completely subservient to the world view established by the Party in its strategy of total control of the minds of its citizens. Orwell describes this language in detail

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of language is a possibility (not science fiction, but concretely historical) that dictatorial regimes make ample use of in the propagandistic deformation of communal language games. But even this possibility (a source of legitimate suspicion on the part of the speakers involved) proceeds as a parasitic derivative eventuality of the fiduciary functionality that governs language as an intersubjective linguistic game of generative regulation of our relationship with the external and internal world. Lying, as the theory of linguistic acts points out, is parasitic with respect to truth and sincerity: the production and reception of meaning is only possible thanks to the transcendental (not factual) assumption that the interlocutor respects the rules of the game (is consistent with the instances of normativity advanced by speaking) and that the linguistic act in question is therefore pragmatically consistent with the image of the world activated semantically in the corresponding form of life. The ordinary speaker is well aware that speakers can deceive themselves, that the form of life semantized as a language game can be regulated on the basis of erroneous cognitive assumptions (the expression "*the sun is rising*" is the linguistic legacy of the erroneous traditional, Ptolemaic perception of the movement of the earth as the movement of the sun), but he also knows that the language game as such does not deceive, it "functions" as a reliable regulation of an intersubjective relation that stabilizes mutual expectations on the basis of shared semantic and behavioral assumptions.

The cognitive error that may lurk in the image of the world semantically encoded in a linguistic game does not disrupt its functioning and does not dissolve the underlying trust associated with it, as is the case with lying, which is 'hidden' behind the rule of truth and sincerity presupposed by linguistic use and whose success is based on its unmasking. In other words, lies are the exception, not the rule, whereas trust is the pragmatic regulator of communicative relations and hermeneutic processes.To break trust is to transgress a constitutive condition of meaning that is not identified with truth (error is always possible) but is intrinsically regulated by it.

in an appendix to the novel, entitled 'The Principles of Newspeak' (see G. Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* [1949], Penguin, London 1987 | 2003).

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6. *The difference between trust and belief, between pragmatic certainty and theoretical and practical certainty*

The holistic, non-theoretical, non-practical, but fiduciary and pragmatic certainty that alone guarantees the functioning of language, the irreducible intersubjective dynamics of linguistic use, even in solitude,[20] therefore excludes as nonsensical, as Wittgenstein observes in *On Certainty*,[21] the possibility of doubting everything, and even less of suspecting everything as deception. Indeed, it is not possible to suspend the set of certainties that fiduciarily (not theoretically) regulate our interaction with the outside world and with others as parameters of the reliability of semantic and grammatical rules assimilated through language games, because this implies the very cancellation of our capacity to doubt. To postulate the independence of consciousness from otherness, which is linguistically configured as an intersubjective relation in the external world, is a counterfactual artifice that contradicts the genetic and functional dynamics of consciousness itself (whose rationality is activated only through a linguistic device received from the outside and a hermeneutic socialization of a relational matrix). This does not mean, as Wittgenstein always insists, that the holistic, pragmatic, and non-theoretical certainty about external reality and others that is established through the use of language, which makes trust in otherness the fundamental pragmatic regulator of meaning, is absolute and unconditional. On the contrary, doubt is not only possible but also necessary (as a factor of ethical and cognitive self-correction), in a precise and circumscribed form: questioning, from time to time, the semantic postulates, symbolic conventions and pragmatic rules of language games and the corresponding forms of life, in order to replace them wholly or partially, is the fundamental modality of civilizational learning, of scientific, ethical-legal and cultural progress:

> "65. When language-games change, then there is a change in concepts, and with the concepts the meanings of words change."
>
> (L. Wittgenstein, *op. cit.*, p.66)

[20] Draw on the example of Robinson Crusoe, a man living in complete isolation, Wittgenstein points out that that linguistic use cannot be divorced from the factuality of its intersubjective actualization, but is only produced if the principled potentiality of it as shareability remains intact. Robinson does not speak to anyone, but to himself, because he has been linguistically socialised. In short, he is not a Kaspar Hauser.

[21] L. Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, ed. by G. E. M. Anscombe & Go Ho Von Wright, D. Paul & G.E.M. Anscombe (transl.), Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1969.

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Languages evolve like societies. If trust, embodied in the set of certainties inherent in the use of language (in the functioning of consciousness), is the fundamental device of meaning, this body of certainties is as such diverse, mobile, incomplete, and fallible. No single certainty is incontrovertible (even a truism as trivial as this is my hand can be scrambled by the sceptic to the point of paradox), and every certainty is embedded in a horizon of uncertainty that extends as far as the eye can see, to the point of loss of meaning. Doubt therefore fruitfully coexists with trust, not as its antithesis, not as its opposite, but as its reverse: the specularly equivalent dimension of that dynamic of relationality between self and other in which meaning is constituted.

The pragmatic holistic certainty, of a fiduciary nature, condensed in linguistic use, is nourished by the belief in given, positive, ethical or theoretical certainties, transmitted and guaranteed by those mechanisms of shared forms of life, proximity and social identification that are language games, but it is not identified with this belief, which it therefore questions from time to time, through processes of corrective, emancipative learning, triggered by that instance of rational normativity that generates meaning through an ineradicable normative scrutiny of a theoretical, ethical and aesthetic order (effective even in the formal non-determinability of the respective criteria of truth, justice and beauty).

Conclusions: Trust in the Unexpected

This means that the demand for certainty can conflict with belief without undermining trust. Indeed, the dynamic of trust proper to rationality is not identified with conformity to what is transmitted, shared, known, believed. It does not reduce itself to *'the already'* but is open to and creatively pregnant with *'the not yet'*, in that process of functional alienation into the other of itself (as first reconstructed by Hegel and then deepened in the linguistic turn of contemporary philosophy) in which the self takes shape through the cultural and linguistic matrix of rationality, of reality.

The insight into this (individual and collective) evolutionary condition of rationality (the recognition of which is one of the indispensable achievements of modernity) confronts us with the need to promote new modalities – not naïve, not fusional, not linear and not tribal – of trust, which do not fixate on the known, on the near, on the similar, on

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the familiar, but which address the new, the distant, the different, the foreign.

Trust, as the basic epistemic condition of linguistic use and thus of rational functionality, excludes as cognitively dysfunctional, nonsensical, systematic suspicion, paranoid conspiracy, the methodical exacerbation of distrust into mistrust, but it also excludes the false equivalence of the necessary pragmatic certainty entrusted to linguistic use with the uncritical assimilation of conformist belief, the one-sided reliance on kinship, the exclusion of the other from oneself, the new, the unknown.

In these dark times, when individual and collective mistrust is undermining social cohesion, the resilience of democracies and human and family relations, eroding the existential well-being of individuals, when the temptation to enclose oneself in tribal bubbles of affinity (of blood, ethnicity, beliefs, interests) is growing seemingly unstoppably, it is more necessary than ever to point out that the rational substance of trust mechanisms does not pass through voluntary assent alone, the recognition of identical, shared belonging.

The common that constitutes the basic condition of the possibility of human coexistence is not the same, what we have in common (property, shared identities), but the deeper fact that *we depend on the other out of ourselves*, that we are constituted by what we cannot recognize as part of ourselves (the culture that shapes us, the language that articulates us as thinking beings and that we receive as a gift from the outside), that the self does not constitute itself without the other (as Michel de Certeau has tirelessly formulated it). What constitutes the (social, personal) unity of human communities is not primarily the sharing of the same, but the interrelation of the different, in the dynamic of trust that such interdependence triggers and requires.

Only by abandoning, on the one hand, the identity paradigm of the common, and, on the other, reductive notions of certainty as uncritical conformity to tribal beliefs or as the assumption of absolute theoretical or practical control, can we regain that trust which is so dramatically lacking in our increasingly fragmented, multicultural, diverse, unstable, mutable societies, and open it up to that other of ourselves without which we would not be ourselves. Fear of the new and the different is a form of suspicion fueled by the narcissistic syndrome of the will to dominate and control, by a need for certainty that is only the egocentric urge to assimilate the other from oneself, to annihilate it. The trust that governs the use of language, reason, does not rely on this kind of dominating and egocentric certainty, but feeds on confidence, exposure,

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hospitality, risk, and freedom. In order for our language, our reason, our society not to degenerate into that tautological repetition of the same as depicted in the Orwellian dystopia of a new artificial language (*Newspeak*) as an authoritarian paradigm of rationality, we must rely on the risk of uncertainty and incompleteness, on the risk of the new, the unpredictable, the other of us. Without trust in this risk, the world does not move forward, our life implodes into meaningless survival.

The poet, as always, says it best:

"Trust in the Unexpected -
By this - was William Kidd
Persuaded of the Buried Gold -
As One had testified -
Through this - the old Philosopher -
His Talismanic Stone
Discerned - still withholden
To effort undivine -

'Twas this - allured Columbus -
When Genoa - withdrew
Before an Apparition
Baptized America -

The Same - afflicted Thomas -
When Deity assured
'Twas better - the perceiving not -
Provided it believed–"

Emily Dickinson, J555 (1862) / F561 (1863) [22]

[22] E. Dickinson, *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, Reading Edition, ed. by R.W. Franklin, Cambridge Mass, Harvard U. P. 1999.

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Between Religious Faith and Basic Trust

The Contributions of Hans Urs von Balthasar and John Henry Newman

Robert Cheaib

Introduction

There is a deep connection between religious faith and human trust, namely "basic trust". The spiritual dimension of placing one's faith and hope in God is inseparable from the existential experience of trusting. In this paper we intend to show multiple facets of this convergence. To do so, we start by considering some reductive usages of the verb "believe" as an opening to the exploration of the richness of this polyhedric human and religious experience, starting from an etymological exploration, followed by a concise biblical and theological overview. These brief introductory parts pave the road to the main reflection of our article which is an exploration of the contributions of two theologians: Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988) and John Henry Newman (1801-1890). We have chosen to consider these two authors not following the chronological order, but rather a logical one, since the reflection of Balthasar sheds the light on the *initium fidei*, on the genesis of faith, while that of Newman is very insightful regarding the obstacles that hinder faith or even lead to losing it.

A reductive (mis)-usage

Apart from the specific religious use of the term, in common contemporary daily life, the verb "to believe" [1] tends to denote fundamentally

[1] The phenomenon applies to many languages: *je crois* in French; *credo* in Italian; *ich*

two things: the expression of an opinion that we are not totally sure about; a rational conviction.

In the first common use, the locution assumes the epistemological value of the platonic *doxa*.[2] A peasant might look at the reddish sky and, according to his precedent experiences, he would declare: "I believe that tomorrow the weather will be hot". A student might answer the professor who asks him about his absent friend: "I believe he's simply running a bit late". In this context, "to believe" is a synonym of "to guess". Were he to be extremely sure that his friend is on the way, he should have said instead: "I am sure he is coming". In both examples, the affirmations do not express an absolute certitude, but a reasonable assumption.

On the contrary, in the second common usage, "to believe" tends to mean a rational conviction The affirmation "I believe in God" might simply mean an intellectual persuasion that there is a God. This "faith" is not necessarily translated into a spiritual experience or a religious practice. It might be the expression of the diffused phenomenon of believing without belonging or believing without practicing.[3]

Etymologically and theologically, the aforementioned verbs and words have a more complex and holistic sense. We will briefly consider some salient aspects of such complexity starting with an etymological analysis.

A rich etymology

In Ancient Greek, the verb *pisteúô* is used to express persuasion, giving credit, putting one's trust in someone or something. The correspond-

glaube in German; *creo* in Spanish. Even in Arabic, أعتقد – from which derives the strong noun عقيدة (which means dogma) – denotes in the ordinary use not the adhesion to a dogma or a faith but rather a supposition.

[2] Although some studies demonstrate different nuances of the concept of *doxa* throughout the platonic *corpus*, it is commonly held that *doxa* for him means a "generic belief" in opposition to *epistêmê* (see for instance the monography of J. Moss, *Plato's Epistemology. Being and Seeming*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2021).

[3] See G. Davie, *Religion in Britian Since 1945. Believing without Belonging*, Blackwell, Oxford 1995. It is significant to consider this abstract "faith" side by side with an opposite phenomenon – belonging without believing –, which can be in a sense related to it and generated from it. It's a matter of adopting a religious faith not as an intellectual conviction but rather as a mere cultural identity, usually chosen in opposition to another menacing cultural identity. Someone, for instance, might identify as a "Christian Atheist" in opposition to the diffusion of Islam or simply against what he might consider as a "Secular religion" devoid of values and certitudes (See B. Mountford, *Christian Atheist. Belonging without Believing*, Christian Alternative, Hampshire 2011).

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ent noun *pístis* consequently means trust, being trustworthy, fidelity and credibility. *Pistós* is a trustworthy person, and it might also implicate the nuance of an obedient person. These elements of trust and trustworthiness are not necessarily related to the religious dimension but are rather present in ordinary daily life and/or contractual interactions between people. They have become terms expressing religious experience especially in Neoplatonism, while for the Stoics *pístis* rather designate man's fidelity to himself and the solidity of his character. [4]

Similarly, in Latin, the verbs *credo*, *fido* – and the nouns *fides*, *creditum* – express the trust and credit that a person offers to another person or thing. *Fideiussorius* is the guarantor. *Fideicommisarius* is the executor of a will. These nuances manifest again a deep rootedness of faith in trust. To believe is to trust and to entrust oneself and one's heritage to someone else. [5]

In German, a very interesting perspective on the semantic richness of faith is summarized by Johann Auer and Joseph Ratzinger. The authors explain that "the verb *glauben* (believe) contains the root *lub* which can be found in *loben* (praise, acknowledge, appreciate), *erlauben* (allow, approve), *verloben* (engage, trust intimately), *geloben* (solemnly promise, swear) and finally in the profound verb *lieben* (love)". Value recognition, valid personal choice, trusting dedication as a response to the call that comes to me from the value found, especially if it is grounded in a person, are all elements that interact and cooperate when genuine 'faith' is implied. Thus, "believing is an attitude of response, with all that a human response implies, from the most delicate freedom to the unbreakable union". [6]

The different nuances of "faith" in the considered languages encompass a rich array of uses and manifest an important existential dimension to faith: to believe, to trust, to be trustworthy, to trust oneself, and even to love are interconnected experiences.

[4] See G. Kittel, *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, vol. VI, W. Kohlhammer, Stuttgart 1959, pp. 174-230; G.W. Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. Abridged in one volume*, Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids 1985, pp. 849-857; R. Penna, *La fede cristiana alle sue origini*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 2013, pp. 23-27.

[5] *Thesaurus linguae latinae*, vol. IV, Teubner, Leipzig 1909, coll. 1129-1150.

[6] J. Auer-J. Ratzinger, *Dios, uno y trino*, Herder, Barcelona 1982 (Curso de Teología Dogmática, II), p. 26.

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Biblical faith as trust

As we dive into the Bible, a multiform richness is opened to us in both the Old and the New Testaments. In the Old Testament, the semantic area of believing cannot be traced back to a privileged term. It rather embraces a variety of terms such as: "*aman* (to be steadfast, secure, faithful), *batah* (to trust), *hasah* (to find refuge), *qwah* (to hope), *hakah* (to wait), *jahal* (to wait)".[7] Among these terms, the most prominent is surely *aman*, from which derives the universal term *amen*. The word has two basic meanings: a subjective sense through which a person makes an act of trusting and giving credit; an objective sense indicating that someone or something is solid, stable, reliable. The adjective *amen* refers to this objective sense and means sure, certain, firm, solid, protective. This explains the usage of different eloquent analogies when the faithful describes the Lord that he believes in and has put his trust upon: rock (Ps 28,1; 42,10; 71,3; 92,16), refuge (Ps 32,7; 62,8; 73,28; 144,2; Jer 16,19), shield (Gen 15,1; Deut 33,29; Ps 118,114; Judg 5,8; 2 Sam 22,31.36), fortress (2 Sam 22,2; Ps 62,2.6; 91,2; 144,2). From these two senses derive respectively two key Hebrew words: *emunah* which stands for faith and expresses the subjective initiative, and *emet* standing for faithfulness and expressing the objective dimension.[8]

Franco Ardusso resumes the belief attitude in the First Testament as follows: "Belief in the Old Testament means trustingly surrendering to the God of the covenant, acknowledging his interventions in history and the truth of his word (promise), practicing righteousness by observing his commands".[9] This summary expresses how faith and trust are deeply interlaced in the Old Testament. To believe in God means to trust in his word and his promises, to entrust one's life and destiny to him and to obey his commandments. Faith in God does not simply affirm his existence, but it confesses his trustworthiness.

As for the New Testament, we can notice that "the word 'faith'

[7] C. Caltagirone, *Teologia della fede ed elementi di antropologia fondamentale*, in G. Lorizio (ed.), *Teologia fondamentale*, vol. II, Fondamenti, Città Nuova, Roma 2005, p. 345.

[8] See R. Penna, *La fede cristiana alle sue origini*, *cit.*, p. 12.

[9] F. Ardusso, *Fede*, in G. Barbaglio-G. Bof-S. Dianich (eds.), *Teologia*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 2003², p. 656. See also J. Bauer, *Faith in the Old Testament* in J. Bauer (ed.), *Sacramentum Verbi. An Encyclopedia of Biblical Theology*, vol. I, Herder and Herder, New York 1970, p. 243: "Faith is […] the attitude which seeks to encounter [God] in all things and in all events, which alone in the last resort can make sense of everything and which shows a way out of present tribulation for a man whose life is based on the bible and who stands in the presence".

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might be described as *the* Christian word. More than any other religion, Christianity deserves to be called a faith". [10] Avery Dulles gives some statistics of the occurrences of faith and its cognates in the New Testament:

> "In the New Testament the word 'faith' (*pistis*) occurs 243 times; 'believe' (*pisteuo*) likewise 243 times, and 'faithful' (*pistos*) 67 times. By comparison, the noun 'hope' (*elpis*) occurs 53 times; the verb to hope' (*elpizo*) 31 times. 'Charity' (*agape*) is used as a noun 116 times and as a verb (*agapao*) 143 times. Thus in the triad of faith, hope, and charity, faith seems to outweigh hope and charity, not indeed in excellence (see 1 Cor 13,13) but in constitutive importance". [11]

Although a word count is not decisive, it is surely instructive about how radical and crucial in the attitude of faith in the Christian experience. Going beyond the statistics, do Christians conserve the strict association between trust and faith that we observe in the Old Testament?

In answering this question, we can't be more in disagreement with Martin Buber who opposes Jewish *emunah* and Christian *pistis*, stating that the first is an attitude of trust of rather collective nature, whereas the latter is more a form of dogmatic recognition of individualistic nature. *Emunah* would be the expression of the dynamic, concrete way of thinking of the Jews, while *pistis* would be the product of the abstract, static, analytical mentality of the Hellenistic mentality, adopted by the early Christian Church. [12]

Different biblical studies have manifested that this drastic opposition does not have a real textual foundation. [13] Although there is a rel-

[10] A. Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped for. A Theology of Christian Faith*, Oxford University Press, New York-Oxford 1994, p. 3.

[11] *Ibidem*.

[12] For Buber, "*emunah* is the state of 'persevering' – also to be called trust in the existential sense – of man in an invisible guidance which yet gives itself to be seen, in a hidden but self-revealing guidance; but the personal *emunah* of every individual remains embodied in that of the nation and draws its strength from the living memory of generations in the great leadings of early times" (M. Buber, *Two Types of Faith*, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., London 1951, pp. 170-171), whereas "Christian *Pistis* was born outside the historical experiences of nations, so to say in retirement from history, in the souls of individuals, to whom the challenge came to believe that a man crucified in Jerusalem was their saviour. Although this faith, in its very essence, was able to raise itself to a piety of utter devotedness and to a mysticism of union with him in whom they believed, and although it did so, yet it rests upon a foundation which, in spite of its 'irrationality', must be described as logical or noetic: the accepting and recognizing as true of a proposition pronounced about the object of faith" (*Ibid.*, p. 172).

[13] Critical stances regarding Buber's hypothesis have been expressed by Jewish thinkers such as Schmuel Hugo Bergmann and David Flusser, but also by numerous Christian

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ative difference of accents between the two Testaments, the New Testament is profoundly imbued by the same movement of trust in God as the First Covenant. This movement is built upon the confession and the acknowledgement of the love of God in the historical event of the Incarnation the Paschal Mystery (the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ), upon which the faithful founds his trust and faith. An example of this convergence can be found in Paul's epistle to the Romans where the apostle speaks of righteousness coming from faith:

> "[…] the righteousness that is by faith says: 'Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?" (that is, to bring Christ down) 'or 'Who will descend into the deep?" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? 'The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,' that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord', and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. As Scripture says, 'Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame'. For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved'" (Rom 10,6-13).

We see clearly how the cognitive dimension of faith that confesses that Jesus is Lord and that he was raised from the dead, but this dimension is inseparable from the fiducial dimension through which the believer calls on the name of the Lord and trusts in him. Even the Old Testament's trust was founded in a knowledge of God and his intervention that founds and justify trust in him. For, beyond the biblical point of view, it is worth considering that, from an anthropological and existential standpoint, faith-as-knowledge and faith-as-trust cannot be opposed. Rather, the two poles presuppose each other mutually. Man cannot reasonably trust what or whom he does not know. Such an act would be a pure act of fideism and not an act of faith. And, as argued before, an act of faith that is reduced to the intellectual affirmation of the existence of God, becomes an empty affirmation, a nominalistic *flatus vocis*. The history of theology has considered this converging distinction arguing about the inseparability between *fides quae creditur* (the objective content of faith) and *fides qua creditur (*the subjective act

theologians and exegetes among whom we mention Hans Urs von Balthasar, Franco Ardusso and Romano Penna.

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of faith). Thus, beyond the Buberian opposition, we are more oriented to a fruitful synthesis that is beautifully expressed by the Jewish thinker, Schmuel Hugo Bergmann, who asks rhetorically: "Isn't it possible that a '*pistis*' is imbued with the security of the '*emunah*', so that the conceptual distinction, while certainly justified, resolves itself into a superior synthesis?". [14]

Faith as existential synthesis: theological perspectives

The richness of biblical faith has had different seasons in the history of theology. Some, arid, have reduced it to one of its nuances resulting in fideism, rationalism or voluntarism, others, more fruitful, have been able to come up with a synthesis that has been able to maintain the challenging multifacetedness of biblical faith. Augustine's contribution is arguably among the most fruitful and fine expositions on the matter. In a dense expression that resumes the Augustinian intuition, we can observe three fundamental dimensions of faith: "*Credere illi [Deo] est credere vera esse quae loquitur; credere illum [Deum], credere quia ipse est Deus; credere in illum [in Deum], diligere illum*". [15] This definition – as Thomas Aquinas observes – offers the possibility of considering the object of faith from three perspectives. [16] We can read and understand these distinctions, along the lines of the theological virtues: faith, hope and agape:

Credere Deum (believing [in/that there is] God) considers God as the material object of the act of faith ("*Credere quia ipse est Deus*"). It expresses the content and makes explicit the cognitive aspect of faith, the so-called *fides quae*. [17] It is faith that recognizes the reality of God and his revelation. It views the reality of God with a more assertive and

[14] Cit. in Cl. Thoma, *Teologia cristiana dell'ebraismo*, Marietti, Genova 1983 (Radici, 3), p. 122.

[15] Longly believed to be Augustinian, recent studies have manifested that it is rather a composite synthesis which, even though summarizing faithfully Augustine's vision of faith, it has not been said or written by him as such. In this regard, see Th. Camelot, *Credere Deo, credere Deum, credere in Deum Pour l'histoire d'une formule traditionnelle*, in *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, vol. 30, 1941-42, pp. 149-155; J.B. Metz, *Credere Deum, Deo, in Deum – Credo*, in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, vol. III, Herder, Leipsig 1959, pp. 86-88.

[16] See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, (=*STh*) II-II q. 2 a. 2. (Source: www.corpusthomisticum.org).

[17] See S. Pié-Ninot, *La teologia fondamentale. "Rendere ragione della speranza" (1 Pt 3,15)*, Queriniana, Brescia 2002, p. 175.

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rational valence, and according to the letter of James, even demons have it. [18]

Credere Deo (trusting God's word) expresses the formal aspect of the act of faith, it represents the assent, the fiducial aspect, the reason why I believe. It is what in theology is called *fides qua creditur*, the believing faith, founded in the trust that emanates from the trustworthiness of God. It is the hope I lay down in the God in whom I have believed: "I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day" (2 Tim 1,12). While presupposing *credere Deum*, *credere Deo* is much more subtle in that it has to do with trust in the word of this God who exists; if the former says, "God is", the latter says, "God is trustworthy". It is believing that God is a witness and guarantor of the truthfulness of his word. In this aspect of the act of faith, there is an involvement that is not merely rational and volitional but also affective. It is the *cognitio affectiva* of God, which grows and is strengthened by what the Second Synod of Orange (529) calls *credulitatis affectus*. [19]

Credere in Deum (believing toward/into God), expressed with Johannine *pisteuein eis*, implies necessarily the passionate agape moving toward union with God and participation in the fullness of his Love. [20] It is a mystical, apophatic, and eschatological act of faith. *Credere in Deum* pertains to the finalism of the *desiderium naturale videndi Deum* and also to the Object of theological hope, the fulfillment of God's promise which the faithful has embraced by believing God (*credo Deo*). Here, too, the will enters as a desire that ecstatically seeks God's goodness and *Gestalt* of beauty (the balthasarian *aiesthesis*). Augustine states that *credere in Deum* is more than *credere Deo* because it means not only trusting God but concretely adhering with good works to God: "*credendo adhaerere ad bene cooperandum bona operanti Deo*". [21] *Credere in Deum* is "*credendo amare, credendo diligere, credendo in eum ire, et eius*

[18] See Jas 2,19: "Do you believe that there is only one God? You do well; even the demons believe it and tremble".

[19] See H. Denzinger, *Enchiridion Simbolorum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, P. Hünermann (ed.), EDB, Bologna 1995, n. 375ss.

[20] For a better understanding of Augustinian nuances, we refer to the brief but timely remarks in R. Piccolomini, *Desiderio di Dio e senso della vita. Agostino d'Ippona*, Città Nuova, Roma 2011, pp. 78-79.

[21] See Augustine, *Enarratio in Psalmum* 77, 8: *PL* 36, 988: "*Hoc est ergo credere in Deum, credendo adhaerere ad bene cooperandum bona operanti Deo*".

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membris incorporari".[22] It is faith that becomes adhesion and mystical union in the agape that is a uniting force.[23]

Thus, faith is an integral and integrating act that encompasses intellectual faith, existential trust/hope and concrete love. The tension of faith that goes further than the intellectual toward an interpersonal trust and a mystical dimension is beautifully synthesized by Henri de Lubac as follows:

> "Faith doesn't bring us a more beautiful theory than philosophers do: it raises us above theories. It makes us break the circle. It takes us beyond the limits of our own minds. Beyond all sublime views of God, it makes us reach God. It establishes us in Being. And this, which alone matters, she alone does".[24]

Regarding our theme, one last passage is worth mentioning. Some major currents of contemporary theology have dealt with the issue of faith by shifting the emphasis and focus from the act of faith (*atto di fede*) to the believing consciousness (*coscienza credente*)[25]. The experience of faith in the broad sense is prior to the reflexive and rational gesture of believing assent. To accept one's existence in a conscious, concrete, and free gesture is already an act of faith, which is why Bernhard Welte speaks of "faith founding existence" and of existence as an act of faith. According to him, there is "a fundamental and elementary form of belief that precedes all the explicit movements of our existence and makes them possible. It also makes all the concrete forms of religious faith possible".[26] Embracing one's existence is not just being content

[22] Augustine, *Tractatus in Ioannis Evangelium*, 29, 6: *PL* 35, 1631.

[23] See Pseudo-Deonysius the Areopagite, *De Divinis Nominibus*, 4, 12: *PG* 3, 709; *STh* I-II q. 26 a. 2 ad 2: "*unio pertinet ad amorem, inquantum per complacentiam appetitus amans se habet ad id quod amat, sicut ad seipsum, vel ad aliquid sui*".

[24] H. de Lubac, *Paradoxes*, Cerf, Paris 1999 (Œuvres complètes, XXXI), p. 10.

[25] The bibliography is vast; we indicate only a few works that we consider fundamental and programmatic: P. Rousselot, *Les yeux de la foi*, in *Recherches de Sciences Religieuses*, 1910, I, pp. 241-259 and 444-475; B. Welte, *Che cosa è credere?*, Morcelliana, Brescia 1984; . H. Fries, *Fundamentaltheologie*, Styria, Graz 1985; Queriniana, Brescia 198; P. Sequeri, *Il Dio affidabile. Saggio di teologia fondamentale*, Queriniana, Brescia 2013[5]; Id., *L'idea della fede. Trattato di teologia fondamentale*, Glossa, Roma 2002; R. Maiolini, *Tra fiducia esistenziale e fede in Dio. L'originaria struttura affettivo-simbolica della coscienza credente*, Glossa, Roma 2004; G. Angelini, *La fede. Una forma perla vita*, Glossa, Milano 2014; M. Hodzic, *La genesi della fede. La formazione della coscienza credente fra essere riconosciuto ed essere riconoscente*, Gregoriana University Press, Roma 2009; G. Tanzella-Nitti, *Teologia della rivelazione. Fede, Tradizione, Religioni*, vol. IV, Città Nuova, Roma 2022.

[26] B. Welte, *Che cosa è credere?*, *cit.*, p. 29.

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and reconciled with one's *Sein-im-Welt*, it is opening oneself to a prospect of future existence and realization, it is a gesture of existential trust – *basic trust* – that is colored with hope and a healthy love to oneself and to life/existence in general. We can notice how the triad of the theological virtues is already present here *in nuce*, exactly as developed in the Augustinian and Thomistic synthesis previously explored.

The rich intuition that these different contemporary theological perspectives have in common consists in understanding that the exploration of faith from the angle of original and originating trust can reknit the broken thread between anthropology and Christian faith, showing that human existence in itself is under the sign of faith, to the extent that we can affirm with Carlo Scilironi: "Impossible is not faith, but the total elimination of faith".[27] With this provocative expression, Scilironi attracts the attention to how faith underlays our most basic experiences. In this sense, a recent work by Giuseppe Tanzella-Nitti's constitutes a valuable contribution on at least two levels: not only does he summarize the most salient theological contributions on the crossroads between faith as anthropological and theological experience, but he also offers a stimulating overview of the importance of faith in different areas of knowledge such as philosophy of language, epistemology, sociology, psychology, and – his personal domain of expertise – science.[28] All these converging lines manifest how religious faith is not a bizarre exception in human experience, but that the anthropological structure contemplates a crucial and undeniable element of *basic trust*. Surely, trust and mistrust coexist in human experience, for basic trust does not mean being naïve. But, the same anthropological experience shows time and again that "certainty precedes doubt, and trusting precedes judging whether or not to grant trust"[29] and that "the ability to trust, to believe and to welcome the testimony of the other is a condition of mature personality development. A well-balanced psychic life cannot be based on skepticism and systematic doubt".[30]

[27] C. Scilironi, *Possibilità e fondamento della fede*, Messaggero, Padova 1988, p. 150
[28] G. Tanzella-Nitt, *Teologia della rivelazione*, *cit.*, pp. 31ff.
[29] *Ibid.*, p. 37.
[30] *Ibid.*, p. 38.

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Hans Urs von Balthasar: The mother's smile

The possibility to use analogies when it comes to faith in the thought of Hans Urs von Balthasar is deeply rooted in the acceptance of the *analogia entis*, strongly defended by his mentor, Erich Przywara.[31] The Swiss theologian defines and defends the analogy of being especially in his monography on Karl Barth.[32] Through the principle of *analogia entis*, Balthasar sees that there is a possible correspondence between the reality of God and that of creation. In the footsteps of Augustine, he recognizes the sacramental character of creation.

> "By examining the truth of the world according to several registers, Balthasar shows that it is steeped in clues which are specific to it but which, simultaneously, manifest God and his truth. These indices qualify the fitness of the truth of the world as to the truth of God. In other words, the truth of the world includes, in what characterizes it, the proof of its ordination to the truth of God, the pledge of the mutual envelopment of reason and faith, and the attestation of the openness of philosophy to theology".[33]

With the principle of *analogia entis*, Balthasar simply affirms the principles that we can find in the Old and the New Testament, especially and explicitly in the book of Wisdom – "For from the greatness and the beauty of created things their original author, by analogy, is seen" (13,5) – and in Paul's letter to the Romans: "For what can be known about God is evident to them, because God made it evident to them. Ever since the creation of the world, his invisible attributes of eternal power and divinity have been able to be understood and perceived in what he has made" (1,19-20). Given that the order of grace does not deny the order of nature, but rather manifests itself through it – *gratia supponit naturam et perficit eam* –, Balthasar looks at the human experience of maternity as a symbolic milieu for the manifestation of what he considers to be the first spiritual act of the human person. By looking at this basic human experience, Balthasar discerns a creaturely foundation for the perception of God.

[31] See E. Przywara, *Analogia entis. Metaphysik*. Vol. I. *Prinzip*, Verlag J. Kösel und F. Pustet, München 1932.

[32] See H.U. von Balthasar, *Karl Barth. Darstellung und Deutung seiner Theologie*, Johannes Verlag, Einsideln/Freiburg 1951.

[33] A.-M. Ponnou Delaffon, *Hans Urs von Balthasar. Vérité du monde et Vérité de Dieu*, in H.-J. Gagey-V. Holzer (eds.), *Balthasar, Rahner. Deux pensées en contraste*, Bayard, Paris 2005, p. 165.

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The analogy that interests our argument is that of a child's smile in answer to the recognition of his mother. We will follow Balthasar in the description of this "first personal act" which constitutes a paradigmatic passage "from the human 'Thou' to the divine 'Thou'". Balthasar observes that a little child "awakens to self-consciousness through being addressed by the love of his mother". This act is simple and undivided in its fullness, and it is necessary to recognize that only *in abstracto* we can divide into various phases in order to analyze it.

> "The interpretation of the mother's smiling and of her whole gift of self is the answer, awakened by her, of love to love, when the 'I' is addressed by the 'Thou'; and precisely because it is understood in the very origin that the 'Thou' of the mother is not the 'I' of the child, but both centers move in the same ellipse of love, and because it is understood likewise in the very origin that this love is the highest good and is absolutely sufficient and that, a priori, nothing higher can be awaited beyond this, so that the fullness of reality is in principle enclosed in this 'I'-'Thou'". [34]

In the child's experience, love as a response is awakened by the love received. The 'I' becomes aware of itself thanks to the 'Thou'. This element is so dear to Balthasar and he stresses it time and again. In the *Theo-dramatic* he describes this process as follows:

> "[...] each free, human self-awareness enters the dance at a particular time. But it cannot enter by its own volition: it cannot waken itself to free self-awareness (otherwise it would have eternally to precede itself); it can only be wakened to free self-awareness by some other free self-awareness: for example, the child by its mother. [...] In the *cogito/sum*, we experience the identity of being-for-me and being-in-itself, but it is an awakened, gift-identity, which has to respond in gratitude to an absolute identity of spirit and being. Second, we experience the call to shared humanity: free self-awareness experiences itself as an 'I' only when it knows that it is addressed and treated as a 'thou' – through word, gesture, smile, protection, and so forth – that is, when it realizes that it is admitted into the appropriate community". [35]

Beyond this inchoative self-conscience, this first exodus of the 'I' is the first step "into the open world that offers it space, it experiences

[34] H.U. von Balthasar, *Movement toward God*, in Id., *Creator Spirit. Explorations in Theology*, vol. III, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1993, p. 15.

[35] H.U. von Balthasar, *Theo-drama. Theological Dramatic Theory*, vol. II, *The Dramatis Personae: Man in God*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1990, p. 391.

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its freedom, its knowledge, its being as spirit".[36] In a non-verbal and non-thematic manner, the child is conscious that it is not the source that has produced the mother's smile and this latter is received as "an incomprehensible miracle". Balthasar writes: "it is not thanks to the gracious favor of the 'I' that space and world exist, but thanks to the gracious favor of the 'Thou'". In other words, the child experiences in this basic human experience something that is a grace, an original and unmerited favor,

> "something for which, a priori, the 'I' will never find the sufficient reason in himself. For if the 'I' could discover this reason, then the 'Thou' would not have addressed any summons at all, and all would be a dwelling of the 'I' in itself, the ellipse would be a circle, the world and love and knowledge would collapse in an instant, being would be illusion, the contents giving fulfillment would be empty law, love would be at best an instinct, knowledge a mere function".[37]

This primary experience which summons the 'I', is freely given and freely calls to giving an answer. "The 'I' is affected in the core of its being and can reply only with its totality, its center, its fullness". The totality of the child is implied in love and its totality is implied in the answer for "the summons by the mother is not addressed to something in the child but to the child itself beyond the sum of its qualities (which it can share with other children), precisely in reality the 'I' of the child".[38] Love personalizes and calls to the personal act of love in answer to love. The person does an act of "*reflexio complete*", taking possession of itself in the act of transcending itself.

Balthasar argues that a subsequent process is necessary to differentiate this love and to introduce it as a love towards the Ultimate Giver, God. But he rightly specifies that this passage does not happen through tying

[36] H.U. von Balthasar, *Movement toward God*, *cit.*, p. 16. See also Id., *Theo-drama. Theological Dramatic Theory*, vol. IV, *The Action*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1994, p. 102: "In the awakening of the individual self-consciousness, the "thou" is earlier than the "I", for the "I" is a response to the preceding call of the "thou"; the "thou" (for example, the mother vis-à-vis the child) produces in the "I" the fundamental ability to go beyond the realm of the "I-thou" and be a responsible part of a "we". Thus both the "I" and the "community of persons"17 share a "common source". It follows (though it is not easy to hold it in focus) that such a source is common to both the (existential) philosophy that speaks of the lonely "existence leading to death" and the (social) philosophy that assumes a common existence in a physico-spiritual time continuum".

[37] H.U. von Balthasar, *Movement toward God*, *cit.*, p. 16.

[38] *Ibidem*.

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down or demythologizing the parents' love. Rather, the love of God can be perceived and explained as the foundation that bears the love of parents and children. The intuition of Balthasar is similar to what Pope Francis affirms in *Amors laetitia*: "The love of parents is the means by which God our Father shows his own love. He awaits the birth of each child, accepts that child unconditionally, and welcomes him or her freely". [39]

Going beyond the risk of idealizing this mother-child relationship and even beyond the existing risks of symbiotic vicious circle (see Lacan), the symbolic intuition of Balthasar is very eloquent, and it manifests that the primary gesture of basic trust is not simply an instinctive act. It is the inchoative act of a self-conscience that frees the infant from itself through the aperture in response to the initiative of the 'thou'. And, by doing so, it symbolically and archetypically opens to others and to the 'Other'. [40]

John Henry Newman: faith and the fault of the heart

Always alert to the situation of people and culture around him, John Henry Newman devoted many efforts to understanding and explaining how man comes to faith. He is arguably the greatest personalist since Augustine according to Erich Przywara who considers him as an "*Augustinus redivivus* of modern times". [41]

Newman has a clear intuition of the relationship between faith and trust because he insists throughout his writings "on the ordinariness of *how* we believe and on the extraordinariness of *what* we believe". [42] He

[39] Francis, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation* Amoris laetitia, Vatican City, 19 March 2016, n. 170. (Source: www.vatican.va). See also n. 11: "The couple that loves and begets life is a true, living icon – not an idol like those of stone or gold prohibited by the Decalogue – capable of revealing God the Creator and Saviour. For this reason, fruitful love becomes a symbol of God's inner life".

[40] In this regard, it is useful to keep in mind the interesting psychological studies on infancy of Erich Erikson, which remain an important milestone: E. H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, W.W. Norton & Co., New York 1950.

[41] E. Przywara, *St. Augustine and the Modern World*, in M.C. Darcy-M. Blondel-E. Gilson et al., *St. Augustine. His Age, Life and Thought*, Meridian Books, New York 1957, p. 286. A similar appreciation is proposed by the French philosopher Jean Guitton (see J. Guitton, *Il Cristo della mia vita. Un testamento intellettuale e spirituale. Dialoghi con J. Doré*, Edizioni Paoline, Cinisello Balsamo 1988, pp. 169-170).

[42] M.P. Gallagher, *Maps of Faith. Ten Religious Explorers from Newman to Joseph Ratzinger*, Paulist Press, New York 2010, p. 9. See also G. Cristaldi, *John Henry Newman e il dinamismo della fede*, in M. Marcocchi (ed.), *John Henry Newman*, Vita e pensiero, Milano 1991, pp. 9-10.

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was deeply convinced that "we are acting on trust every hour of our life. When faith is said to be a religious principle, it is [...] the things believed, not the act if believing them, which is peculiar to religion".[43]

As he reflected on the process of believing, Newman distanced himself from the evidentialist and rationalist approaches of his fellows at Oxford and he insisted more on the psychological, intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions that open or close the door to faith. He wasn't very enthusiastic about "proofs" and "demonstrations" of the existence of God, reckoning that the soul cannot be swayed to commit its life by an argument, no matter how strong it can be. Adequate arguments should be integral, implicating the different dimensions of the human existence because, "after all, man is not a reasoning animal; he is a seeing, feeling, contemplating, acting animal"[44].

Newman was rather critical about the usurpations of reason in matters of faith.[45] When it comes to the sensitive and intimate religious subjects, our attitude and our aperture is highly determined by what he calls "previous habits". "We survey moral and religious subjects through the glass of previous habits; and scarcely two persons use a glass of the same magnifying power".[46] That is why the same argument or event can touch someone and leave someone else stone cold. Many are the reasons that Newman exposes as hindering religious faith. Michael Paul Gallagher highlights the following: "A typical source of refusal to believe in God lies in excessive self-trust [we must read 'self-sufficiency'], in a cold and proud rejection of any dependence and in an avoidance of one's own conscience".[47] As a young Anglican preacher, he developed a theory about "antecedent probabilities" that heavily influence our sympathy or antipathy in matters of trust and faith. This intuition draws the attention not to the explicit expression of faith or disbelief, but to what lies under them and motivates them. It is the pre-conceptual area of our intelligence, our internal pre-verbal attitudes. It is in this area that Newman locates the probability or the improbability of religious belief. We can't access religious faith through

[43] J.H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. I, Longmans, London 1907, p. 191.

[44] J.H. Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, Longmans, London 1903, p. 94.

[45] See. J.H. Newman, *Sermon 4. Usurpations of reason*, in Id., *Fifteen Sermons Preached before the University of Oxford*, Longmans, Oxford 1909, pp. 54-74.

[46] *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman* (=*LD*), vol. I, I. Ker-T. Gornall (eds.), Oxford University Press, Oxford 1978, p. 226.

[47] M.P. Gallagher, *Maps of Faith*, *cit.*, p. 10.

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mere reasons, which Newman calls "paper logic".[48] "Without a due preparation of heart, we cannot hope to obtain and keep the all-important gift of faith".[49] To state it differently, we don't access faith by simply thinking about its truth and logic, for there is a deeper dimension of aperture or refusal that is antecedent to this logical and syllogistic sphere. Openness to faith entails "moral character". The moral attitude determines one's readiness to accept the credibility of faith. Decision for faith depends on "existential interiority".[50] It is, as Newman argues in his eleventh university sermon, not evidential but rather personal in character.[51]

A very concrete example that elucidates Newman's vision and that has certainly influenced the development of his theory about intimate connection between theological faith and anthropological trust, is the experience of his youngest brother Charles Robert. This latter, severely shaken by the economic vicissitudes suffered by the family after the bankruptcy of the father, John Newman, quarreled with his relatives and abandoned Christianity. This occurred during correspondence with his older brother John Henry covering an intermittent period between 1823 and 1830. On March 3, 1825, John Henry writes to his brother: "You are not in a state of mind to listen to argument of any kind. I have long observed and with painful feelings, the effects which trial, disappointment and continual mortifications have had upon you".[52] Newman sustains that the trauma Charles Robert suffered had disturbed his imagination and clouded his openness to God.

John Henry tried to distinguish between two dimensions: the first, that of internal evidence, based crucially on the moral feeling decisive for openness to faith; the second, the dimension on which Charles was trying to build discourse, that of external evidence based on pure logical principles.[53] The person who is in a state of aversion caused by moral feeling, not only rejects intrinsic evidence, but is unable to see and hear

[48] J.H. Newman, *Apologia pro Vita sua. Being a History of his Religious Opinions*, Longmans, London 1908, p. 169.

[49] J.H. Newman, *Sermons preached on various occasions*, Longmans, London 1908, p. 61. See also J.H. Newman, *Sermon 10. Faith and Reason, contrasted as Habits of Mind*, in in Id., *Fifteen Sermons*, *cit.*, pp. 176-201.

[50] M.P. Gallagher, *Maps of Faith*, *cit.*, p. 13.

[51] See J.H. Newman, *Sermon 11. The Nature of Faith in Relation to Reason*, in Id., *Fifteen Sermons*, *cit.*, pp. 202-221.

[52] *LD* I, p. 212.

[53] See *LD* I, p. 214: "The internal evidence depends a great deal on moral feeling; so that if we did not agree, we might accuse each other of prejudice or pride: the external is founded on purely logical principles".

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extrinsic arguments.[54] More concisely and incisively, Newman seeks to explain to his brother that rejection of faith arises from "from a fault of the heart, not of the intellect".[55] In this situation, it would be absurd and childish to dispute external rational evidence when in truth it is the heart that is at fault.[56] Antipathy toward faith subsists in a dimension that is beyond the reach of arguments and resides in previous habits that set the person's views and pre-logic and athematic convictions.[57]

After years of sterile discussions, Newman matured the difficult choice to break off disputes on religious matters with his brother in a letter dated May 25, 1830. The reasons Newman brings forward are indicative of the maturation of his ideas regarding predispositions and antecedent presumptions. When these predispositions are lacking, it becomes difficult and fruitless to debate religious issues since they are already precluded by a pre-critical bias. He justifies the choice to make this rupture as follows: "My reason is, that I am indisposed again to expend time in stating to you arguments in behalf of religion, when I have already had experience of your being silenced without being satisfied".[58]

Correspondence with Charles, however "truly lamentable",[59] was an enduring richness and stimulus in Newman's thought and further helped to confirm his vision and refine his sensibility. We can trace in these letters the formation of a number of familiar and recurring lines in Newman's thought, which will play an instrumental role in deciding Newman's affiliations and distances on the eve of his famous *Oxford University Sermons*, and in justifying some of his accents, decades later, in his work of maturity, the *Grammar of Assent*.[60]

[54] See *LD* I, p. 215.

[55] See *LD* I, p. 219: "I wish it to be distinctly understood that I consider the rejection of Christianity to arise from a fault of the heart not of the intellect; that unbelief arises, not from mere error of reasoning, but either from pride or from sensuality […]. A dislike of the contents of Scripture is at the bottom of unbelief".

[56] *LD* I, p. 240: "you indeed yourself acknowledged the other day that an aversion to the contents of Scripture is the grand objection in your mind to revelation. Il will then be but child's play to be arguing about external evidences, while at the time you have this hidden and insuperable obstacle in your mind".

[57] See *LD* I, p. 219: "For there is at the bottom that secret antipathy for the doctrines of Christianity, which is quite out of reach of argument".

[58] *LD* II, p. 224.

[59] *LD* I, p. 252.

[60] See G.R. Evans, *Newman's Letters to Charles*, in *The Downside Review*, 4, 1982, pp. 92-100; E.J. Enright, *The Letters to Charles Newman as Background to the Grammar*, in G. Magill (ed.), *Personality and Belief. Interdisciplinary Essay on John Henry Newman*, University of America Press, Lanham 1994, p. 168.

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This exploration of Newman's thought and experience confirms the deep connection between religious faith and existential and anthropological trust. The reasons for atheism and belief are not merely argumentative and deductive, there are "reasons" that go beyond the intellectual and arguments that are not merely syllogistic and that stem from the complexity of the human experiences of trust and mistrust.

Conclusion: an ouverture

Trust as an existential gesture arises in the interval in which human consciousness moves from knowing that it exists as fact to the grateful recognition of being as gift. There is an anthropological background to faith/trust that some strands of theology are recovering, thus identifying a fruitful interweaving and promising crossroads between ordinary human experience and the theological experience of *aman*. Our exploration, especially of the contributions of Balthasar and Newman, has aspired to prove that "faith, as it presents itself at the level of human relationships, can be seen as a preparation for accepting the theological faith. [...] between human faith and theological faith, there is a unity of analogy (*unité d'analogie*)". [61] We have tried to highlight the connection between religious faith and human trust which allows us to conclude with Franco Ardusso that, in a certain sense, "Christian faith is a historical determination of the original faith". [62] The awareness that religious faith, even though its theological source is divine grace, is not independent from the anthropological dimensions, opens various pathways for reflection, both within theology and in branches of sciences interested in the study of religious phenomenon.

Nevertheless, and as a "closing *ouverture*", it is worth specifying that this consideration of the convergences must not lose sight of the distinctions and the differences. Even though religious faith is anthropologically rooted in human trust, it cannot be reduced to it. Firstly, because faith is also and at the same time a theological virtue, a gift from God. Moreover, the contents of Christian faith are not elements that a human person deduces from its ordinary immanent experience.

[61] G. Cottier, *Qu'est devenue la scientificité de la théologie?*, in F. Bousquet-Ph. Capelle (eds.), *Dieu et la raison. L'intelligence de la foi parmi les rationalités contemporaines*, Bayard, Paris 2005, p. 199.

[62] F. Ardusso, *Imparare a credere. Le ragioni della fede cristiana*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 2005, p. 28.

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"Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Rom 10,17), from an encounter with the otherness of the historical initiative of God.

Finally, as Blaise Pascal has brightly expressed it, religious faith needs practice and rituality, it is – to use a Kierkegaardian expression – "a leap of faith", a conjunction between action and sentiment, exteriority and interiority: "The external must be joined to the internal to obtain anything from God, that is to say, we must kneel, pray with the lips, etc., […]. To expect help from these externals is superstition; to refuse to join them to the internal is pride".[63] Faith is more than a sentiment, it is an action and there is a hermeneutic circle between the act of faith and faith in action.

[63] B. Pascal, *Pensées*, n. 250.

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Rebuilding Trust

The Texture of Values and Images in Iris Murdoch

Silvia Conti

In this contribution, I aim to analyze the role that trust plays in the philosophical and moral reflection of Iris Murdoch (1919-1999), a singular thinker and novelist of the 20th century. Although the term "trust" is sparsely used in Murdoch's philosophical writings, I argue that this topic is nevertheless central and predominant in her ethical reflection. According to Murdoch, multiple human dimensions, such as art, literature, and religion, enable the experience of shared values that could enhance mutual trust and thus social bonds. To capture the aspects that implicitly characterise trust in Murdoch, I intend to propose a critical path divided into two phases: a first stage of historical-critical analysis, aimed at identifying the causes that, according to Murdoch, have led to the current erosion of social bonds and, consequently, of trust itself; a second, more substantial and proactive phase, to clarify the strategies that Murdoch adopts for rehabilitating bonds of trust.

Although Murdoch's philosophical production did not enjoy an immediate success, unlike her literary works, one of her best-known speculative contributions concerns the vehement criticism directed towards two apparently distant currents of thought, logical positivism, and existentialism. According to Murdoch, both philosophies promote a liberal conception of morality and the individual: this accusation is intriguing since these two doctrines were among the most widespread in the philosophical landscape of the mid-20th century and appeared strongly incompatible – as if they prefigured the clear and often stereotyped division between analytic and continental philosophy. Murdoch contends that both philosophies, despite their differences, come to emphasize an epic and invulnerable image of the individual, depicted in terms of traits

of completeness, incorruptibility, and rationality. Therefore, it is not surprising that Murdoch considers the philosophy of her time dominated by an unrealistic conception of the individual [1]: there is no reference to conditions of illness, dependence, and indigence, as if human beings could forbear their constitutive dimensions of vulnerability and relationality.

The name under which Murdoch places the two doctrines is "voluntarism": both logical positivism and existentialism stress individual choice and consider subjective will as the sole factor from which one's identity and morality depend. Both philosophies see the subjective will as the centre from which all values and meanings emanate. [2] Values and meanings are no longer found in reality; instead they become projections of the individual will. This aspect is crucial: it is important to underline that if values no longer reside in the world, but are voluntarily determined, then everything is potentially valuable, and there is no longer a clear distinction between what is valuable and what is not. If everything can have value, nothing has truly inherent value. According to Murdoch, our era is precisely marked by a crisis of value: we are witnessing the emergence of a generalized anti-metaphysical tendency, a cultural climate in which even the traditional unifying images of the past, such as transcendence, no longer hold meaning. Indeed, according to the author:

> "Twentieth-century man [...] finds his religious and metaphysical background so impoverished that he is in some danger of being left with nothing of inherent value except will-power itself. It is true that now increasingly technological divertissements are available to make sheep once more of those who have emerged from the industrial cave. But these are superficial remedies. The deep confidence has gone". [3]

[1] I. Murdoch, *Against Dryness*, in Id., *Existentialists and Mystics. Writings on Philosophy and Literature* (*EM*), ed. by P.J. Conradi, Penguin, New York 1999, pp. 288-289: "So we have the modern man, as he appears in many recent works on ethics and I believe also to a large extent in the popular consciousness. [...] He is rational and totally free except in so far as, in the most ordinary law-court and commonsensical sense, his degree of self-awareness may vary. He is, morally speaking, monarch of all he surveys and totally responsible for his actions. Nothing transcends him. His moral language is a practical pointer, the instrument of his choices, the indication of his preferences. His inner life is resolved into his acts and choices, and his beliefs, which are also acts, since a belief can only be identified through its expression. His moral arguments are references to empirical facts backed up by decisions. The only moral word which he requires is 'good' (or 'right'), the word which expresses decision. His rationality expresses itself in awareness of the facts, whether about the world or about himself. The virtue which is fundamental to him is sincerity".

[2] *Ibid*., p. 290: "We no longer see man against a background of values, of realities, which transcend him. We picture man as a brave naked will surrounded by an easily comprehended empirical world".

[3] I. Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics*, in Id., *EM*, cit., pp. 224-225.

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According to Murdoch, it is precisely the myth of the subjective will that leads to an imaginative and conceptual depletion: this is the result of the loss of a shared fabric of values which undermines social bonds, and ultimately trust. The idol that "where there is a will, there is a way" is undeniably fascinating and pervasive: it deludes us into thinking we are fully in control of our destinies. However, it leads to progressive individualistic isolation, which gives rise to severe forms of solipsism, fosters individual selfishness, and weakens social ties.

Murdoch seems to diagnose a crisis of trust largely determined by the privatization of value: values are not discovered and found objectively in reality but arbitrarily affixed to it as "moving labels". Values are no longer experienced for themselves but projected onto something that has a market value, something to be acquired and consumed. It is interesting to notice how a similar diagnosis can be found in contemporary authors, distant from Murdoch's speculative and cultural horizon, such as Jean-Luc Marion and Byung-Chul Han. The former, mainly known for his phenomenological perspective on the Given, in a recent study on the theme of trust,[4] emphasized the anthropological paradigm shift, located around Marx's thought, which conceives human beings as producers and consumers of objects. Within this paradigm, it is the object that holds value: value is no longer a *thing-in-itself*, but an alienated thing, projected onto the object to be possessed, consumed, and traded in a mercantile perspective. Similar considerations can be found in Han, known for defining our society as "the burnout society", a society dominated by feelings of inadequacy, uselessness, and even depression due to the impossibility of satisfying the criteria of efficiency and hyperproductivity dictated by neoliberal marketing. In a recent book titled *Non-things: Upheaval in the Lifeworld* Han appears to take Murdoch's and Marion's considerations on the reification of value to the extreme. According to Han, we are no longer even producers and consumers of objects: neoliberal capitalism now applies to a new non-objectual domain, that of information.[5] What we want to possess and consume is information; however, information cannot be owned: it identifies a flow of data in perpetual oscillation. We are overwhelmed by an enormous amounts of data, often biased, which escape our control and obscure authentic encounters with reality. The very foundations of trust and social bonds are lost in the solipsistic and capitalist flow of information.

[4] J.-L. Marion, *Crisi, nichilismo e fiducia – Crise, le nihilisme et la confience*, in *Idee LUMSA*, 4, Studium, Roma 2023.

[5] B.-C. Han, *Non-things: Upheaval in the Lifeworld*, Trans. by D. Steuer, Polity, 2022.

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Now, I am aware that this analysis may appear cynical in many ways, perhaps overly pessimistic, but I believe it reflects truthful aspects of our existence: the inability to stop, the need always to appear busy and high-performing, feelings of inferiority towards those who are more productive and faster than us, and so-called *FOMO* (fear of missing out). However, I am persuaded that presenting our situation in a realistic manner can help break free from the vicious cycle of capitalizing on our lives. Only awareness allows us to seek innovative strategies to respond to our individual and social malaise, the crisis of trust that afflicts us.

One promising response to the current crisis of trust seems to be offered precisely by Murdoch: the author does not advocate a blind restoration of lost values or a thoughtless reinstatement of past forms of unity and authority. Such conservatism would contradict Murdoch's philosophical intentions. According to Murdoch, processes like secularization or the demystification of past dogmas have allowed for a healthy emancipation from often despotic and coercive authority. Mudoch takes an alternative path: to counteract the desolate sense of emptiness that pervades us and escape victimistic selfish attitudes, we must return to reality. Murdoch's moral perspective is strongly centered on a return to reality: it involves an ethics of vision that requires us to fix our gaze on reality and re-observe it contemplatively, paying *attention*[6] "towards the great surprising variety of the world"[7]. The call to reality is characterized by a language that echoes tones of practical and ordinary mysticism: we must not try to distance ourselves from the world and evade its ills, but rather to better understand and know reality itself, to learn how to love and treat it.

In Murdoch's ethics of vision, it is not difficult to detect a Platonic echo[8]: references to the author of the dialogues are constant in Murdoch's philosophical writings, revealing an anti-intellectual interpretation of him. Indeed, vision is for Murdoch both the starting point and the destination of a moral pilgrimage that leads from appearance to real-

[6] As regards the concept of attention, Murdoch was deeply inspired by the existential and mystical meditation of Simone Weil (1909-1943). According to Weil, *Waiting for God* (1950), trans. by E. Craufurd, ed. by L.A. Fiedler, Harper&Row, New York 1973, pp. 111-112: "Attention consists of suspending our thought, leaving it detached, empty, and ready to be penetrated by the object; it means holding in our minds, within reach of that though, but on a lower level and not in contact with, the diverse knowledge we have acquired, which we are forced to make use of. [...] Above all our thought should be empty, waiting, not seeking anything, but ready to receive in its naked truth the object that is to penetrate it".

[7] I. Murdoch, *On 'God' and 'Good'*, in *EM*, cit., p. 354.

[8] See S.M. Vaccarezza, *L'amore da emozione a virtù nel pensiero di Iris Murdoch e Simone Weil*, *Emozioni e virtù: percorsi e prospettive di un tema classico*, ed. by S. Langella e M.S. Vaccarezza, Orthotes, Napoli 2014, pp. 133-144.

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ity, from one's myopic perspective to a humble and loving contemplation of reality. Such a vision is fueled by the passionate impulse recognized in Platonic *eros*[9]: it does not resolve into a neutral and detached, intellectualistic contemplation, but rather entails the continuous involvement of the subject's moral psychology. The vision Murdoch speaks of reunites within itself a proper perception and knowledge of the real, from which virtuous action stems. It is a plural process that synergistically blends the perceptual, emotional, epistemic, and practical planes.

In order to restore healthy social bonds and relationships of trust, it is necessary to understand Murdoch's wish for an ethics of vision: vision allows us to penetrate reality, and to treat it properly as otherness, because it is oriented toward a single magnetic focus: the Good. According to Murdoch, the Good, like Plato's Sun, is the dimension toward which everyone tends, setting the condition of possibility for reality itself, as its transcendental: from the Good, individual goods gradually emanate. The Good, in addition to being a transcendental, is conceived by Murdoch as a transcendent dimension: the Good is not something we can possess or dominate, nor can we fully pursue it, as it surpasses us in its inexhaustibility (*epekeina tes ousias*). We move towards the Good, aware that our condition is intrinsically fallible: we embark on a path of perfectibility that is never concluded or finished, but always open and *in fieri*. Such a conception of the Good is intrinsically secularized. In Murdoch's perspective, the Good must be pursued for nothing; there is noconsolation provided by a promise of salvation, as is often the case in religious outlooks. The Good is perceived as a striving towards *altitudo*, which is both height and depth, [10] and is manifested in the ordinary concreteness of reality through goods.

Now, there are goods that allow the experience of the Good more than others and can thus be considered values in themselves. This is the case with images derived from aesthetic and religious experiences, as well as encounters with other people. These are all dimensions of inalienable value because they are etymologically absolute (from the Latin *ab-solutum*, meaning free from, independent, without conditions). Religions and art, however, have a special status: if the encounter with others is a direct experience of value, art and religions allow for an indirect experience of value to be enjoyed in aesthetic or religious contemplation. For this reason, according to Murdoch, art and religions

[9] Plato, *Phaedrus* 248e-252c.

[10] See R. Panattoni, *Altitudo. Perché l'essere umano desidera elevarsi?*, Il Melangolo, Genova 2019.

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fulfil an analogical function in morality: they are analogous to ethics as they provide a concrete and substantial representation of it, offering paradigmatic cases of virtue and virtuous actions in various situations.

> "Great art has also taught us that virtue can be portrayed independently of precise social background through some more general appeal to our knowledge of man and his frailty. Virtue standing out gratuitously, aimlessly, unplaced by religion and society, surprising us as it so often does in real life: the gentleness of Patroclus in the middle of a ruthless war, the truthfulness of Cordelia in a flattering court. The utter chanciness of human life and the fact of death make virtue always, really, perhaps, when the illusory backgrounds are removed, something gratuitous, something which belongs in the absolute foreground of our existence, along with self-evident goods such as eating enough and not being afraid. [...] Goodness is needful, one has to be good, for nothing, for immediate and obvious reasons, because somebody is hungry or somebody is crying". [11]

The images derived from great art and religions seem to offer the ground to renew social bonds and relationships of trust. Indeed, according to Murdoch, despite the significant changes affecting our era, we formulate the same moral judgments as three thousand years ago and have a similar and immediate understanding of the Good and virtue.

I would like to conclude with some clarifications. I am aware that Murdoch's ethics of vision has its limits: it is mainly focused on a first-person ethical approach, emphasizing the moral experience of the individual, his or her self-improvement and self-flourishing. Its impact may seem less pronounced compared to a third-person ethical perspective, which is more impersonal and universalistic. However, I believe that an ethics of vision, which insists on dispositions such as attention, humility, and kindness, can be much more demanding and impactful than it may appear. Applying an ethics of vision in everyday life requires a serious effort to decenter ourselves from our "fat and relentless ego" to genuinely see the other. Moreover, I do not exclude that an ethics of vision can also condition third-person ethical perspectives from below, directing them toward a "more loving" conception of justice. Perhaps promoting trust in our society must pass through the primary teaching that Plato bequeathed to philosophy: love.

[11] I. Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics*, in Id., *EM*, cit., p. 233.

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Not a Wager: the Real Presence as Poetic Trust

Christophe Herzog

> "This essay argues a wager on transcendence. It argues that there is in the art-act and its reception, that there is in the experience of meaningful form, a presumption of presence. [...] But my wager must be made more specific. I am wagering, both in a Cartesian and a Pascalian vein, on the informing pressure of a real presence in the semantic markers which generate Oedipus the King or Madame Bovary." [1]

George Steiner's use of the concept of real presence has often been described as a sort of Pascalian wager on transcendence. Steiner himself sometimes refers to it in these terms and we will argue that such a lexical choice can be misleading. Instead, the notion of trust might be a much more useful, efficient, and semantically relevant concept than the idea of a wager. Indeed, as such, Steiner's approach has been sharply criticized and seen as impulsive and arbitrary, nostalgic and ambivalent, sometimes even insignificant. A closer reading of key passages of *Real Presences* nevertheless should lead us to reconsider its meaningfulness through the notion of trust, which appears as the real object of Steiner's quest. As we will show, textual evidence allows and calls for displacing our focus from a wager – which, according to Martin Buber, can only situate us within the echo chamber of truth – to trust as implying responsibility and therefore a relationship to truth: "Der Mensch hat sich auf Verantwortung eingelassen, darauf also eine Person mit einem Verhältnis zu Wahrheit zu werden." [2] Furthermore, what is involved in the case of trust is a personal relationship, whereas the wager – even in Pascal's words – is either motivated by an objective

[1] G. Steiner, *Real Presences*, Faber&Faber, London, 1989, pp. 214-215.
[2] M. Buber, *Das dialogische Prinzip*, Lambert Schneider, Heidelberg, 1984, p. 252.

logic of gain and loss or depends on a decision taken by the subject. Now, as far as Pascal is concerned, the relational dimension is not completely absent: it is signified by the dialogical form in which Pascal has chosen to frame his argument. On the contrary, Steiner's depiction of trust as enacted responsibility implies a personal commitment which is not predetermined by some abstract form of transcendence but allows for the immanent manifestation of meaning within the responsive highly intersubjective and "moral" process of reading. In short: considered as a wager, Steiner's approach can appear rhetorically unpersuasive, yet once trust is taken as its primary concern, it reveals its ethical significance.

It is when commenting on Péguy's *Dialogue de l'âme païenne* in "Drumming on Doors" that Steiner explicitly connects trust to reading:

> "To 'read well' is to engage the immediacy of felt presence in a text at every level of encounter: spiritual, intellectual, phonetic, even 'carnal' (the text acts on nerve and sinew as does music). The issue is that of a true philology, of a 'love of the Logos' that calls on every instrument of understanding – lexical, prosodic, grammatical, semantic – but whose motor is a scruple, a bestowal of trust on the part of the reader when he apprehends (there is terror in understanding) the demands which any serious literature or art makes on him." [3]

Specifically referred to the action of reading, trust might be a much more useful and efficient concept than the idea of a wager. Trust indeed connotes an assumed and convinced, felt and open choice, whereas a wager results from an arbitrary one. As Marting Buber says: "Das Wagnis sichert uns die Wahrheit nicht; es führt uns nur in ihren Atemraum, und es allein." [4] A wager such as Steiner's does not introduce us into a trustful relationship to truth but situates us within its "echo chamber" or breathing space in a literal sense. It is responsibility which opens up the relation to truth: "Der Mensch hat sich auf Verantwortung eingelassen, darauf also eine Person mit einem Verhältnis zu Wahrheit zu werden." [5] As we will see, it is precisely through the notion of responsibility that we will be able to requalify Steiner's wager as a motion of trust.

Marc Ruggeri has published an article in which he discusses Steiner's wager in relation to Thomism. In it, apart from Saint Thomas, Rug-

[3] G. Steiner, "Drumming on Doors", *No Passion Spent. Essays 1978-1996*, Faber&Faber, London, 1996, pp. 372-373.

[4] Martin Buber, *op. cit.*, p. 248.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 252.

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geri points to another major influence in Steiner: that of Pascal. He consequently reformulates Steiner's wager in terms of trust and responsibility:

> "Car c'est bien le geste de Pascal que nous invite à refaire G. Steiner: nous agenouiller devant le texte et accomplir les rites de la lecture. [...] Faire *comme si*, c'est renouer avec les termes du contrat qui liait les hommes au langage et les mots aux choses, c'est restaurer entre eux une 'confiance', avec ce que le mot contient de responsabilité ontologique envers le sens, c'est poser un acte de foi et faire vivre un espoir." [6]

Yet, according to Ruggeri, Pascal's relevance in Steiner is mediated by that of Karl Barth, one of his unambiguously predilected theologians, whose notion of event inspires his epiphanic conception of reading:

> "Événement, c'est le grand mot de K. Barth. C'est aussi le plus approprié pour comprendre ce que G. Steiner entend par révélation du sens au coeur de la lecture. En rendant disponible la conscience du lecteur, le *comme si* pascalien libère en lui un espace désormais ouvert au déploiement du sens. En aucune façon cette disponibilité ne crée le sens, mais, par analogie avec la foi, elle en rend possible l'événement." [7]

So the wager does not produce meaning but implies the possibility of its happening as an event. This is the reason why trust cannot result from a wager; on the contrary: it is the existence of an underlying dimension of trust as personal responsibility which allows for the wager to become a fruitful act. A close reading of *Real Presences* sustains this argument.

Trust and responsibility: Steiner and Buber

Trust appears in a key passage of *Real Presences*. In chapter five of part II, entitled "The Broken Contract", Steiner underlines what he describes as commonplace: that our history is both the history of meaning and the meaning of history, since we are bound to the word as language-animals. Yet, according to him, it is impossible to conceive of such a vital significative link without an underlying trust:

[6] M. Ruggeri, "*Figura Christi*. Lecture et Eucharistie dans l'oeuvre de George Steiner", in *Steiner*", ed. by P.-E. Dauzat, L'Herne, Paris, 2003, p. 295.

[7] *Ibid.*

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> "Less often observed is the act, the tenor of trust which underlies, which literally underwrites the linguistic-discursive substance of our Western, Hebraic-Attic experience. Often unregarded, because so evidently resistant to formalization, is the core of trust within logic itself, where 'logic' is a Logos-derivative and construct. There would be no history as we know it, no religion, metaphysics, politics or aesthetics as we have lived them, without an initial act of trust, of confiding, more fundamental, more axiomatic by far than any 'social contract' or covenant with the postulate of the divine. This instauration of trust, this entrance of man into the city of man, is that between word and world. [...] to the present, the relationship between word and world, inner and outer, has been held 'in trust'. This is to say that it has been conceived of and existentially enacted as a relation of responsibility." [8]

Logic depends on initial trust and "logos" is here reinterpreted as a stage of confidence in language: as the union between word and world. According to Steiner, in this second chapter of *Real Presences*, such a bound or contract has been broken since the end of the 19th century. Words are understood to signify yet belief in their referential function is undermined. What is of high interest here is the link that Steiner makes between trust and responsibility. Yet the relation is not established on the grounds of the common acceptance of 'responsibility' as legal liability, but on the etymological meaning of the term:

> "As noted before, this noun houses a primary notion of 'response', of answerability. To be responsible in respect of the primary motion of semantic trust is, in the full sense, to accept the obligation of response though, as I shall emphasize, in an almost paradoxical freedom. It is to answer to and to answer for. Responsible response, answering answerability make of the process of understanding a moral act. This is the source and intent of what I am trying to say." [9]

Steiner underlines the relation between trust and responsibility in a way that echoes Martin Buber, for whom responsibility and truth are almost synonyms. Indeed, in "Die Frage an den Einzelnen", in which he discusses the individualistic impasse to which Kierkegaard's and Stirner's thought leads, Buber describes responsibility in the following way:

[8] G. Steiner, *Real Presences*, cit., p. 89.
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 90.

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> "Verantwortung setzt einen primär, d. h. aus einem nicht von mir abhängigen Bereich mich Ansprechenden voraus, dem ich Rede zu stehen habe. Er spricht mich um etwas an, das er mir anvertraut hat und das mir zu betreuen obliegt. Er spricht mich von seinem Vertrauen aus an, und ich antworte in meiner Treue oder versage die Antwort in meiner Untreue, oder aber ich war der Untreue verfallen und entringe mich ihr durch die Treue der Antwort. Dieses: einem Vertrauenden über ein Anvertrautes so Rede stehen, dass Treue und Untreue zutage tritt, beide aber nicht gleichen Rechtes, da eben jetzt die wiedergeborene Treue die Untreue überwinden darf, —dies ist die Wirklichkeit der Verantwortung." [10]

This is one of the rare occurrences of the word *trust* in *The Dialogical Principle*. Responding to Kierkegaard and Stirner, Buber develops a vision of trust according to his own personalist philosophy and coherent with the dialogical imperative which he identifies as the pillar of humanity. Lexically, his concept undergoes an enriching process: trust is here related with an act of entrusting (anvertrauen), of taking care (betreuen) thus implying a lasting relationship of faithfulness. What is thereby implied is subsistence and memory, as we will see through other examples. Not only: the act of entrusting means irreversibility and freedom. It is positive and performative, yet entails the possibility of its negation or disregard (mistrust), the latter being necessarily secondary. The reality of responsibility is that faithfulness can always overcome its opposite. The first motion of trust can always be reactivated through an act of trust. What can be deconstructed is the object that has been entrusted, but not the initial motion of trust.

We will now see how this dynamics of trust is at work both in a literary and a religious example. Thus doing we will be led to identify a poetics of trust in act within them. This will also throw a different light on the complex and paradoxical use of the concept of real presence by George Steiner.

A famous example which ties responsibility and trust comes from Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince*. In Saint Exupéry's work, the narrative unfolds as an encapsulation of encounters, some of them limited to the shortest form of dialogue: "–Hello. –Goodbye." Yet all the dialogues are enactments of a relation of responsibility as Steiner describes trust. They are all trials of trust. Among them, the two that eventually manage to establish a relationship of trust are the famous encounter with the fox, and the initial one between the narrator and the protag-

[10] Martin Buber, "Die Frage an den Einzelnen", *Das dialogische Prinzip*, cit., p. 206.

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onist. In the former, after having explained and enacted what taming means ('creating links'), the fox tells the little Prince:

> " '-It's the time you lost for your rose that makes your rose so important.'
> 'That's the time I lost for my rose,' said the little prince, 'to remember. You become responsible forever for what you have tamed. You are responsible for your rose ...' [11]

Trust and taming appear as nearly synonyms in *The Little Prince*, where they mean "creating links" or "becoming friends." Taming could thus also describe the relationship between the narrator and the Little Prince. While narrating their becoming friends, Saint-Exupéry's masterpiece enacts a poetic of trust through which its protagonist becomes a real presence to the narrator. Yet it is not an immediate one, but a metaphorically symbolized one:

> "I lived alone, without anyone with whom to speak truly, until a breakdown in the Sahara desert six years ago. [...]
> So you imagine my surprise, at dawn, when a funny little voice woke me up. She said:
> -Please draw me a sheep!
> -Hein!
> -Draw me a sheep... [...] So I drew. [...] I thus still refine my drawing: But it was refused, like the preceding ones [...]. So, for lack of patience, as I was eager to start dismantling my engine, I scribbled this drawing. Then I DREW: That's the cashier. The sheep you want is inside. But I was very surprised to see the face of my young judge light up: - That's exactly how I wanted it! Do you think that this sheep needs a lot of grass? […] -Surely that will suffice. I gave you a little sheep. He leaned his head toward the drawing: -Not so small that ... Here! He fell asleep... And so I met the little prince." [12]

Although the protagonist starts with a polite "please" he uses the imperative and thus bids the narrator to act: not to respond verbally but to *do* something, namely to draw a sheep. After some realistic attempts which are all declined by the little Prince, oscillating between perplexity and good will (Treue or Untreue, Buber would say), finally they agree on an invisible sheep to take care of (betreuen). The sheep – which rhetorically results from a complex mixture of metonymy, metaphor

[11] A. de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*, Prabhat Prakashan, New Delhi, 2015, p. 66.
[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 6-10.

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and symbol – becomes a real presence to them at the same time as they both become real presences to each other. In a literary transfiguration of the episode of the Transfiguration, the little prince's face (*visage* in the French, which takes on deep ethical connotations) becomes illuminated and for the first time, the narrator calls him "the little Prince" (before he was a voice, an apparition, a young judge, a little man...). "Thus I met the little Prince": an irreversible event has taken place: an encounter. Knowledge of a person is depicted as an act and, what is more, a poetic one. Only once the aviator and the little prince have agreed on a metaphorical mediating instance, can their relationship start to take place. The imagined fiction, the sheep, acts as an epiphenomenon of personal mutual trust. As long as it lives, even if it sleeps, they will be really present to each other.

Thus the little Prince becomes a real presence to the narrator through a symbolic mediation –a sheep that is and is not– and only thus. In Buber's words, an I-Thou relationship is established. Indeed, it is the I-it experience that the protagonist decidedly intends to avoid from the beginning, since it de-realizes (to use Buber's words, once again) both the "I" and the "it" involved, whereas the I-Thou relationship realizes the two subjects involved. This can be evinced from Chapter III:

> "I immediately glimpsed a glimmer, in the mystery of his presence, and I questioned sharply: -You come from another planet? But he did not answer me. [...] And he sank into a reverie that lasted a long time. Then, taking my sheep out of his pocket, he plunged into the contemplation of his treasure. You can imagine how intrigued I was by this half-confidence about "other planets". I tried to find out more: "Where are you from, my little fellow? Where is it "at your place"? Where do you want to take my sheep? He answered me after a meditative silence: -What is good, with the box that you gave me, is that, at night, it will serve him as a house. -Of course. And if you're nice, I'll also give you a rope to tie in during the day. And a picket." [13]

As soon as the narrator – even unconsciously – tries to objectify the little Prince, the latter refuses to answer him. Or, rather, he only answers on the metaphorical level that has just been disclosed., for he considers it the only legitimate way in which dialogue can take place and unfold.

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

Thus, in *The little Prince*, trust does not appear as the result of a wager. Nor from a primordial faith or mystical expectation (the narrator is busy repairing his engine and anxious for survival). It nonetheless results from a poetic act within a dialogue. But "results" is a wrong word since it implies a relation of cause and consequence. More appropriate would be to say that trust crystallizes within the poetic dialogue. It is concomitant with an act that is a poetic act, a *poein*.

Trust and the Real Presence

To conclude, I will briefly allude to another example that not only explicitly relates trust to a poetic act, but is also specifically bound up with the question of the real presence. I am referring to the institution of the Eucharist. Here is a fragment from the institution of the Eucharist as it is reenacted during the Catholic Mass:

> "On the day before he was to suffer, he took bread in his holy and venerable hands and with eyes raised to heaven to you, O God, his almighty Father, giving you thanks, he said the blessing, broke the bread and gave it to his disciples, saying:
> Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for this is my body,
> which will be given up for you. [...] Do this in memory of me." [14]

Let us notice the imperative "take!", which not only recalls the little Prince's "draw!" but also immediately sets the addressee in a situation of answerability. Once the imperative has been spoken out, the receiver can only react to it. He is free to be faithful or unfaithful to it, but has lost the initiative. Buber's dynamics of trust applies here perfectly. A piece of bread is entrusted to the receiver, who is instructed to realize a metaphor out of it (just as it happens with the "box" supposed to contain a sheep in *The Little Prince*).

According to Venard, the Eucharist, by rendering present what is visibly absent, throws the most penetrating light on the workings of language and therefore re-enlivens our trust in the dynamics of signification and, especially, in the intrinsic symbolism of language:

[14] Taken from https://www.catholicbishops.ie/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Order-of-Mass.pdf.

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> "en dévoilant la Présence, l'eucharistie peut finalement rendre confiance en *tous les signes*. Signes matériels, bien sûr [...]. Mais aussi signes linguistiques: si le langage est une structure, dans laquelle chaque signe se définit par son rapport à l'ensemble des autres, la parole particulière de la consécration peut refluer sur le fonctionnement *symbolique* de toute parole qui veut dire le vrai." [15]

There is here matter to understand the genesis of the real presence analogy in Steiner. Far from being an arbitrary wager, it relies on the interdependence of trust and responsibility, which we have seen most adequately expressed by Buber.

Without denying what could not be our concern here, namely that there are probably different degrees of trust –from care to faith, from taming to believing, for example– we have nonetheless attempted to identify the poetic dynamics in act within all manifestations of trust. Such a perspective leads us to formulate several provisional yet highly suggestive conclusions: that trust situates us in the performative dimension of language, in which a poetic act can generate being. It also suggests that real encounter happens on a metaphorical level.

[15] O.-T. Venard, *Pagina Sacra*, Ad Solem/Cerf, Paris, 2009, pp. 722-723.

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Divine Trust and National Sovereignty

Democracy, Theocracy and Institutions in the Islamic Republic of Iran

Filippo Benedetti Milincovich

It is difficult to essentialize the intrinsically dualistic nature of Iranian republican constitutionalism,[1] a kind of difficulty which can be overcome by using the category of "divine trust". The dualism – perhaps, for some, the paradoxical dualism – featuring the essence of the Iranian constitutional and institutional system is well expressed by art. 56 of the 1979 Constitution, according to which:

> "Absolute sovereignty over the world and the human being belongs to God. And it is He who has made human beings sovereign over their social destiny. No one can take this divine right away from human beings or apply it to the interests of a special person or group. The nation exercises this God-given right in ways that are specified in the following articles".[2]

When the Iranian Constitution was drafted in 1979, the notion of divine trust was not alien to Islamic constitutional history. In March 1949, during the Constitution-making – and State-building – process of the first Islamic Republic, Pakistan, the Pakistani Constituent Assembly adopted the first constitutional document since the independence of

[1] See A. Schirazi, *The Constitution of Iran. Politics and the State in the Islamic Republic*, I.B. Tauris, London-New York 1987, pp. 8-21; R. Redaelli, *Constitutional Complexity and Political Paradoxes of the Islamic Republic of Iran*, in *Oriente Moderno*, 87, 2, 2007, p. 483, points out the "clear distinction in terms of real power between elected bodies and those whose representatives are not chose by the people".

[2] Translation made by F. Papan-Martin, *The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran (1989 Edition)*, in *Iranian Studies*, 47, 1, 2014, pp. 159-200.

the country, the *Objectives Resolution*, which would later form the Preamble of the 1956 Constitution. In the first clause, the *Objectives Resolution* stipulated that:

> "sovereignty over the entire universe belongs to God Almighty alone and the authority which He has delegated to the state of Pakistan through its people for being exercised within the limits prescribed by him is a sacred trust", [3]

but Rainer Grote and Tilmann Röder – in a work edited by them on Islamic constitutionalism in 2012 – point out that "At the time of the adoption of the [Pakistani] constitution the declaration of God's sovereignty in the preamble was merely a symbolical act, devoid of any specific legal implications". [4] However, notwithstanding formal similarities, the constitutional development in republican Iran was quite different on a substantial level from the Pakistani. Although the 1979 Iranian Constitution does not explicitly speak of "divine" or "sacred trust" (but rather "divine right"), there is no doubt that the above-quoted art. 56 Const. recognizes such a principle. The point is, hence, to assess the constitutional and institutional forms through which this trust has been realized.

If one reads the 1979 Iranian Constitution, passing beyond its verbose *Preamble*, one finds that the article proclaiming the rule of the just jurist (art. 5) precedes that recognizing popular sovereignty (art. 6), thus giving a structural or formal idea of the problematic balance between elected and non-elected institutions, or between democratic and religious principles, in the institutional and constitutional framework of the country.

The Islamic feature of the Iranian regime is expressed mainly through three powers: the Leadership, the Council of Guardians, and the Judiciary. The Leader of the Revolution (*Rahbar-e Enqelāb*) embodies the political and theological theory of *āyatollāh* Khomeyni, known as *velāyat-e faqih*, or "guardianship of the jurist". Roughly said, according to Khomeyni the most knowledgeable and pious Islamic Shi'i jurist (*faqih*) should be entrusted not only with those cultic and religious functions that the juristic tradition had bestowed upon the para-cler-

[3] H. Khan, *Constitutional and Political History of Pakistan*, Oxford University Press, Karachi 2019[3], p. 71.

[4] R. Grote-T. J. Röder, *Introduction*, in Idd. (eds.), *Constitutionalism in Islamic Countries: Between Upheaval and Continuity*, Oxford University Press, New York 2012, p. 8.

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ical hierarchy, but also with the political guidance of the community – which meant taking political power. It is widely acknowledged that this theory was a patent innovation – and for some even a rejection – of the traditional Shi'i understanding of politics, but the theoretical issue of the guardianship of the jurist is not of interest here.[5] What can be underlined is that the 1979 Iranian Constituent Assembly constitutionalized the leading role of Khomeyni not only as revolutionary leader, but also as a member of the top rank of the clerical Shi'i hierarchy, giving a governmental form to *velāyat-e faqih*.[6] Khomeyni was a *marja' at-taqlīd*, a "source of emulation", that is to say, a Shi'i religious figure whose jurisprudence was followed by millions of believers,[7] and art. 107 of the Constitution, in its original version, stated that only a *marja' at-taqlīd* could occupy the office of the Leader of the revolution. As to the functions and powers of the Leader (art. 109), they are very similar to those characterizing 19th century constitutional monarchs: besides his lifetime mandate and the religious legitimacy, the Leader appoints the heads of the Judiciary; he commands the armed forces and appoints the Commanders-in-Chief; he declares war; he grants pardon; even the sanction of the presidential election and the dismissal – at certain conditions – of the President are incumbent upon him, as well as the nomination of the six religious members of the Council of Guardians. The Council of Guardians – designed as a strengthened version of the Religious Committee present in the 1907 Supplementary Fundamental Laws of the 1906 Persian Constitution – essentially exercises a pervasive judicial and religious review of all parliamentary bills before they enter into force. In the political history of republican Iran, this power has gone far beyond the purpose of preserving the Islamic nature of the regime, since the Council of Guardians obstructed many

[5] Upon the theological significance of *velāyat-e faqih* and its relationship with the Shi'i tradition, see among others M. A. Amir Moezzi-C. Jambet, *What is Shi'i Islam? An Introduction*, Routledge, Abingdon-New York 2018, pp. 105-127; A. G. E. Sabet, Wilayat al-Faqih *and the Meaning of Islamic Government*, in A. Adib-Moghaddam (ed.), *A Critical Introduction to Khomeini*, Cambridge University Press, New York 2014, pp. 69-87.

[6] The constitutional incorporation of *velāyat-e faqih* during the Iranian Constitution-making process is analytically addressed, among others, by N. Ghobadzadeh, *Theocratic Secularism. Religion and Government in Shi'i Thought*, Oxford University Press, New York 2023, pp. 171-244.

[7] Concerning the figure of *marja' at-taqlīd* in Shi'i Islām, see J. Calmard, *Mardjaʿ-i taḳlīd*, in C. E. Bosworth-E. van Donzel-W. P. Heinrichs-B. Lewis-C. Pellat (eds.), *The Encyclopaedia of Islam. Mahk-Mid*, vol. VI, E.J. Brill, Leiden 1991, pp. 548-556; A. Amanat, *In Between the Madrasa and the Marketplace: The Designation of Clerical Leadership in Modern Shi'ism*, in S. A. Arjomand (ed.), *Authority and Political Culture in Shi'ism*, State University of New York Press, Albany 1988, pp. 98-132.

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laws approved by Legislatures controlled by the Khomeynist Islamic Republican Party – such as the nationalization of trade in 1982 and the land reform in 1983 – for political reasons. [8]

Regarding popular sovereignty, people have the right to choose their representatives (via legislative elections) and the President of the Republic by means of direct, secret and universal ballots. Although the electoral process is limited and controlled by the Council of Guardians, it is interesting to notice that since the first presidential and parliamentary elections in 1980, voters have always had the chance to express their opinions in regular elections every four years. [9] Moreover, the institutional history and the constitutional development of these two institutions – Presidency and Parliament – show a kind of dynamism and dialectic unknown in fully authoritarian or totalitarian regimes. Since its inception, the Parliament has tried to foster its own paramountcy by curtailing presidential powers and prerogatives, mainly – but not only – in relation to the Prime ministerial and ministerial nominations. Although the Constitution explicitly entrusted the President with the nomination of the Cabinet – following the French model of the 5th Republic constitutional drafters in Iran had resorted to – the Parliament always undermined this right and denied its confidence to all Prime ministerial candidates that were a pure presidential choice – even when apparently there was an ideological convergence between the President and the parliamentary majority, as at the beginning of Khāmenei's Presidency in October 1981. This led Olivier Roy to ascribe Iranian parliamentarism to the "tradition des régimes d'assemblé", [10] and indeed between 1980 and 1989 the Iranian form of government was more akin to monistic parliamentary systems like the Westminster, or the 3rd French Republic, than to anything else, precisely due to the institutional strength of the Parliament and the essentially parliamentary, rather than presidential, genesis of the Cabinet. This dialectic was partially dismantled in 1989, when the constitutional amendments removed the figure of the Prime Minister.

To be thorough, the amendment process was initiated by Khomeyni

[8] See B. Baktiari, *Parliamentary Politics in Revolutionary Iran: The Institutionalization of Factional Politics*, University Press of Florida, Gainesville 1996, pp. 84-92.

[9] This point is clearly, although somehow emphatically, highlighted by P. L. Petrillo, *Iran*, il Mulino, Bologna 2008, p. 63, who remarks that "Khomeini's Iran is the sole country among those founded upon Islamic law where there are fixed, recurring and important electoral consultations" (my translation).

[10] O. Roy, *Une théocratie constitutionnelle : les institutions de la République islamique d'Iran*, in *Politique étrangère*, II, 52, 1987, p. 327.

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himself. In this regard, he exercised his guardianship function that was a key feature of the Leadership as institution. Under the word "guardianship" lies a universe. Guardianship emerges in one of the most symbolical powers of the Leader, namely the confirmation appointment of Presidents-elect. Reading the decrees wherewith Khomeyni confirmed the elections of Presidents who served under his Leadership – Banisadr in 1980, Rajā'i in 1981, Khāmenei in 1981 and 1985 – the "narrative" of these decrees presents the Leader's act as complementary to elections.[11] The legitimacy of the Presidency, then, has a dualistic nature: bottom-up – elected by the people –, and top-down – confirmed by the Leader – rather as Cabinets in constitutional monarchies had a dualistic genesis – enjoying the confidence of Parliament but appointed by the monarch. Yet Khomeyni exercised his guardianship role as Leader in broader, even meta- or extra-constitutional, ways in so far as he had to intervene in inter-institutional struggles that institutional and political actors were unable to solve resorting to solutions that were outside the constitutional perimeter. The most exemplary case was the creation of the Expediency Discernment Council in 1988 to overcome disputes between the Parliament and Council of Guardians. In this sense, the Leader's role can be defined by borrowing the synthetic definition wherewith Luca Mannori has labelled the State apparatus in the Grand Duchy of Tuscany hypostatized in the figure of the Grand Duke throughout the late-Modern and early Contemporary Eras: the Grand Duke as a "guardian sovereign" ("sovrano tutore" in Italian[12]). "Guardian sovereign", "constitutional theocrat" (making a reference to Roy's idea of Iran as a "constitutional theocracy"[13]), "divine trustee". All these definitions of the Leadership may help to grasp the historical genealogy of Iranian republican constitutionalism, which can be considered as the point of convergence of several constitutional traditions. The post-1830 Orléanistic dualism was transposed both in Imperial Persia through the 1906 Constitution, which was a modelled after the 1831 Belgian Constitution;[14] and in republican Iran, whereas

[11] The texts of the decrees in *Ṣaḥifeh-ye Imam. An Anthology of Imam Khomeini's Speeches, Messages, Interviews, Decrees, Religious Permissions, and* Letters, vol. 12, The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's, Tehran 2008, pp. 118-119, as to Baniṣadr (1980); vol. 15, p. 60, as to Rajāi (1981); vol. 15, p. 241, for Khāmenei's first election (1981); vol. 19, p. 335, as to Khāmenei's re-election (1985).

[12] L. Mannori, *Il sovrano tutore. Pluralismo istituzionale e accentramento amministrativo nel principato dei Medici (secc. XVI-XVIII)*, Giuffrè, Milano 1994, part. p. 139.

[13] O. Roy, *Une théocratie constitutionnelle*, cit.

[14] The direct influence of the 1831 Constitution over Persian constitutionalists is widely

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the 1958 French Constitution served as a blueprint in the shaping of the Iranian post-revolutionary parliamentary form of Government.[15] The result is that, besides the presence of a constitutional ruler similar to constitutional monarchs, the people enjoy a degree of political representation, which nonetheless is limited by the control function of the Council of Guardians over elections much as until the post-World War Two constitutional wave the suffrage was generally restricted.

Paradoxically, the 1989 constitutional amendments undermined the – already weak – democratic characters of the Iranian Constitution. Not only was the figure of the Prime Minister eliminated in 1989, so reducing institutional pluralism; more importantly, the criteria for becoming Leader were modified to allow President Khāmenei – who was not a *marjaʿ at-taqlīd* but a modest theologian – to access that very office.[16] This, combined with Khomeyni's rule on absolute guardianship (*velāyat-e motlaq*) in 1988, deeply changed not only the formal but also the material Constitution (in Mortati's sense[17]) of Iran by giving political categories and issues greater importance over religious ones. One thing that must be noted is the textual change in the Constitution. Art. 5, in its original version, seemed to link *marjaʿiyya* (being a *marjaʿ at-taqlīd*) to a form of democratic or representative genesis of the Leadership. It stipulated that

recognised: see M. Bayat, *Iran's First Revolution*, cit., p. 43, "The constitutionalists were to choose the Belgian constitution as the model to emulate"; E. Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, cit., p. 89: "The deputies, working with a translation of the Belgian constitution, formulated a parliamentary system of government"; S. A. Arjomand, *Islam and Constitutionalism since the Nineteenth Century*, cit., p. 37, part. note 12; a deeper analysis on this point in F. Benedetti-G. M. Sperelli, *Le rivoluzioni costituzionali in Giappone, Russia, Persia e Impero ottomano tra XIX e XX secolo. Un percorso circa-europeo*, in *Giornale di Storia Costituzionale / Journal of Constitutional History*, 44, II, 2022, pp. 217-218, part. note 61.

[15] The institutional framework of the 1958 French Constitution – a parliamentary system with a strong Presidency – was transposed in the draft Constitution due to the first drafter's, Ḥassan Ḥabibi, physical presence in France and cultural inclination towards it. Many authors highlight the French influence over the Iranian Constitution: see, for instance, S. Randjbar-Daemi, *Building the Islamic State*, cit., pp. 645-647, who states that Ḥabibi was "An enthusiastic supporter of the institutional configuration of the French Fifth Republic"; S. Bakhash, *The Reign of the Ayatollahs. Iran and the Islamic Revolution*, Basic Books, New York 1984, p. 74; M. Ayatollahi Tabaar, *Religious Statecraft. The Politics of Islam in Iran*, Columbia University Press, New York-Chichester 2019, p. 98; B. Ackerman, *Revolutionary Constitutions. Charismatic Leadership and the Rule of Law*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (MA) 2019, p. 326: "Khomeini's initial draft was not only written in Paris; it borrows very heavily from the Constitution of the Fifth Republic – in both its text and its institutional design".

[16] On the 1989 amendments, see S. A. Arjomand, *After Khomeini. Iran Under His Successors*, Oxford University Press, New York 2009, pp. 31-41; B. Baktiari, *Parliamentary Politics in Revolutionary Iran*, cit., pp. 178-188.

[17] See C. Mortati, *La costituzione in senso materiale*, Giuffrè, Milano 1998, pp. 53-113.

> "sovereignty of the command (of God) and religious leadership of the community (of believers) is the responsibility of the jurisprudent who […] is recognized and accepted by the majority of people as leader".

The last sentence ("recognized and accepted by the majority of people as leader") has no longer been present in the Constitution since 1989. The fact that the Leader, according to the amended Constitution, may not be a *marja'* has proven to be a direct challenge both to religious tenets – however problematic *velāyat-e faqih* can be theologically and religiously – and to the plebiscitary and revolutionary forms of political representation in Iran. Until 1989 the Leader – that is, Khomeyni – did not embody just a religious or theological principle: he was the main figure of a revolution as well, and indeed Khomeyni himself understood the leadership of the revolution as a unitary expression of a single will, that of the Nation. With the 1989 amendments, both the religious and the revolutionary characters of the Leadership were deeply downsized. And if one wishes to seek the causes of the current political and institutional sclerotization of the Iranian regime today, they should follow precisely this historical path.

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Democratic School Governance and Organizational Trust

Francesca Fioretti

1. *Introduction*

The creation of an inclusive and democratic school environment, which takes the form of a community of practice where students can actively experience citizenship, is of fundamental importance for the promotion of civic learning as the result of experiences and interactions in formal, informal, and non-formal learning contexts where the student lives. This brings out how contextual factors can positively or negatively influence the development of citizenship competence. [1]

The *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture*, drafted by the Council of Europe in 2018, identifies the Whole-School Approach [2] (WSA) as the organizational orientation that can create a democratic learning environment that supports the development of citizenship competence through a "systemic school-wide change to embed both the ethos and actions of democracy and active citizenship in school governance, culture, planning and monitoring, teaching, learning and the wider community". [3]

From the above documents, it follows that school governance is not the result of the Principal's top-down authority but it derives from the active participation of the whole school community in decision-making. Indeed, WSA requires a democratic school governance, character-

[1] *See* 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, Amsterdam The Netherlands 2023.

[2] *See* Council of Europe, *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture. Volume 3: Guidance for implementation*, Strasbourg 2018.

[3] European Commission, European Education and Culture Executive Agency, *Citizenship education at school in Europe, 2017*, Publications Office, 2017, p. 76.

ized by a leadership style based on respect for democratic principles, collective participation in the decision-making that includes students, and educational policy for inclusion.

Democratic school governance has a positive impact on the teachers' perceived Organizational Trust (OT), which is the feeling of trusting and relying on the organization of which they are a part, because they know that they will encounter ethical behaviors based on respect for human rights. OT has a dynamic nature: it is the result of the relationships between all the organization's members and, at the same time, influences the relationships themselves; therefore, it can increase or decrease depending on the leadership style adopted by the Principal. [4]

Trust can be regarded as the glue and lubricant of any organizational life. As the glue, "trust binds organizational participants to one another". [5] As the lubricant, "trust greases the machinery of an organization, [...] contributes to greater efficiency when people can have confidence in other people's words and deeds". [6]

OT is built upon various factors, including transparent communication, consistent and fair decision-making process, competent leadership, and shared vision and values. [7] Three main dimensions of OT can be distinguished on the part of the teachers: [8]

- Principal trust, that relies on qualities such as trust, concern for school issues, consistency of interactions, competency, and willingness to share information with the team;
- trust in colleagues, that depends on the conviction that colleagues are competent, fair and trustworthy;
- trust in students and parents, based on the belief that students will do what they have to do and that parents will support the teacher. It is a shared feeling of trust between teachers-students and teachers-parents.

Teachers who trust their Principal and colleagues are more likely to engage in professional development, share innovative ideas, participate in the decision-making process, and work collaboratively towards common goals.

[4] *See* M. Tschannen-Moran, *Organizational trust in schools.* In R. Papa (Ed.), *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Educational Administration.* Oxford University Press, UK 2020.

[5] Id., *Trust Matters: Leadership for Successful Schools*, Second Edition, John Wiley & Sons, Indianapolis USA 2014, p. 16.

[6] *Ibidem.*

[7] *See* M. Tschannen-Moran-W. K. Hoy, *A multidisciplinary analysis of the nature, meaning, and measurement of trust*, in *Review of Educational Research*, LXX, 4, 2000, pp. 547-593.

[8] *See* M. Kars-Y. Inandi, *Relationship between school principals' leadership behaviors and teachers' organizational trust*, in *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, XVIII, 74, 2018, pp. 145-164.

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2. *Methodology*

In order to describe the different profiles of school Principals in relation to the leadership style adopted and the organizational-teaching practices conducive to Civic and Citizenship Education (CCE) from a WSA perspective, an embedded-multiple case study with exploratory purposes was structured in Italy and Portugal.

The research was conducted in four schools in Rome and four schools in Porto, selected by non-probabilistic sampling, following an analysis of documentation regarding the structuring of activities for CCE and the implementation of a nonvertical organizational structure.

Despite the qualitative connotations of the research, which involved the use of interviews, focus groups and observations, survey instruments such as questionnaires with standardized questions and checklists were also used in order to triangulate data and define a systemic description of each case.

In Italy, interviews and focus groups were held in Italian; in Portugal, participants chose between Portuguese or English. The school's teachers or students from the Universidade Católica Portuguesa acting as interpreters were present during the Portuguese interviews.

Quantitative data from interviews and checklists were analyzed by means of statistical analysis for descriptive purposes, while thematic analysis (TA) was used to look into textual data from focus groups and interviews. By finding similar or contradictory themes in the case studies through the TA of focus groups and interviews as well as through checklist and questionnaire statistical analysis, reliability was verified.

After defining the primary themes emerged from the conceptual framework and from the description of school contexts – including school information, educational vision, CCE, governance, decision-making – a theoretical TA was structured and elaborated. This approach, known as top down, was coupled with an inductive one for assigning codes for enrich the aforementioned themes: the creation of a code pertaining to the concept of trust as a component of school governance, which is absent from the theoretical framework, is evidence of the flexibility used in theoretical TA. [9]

[9] *See* V. Clarke-V. Braun, *Teaching thematic analysis: Overcoming challenges and developing strategies for effective learning*, in *The Psychologist*, XXVI, 2, 2013, pp. 120-123.

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3. *Preliminary results*

Preliminary results from two schools, one Italian and one Portuguese, are now presented. These lower secondary schools are considered paradigmatic on the relationship between OT, decision-making and Principal's leadership, because the participation of teachers is influenced positively in one case and negatively in the other one by the trust they feel placed in them, although the data collected are not sufficient to prove a correlation between teachers' participation and OT.

Table 1 summarizes the data collected in S-2 and S-6 in 2022/23 school year.

	Italian school S-2 (November 2022-January 2023)	**Portuguese school S-6 (April-June 2023)**
Principal Interview	• Italian language • Transcribed words: 6,216	• English language • Participation of the Vice Principal • Transcribed words: 5,836
Civic Education Coordinator Interview	• Italian language • Transcribed words: 3,202	• English language • Participation of the Pedagogical Council Coordinator • Transcribed words: 6,866
Teacher Questionnaire	28 teachers out of a total of 45	68 teachers out of a total of 73
Observation	25 hours	20 hours
Teachers Focus Group	• 7 participants • Italian language • Transcribed words: 7,760	• 4 participants • Portuguese language • Transcribed words: 11,707
Follow-up detections	/	5 hours of observation of the *Dia do Agrupamento*

Table 1: Data collected in S-2 and S-6 in 2022/23 school year.

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3.1 The Italian school S-2

The Italian school, hereafter referred to S-2, is a comprehensive institute in the center of Rome, consisting of two primary schools and a lower secondary school; it has a medium-high attendance. It is a school where teachers perceive a climate of mistrust towards them by the Principal, which manifests itself in a lack of communication and confrontation, decisions made at the top, confusion, and uncertainty.

> "We do not find stimulation in being able to do this activity peacefully because of the bureaucracy, [...] we are controlled. There is a kind of mistrust in the teaching staff" (teacher, S-2, translated from Italian).
> "Often I find lack of communication [...] you find yourself directly on top of the decision made by someone else, so you say 'I thought they had me involved' and then they did not" (teacher, S-2, translated from Italian).
> "Even when we actually participate in the decision-making phase, for example in the Teachers Board, we actually have the opportunity to express through our vote whether or not to adhere to projects and proposals, at least I always have a feeling of confusion and uncertainty, so even what is established in the Teachers Board, I do not have the certainty that then it will actually be applied that way" (teacher, S-2, translated from Italian).

This is associated with a low level of participation in the decision-making process, according to the findings of the questionnaire. The results of one of the questions regarding teachers' perceptions of participation in decision-making and collaboration at school are reported (fig. 1): it appears to be not only a lack of participatory decision-making, especially toward teachers (item a) and students (item c), but also few levels of sharing of responsibilities (item d), collaborative culture (item e), common educational vision (item f); slightly positive data emerge regarding parents' participation in decision-making (item b) and the possibility of the promotion of initiatives by the school staff (item g).

These data also emerged during the interview with the Civic Education Coordinator, who spoke about the absence of the majority criterion for decision-making that leads teachers to have to accept what is decided at the top: "the majority criterion formally is always there, but practically very little" (Civic Education Coordinator, S-2, translated from Italian).

At the same time, the Principal also highlighted the issue of the lack of collaboration and participation in the school, stating in contrast

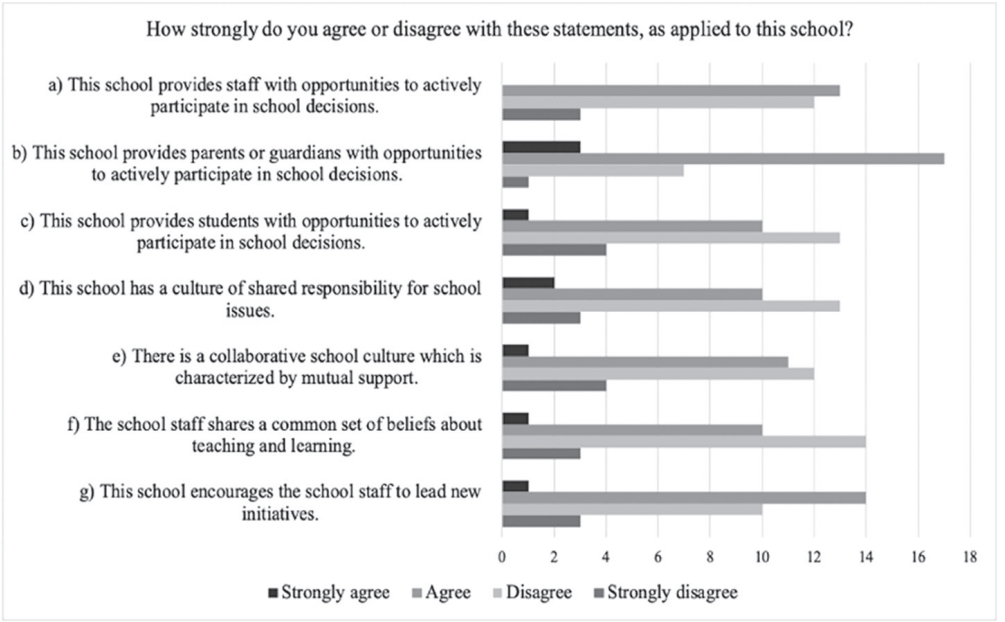

Figure 1: Teachers' perception on participation and collaboration in the decision-making process in S-2 (N=28). Question retrieved from J. Ainley-R. Carstens, *Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2018 Conceptual Framework*, OECD Education Working Papers, No. 187, OECD Publishing, Paris 2018.

that there are teachers who are bound to an individualistic approach to teaching and therefore plan projects and activities independently:

> "My approach has always been one of great sharing. Of course, there are areas where I have to decide independently, but as far as educational and teaching choices are concerned I always try to find great sharing in the Teachers Board. [...] I always look for participation and sharing, I always try to stimulate them. I have to be honest: I do not always succeed [...], there are still some teachers who are used to working autonomously, to not sharing, not feeling an integral part of a community and achieving goals in synergy. Not everyone has this ability to work together" (Principal, S-2, translated from Italian).

From the first data analysis, the Principal's autocratic leadership style starts to emerge.[10] It is characterized by a top-down decision-making

[10] *See* R. N. Amanchukwu-G. J. Stanley-N. P. Ololube, *A review of leadership theories,*

process that does not involve team members, who also have few opportunities to express their views or make suggestions. Studies carried out in the second decade of the 2000s showed that autocratic and laissez-faire leadership styles are significantly negatively correlated with the three dimensions of OT. [11]

3.2 The Portuguese school S-6

The Portuguese school, hereafter referred to S-6, is school grouping located in Maia, a municipality in the district of Porto; it consists of 11 schools, from primary school to 12th grade, and a Qualification Center for adults. Here, the Principal highlights a feeling of trust in teachers, which is manifested not only in participatory decision-making, as evidenced in the questionnaire, but also in the freedom and autonomy left to teachers who know the rules:

> "In the organization's structure, [...] the responsibilities are shared. [...] I'm comfortable with the responsibility that the other people here have because I trust them and I know that they do what needs to be done and what I need them to do [...] and they know also what I must do, and they can come at any time" (Principal, S-6).

The participation of the entire school community is also evident in the data in the questionnaire. In the question about teachers' perceptions of participation in decision-making and collaboration at school (fig. 2), positive results appear regarding the participation of teachers (item a), parents (item b) and students (item c) in decision-making process, the presence of sharing responsibilities (item d), a collaborative culture and mutual support (item e), common educational vision (item f) and the opportunity for teaching staff to propose new initiatives (item g).

Despite the positive data, different opinions emerged in the focus group regarding teachers' effective participation in decision-making, which occurs more through Committees and Representative Councils. In particular, the rigidity and the learning objectives that the Portu-

principles and styles and their relevance to educational management, in *Management*, V, 1, 2015, pp. 6-14.

[11] *See* M. Kars-Y. Inandi, *Relationship between school principals' leadership behaviors and teachers' organizational trust*, cit.

guese Educational System requires schools to achieve, as well as the characteristics of the S-6 organization, are an impediment to teachers effectively participating in the decision-making process. This has an impact on teachers' proposals for new projects and activities that can benefit students:

> "We don't have much decision-making power and I think the school and the Ministry should listen to us more. I'm thinking about the Class Directors Council, the Pedagogical Council [...]. It's often said 'oh this is an excellent idea, but it can't be done', but why can't it be done? If it could benefit the students, [...] why not try it? I think change is always scary for everyone, but we are agents of change" (teacher, S-6, translated from Portuguese).

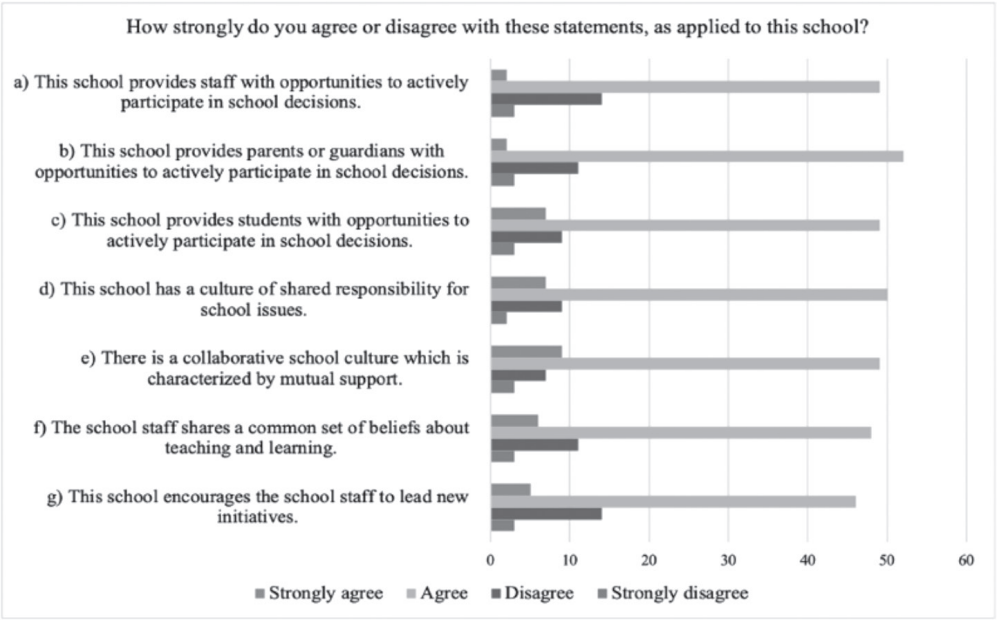

Figure 2: Teachers' perception on participation and collaboration in the decision-making process in S-6 (N=68). Question retrieved from J. Ainley-R. Carstens, *Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2018 Conceptual Framework*, OECD Education Working Papers, No. 187, OECD Publishing, Paris 2018.

> "School has intermediate structures where things come to us and we give our opinion [...], but I don't think we really have a great involvement in the

> decision-making process of what is fundamental in the school. [...] Things come to us cut and dried and not as something still to be debated and discussed" (teacher, S-6, translated from Portuguese).

The leadership style that is starting to emerge from the first data analysis lies between a democratic and a bureaucratic one. The democratic leadership style is found in the open-doors organizational structure, which is based on the promotion of collaboration, confrontation, participation and listening within the entire school community,[12] mainly visible in the figure 2 and Principal interview. The bureaucratic leadership style is reflected in the full adherence to the rules that leaves little space for creativity or innovation of the teachers, as appeared in focus group.

It should be recognized that there is no unique leadership style that always applies; it needs to be chosen and modified for different groups, individuals, organizations, and circumstances.[13] Among the factors that can aid in determining the leadership style is the size of the organization in which the leader operates: the larger and more varied it is, the more centralized decision-making is needed. This is the case of S-6, which is entailed by 11 different institutes where "things must be very smooth and structured because it's very challenging and very difficult, but it's a miracle perhaps that we can open the schools, eleven schools, every day" (Vice Principal, S-6).

Thus, as also stated by the Vice Principal, there is a need for actions, functions, and procedures to be structured and regulated, and for this reason the bureaucratic leadership style of the Principal, which is also manifested in the presence of Committees and Coordinators, is employed.

4. *Conclusions*

The qualitative study carried out is aimed at offering a contribution to the relationship between teachers' perceived OT and their participation in the school's organization. Initial evidence indicates that democratic school governance – characterized by participation, sharing,

[12] *See* K. E. Hoque-Z. T. Raya, *Relationship between principals' leadership styles and teachers' behavior*, in *Behavioral Sciences*, XIII, 2, 2023, pp. 111-125.

[13] *See* R. N. Amanchukwu-G. J. Stanley-N. P. Ololube, *A review of leadership theories, principles and styles and their relevance to educational management*, cit.

communication, and collaboration among all members of the organization – promotes the creation of a trust-based school climate that not only facilitates interpersonal relationships between the school community as a result of their interactions but also has a positive effect on a school's effectiveness. This has been confirmed in the literature, where a significantly positive correlation between democratic leadership style and OT, [14] performance [15] and school climate [16] is found.

An environment of trust enables the success of the organization to be achieved, implementing efficiency and productivity. When trust exists within an educational organization, it encourages collaboration, cooperation, and open dialogue among all stakeholders; on the contrary, if there is no climate of trust, relations between staff members suffer and collaboration and cooperation decrease. [17]

According to Babaoglan (2016), a higher level of teachers' commitment and participation at school follows an improvement in their sense of trust. [18] Trust promotes a sense of well-being, where individuals feel comfortable taking risks, expressing their opinions, and engaging in constructive discussions. Schools that cultivate environments characterized by OT are in a better position to accomplish the task of educating students who have developed skills in response to the challenges of an ever-changing society through a culture of innovation and continuous learning.

In future studies, research with a quantitative approach can analyze the correlation between the dimensions of OT and the components of democratic school governance in order to understand the positive effects they have on each other and on the organization as a whole.

[14] *See* M. Kars-Y. Inandi, *Relationship between school principals' leadership behaviors and teachers' organizational trust*, cit.

[15] *See* D. A. O. Aunga-O. Masare, *Effects of leadership styles on teacher's performance in primary schools of Arusha District Tanzania,* in *International Journal of Educational Policy Research and Review*, IV, 4, 2017, pp. 42-52.

[16] *See* C. J. Ndaipa, *Leadership styles adopted by headteachers and the influence on staff performance in primary schools of Chimoio cluster in Mozambique*, in *The Eurasia Proceedings of Educational & Social Sciences*, V, 17, 2016, pp. 107-115.

[17] *See* H. C. Akbay-B. Zeybek, *Examination of teachers' organizational trust levels according to various variables*, in *European Journal of Education Studies*, X, 3, 2023, pp. 257-266.

[18] *See* E. Babaoglan, *The predictive power of organizational trust to organizational commitment in elementary and high school teachers*, in *The Anthropologist*, XXIV, 1, 2016, pp. 83-89.

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Renewing Trust in Life: Dionysus or the Affirmation of the Human Possible

Gael Trottmann-Calame

> "Thus [Dionysus] once declared: 'Sometimes I love man [...]:
> I often think about how I could make him progress
> even further and make him stronger, meaner and
> deeper than he is [...]; more beautiful too'"
>
> *Jenseits von Gut und Böse, §295*

After the proclamation of the "death of God", does it make sense, on the one hand, to still question the divine in the field of Nietzschean thought? And on the other hand, in the wake of this "death of God", can we still have trust in life and in man, knowing that the "last man" and nihilism are respectively announcing themselves as the figure and "the history of the next two centuries"? [1] Indeed, on the one hand, doesn't the ceaseless publication of the "tremendous event" that is the "death of God" allow us to count Nietzsche once and for all among the radical and resolute atheists? On the other hand, doesn't the "catastrophe" of the "death of God" sound the death knell for all possible trust and hope in man and in life, given that the fall of an ideal reveals the relativism of values, the lack of foundation and the emptiness of all ideals, the disgust with man and existence – in short, nothingness ? [2] Could it be, then, that Nietzsche, with the "death of God", becomes the apostle of a overman figure who, in a salvific movement, would

[1] *Posthumous Fragments* (PF) 1887-1888, 11[411]. *Digitale Kritische Gesamtausgabe Werke und Briefe* (eKGWB), edited by Paolo D'Iorio and published by Nietzsche Source (www.nietzschesource.org). (All translations from German to English, and from French to English are mine).

[2] PF 1885-1887, 5[71].

eclipse the annihilated divine figure – by revealing what illusory and mortifying ideals it is the projection of – on the one hand, and victoriously succeed the moribund figure of modern man, fragment man, nihilist or "last man", the decadent and chaotic consequence of the "Christian" type? In short, wouldn't Nietzsche, having eyes only for the overman, rise up fiercely against any divine figure, denouncing it as a projection of nothingness, thereby asserting that it definitively no longer deserves to be dwelt upon – "God remains dead!" ?[3] And in a similar vein, wouldn't Nietzsche also champion a new "ideal", that of the "overhuman", overlooking the fundamental problem of the relatively "weaker" human type, obscuring the causes of the decadence affecting it, to the point where this weak type has come to embody the loss of trust in any divine figure and in life ?[4]

As we all know – but it's worth emphasizing once again – defending such reductive readings of Nietzsche's message betrays an understanding based on outdated clichés, dangerous shortcuts and erroneous glosses. Indeed, among the multitude of sometimes dubious commentaries and interpretations that the "death of God" has given rise to, many are quick to dismiss the difficult question of the divine. Nevertheless, to those who, out of comfort or laziness, would like to avoid the question of the divine in Nietzsche, we must announce and show that with the death of a God, all divine figures do not disappear from his thought, or, to put it in Éric Blondel's terms: "there is – and we must say it 'anyway', at the risk of embarrassing everyone – a God in Nietzsche".[5]

And perhaps we should go even further, asserting that, far from marking the end of the question of the divine, "the death of God" on the contrary enlivens it, questioning anew the meaning and content of the divine figure. Indeed, it seems to us that the divine in Nietzsche, as a "philosophical" problem, must be seen above all through the prism of human typology as a fundamental problem, tending to affirm (or con-

[3] *Die fröliche Wissenschaft* (FW), §125.

[4] See E. Blondel, *La Psychologie de la foi chez Nietzsche : L'antéchrist, § 50, et Ecce Homo, "Pourquoi je suis un destin", § 7,* PUF, Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger, N°4, Paris 2006. p.435. "Faute d'explication assignant une raison à l'apparition, voire à l'irruption d'une corruption, d'un mouvement de déclin, d'une sorte d'incapacité de nature à affronter la réalité, on est en effet tenté de voir dans la décadence une sorte d'infirmité proprement humaine, naturelle, par rapport à laquelle le modèle tragique et le Surhumain, à leur tour, font figures d'idéaux et de fantasmes".

[5] E. Blondel, *Nietzsche : le cinquième évangile ?,* Les Bergers et les Mages, Paris 1980. p. 251.

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firm) a new human possibility, the source of a "new" possible trust. In other words, the question of the divine remains to be posed, but in the strict field of *Züchtung*, of breeding – which is perhaps why Nietzsche would defend theology rather than philosophy, if not physiology, as the ideal approach to the divine ("philosophy of Dionysus" [6]). This means, as we shall see, that the meaning of the divine can be rethought as a power of metamorphosis – affirming man as a possible creator, for whom "oneself" becomes a work of art – and that the content of the divine, as sacred, must be reviewed insofar as it is love, affirmation, the blessing of reality as appearance, and a source of exhilaration [*Rausch*].

Following Nietzsche's lead, we will see that, to the weak, "all-too-human" type who would be tempted to protest that in this world, only a creative aptitude proper to a "super" or "supra" human would be able to save it, we will first oppose the divine figure of the "retreating god", inviting the human to be no longer just a creature, but also a creator. Secondly, we will sketch out the creative human figures par excellence, the "parturient" and the "artist", "bridges" to the overman possible and to come. Divine and human figures, then, capable of reminding modern man (fragment-man and chaotic man, an indecisive type torn between multiple, contradictory axiological influences) that it is possible for him, by overcoming himself, to emerge from this dangerous condition that ends up making him sigh: "I don't know where to turn; I'm everything that doesn't know where to turn". [7] And this by inviting him to make of himself a work sketching out the figure of a new subjectivity.

The death of a God

We won't dwell here on the analysis and consequences of the famous "death of God", and will refer you to the rich and numerous comments already given. [8] Let us simply recall that it is a moral interpretation of the world, inherited from Platonism, relayed by Christianity and leading to nihilism, that is analyzed, criticized and denounced by Nietzsche

[6] PF 1884-1885, 34[176].

[7] *Der Antichrist* (AC), §1.

[8] See e.g. E. Fink, *La philosophie de Nietzsche*, Les Éditions de Minuit, Paris 1965 (pp.83-93) ; P. Valadier, *Nietzsche et la critique du christianisme*, Éditions du Cerf, Parie 1975 (third part) ; E. Blondel, *Nietzsche : le cinquième évangile ?* cit. (second part) ; I. Wienand, *Significations de la mort de Dieu chez Nietzsche, d'*humain trop humain *à* Ainsi parlait Zarathoustra, Peter Lang, Berne 2006.

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through the figure of the "God of death", a figure that far exceeds the Christian God alone. In other words, when "God dies", here only the "old god is dead". [9] leaving the horizon clear for the god who does not rise once to another life, but is eternally reborn to that same life: "—Do you understand? – Dionysus versus the Crucified...". [10]

We must therefore move on from the figure of the "dead God" to that of the "living God", even if he is hidden or withdrawn, the latter undoubtedly contributing to the affirmation of the new human and a new possible trust, beyond morality and nihilism. So let's understand that, with the death of the "old god", it's not only man who begins his "molt" ("stronger, meaner, deeper, more beautiful too" *supra*), but also the divine. [11]

Dionysus, god in retreat

What then is this divine that, emerging after the "death of God" and of moral religion, would participate in the affirmation of a new human possibility? A God of life or, better still, a god of life, synonymous with or symbolic of multiplicity, change, becoming and metamorphosis, the Nietzschean divine borders on the elusive and the virtually unspeakable. Nevertheless, among the many names and adjectives Nietzsche uses to signify the divine, there is one that recurs throughout his work: Dionysus.

Certainly, at the opposite extreme from the "God of death", the Ideal denying the world and life, Nietzsche's divine figure can only be a figure of affirmation [*Bejahung*], of saying-yes [*Ja-Sagen*], of the blessing (*Amor Fati*) of reality, of life. [12] So it's life in its entirety – with nothing excluded (pain, suffering, tragedy)– that arouses in the mind freed from the heaviness of moral idealism, of nihilistic pessimism, a quasi-religious feeling, a reminder of the divine, sacred character of life as a whole. [13] For Nietzsche, to acquiesce to life (becoming) in the same way is to recognize its agonal character, to acknowledge the value of opposition and contradiction, and to concede that even the

[9] FW, §343.

[10] *Ecce Homo* (EH), "Warum ich ein Schicksal bin", §9.

[11] PF 1882-1884, 3[1]. "You say it's a self-decomposition [*Selbstzersetzung*] of God, but it's only his molt: he strips off his moral skin. And soon you will find him again, beyond good and evil".

[12] PF 1887-1888, 9[42].

[13] *Götzen-Dämmerung* (GD), "Streifzüge eines Unzeitgemässen", §49.

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most sublime creative process cannot proceed without an element of destruction.[14] In other words, Dionysus, gentle and cruel, embodies the image of the divine, inspiring humans to test themselves joyfully through fire and "war", to overcome themselves in constant struggle, so that they become "stronger" (enduring adversity and becoming), "meaner" (overcoming all-too-human moral temptations), "deeper" (acquiescing to suffering and the "terrible and problematic" nature of existence), "more beautiful" too (imposing form on chaos and making a work of itself).[15] Dionysus thus invites man not only to be a creature, but also to be a creator, as "God" steps aside, leaving man the "matter" and "power" to make a work of himself and with himself. For, if man discovers himself to be in part a creature, material, "chaos" – an "interesting chaos" in that it demands to be informed, forged, according to the logic of the will to power – he also discovers himself to be a creator, a "Dionysian artist" capable of "dominat[ing] even the chaos of the will that has not yet become form, and can from there give birth to a new world at every creative moment".[16]

What's more, Dionysus is by no means a god of peace and gentleness, inviting us to flee into hypothetical "after-worlds" from a reality that is too painful. Dionysus is certainly not a god who, having once died, would once again rise in another world. No, Dionysus is indeed the "dismembered" god, the "divine fire", who dying an eternity of times, is reborn an eternity of times to this same life. This is why, for Nietzsche, the divine cannot be dissociated from the breeding doctrine[17] [*Züchtung*] of the possible new human, from the ultimate test of acquiescence: the eternal return – "I, the ultimate disciple of the philosopher Dionysus, – I who teach the eternal return...".[18] In other words, to interpret suffering less as the supreme objection to this life (weakness) than as an instrument for surpassing oneself, a means of increasing one's sense of power (strength).[19] In other words, the Dionysian disposition enables us to move from the subjection of suffering to creative activity, to the will to make a work by oneself and with oneself. In other words, Dionysus is certainly less an invitation to the reassuring comfort and indolence of identity, of "sameness", than it is

[14] PF 1885-1887, 2 [106].
[15] PF 1884-1885, 34[176].
[16] *Die Dionysische Weltanschauung* (DW), §1.
[17] PF 1887-1888, 9[8].
[18] GD, "Was ich den Alten verdanke", §5.
[19] Ibid.

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to the ever-renewed creation of oneself, beyond oneself, to conquer a new subjectivity. In this way, the symbol of Dionysus invites creative exhilaration, a fundamental psycho-physiological condition whose synonym is "Dionysian", and characterized by a high sense of power capable of giving shape to the chaos that we are. Dionysus is therefore the principle or symbol of a new fundamental disposition, a metamorphosis of the flesh (a new impulse hierarchy), a resurrection or rebirth to this same life (a possible new human), in opposition to the figure of the God-Messiah or God-crucified. Indeed, the latter, taking upon himself "the sin of the world" and thus confirming the moral and mortifying interpretation of Platonic-Christianity, by "washing away" the human and the world of what they "are", invites man to seek life in a "beyond".

On the contrary, the figure of Dionysus withdraws – hidden god or withdrawn god – and makes a point of inspiring an almost religious feeling towards life, concealing himself in it, hiding for its benefit, unlike the "dead god" who presents himself as an alternative to life, in front of it or beyond it: "me or life". A divinity in retreat, Dionysus does not make man his work, the pinnacle of his "creation", but – as a mark of his love and his desire to make him progress further – leaves man the task of making of himself his highest work, by surpassing himself in exhilaration.

So, if we follow Nietzsche's invitation to think of the divine as closer to freely-playing drive forces than to metaphysical principles,[20] we might well consider the extent to which Nietzsche's divine figure reveals physiology, and no longer theology, as the science capable of approaching the divine. For it is indeed in the metamorphosis of the body (the drive hierarchy) that the divine and its "efficacy", a figure in retreat and discreet action, are to be sought. And, as a result, what the figure of Dionysus affirms is the new possibility of man becoming a creator, making himself and the world his own work.

From suffering to tragic joy: the parturient and the artist

But who is this possible human, this new "type" that Dionysus and the "Dionysian" affirm and arouse? It's Zarathustra we need to listen to here:

[20] M. Dixsaut, *Nietzsche : par-delà les antinomies,* Vrin, Paris 2012, p. 440.

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> "To create – that is the great deliverance from suffering, that is what makes life light. But for the creator to exist, much suffering and metamorphosis are required. [...] For the creator himself to be the newborn child, he must also want to be the parturient and the pain experienced by the parturient".[21]

This new type does not aspire to abolish suffering by following the "God of death" into his afterlife, but rather to follow Dionysus in his constant rebirth into this very life. Able to see in the greatest suffering a fact that always accompanies the greatest creation, this human possibility discovers itself as "poetic" [*poíesis*]. If we follow the lines and thoughts of the philosopher of Sils-Maria, it is indeed of this human possibility that the artist and the parturient are the most beautiful mirrors: like the two poles of the same creative movement.

On the one hand, the parturient embodies a Dionysian-Apollonian relationship with raw, "animal" suffering, when, while giving birth, she allows herself to be overwhelmed by suffering (Dionysian trance), but is not "scattered" or "fragmented" by it, "channeling" it (oneiric, Apollonian dream) towards a work,[22] a work that is beyond itself, a surpassing, a spiritualization of suffering. In the most profound act, that of giving life, the first and fundamental oath to life is reaffirmed. An absolute act of creation, which, beyond suffering, affirms the eternity and future of life in its entirety, to the point where the self merges with the act, where the agent becomes the act itself ("Bacchantes"). A religious feeling, a blissful experience of the sacred, that of creation, in which inner chaos and the chaos of the world are seized as "matter" to give birth to a work of art.

On the other hand, it is also in this creative gesture that the tragic artist merges or merges, the Apollonian-Dionysian pole through which even the most terrible or chaotic reality is spiritualized or sublimated in a fertile, affirming interpretation. For it is from himself and from reality that the artist makes a work, refusing the comfort and security of identity or "sameness", refusing fear and weakness, testing his soul and his work in the fire of multiplicity and contradiction. And when he sacrifices himself to the strength and necessity of conquering and overcoming himself, always imposing a direction (a "self"), and thereby imposing an interpretation on "reality", organizing it and enriching it with his own plenitude, the artist raises the curtain on one of the most beautiful spectacles to be seen – the vision of the overcome human to come:

[21] *Also sprach Zarathustra* (AZ), II, "Von den Mittleidigen".
[22] *Morgenröthe* (M), §552.

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> "what is most beautiful is perhaps still happening in the dark and dark, barely born, in the eternal night – I mean the spectacle of the force that a genius applies not to works, but to himself as a work, to his own taming, to the purification of his imagination, to the ordering and choice in the influx of his tasks and inspirations".[23]

As we can see, interpreting reality through the prism of Dionysus (a new physiological disposition) turns out to be a matter of "tragic joy": glorification of life, suffering from an overabundance of life, the search for resistance and the will to play the game of multiple interpretations and appearances with a reality that is always in the making, always elusive. And it is in asserting that he can never "know" the world that the "Dionysian artist" proves that he has the most intimate, the most respectful, if not the most "religious" relationship with it. And it's this "tragic joy" that the disciple of Dionysus can always be recognized by. Tempted by "the born bewitcher of consciences", by "the genius of the heart", inspired by the "philosophy of Dionysus", this human type takes joy in his metamorphosis, aspiring in his work to sketch out a new figure of subjectivity, overcoming the trial that man has hitherto been, passionately dedicating himself to the breeding [*Züchtung*] of a possible new human: "yes, man was a trial".[24]

This, then, is what the Nietzschean figure of Dionysus and Dionysian exhilaration are all about. Beyond the "death of a God" (Ideal), which would leave either the human unchanged (too human), or the human in the throes of a death foretold (nihilism), we see the birth of a possible human. The joy of this world and of "great mood" in the face of a reality that has regained its god-like "nakedness" (dehumanization), artists or parturients sublimating suffering and weakness in exhilaration, works always starting over, bodies metamorphosed, we ourselves become the newborns of ourselves, "amen" and "tremendous yes" to this life and to ourselves:

> "on this immense, immeasurable scale of happiness, with all its range of colors and shades, which descends from that acme of joy where man feels himself to be an entire divine form, and like nature's justification of itself, to the first rung where joy is that of healthy peasants and healthy beings, half man half beast, the Greeks gave this divine name: Dionysus".[25]

[23] M, §548.
[24] AZ, "Vor der schenkenden Tugend", §2.
[25] PF 1884-1885, 41[6].

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The Grammar of Faith in the Community of Trust

An Excursus from Ludwig Wittgenstein to George Lindbeck

Pierangelo Bianco

1. *Introduction*

The Scottish theologian Fergus Kerr ends his work *Theology after Wittgenstein* by proposing a new philosophy of theology that starts from the thought of the author of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*:

> "Wittgenstein's watchwords in the philosophy of psychology are also contributions of central importance to a theology that starts where we are [...] a theology that starts from the deep and sinister thing in human nature, rather than from a hypothesis about a deity". [1]

Moreover, Kerr considers that a similar possibility is already, in some way, present in Wittgenstein's work, if we consider, for instance, a statement at the center of the first part of the *Philosophical Investigations*: "371. Essence is expressed by grammar [...] 373. Grammar tells what kind of object anything is (Theology as grammar)". [2]

The relationship of the Austrian philosopher with religious thought has indeed been a very important and widely debated subject in recent years. One of the most significant voices in this field is that of the American philosopher Norman Malcolm, who focuses his reflections on Wittgenstein's famous statement in a dialogue with M. O' Connor

[1] F. Kerr, *Theology after Wittgenstein*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford/New York, 1986, p. 163.
[2] L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, cit., p. 23e.

Drury, in which the philosopher confesses to see every problem "from a religious point of view" [3] (*RW* 79). Furthermore, most critics, discussing the religious issue in Wittgenstein, bring out the idea of a "grammar of religion", or even of a "grammar of God". For Instance, Rush Rees states:

> "I should want to say something about what it is 'to talk about God', and how different this is from talking about the moon or talking about our new house or talking about the Queen. How different the 'talking about' is, I mean. That is a difference in grammar". [4]

Again, Norman Malcolm, in an essay, criticizing the ontological proof of God's existence by Anselm of Canterbury, concludes:

> "I wish only to say that there is that human phenomenon of an unbearably heavy conscience and that it is importantly connected with the genesis of the concept of God, that is with the formation of the 'grammar' of the word God". [5]

We can find a reference to the relationship between grammar and religion also in Dewi Z. Philips' essay in which he comments on Searle's understanding of the relationship between religions and language games: "There is a conception of an independent reality in religion. Yet, to see what this conception of an independent reality amounts to, we must pay attention to the grammar of the religious concepts involved". [6]

Finally, the American theologian Hans Frei, taking inspiration from Wittgenstein's thought on the social and communitarian nature of language, offers an idea of theology as "the grammar of religion, understood as a faith and as an ordered community of life". [7] Such idea was then developed by George Lindbeck, Frei's colleague at Yale University. In his work *The Nature of Doctrine*, Lindbeck explores the possibility of an analogy between grammatical rules and religious truths. Without claiming to exhaust such a complex subject, the present arti-

[3] R. Rees (ed.), *Recollections of Wittgenstein*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1984, p. 79: "I am not a religious man but I cannot help seeing every problem from a religious point of view".

[4] Id., *Religion and Language* in *Without Answers,* vol. 8, Routledge, London, 1969, p. 132.

[5] N. Malcolm, *Anselm's Ontological Arguments* in *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 69 n° 1 (Jan. 1960), pp. 41-62.

[6] D. Z. Phillips, *Wittgenstein and Religion*, St. Martins, New York, 1993, p. 25.

[7] Hans Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1992, p. 20.

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cle will try to investigate the possibility, sketched by Wittgenstein, of a "theology as grammar", at first in the thought of Norman Malcolm, and then in the postliberal theology of George Lindbeck. The aim of the text is to consider how such a possible approach to theological thought, can bring with it a new understanding of faith, capable of facing the challenges of social and rational discourse in the contemporary global community.

2. *Essence is expressed by grammar*

In an essay entitled *The Groundlessness of Belief*, the Wittgensteinian philosopher Norman Malcolm complains that "the desire to provide a rational foundation for a form of life is especially prominent in contemporary philosophy of religion", taking the form of a desire which becomes an "intense preoccupation" concerning the "purported proofs of the existence of God". [8] However, this is in contrast with the awareness that the most of our life, not only in the religious field, is characterized precisely by the groundlessness of beliefs, namely the fact that most of the things in which we are involved, from the relationship between the mother and the child, to the adult relation of friendship or love, generally rest on reciprocal trust, rather than on a rational demonstration. Focusing on the religious dimension, a similar awareness can be reflected in the understanding of the difference between "belief in the existence of God" and "belief in God": "belief in God in any degree does require, as I understand the words, some religious action, some commitment, or if not, at least a bad conscience". [9] In this sense, the core issue of a philosophy of religion should not be to provide "an artificial construction" [10] such as the demonstration of God's existence, but to clarify the language game, or the form of life, made up of a strict relationship between words and actions, in which the belief in God takes place: "Religion is a form of life; it is a language embedded in action – what Wittgenstein calls a 'language-game'". [11]

In other words, Norman Malcolm, following Wittgenstein, seems to address to contemporary philosophy of religion the appeal to con-

[8] N. Malcolm, *The Groundlessness of belief*, in Id., *Thought and kowledge*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1977, p. 210.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 211.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 212.

[11] *Ibid.*.

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sider the religious phenomenon from an internal, rather than from an external point of view. This emerges in a quite clear way in the essay quoted above, in which Malcolm considers the Anselmian ontological demonstration of the existence of God, understood as "something than which nothing greater can be thought". [12] Anselm's demonstration is based on a linguistic definition of the word "God" that even the insipient, or the non-believer, cannot avoid: "But surely," concludes the theologian, "that than which a greater cannot be thought cannot be only in the understanding. For if it were only in the understanding, it could be thought to exist also in reality—something which is greater [...] Hence, without doubt, something than which a greater cannot be thought exists both in the understanding and in reality". [13]

According to Malcolm, we must analyze such a demonstration from a grammatical point of view. In this way, we will find out that Anselm's proof is not only true but serves to trace the grammatical difference between the concept of existence proper to God and any other concept of existence: "What Anselm has proved is that the notion of contingent existence or of contingent nonexistence cannot have any application to God". [14] According to the British philosopher, stating that God is "something than which nothing greater can be thought" is like conceiving Him as an unlimited being, with an unlimited existence in terms of space and time: the existence of God cannot be a contingent existence, but a necessary one. Those who, starting from Kant, have tried to demonstrate the inconsistency of this proof and therefore of a rational proof of the existence of God, questioned the fact that the divine entity could be worth something more and different than all the other entities. [15] In other words, from a definition of the thing, it is impossible to deduce its concrete existence. But, considers Malcolm: "what we need to understand, in each case, is the particular sense of the assertion" because, "It is wrong to think that all assertion of existence as the same kind of meaning. There are as many kinds of existential

[12] Anselm of Canterbury, *Proslogion*, in *Complete Philosophical and Theological Treatises of Anselm of Canterbury*, eng. trans. by J. Hopkins and H. Richardson, The Arthur J. Banning Press, Minneapolis, 2000, p. 93.

[13] *Ibid.*, pp. 93-94.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 49.

[15] *See* I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Eng. trans. by N.K. Smith, MacMillan and Co., London, 1929, pp. 500-501: "In all ages men have spoken of an *absolutely necessary* being, and in so doing have endeavoured, not so much to understand whether and how a thing of this kind allows even of being thought". Therefore, Kant concludes that: "the unconditioned necessity of judgements is not the same as an absolute necessity of things. The absolute necessity of the judgement is only a conditioned necessity of the thing, or of the predicate in the judgement".

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propositions as there are kinds of subjects of discourse". [16] The difference placed Kant between the concept of a being only in thought and a being demonstrated as existing, is thus, in Malcolm's terms, brought back to a grammatical difference, in some way restoring legitimacy to the Anselmian argument: it is from the grammar of God that we derive its existence, indeed, it is from the grammar of God that it is possible to understand what kind of existence conforms to him.

Finally, having considered a part of Malcolm's work, the meaning of the Wittgenstein's first proposition from which we started seems now to be clearer: "Essence is expressed by grammar". [17] A similar statement may be valuable for every being, as expressed already by the following sentence: "Grammar tells what kind of object anything is". [18] But there remains a final part of Wittgenstein's proposition to be explored, and probably the most significant one: the idea of a "Theology as grammar". What, finally, does understanding theology as grammar mean? And what consequences does it have on the relationship between faith and truth?

3. *Theology as grammar*

The American Theologian George Lindbeck presents a cultural-linguistic approach to religious truth which comes close to offering a possible answer to these questions. The central idea of Lindbeck's work is summed up in the conception that:

> "Religions are seen as comprehensive interpretative schemes, usually embodied in myths or narratives and heavily ritualized, which structure human experience and understanding of self and world". [19]

The concept of religious truth appropriate to this perspective is "categorial" [20] or "intrasystematic". [21] In this case: "attention, when considering the question of truth, focuses on the categories (or 'grammar' or 'rules of the game') in terms of which truth claims are made and

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 53.
[17] L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, cit., p. 23e.
[18] *Ibid.*
[19] G. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*, SPCK, London, 1984, pp. 32-33.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 63.
[21] *Ibid.*, p. 64.

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expressive symbolisms employed".[22] In other words, truth or falsity should be based on a connotative, internal coherence, rather than on a denotative adherence to reality. The challenge of Lindbeck's approach is to found religious truth on itself, i.e. on an intrasystematic ground. According to him, in particular, such a ground is to be found in the relationship between the narrative of the text on which a religion is centered and the community in which the religion is professed as a shared system of beliefs. In this sense: "A religion thought of as comparable to a cultural system, as a set of language games correlated with a form of life, may as a whole correspond or not correspond to what a theist calls God's being and will".[23]

The explicit use of the terms "language game" and "form of life", taken from Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, is present here, just as it was in Malcolm's work. The final result of a similar conception of religious truth, mostly developed in his work *The Nature of Doctrine*, will however be the original idea of an "intratextual"[24] theology. In his essay *Barth and Textuality*, Lindbeck distinguishes an "intertextual" and an "intratextual"[25] way of interpreting religious sacred scriptures. To explain the difference, he traces a parallel between two main periods of Christian history in which the biblical text has constituted the ground for the foundation of faith and the building of community on an "inter-communicative force"[26]: the early Christian age, until the period of Emperor Constantine and the period of the Protestant Reformation of Luther and Calvin. In both these cases, as Lindbeck tries to show, the community of believers made use of the scriptures as a key to interpretation of their experience in the world, rather than allowing their experience to become the starting point for the comprehension of the sacred texts:

> "One notable example is the way it kept the Lutherans and Reformed talking to each other. They were sacramentally divided for deep historical, cultural and sociological reasons, and yet they were so unmistakably similar in their way of reading Scripture".[27]

In other words, they shared common interpretative grounds for the reading of the Bible that served as "comprehensive, interpretative

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 48.
[23] *Ibid.*, p. 51.
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 114.
[25] G. Lindbeck, *Barth and Textuality*, in *Theology Today*, 43, 1986, p. 363.
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 364.
[27] *Ibid.*.

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schemes",[28] or "fixed communicative patterns which are used in many different contexts for many purposes and with many meanings".[29] Such a situation resembles, in the eyes of the theologian, that of early Christianity, in which the Old Testament, or the writings that belong to the Jewish faith, served Christianity as a prototype, an original source of which the words and deeds of Jesus Christ represented the type, the final fulfilment that offered the complete sense. Lindbeck recalls that the Christian communities, before the codification of the Gospels, were readers of the *Torah,* in the Greek translation of the *Septuagint* and they informed their life experience by interpreting this Scripture through the memory of the teachings of Jesus Christ.

In his essay *Atonement and the Hermeneutics of Intratextual Social Embodiment*, Lindbeck concludes that:

> "Christ is encountered chiefly as a Model to be imitated rather than a savior to be trusted [...] Jesus is not first Example and then Savior, but the other way round. He is trusted and loved as the One who saves from sin, death and the devil, and it is from this trust and love there arises the longing to be like him in his life and death".[30]

The final answer then, is not to believe, abstractly, in the existence of Christ, in terms of historical or even scientific evidence, but to believe in Christ. That becomes possible, in Lindbeck's own terms, as a result of the relationship between the narrative of the text and the community of the faithful in which the example of Christ takes shape and is lived in everyday life. It cannot be, instead, a centrality of Christ in the sense of F. Strauss, who tries to prove the historical truthfulness of the events in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, nor even less in the mystical sense of an *Imitatio Christi* carried out in isolation by the individual believer.

4. *Conclusion*

Finally, having considered Lindbeck's interpretation of theology together with Malcolm's thought on Wittgenstein and religion, it seems possible to conclude that the meaning of trust, in the sense of "belief

[28] G. Lindbeck, *The Nature of the Doctrine*, cit., p. 32.
[29] Id., *Barth and Textuality*, cit., p. 364.
[30] G. Lindbeck, *Atonement & the Hermeneutics of Intratextual Social Embodiment*, in G. Lindbeck, A. McGraph, G. Hunsinger et alii, *The Nature of Confession: Evangelicals and Postliberal in conversation*, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove (Illinois), 1996, p. 237.

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in", particularly emphasizes, in both these authors, the role of the preposition "in". Therefore, believing in something entails embracing a commitment to it and being involved in it. To again quote a significant statement by Wittgenstein:

> "I believe that one of the things Christianity says is that sound doctrines are all useless. That you have to change your life. (Or the direction of your life.)
> It says that wisdom is all cold; and that you can no more use it for setting your life to rights than you can forge iron when it's cold. The point is that a sound doctrine need not take hold of you; you can follow it as you would a doctor's prescription.—But here you need something to move and turn you in a new direction - (I.e. this is how I understand it). Once you have been turned round, you must stay turned round. Wisdom is passionless. But faith by contrast is what Kierkegaard calls a passion". [31]

George Lindbeck indirectly offers an answer to this thought, focusing on the nature of doctrine and developing a cultural-linguistic approach to it. In his perspective, doctrine does not in the least represent a cold and abstract propositional truth such as the demonstration of the existence of God. On the contrary, religious doctrine assumes the form of a grammar, namely the grammar of faith, constituted in the relationship between the sacred text and the community of believers, within which every religious truth acquires its significance and value. Thus a community of reciprocal trust can become a community of believers in God and not merely in his existence. Indeed, as Lindbeck observes in one of his autobiographical memories:

> "This focus on building Christian community will seem outrageous to some in view of the world's needs, but it is a strength for those who see the weakening of communal commitments and loyalties as modernity's fundamental disease. Perhaps no greater contribution to peace, justice and the environment is possible than that provided by the existence of intercontinental and interconfessional communal networks such as the churches already are to some extent, and can become more fully, if God wills". [32]

[31] L. Wittgenstein, *Vermischte Bemerkungen*, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 1977; Eng. ed. by G.H. von Wright, Id., *Culture and Value*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1980, p. 53e.

[32] G. Lindbeck, *Confession and Community* (1990), in Id., *The Church in a Postliberal Age*, Eerdmans Publishing, Cambridge, 2002, pp. 8-9.

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Assessing Multimodal Scientific Writing Competencies: An Analysis of Validity and Educational Justice of Standardized Tests

Dany López González

Introduction

The landscape of scientific practice is intrinsically linked to discursive practices where science finds its voice. In this regard, writing is pivotal in shaping disciplinary knowledge in science. Writing is not merely a task undertaken by scientists but a practice that embodies how scientific communities understand, engage with, and debate their subject matter. The connection between writing and scientific disciplines thrives on typified discursive practices, known as genres, which are deeply embedded in the social and cultural fabric of a disciplinary community. Scientific genres can be conceptualized as texts that mirror common scientific practices, characterized by staging, goal-orientation, and realization through language. [1] As such, genres in science are not limited to visible research papers; they can extend to a plethora of crucial genres that facilitate the knowledge-building process, such as laboratory notebooks, presentations in research teams, scientific laboratories, and laboratory reports, among others. [2]

Science genres are vital contributors to the construction of disciplinary knowledge. However, it is relevant to acknowledge that genres in science go beyond verbal-linguistic expressions, they also incorporate

[1] J.R. Martin-D. Rose, *Genre Relations: mapping culture*, in Equinox, London, 2007.
[2] S. Doody-N. Artemeva, *Everything Is in the Lab Book': Multimodal Writing, Activity, and Genre Analysis of Symbolic Mediation in Medical Physics*, in Written Communication, XXXIX, 1, 2021.

mathematical and visual resources that frequently coexist.[3] In other words, the knowledge-building process in science is inherently multimodal, encompassing various modes of communication. These combinations of semiotic modes are integral to scientific reasoning, as they create meaningful representations of the external world. It is through this multimodal language that scientific insights, knowledge, and facts are conveyed.

Teaching scientific discourse: Challenges of multimodal language

In science education, it is crucial for students to effectively engage in the critical interpretation and creation of abstract scientific concepts with language, images, and mathematics. This multimodal approach is essential for developing disciplinary literacy in science and should be effectively fostered through instructional guidance. Therefore, it is essential to recognize that the way we teach and conduct scientific research is different, and the role genre plays in teaching is crucial to develop students capable of mastering both scientific discourse and practice. In line with it is also relevant to comprehend that scientific practice is not only "doing" science as hands-on activities, but also "language intensive", which requires both student and teacher to engage with specific science discourse.[4] As such, the highly specialized knowledge and discourse can be effective for students when supported by teacher-guided writing. Scaffolding these "language intensive" practices, therefore, plays a crucial role in science classroom discourse, which requires a comprehensible metalanguage for students and teachers to be able to write and talk multimodally. Hence, there is a critical need for an effective pedagogical approach that incorporates scaffolding for both genre and multimodality. Without supportive writing that situates the writing in a broader context beyond verbal language and acknowledges the multimodal nature of science and teaching, the highly specialized, technical, and abstract content, often presented implicitly, can hinder an effective teaching and learning process. This issue

[3] J.R. Martin, *Multimodal Semiotics: Theoretical Challenges*, in S. Dreyfus-S. Hood-M. Stenglin (eds.), *Semiotic margins: Meaning in multimodalities*, in Continuum Publishing Corporation, London, 2012.

[4] KS. Tang-J. Park-J. Chang, *Multimodal Genre of Science Classroom Discourse: Mutual Contextualization Between Genre and Representation Construction*, in Res Sci Educ, LII, 2022, pp. 755–772.

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is particularly significant for students with limited prior experience in science, as their educational and social backgrounds can significantly impact their success.

Additionally, not only is inclusive pedagogy relevant in multimodal terms, but it is also important to have reliable evidence that can inform pedagogical decision-making. This assertion implies inquiring into the complex interplay of different linguistic modes and their meaning in scientific discourse to improve the assessment tools on which learning outcomes are reported. Therefore, to improve the validity of science genre assessment for pedagogical purposes, particularly in supporting its effectiveness in assessing and certifying writing-related competencies, a comprehensive understanding of science genres, and the role of multimodal language together with a robust model of measurement and assessment is required.

This is critical in higher education, given the accelerated expansion that the higher education system has experienced in recent decades along with the institutional and social interest in promoting and assuring the quality of its degree programs, which has driven both the creation of writing support programs and a greater emphasis on standardized writing assessment. [5] However, the dominance of verbal language in assistance programs at higher education overlooks the importance of multimodal language in supporting genre-based writing, especially for students in science and multidisciplinary fields. Integrating multimodal language support and academic literacy is essential for collaboration between language specialists and disciplinary experts, facilitating knowledge sharing and improving support for students experiencing language difficulties. Social support, including help from trusted peers and staff members, is crucial in students' engagement with language learning and multimodal literacy. Besides, the increased incentive for using standardized instruments to assess students' writing competencies, whether to establish pathways for university admission or to certify writing competencies needed to ensure the quality of teaching in higher education, has a high social, cultural, institutional, and educational impact. The use of these tests influences students' learning trajectories, curriculum design, and pedagogical practices. [6] However,

[5] A. Chiroleu-M. Marquina, *Democratisation or credentialism?:public policies of expansion of higher education in Latin America*, in Policy Reviews in Higher Education, I, 2017, pp. 139-160.

[6] F. Navarro-N. Ávila Reyes-G. Gómez Vera, *Validez y Justicia: hacia una evaluación significativa en pruebas estandarizadas de escritura*, in Revista Meta: Avaliação, XI, 31, 2019,

the scarce theoretical discussion on the validity criteria associated with the construction of instruments that seek to measure genre-mediated language competencies is crucial to advance toward a fair assessment that allows for the recognition of the linguistic diversities of disciplines and students.

Therefore, focusing on the role of writing competency assessment instruments to inform decision-making in higher education, the debate here is about the need for standardized learning measurement instruments that can provide reliable, valid, and sustained evidence of language-based competencies in a way that supports instruction, reduces gaps and improves student-teacher relationships through the use of a common and accessible metalanguage for a diverse population of students.

The challenge of measuring multimodal competencies

The first challenge associated with measuring language-related attributes is connected with the multidimensional nature of writing and language. Writing has an epistemic and semiotic dimension, constructs and communicates meanings and is involved in all human-scientific activity.[6] In this regard, writing implies using language to fulfill an ideational, interpersonal, and textual function.[7] Ideational in that it allows the construction of representations of the world, interpersonal in that it involves relationships among participants, and textual to fulfill the function of organizing knowledge. A second challenge associated with the above is related to the material space in which multimodal writing is constructed and articulated. Writing is crystallized in scientific genres, texts that satisfy specific communicative purposes. However, unlike genres created by experts (e.g., scientific research articles), in genres used in the educational setting, it is more difficult to reach a consensus to assess their quality. Consequently, students often perceive that the same genre is written arbitrarily, according to the criteria of each teacher.

A third challenge in assessing multimodal competencies also involves a temporal dimension. This involves recognizing and tracking language learning over time. Systemic Functional linguists, for instance,

p. 1.

[7] M. A. K. Halliday, *Introduction to functional grammar*, in Hodder Arnold, London, 1994.

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have studied language development mapping the progression from informal spoken language to technical language in different school subjects. Early childhood education sees children adapting spoken language for curriculum genres.[8] At the same time, upper primary and junior secondary schooling emphasizes literacy skills, subject-specific knowledge, and the integration of verbal and non-verbal resources, especially in subjects like mathematics and science. This research highlights the evolving nature of language acquisition and development throughout a student's educational journey. During mid-adolescence, students grapple with more complex and abstract language, which differs significantly from the familiar expressions of common-sense experience. Teaching at this stage involves genre analysis and helping students understand how language functions in various subject areas, such as physics, biology, mathematics, and science. Late adolescence and adulthood mark a phase where students engage with theoretical knowledge and abstract concepts, applying language in distinct methods of inquiry and knowledge creation. Higher education further embeds technical discourses within disciplinary practices, expanding students' skills for navigating various educational domains.

From a measurement perspective, it is relevant to understand that the construction of instruments requires knowing who interprets the scores, for what purposes, and with what intentions. In other words, the contribution of measurement instruments to improve teaching practices and inform learning outcomes depends on measuring what they are intended to measure reliably and validly, and on using and interpreting them according to their specific purpose, as well as in light of the latest evidence-based on research and practice.[9] This implies the need for a standard for constructing educational instruments, guiding the development of a validity argument to support the interpretation of educational instrument scores. This does not mean that scores are the ultimate goal of measurement; that would pose a risk to educators, and students, and perpetuate educational injustices. For a reliable interpretation and use of educational instruments, innovative advances in psychometrics, learning sciences, and empirical-theoretical understanding of language are needed to build more comprehensive, flexible, and authentic assessments that better respond to the diversity of

[8] F. Christie-B. Derewianka, *School Discourse: Learning to Write Across theYears of Schooling*, in Continuum Publishing Corporation, New York, 2010.

[9] P. Uccelli, *Midadolescents' Language Learning at School: Toward More Just and Scientifically Rigorous Practices in Research and Education*, in Language Learning, Wiley, 2023.

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today's communities. In this context, the assessment of highly specialized genres, with a high demand for multimodality language and in specialized disciplinary contexts, continues to represent a challenge in higher education.

Measuring the quality of multimodal genres is a challenge for the field of psychometrics, for the field of linguistics, and for the field of education. The question we pose relates to what combination of instruments used by which actors and for which purposes can help transform which aspects of research ecologies and educational practice related to the use of scientific genres. The high degree of conceptual abstraction, high technicality, and level of specialization achieved in higher education are reflected in complex scientific genres integrating more than one canonical text with complex multimodal demands. Therefore, measurement processes should recognize epistemic and semiotic differences in disciplinary writing before measuring and assessing their writing. While this presents a measurement challenge, institutions of higher education necessarily require the collection of sustained evidence to inform the learning progress in communication and writing that students require to become well-rounded scientists.

This requires, at least from an evaluative point of view, standards for educational measurement to guide educational professionals, educators, and decision-makers, as well as test designers and developers, test users, and all those who receive and interpret test results. In other words, the Standards underpin rigorous and reliable professional judgment. This approach is directly related to the definition of validity in instrument construction: Validity refers to the degree to which evidence and theory support interpretations of test scores for proposed uses of tests.[10] At this point, it is important to mention that the degree of support for any proposition is logically independent of the truth of that proposition; that is, an interpretation of test scores could be incorrect despite having the strongest possible support from the perspective of a community of observers. Standards in a certain way allow operationalizing a concept (i.e., what is intended to be measured) in a way that makes it straightforward to test developers what the exact standard of validity is. In other words, they have to convince the jury. However, for scientific research, truth cannot equate to quantity of evidence, so standards, such as cause, consequence, or both, are primarily

[10] American Educational Research Association-American Psychological Association-National Council on Measurement in Education. *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*, Washington, 2014.

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focused on situations where evidence is used to make decisions about individual people or programs in the current time.

Another challenge in the measurement of attributes such as competencies is related to the measurement of social and psychological concepts and the implementation of methods borrowed from the natural sciences to measure observable physical attributes. It is commonly accepted that psychologists can measure intelligence, and educators can assess students' knowledge and writing competencies. Despite the successful expansion of measurement to social and psychological attributes, the transition from the physical to the psychosocial raise crucial questions. Does measuring length mean the same thing as measuring language proficiency? If not, what is the difference, and are thermometers as reliable as tests that purport to measure skills? [11] These essential questions challenge the possibility of social science measurements, their interpretation, and their influence on the development of social and psychological theories. We might debate these issues, criticizing the use of the concept of measurement in the social sciences and the failure of social scientists to address theoretical and philosophical questions about the definition and practice of measurement. This tension has been accompanied by a distrust of formal measurement of psychological phenomena, possibly related to an inadequacy of natural scientific methods to approach the nature of psychic life.

Despite fundamental questions about measurement in the social sciences, the practice has become widespread and essential in fields such as education. We must expect it to continue, but we need a solid foundation to continue to rely on psychosocial concepts. These critical questions about the meaning and validity of measurement need answers or at least an interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary approach. We can think of measurement as being undertaken to engage with the world, not to passively reflect the world according to the spectator theory of knowledge, but to support successful use. [12] From this point of view, measurement should not be understood as the reproduction or recovery of a set of true values, but as a set of three activities: classification, ordering, and quantification. This view assumes a pragmatic perspective, mostly aligned with assessment, as the author states: this view of measurement closer to assessment or, at

[11] D. Torres Irribarra, *A Pragmatic Perspective of Measurement. In A Pragmatic Perspective of Measurement*, in Cham: Springer International Publishing, Switzerland, 2021, p. 1.

[12] D. Torres Irribarra, *A Pragmatic Perspective of Measurement. In A Pragmatic Perspective of Measurement*, in Cham: Springer International Publishing, Switzerland, 2021, p. 44.

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least, broader than quantification implies understanding that the attributes of interest in the social sciences can, in principle, be modeled in any of these three ways, and studies involving the measurement of competencies or psychosocial aspects would benefit from a common framework that aims to produce reliable and actionable knowledge. When studying attributes in the social sciences, such as multimodal language proficiency, one should avoid assuming in advance a quantitative difference model or other assumption that biases the process of reliable and valid measurement.

Conclusion

Measuring competencies involves understanding measurement as a purpose-driven activity. When we measure, we do so with a purpose in mind. Incorporating the objectives into the definition is crucial from a pragmatic standpoint, as they provide the criteria for evaluating the quality of the measurement in terms of its usefulness in achieving those objectives. This links the measurement to a specific purpose and establishes criteria for its evaluation. This means that measurement holds substantial societal value for both the public and scientists, as it is linked to accuracy and reliability. Finally, assessing students to identify educationally areas of language growth, especially in the assessment of multimodal genre-mediated competencies, does not necessarily imply a reductionist view; on the contrary, evidence from assessment can empower teachers to empower student learning with instructional approaches that foreground students' linguistic and cultural strengths. Current measurement standards demand a shift towards a dynamic and proactive approach in developing assessment tools, aiming to minimize injustices and prevent potential harm.

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What is Poetic Phenomenology?

Jan Juhani Steinmann

1. *The original ground of phenomenology*

What is phenomenology? According to Edmund Husserl's well-known motto, it is – inspired by the originally Platonic αὐτὰ τὰ πράγματα[1] – the return to the "things themselves", the "Sachen selbst".[2] This is not a turn to the concrete empirical things of the world, as is often misunderstood, but to the givenness of the phenomenon, i.e. to what is originally given in seeing or experiencing. In philosophy, this orientation towards the "things themselves" is linked to the longing for a quasi-original vision or a pure showing of the phenomena. Husserl therefore speaks of the need to "learn to see in the right way",[3] i.e. to learn to see phenomenologically, which goes hand in hand with the fundamental claim of phenomenology to be philosophy *par excellence*. A criterion that Maurice Merleau-Ponty also takes up when he speaks of "*rapprendre à voir le monde*" as "*la vraie philosophie*".[4] Phenomenology thus becomes, as Heidegger says, the rediscovered possibility of research in philosophy in general.[5]

However, this turn to the "things themselves" is only possible by breaking out of the "most familiar"[6] of our known and self-evident reference to life and moving into a different, phenomenological ref-

[1] Plato, *Gorgias*. WBG (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft). Darmstadt 2011, 459b. All translations by the author.

[2] E. Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen (Zweiter Theil)*. Max Niemeyer. Halle a.S. 1901, p. 7.

[3] Id., *Phänomenologische Psychologie*. Springer-Sciene+Business Media B.V.. Den Haag 1968, p. 159.

[4] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*. Gallimard. Paris 1976, p. XVI.

[5] See M. Heidegger, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des* Zeitbegriffs. Vittorio Klostermann. Frankfurt am Main 1994, p. 184.

[6] E. Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie.* Felix Meiner Verlag. Hamburg 2012, p. 133.

erence to the world. In this context, Husserl also speaks of a "leap of reflection".[7] This requires a change in attitude towards the world, i.e. a transition from the "natural attitude" to the "phenomenological attitude".[8] This transition is possible by virtue of the "phenomenological ἐποχή", i.e. the pausing of the natural attitude towards the world by excluding all assumptions and all prior knowledge about the world, including its objective reality. The complementary counterpart to ἐποχή, on the other hand, is reduction, which determines what is ultimately to be developed as a result of the withholding of judgment from the natural world, i.e. what it has been reduced to. The more real reality, as it were, that is to be made accessible in this way is no longer the Aristotelian "being as being" or the Kantian "thing in itself", but the "pure phenomenon" as it is given to subjective consciousness. According to Husserl, this movement should allow an eidetics of the world, i.e. a view of essence, insofar as the "phenomenological reductions" enable the analysis of "pure consciousness".[9] Husserl compares this change of attitude to a religious conversion,[10] insofar as the "abstention from execution" of the natural attitude will lead to a complete "conversion of the whole of life" and thus result in "a completely new way of life".[11]

2. *The phenomenological phenomenon*

Phenomenology should therefore be understood from the outset as an art of seeing, which aims to make the pure phenomenon accessible. But what is a pure or phenomenological phenomenon? A phenomenon in the sense of phenomenology is decidedly more than just the perceptible eventfulness of appearance or the appearance of an object of perception. Certainly, every tree, every melody, every scent is a phenomenon. However, this does not yet mean a phenomenological phenomenon. We are only talking about such a phenomenon when, in Husserl's sense, the appearance of a tree, a melody and a scent is reflected in consciousness in its subjective mode of existence, i.e. after ἐποχή and reduction have paved the way for it. No phenomenological

[7] Id., *Zur Phänomenologie der Reduktion.* Springer-Sciene+Business Media B.V.. Dordrecht 2002, p. 219.

[8] Id., *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie I.* Meiner. München 2009, p. 138.

[9] *Ibidem* §33-§46; §47-§55; §56-§62.

[10] Id. *Krisis*, cit., p. 149.

[11] *Ibidem* p. 163.

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phenomenon without a change of attitude. For Husserl, a phenomenon is the subjective way in which things are given. The phenomenon is thus a reduction of the givenness to the pure immanence of consciousness, [12] whereby the most general "essential character" of phenomena is that of being intentional, i.e. "to be 'as consciousness of', 'appearance of'" the respective objects. [13] In this directedness, the phenomenon subsequently takes on transcendental philosophical and egological traits for Husserl. [14] In this actual givenness of the world as a transcendental-egological and eidetic phenomenon, Husserl hopes to have found the "original ground of experience" [15] that he was looking for.

For Heidegger, however – to give a second example – the phenomenological phenomenon is "that in which something reveals itself, can become visible in itself", [16] derived from the verbal φαίνεσθαι, i.e. its showing itself, and the etymologically contained φαίνω, i.e. the putting-into-brightness, and the stem φα- of φῶς, i.e. the light, the brightness, which in turn belongs to these two. As "that which shows itself, that which shows itself, that which is revealed", the phenomenon in Heidegger's phenomenological sense thus means "showing itself to itself". [17] Or to put it another way: The phenomenon is that which appears from itself, that which reveals itself from itself. However, what can be "seen" in the phenomenon is often precisely that "which *does not* show itself at first and for the most part, which is hidden from what shows itself at first and for the most part, but at the same time is something that essentially belongs to what shows itself at first and for the most part". According to Heidegger, however, this something that is now hidden and only shows itself hidden is not an arbitrary being, but the "*being* of being" par excellence. From this we can also understand Heidegger's weighty statement that ontology is only possible as phenomenology, i.e. that phenomenology should become the mode of access and mode of determination of ontology. [18] This invisibility in the visible thus also indicates an intrinsic surplus, a hyperphenomenality that is inherent in every phenomenon and that Merleau-Ponty, Emma-

[12] See E. Husserl: *Die Idee der Phänomenologie.* Nijhoff. Den Haag 1950, pp. 44.

[13] Id. *Encylopaedia-Britannica-Artikel* in *Die phänomenologische Methode.* Reclam. Stuttgart 1985, p. 198.

[14] See id., *Krisis* cit., p. 106.

[15] Id., *Formale und Transzendentale Logik*. Nijhoff. Den Haag 1974, p. 219.

[16] M. Heidegger: *Sein und Zeit.* Max Niemeyer Verlag. Tübingen 1967, p. 28.

[17] *Ibidem* p. 31.

[18] *Ibidem* p. 35. Already for Husserl phenomenology is "true and genuine universal ontology". See *Cartesianische Meditationen*. Felix Meiner Verlag. Hamburg 2012, p. 155.

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nuel Levinas and Bernhard Waldenfels in particular have attempted to describe.

3. *Description as presence*

Regardless of the differences within the various approaches to phenomenology – the Husserl heresies, as Ricœur called them [19] – these all prove to be "radical considerations", [20] which turn away from the "vulgarly understood phenomenon" [21] in order to question the phenomena in their actual givenness. Questioning them in their "thingness itself" means describing them according to their reduced givenness. Phenomenology is and remains, in Husserl's words, "the science of experience", [22] which always begins by "bringing pure and, so to speak, still silent experience [...] to the pure enunciation of its own meaning." [23] This enunciation means bringing up the ontological givenness of the phenomenon; it thus touches on the question of its presence. We can therefore understand phenomenological work on the phenomenon as work on the linguistic realization of the phenomenon. This presence must be both a textual-factual, i.e. predicative presence (*in verbo*), as well as an experiential-effective one, in the affectedness of the reader (*in sensu*). Based on the textuality, this is, on the one hand, a presence that is objectified; and, on the other hand, a quasi-real presence of the phenomenon that has an effect on the concrete experience of the subject concerned. If we think back to Heidegger, the claim of phenomenology, in the sense of φαίνεσθαι, must therefore lie in making the phenomenon to be described present in language in such a way that it shines "as a pure phenomenon" through the descriptions, as it were, and thus shows itself to be what it is – the "Sache selbst". The big question then is, how can phenomenological description concretely prove this linguistic presence of the phenomenon? There can only be two answers: On the one hand, by means of a language that corresponds to the phenomenon itself; on the other hand, by means of an effect that satisfies the saying of what is said, i.e. the reality of what is made present. Has phenomenology so far fulfilled this requirement? If so, this

[19] P. Ricœur, *A l'école de la phénoménologie*. Paris 1986, p. 156.
[20] E. Husserl, *Ideen I* cit., p.107.
[21] M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* cit., p. 31.
[22] E. Husserl, *Ideen I* cit., p. 145.
[23] Id. *Cartesianische Meditationen* cit., p. 39.

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would mean that the language of its descriptions would have produced a corresponding effect in the reader of these descriptions, as if they were perceiving the phenomenon itself, supplemented by the analytical description of their thingness itself. If not, this would mean that phenomenology has not yet found a descriptive language that makes the self-showing of the pure phenomenon present, even in its merely absent presence, as is the case with all hyperphenomena, such as the phenomenon of the alien and the other.

4. *Poetic presence*

The answer to the above question must be "no". Despite significant descriptive attempts, especially by Heidegger and Levinas – whose descriptions probably allow the phenomenon to speak most forcefully of itself – phenomenology has so far lacked a phenomenal language of both ontological correspondence and the real effect of itself. In terms of the aesthetics of reception, this would mean that the reader of the phenomenological language of description would respond to it in a concrete bodily way, since he would be touched pathically by the φαίνεσθαι of the phenomenon. Movements such as astonishment, shock, irritation, amusement, alienation or excitement can be accurately described phenomenologically, but only when these are described in such a way that we as readers are actually astonished, shocked, irritated, amused, alienated and excited, does the phenomenon – in the sense of φαίνεσθαι – appear through the word in such a way that it has a physical effect on us, i.e. is made present for us. Such a linguistic capacity, however, we know primarily from poetry – understood here in the broad sense as the genuineness of literature – specifically from a condensation of the contemplation of being. It is therefore evident that if phenomenology wants to live up to its own descriptive claim, it must poeticize itself more strongly in its descriptiveness. A "poetic phenomenology" thus understands itself as a descriptive bringing-to-language of the phenomenon, which is more demonstrative, because it is ontological; and more present, because it has bodily effects on us – compared to a merely analytical description of the phenomenon, as we know it from the tradition since Husserl.

The poetry of such a phenomenology can, with Waldenfels in mind, initially be understood as "enaesthetic speaking". This is not limited to "describing and explaining what is seen and heard, visible and audible,

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but makes visible and audible in the course of speaking 'parallel' to painting and making music." Waldenfels sees such a "linguistic poiesis", which goes hand in hand with a concrete bodiliness, at work in authors such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Paul Valéry, Samuel Beckett, Thomas Bernhard, Marcel Proust and Robert Musil. As a bodily way of speaking, it always transcends speaking about the body, because it speaks of and to the body.[24] Are a Nietzsche, Beckett, or Proust, but also a Søren Kierkegaard or Fernando Pessoa, thus the better phenomenologists, so to speak, because they succeed more concretely in addressing the reader bodily with their language through enaesthetic speech and including them in their phenomenal world? In any case, their poetic descriptions of phenomena evoke – according to the presumably unanimous experience – completely different bodily responses than the descriptions of a Husserl or Max Scheler. The decisive question is therefore whether the "pure phenomena" were thereby made more real, because more effective. And whether the absence of the phenomenon was thereby also present in such an indicative way that it was brought to its effect in us recipients.

5. *Basic features of a poetic phenomenology*

A poetic phenomenology speaks from the body to the body. It thus proves to be not only an intensified culture of description, but also a more specific, "new way to see", insofar as it directs its phenomenological attunement to the non-vulgarity of the "things themselves" in such a way that their radicality emerges compellingly. Now, not all poetry is always and already phenomenological, but every phenomenology must also become poetic in order to correspond to an enaesthetic speaking. For it to succeed in this, it must fulfill the following criteria: First, it must make explicit use of the qualities of literature, that is of the possibilities to show through increased vividness, plasticity and conspicuousness, in such a way that it brings with them an immediate and atmospheric presence of the "Sache selbst" to be shown. In this, it can be imagined, the auratic quality of the "thing itself" appears within the literary text – we think of Walter Benjamins notion of Aura – which can thus be experienced through a corresponding atmosphere emanating from these texts. Second, its "showing speech" must thus express the ambivalence

[24] See B. Waldenfels: *Sinnesschwellen.* Suhrkamp. Frankfurt am Main 1998, p. 12.

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of reality in a particularly intensive way so that it can have a strong pathic effect on the reader, i.e. haunt him, in order to involve him emotionally and reflexively in what it illustrates. It must therefore succeed in both alienating and familiarizing the reader's experience through the associated experience with the language. Third, it must therefore exhibit both sufficient precision and openness to allow a concept of being of its phenomenality, but without narrowing into it in an unliving way. The necessary bodiliness of its language is only maintained in an interplay of precise openness and open preciseness. Fourth, a poetic phenomenology requires therefore a certain culture of flexibility in its descriptions, to which an ethos of circling around a phenomenon, a certain courage to be imprecise and the omission of the unspeakable are all essential. Fifth, in all of this, poetic phenomenology is not least a question of style, more precisely, a style of a specific representation, to be allowed by all means, which unmistakably distinguishes the different poets from one another. It is precisely in this associated intensity and reduction of abstraction that poetry has the most insistent and emphatic effect on its readers. An intensive poet-reader relationship *ipso facto* can serve as an increasing factor for a personal addressedness of the reader with the author he reads. This factor usually succeeds very effectively in poetry, literature, or literary-inspired texts, because it can develop and manifest the involvement of its readers to a greater extent in its showings and narrative acts. In reading poetic texts, the recipient himself feels addressed. Sixth, in this way, poetic phenomenology must sow the seeds for resonance relationships to arise between the poet and the reader, which can become moods that can even by narrated. From this an atmospheric involvement of the reader is possible through contemplation, allowing the familiar possibilities of identification we know from novel or film heroes, which ultimately intensify the possibility that readers are thrown back on themselves, as it is typical for the recipients of the arts. Outstanding texts of such naturalization are then not only porous in the sense that a presence of the "Sache selbst" becomes possible, but also insofar as they are also porous for the reader, who can fill the torn open gaps, cracks, and holes with himself, as the person affected by them and challenged to respond. Particularly religious, i.e. theo-poetic texts can have a such an effect on the reader, since they contextualize him, firstly, with the eternal, which he either is, believes himself to be or knows himself to be protected by; secondly with the cosmic whole, which also encompasses him, or thirdly, at least with the existential addressedness of each individual life, insofar as that what

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is written also affects him. Seventh, and finally, poetic phenomenology must be open to a certain "willing suspension of disbelief", as introduced by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The principle that we should voluntarily give up our doubts about narrative fiction, which in our hyper-phenomenological case must also refer to non-fictional things, and, if necessary, are prepared to believe the impossible, should be integrated into a specific poetic ἐποχή, which can complement the regular phenomenological ἐποχή to allow a stronger pathic effect of the phenomenon.

6. *Conclusion*

Poetic phenomenology should thus not only use poetic examples to show how phenomenality can be made present more concretely, but also create such examples itself. The essential differences between purely literary texts and phenomenological descriptions – which, despite the many parallels, must exist because not all poetic texts are necessarily written from a phenomenological attitude as a result of ἐποχή and reduction – are initially irrelevant,[25] if we interpret literature either as a poetic mirror of the empirical world, through which we experience what was verbalized in terms of experience, or as an inducing medium that allows us readers to recall certain experiences, which we can then refer to phenomenologically. In the first case, reality shines through the text, as it were, into our experience; the quasi-real and bodily presence. In the second case, we find a textually concentrated experiential reality: the linguistically objectified presence. As such poetic phenomenology is not in competition with regular phenomenology, rather it complements it by attempting to make the phenomenon present as concretely and intensively as possible through the means of language.

Blutende Blitze. Graduelle Blendung.

> Wir himmeln Blitze an,
> die uns nicht versagen
> unsere schlichten Blicke
> in aufgeflammten Falten,

[25] Husserl's criticism of the so-called "literary philosophers" stands in contrast to this. See *Krisis* cit., p. 18.

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da Partituren sich entladen,
nach und nach zu blenden,
an diesen Gottesseufzern,
in Salzburger Lüften,
wo Blutfunken jagen
über rot gestrichne Spitzen
rissig gemalter Achtsamkeit. [26]

[26] J.J. Steinmann, *Am Saum der Worte. Eine Wiener Musikpoesie,* Castrum. 2021, Vienna, p. 40. Translation by the author: Bleeding Flashes. Gradual Glare. We worship lightning, / that do not deny us / our simple gazes / in flaring folds, / as scores are lightened / to glare us little by little, / at these sighs of God, / in the Salzburg airs, / where blood sparks chase / over red-painted tips / of cracked painted attentiveness.

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Why do we need Posthuman Ethics instead of Humanism?

Victoria Bauer

Humanism has been equated to anthropocentrism.[1] For centuries, man has seen himself as the crown of creation, and has found various reasons to justify his special position at the top of the hierarchy of all living entities: Mostly because God has chosen (the male) him to be at the head of creation, but even after the removal of the God premise from modern sciences caused by the texts and theories of scholars like Darwin, Nietzsche, Freud and Einstein, (philosophical) anthropologists still emphasize the special abilities of the human being, which entitle it to be the master of the world and all living entities.[2] These positions have been heavily criticized in the last century, not only in terms of content, but also in terms of the methodological approach of philosophical anthropologists.[3] Meanwhile, thanks to Freud, we realized that we cannot call ourselves masters of the world. We are probably not even masters over ourselves.[4]

In times of climate change, humanitarian crises, opaque globaliza-

[1] J. Maritain, *Humanisme intégral. Problèmes temporels et spirituels d'une nouvelle chrétienté*, in *OEuvres complètes*, vol. VI (1935-1938), Éditions Universitaires Fribourg Suisse - Éditions Saint Paul, Fribourg-Paris, 1984. p. 322.

[2] A. Gehlen, *Urmensch Und Spätkultur*, Athenäum-Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 1964., see G. H. Meads, *Geist, Identität Und Gesellschaft*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1968., see H. Plessner, *Die Stufen Des Organischen Und Der Mensch: Einleitung in Die Philosophische Anthropologie,* De Gruyter, Berlin, 1975., see M. Scheler, *Die Stellung des Menschen Im Kosmos*, Bouvier, Bonn 1991.

[3] J. Habermas, *Philosophische Anthropologie*, in *Kultur Und Kritik. Verstreute Aufsätze,* 1973.., see, M. Horkheimer, *Bemerkungen Zur Philosophischen Anthropologie*, in *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, IV, 1, 1935, pp. 1-25., see J. P. Sartre. *Der Existentialismus ist ein Humanismus: Und andere philosophische Essays 1943-1948,* Rowohlt, Hamburg, 2000.

[4] P. Ricoeur, *De l'interpretation. Essai sur Freud,* Éditions du Seuil, Paris, 1965, pp. 40-44., see S. Biancu, *The human measure and the (impossible?) legacy of humanism*, in *Etica Polit. / Ethics Polit.*, XXI, 2, 2019, pp. 9-23.

tion structures, complex financial markets and gender equality struggles we are gradually moving away from our grandeur. Even though statistically human life (regarding life span, hunger, health) is getting better worldwide, many people are convinced that some have caused and most of the others have been engaged in an environmental and social mismanagement for far too long.[5]

A mismanagement that could only arise on the basis of a humanistic culture.

Because it attributes a reign to the humans that they do not seem to be able to master. In the narrative of humanism a role of responsibility is ascribed to human beings that has been collectively betrayed for personal profit. In this radical reading, humanism can be interpreted as anthropocentrism, and therein located the root of our current ecological and social problems. The need for ingenious scientific and more ethical solutions is growing as the consequences of our (not always) collective decisions become more and more inevitable. Nevertheless, non-anti-humanist authors agree not to abolish humanism, but to improve it as a regulative ideal that continues to offer us much.[6] Thus, the term 'post-humanism' was introduced as a better continuation of the ideals of humanism. With new terminology, we often try to shed our old thought patterns to make room for new ways of thinking that allow us to take better actions. But 'posthumanism' can be understood in the opposite way. On the one hand as an overcoming of traditional anthropocentrism[7] (a post-anthropocentrism[8]) or as the endorsement and idealization of a posthumous being emerging from the transhumanism project.[9] Only the first interpretation can provide a strong ethical framework. The post-anthropocentrist thesis, namely the idea of moderating human beings in their overconfidence, would have to apply to the transhumanism project. Ferrando's definition ties in with the tradition originated by Donna Haraway and clearly shows what a holistic interpretation of the term might look like. First of all, what transhumanism and posthumanism share is the notion of technogenesis.[10] But even both conceive of human beings

[5] Y. N. Harari, *Homo Deus: eine Geschichte von Morgen,* C.H. Beck, München, 2017.

[6] S. Biancu, *The human measure and the (impossible?) legacy of humanism*, in *Etica Polit. / Ethics Polit.*, XXI, 2, 2019, pp. 9-23.

[7] *Ibidem*, pp. 20-22.

[8] R. Braidotti, *The Posthuman.* Polity Press, Cambridge, 2013.

[9] S. Biancu, *The human measure and the (impossible?) legacy of humanism*, in *Etica Polit. / Ethics Polit.*, XXI, 2, 2019, pp. 9-23.

[10] K. Hayles, *Wrestling with Transhumanism*, in *H+: Transhumanism and its Critics,* Metanexus Institute, Philadelphia, 2011, pp. 215-226.

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as mutable they differ in roots and perspectives according to Ferrando. She remarks that transhumanism is conceptually rooted in Enlightenment, while posthumanism is based on concepts from Foucault: Technology is seen as a way of revealing and defined through the technologies of the self, which dismantle the separation of self and others through a relational ontology.[11] So the transhumanist insistence on recognizing science and technology as the primary means of reformulating the human would run the risk of technology reductionism, while posthumanism would not turn technology into its main focus.[12] Avoiding reductionism, posthumanism is fundamentally a better framework for ethical considerations than transhumanism. According to Ferrando it should be defined as post-anthropocentrism. She argues that speciesism has become an integral aspect of the critical posthuman approach, but it cannot be replaced by other types of primates, such as machines.[13] Ferrando outlines that posthumanism stresses the urgency for humans to become aware of pertaining to 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.[14]

It's obvious that posthumanism as characterized by Ferrando represents a holistic approach with great potential for a post-anthropocentric humanism, version 2.0. It's neither a human nor technology centered theory. And it dismantles a regulative ideal with a critical component in relation to the transhumism project: It doesn't put technology in the center of the concept of the (post) human being. In this theoretical framework technology is neither to be feared, nor does it sustain the almost divine characteristics which some transhumanists attribute to it. A technological, but human future could therefore best be achieved within the theoretical framework of Ferrando's posthumanism. But why do we need a balanced future?

Human enhancement is broadly discussed. Mostly, we imagine dystopian or utopian scenarios from science fiction worlds that tell of the loss of distinct human attributes and the resulting social and ethical consequences. The partly toxic self-optimization of emerging fitness and health cults is directly transferred into the narrative of the tran-

[11] F. Ferrando, *Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Antihumanism, Metahumanism, and New Materialisms: Differences and Relations,* in *Existenz*, VIII, 2, 2013, p. 27.
[12] *Ibidem*, p. 28.
[13] *Ibidem*, p. 29.
[14] *Ibidem*, p. 32.

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shumanism project. Technical possibilities go more and more in the direction of science fiction dream worlds [15] and a few of the transhumanists have enough money to realize their dreams. An example is the billionaire Elon Musk and his startup Neuralink: It focuses hybridization between a human being and a computer, by means of a neurochip. In his first product presentation, Musk explained his intention to make human beings more intelligent, to keep up with future AIs. [16] There are enough ethical concerns that aim at less futuristic scenarios. According to current research on this term the focus of the enhancement ethics literature is on interventions that make biological changes in human bodies and brains, using pharmaceutical, surgical, or genetic techniques. [17] Some ethical problems come from distinguishing an enhancement from a medical intervention. It seems clear what the difference is. [18] But nosological elasticity makes the shifting of this boundary possible. [19] However, the transition from therapeutic to non-therapeutic technology has so far been fluid. We are mostly used to concentration-enhancing and weight-reducing drugs but not yet to the use of brain to computer or brain to brain interfaces. While we know the former and may even have benefited from it, the latter is still in development: Results have been published on BrainNet, a multi-person brain-to-brain interface for collaborative problem solving. According to its developers BrainNet points the way to future brain-to-brain interfaces that enable cooperative problem solving by using a "social network" of connected brains. [20] As intriguing as this collaboration opportunity sounds, we can imagine it having an impact on the human being in everyday use. An influence just as strong as the invention of electric light, the Internet or smartphones. Such milestones that change our whole existence are already part of our history and certainly part of our future. We can now deduce that this is another new technology that we have to get used to.

[15] N. Bostrom, *The Future of Human Evolution,* in *Death and Anti-Death: Two Hundred Years After Kant, Fifty Years After Turing.* Ria University Press, 2004.

[16] É. Fourneret, *The Hybridization of the Human with Brain Implants: The Neuralink Project,* in *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics*, XXIX, 4, 2020, pp. 668-672.

[17] S. Clarke - J. Savulescu - C.A.J Coady - A. Guibilini - S. Sanyal (eds.), *The Ethics of Human Enhancement: Understanding the Debate*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2016.

[18] P. J. Whitehouse - E. Juengst - M. Mehlman - T. H. Murray, *Enhancing Cognition in the Intellectually Intact*, in *The Hastings Center Report*, XXVII, 3, 1997, pp. 14-22.

[19] T. S. Carey - C. L Melvin - L. M., Ranney, *Extracting Key Messages from Systematic Reviews,* in *Journal of Psychiatric Practice*, XIV, 1, 2008, pp. 28-34.

[20] L. Jiang - A. Stocco - D.M. Losey - J.A. Abernethy - C.S. Prat - R.P.N Rao, *BrainNet: A Multi-Person Brain-to-Brain Interface for Direct Collaboration Between Brains*, in *Scientific Reports*, XV, 1, 2019, pp. 1-11.

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But that should not be the conclusion of my paper. Neither do I want to develop a conservative argument to stop technological development. For the moment, I note that it is a human tradition to exceed the limits of what has been possible so far and also to understand the extent of certain developments in retrospect. And even human enhancement is rooted in a certain historical tradition.

Humans have always tried to improve. One premise here is the understanding of being (at least partly) modifiable. Already in the Renaissance Pico della Mirandola praises man to have what he chooses, to be what he wills to be.[21] Machiavelli states that it is not constancy that brings success to a leader, but the capacity to adapt to changing times.[22] About 400 years later, Darwin shows that adaptability to environmental conditions is the most important quality for survival.[23] Adapting to changing times is no longer the condition for a successful ruler, but for the preservation of every species. And to adapt, the basic condition is the ability change, to be able to variate in behavior or even in the way of existence. So the roots of the idea of a variable and thus potentially improved human being can be traced long back to the tradition of thought. The idea of variability as the core of humankind is supported by contemporary knowledge: From the biological perspective, the only characteristic and static property of humankind seems to be the capacity for a permanent variability in geno- and phenotype.[24] Also from the social science perspective no general statements can be made about the human being, because it is understood to create itself in the socio-historical context.[25] The consent here is that the human being is not determinable from the internal perspective of both sciences. In fact, authors who have developed a critique of methodological naturalism think that no scientific discipline at all can fully capture the nature of the human being and any external trial will fail.[26] It is the human being who designs and defines itself. And it has always modified itself through history. By all possible means.

[21] G. Pico della Mirandola, *Oration of the dignity of man*, Henry Regnery, Chicago, 1956.

[22] N. Machiavelli, *Il Principe.* Einaudi, Torino, 1961.

[23] C. Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection,* John Murray London, 1869.

[24] D. L. Hull, *On Human Nature*, in *Proceedings of the Biennial Meeting of the Philosophy of Science Association*, The University of Chicago Press, 1986.

[25] J. Habermas, *Philosophische Anthropologie*, in *Kultur Und Kritik. Verstreute Aufsätze,* 1973.., see, M. Horkheimer, *Bemerkungen Zur Philosophischen Anthropologie*, in *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, IV, 1, 1935, pp. 1-25., see J. P. Sartre. *Der Existentialismus ist ein Humanismus: Und andere philosophische Essays 1943-1948*, Rowohlt, Hamburg, 2000.

[26] J. Nida-Rümelin, *Humanistische Reflexionen,* Suhrkamp, Berlin, 2016, pp. 141-145.

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With emerging technologies regarding human enhancement ethical challenges give rise.[27] And we need better ethics to respond to them.[28] Let's take one example of a well-known ethical dilemma regarding human enhancement. The human being is the only being we know that could intervene in his own genetic make-up.[29] Critical voices of genetic manipulation and its ethical implications argue for the unavailability of the human genome as a fundamental right.[30] John Harris thinks enhancement is a moral duty: according to him, human enhancement is seen as a way to intervene in nature, but the practice of medicine is interfering with nature as well.[31] Furthermore we have to be aware of the fact that the limits of both concepts of nature and technology are blurry: Coeckelbergh sees technology as part of our existential condition and in this sense not external to the human being.[32] According to Bostrom, only technological (and cultural) development, which exhibits some parallels with biological evolution, enabled our species to progress at an accelerated pace.[33] Bostrom argues that we should not trust evolutionary development to take our species in broadly desirable directions and considers scenarios in which human evolution, potentiated by the advanced technology, leads in directions that we should regard as highly undesirable. He argues that the only way to avoid these outcomes, is to assume control over evolution, to "direct our own evolution" by global coordination.[34] How should we respond to this? As I have already indicated, I do not want to take either side. I want to contribute to a human but technological future. A balanced future with a strong regulative ideal and a resulting guideline for action. Determining the (post) human being and the resulting ethical guidelines will not be done by a single person. It must be done collectively.

[27] F. Battaglia - A. Carnevale, *Epistemological and Moral Problems with Human Enhancement,* in *HUMANA.MENTE Journal of Philosophical Studies,* XXVII, 7, 2014.

[28] J. Moor, *Why we need better ethics for emerging technologies*, in *Ethics and Information Technology.* Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht, 2005.

[29] Y. N. Harari, *Homo Deus: eine Geschichte von Morgen,* C.H. Beck, München, 2017.

[30] G. Maio, *Medizin und Menschenbild*, in *Mensch ohne Maß?,* Alber, Freiburg/München, 2008.

[31] J. Harris, *Enhancing Evolution. The Ethical Case for Making Better People.* Princeton University Press, 2007.

[32] M. Coeckelbergh, *Human Being @ Risk*. Springer, Dordrecht, 2013, p. 3.

[33] N. Bostrom, *The Future of Human Evolution,* in *Death and Anti-Death: Two Hundred Years After Kant, Fifty Years After Turing.* Ria University Press, 2004, p. 339.

[34] *Ibidem*, pp. 340-350.

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Conclusion

The handling of ethical problems regarding human enhancement is important for the future of humankind. Not for the first time, the question is asked whether we should do everything that is possible or whether there is a reason not to exceed a certain limit. This paper questiones the limits and states that the boundaries of technology and nature are blurry upon closer examination, the boundaries between medical intervention and attempted optimization is shiftable and the human being has always created itself.

So the right question is not where the limits are, but where we want to set the limits and what kind of future development we want. There will be different, well-reasoned answers to this, which is a characteristic of contemporary ethical reflection in liberal western cultural areas that do not have a clear *telos* or God as the ultimate moral authority. [35]

If we do not know the boundaries, we may have to first negotiate and then draw them, as deliberative theorists like Habermas suggest. And perhaps it seems reasonable for us to shift those boundaries as we evolve. But to get the boundaries right in the first place, we need a theoretical framework as an anchor for our ethical deliberations. And humanism can no longer serve as an anchor based on the crises associated with it. I propose posthumanism as a theoretical framework for ethical reflection. Ferrando argues, the way we inhabit this planet, what we eat, how we behave and what relations we maintain creates the network of who and what we are: "(...) not a disembodied network, but (also) a material one, whose agency exceeds the political, social and biological human realms, (...)". [36] Only posthumanism offers a unique balance between agency, memory and imagination, aiming to achieve harmonic legacies in the evolving ecology of interconnected existence. [37]

[35] A. MacIntyre, *Der Verlust der Tugend. Theorie und Gesellschaft*, Surkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1987.

[36] F. Ferrando, *Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Antihumanism, Metahumanism, and New Materialisms: Differences and Relations,* in *Existenz*, VIII, 2, 2013, p. 32.

[37] *Ibidem*, p. 27.

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On Why Architecture Matters: the Exhibition Experience

Federico Rudari

Introduction

Despite artistic media having evolved and changed, our fruition of artworks has followed a similar scheme since public museums as they are known today developed between the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th century.[1] While the implementation of innovative technologies and the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic on a global scale have prompted new online-based forms of artistic appreciation, as we learned to co-habit with the health crisis museums, galleries, and foundations quickly returned to in-presence exhibitions held in multiple forms.

When reducing the broad exhibition experience to its most elementary components, I argue, the formula presents three indispensable elements: object, subject, and space, which correspond to artwork, audience, and context of fruition. However, most aesthetic theories throughout the history of philosophy have disregarded space and its impact on perception. While the relationship between subject and object in the aesthetic experience has been consistently addressed (approaches vary from enlightened rational mind-based aesthetic knowledge to the Romantic discourse on beauty, among many others), the importance of architecture and display has been tackled with more interest only in recent years. Nonetheless, the role they play is of great importance. As Sophia Psarra writes,

> "[i]n terms of operational requirements museum design has two fundamental problems to solve: a route structure that facilitates the encounter

[1] V. Newhouse, *Art and the Power of Placement*, The Monacelli Press, New York, 2005.

between the displays and visitors, and spatial mechanisms that aid orientation and enable the building and the exhibitions to be seen as one whole." [2]

Exhibition spaces have evolved in time and geographies to meet artistic, social, and didactic goals, in the same way museums have become complex spaces of representation rather than being simply containers for works of art. In this frame, my research aims at discussing the dynamic interaction between people, objects, displays, and the resulting experience, but also between intended meanings and our ability to make sense of them.

Embodied perception and the arts: towards a new aesthetics

Experiencing cultural objects and works of art in the context of museum and exhibition spaces is a widely shared activity. Such spaces are designed and subsist as places of fruition. However, experiences of this sort were often conceived as solely visual in the past. Considering elements including time, space, and memory in the experience of artistic objects is at the core of an epochal shift in the humanities that took place at the end of the 19th century. Since then, a more comprehensive understanding of the aesthetic experience put the body at the center for its situated role in phenomenological perception.

While broader systems were integrated in the analysis of objects alone under structuralism and post-structuralism, it is only with the phenomenological turn that discourse was affected by the situational element. The phenomenal world and human situatedness, but also the body itself were now taken into consideration, in opposition to a strictly cultural take on meaning. As semiotician Per Aage Brandt claims, "[t]he main principle was the idea that stable patterns of meaning could be found across occurrences of apparently unstable and context- and media-bound 'significations'. Meaning could thus be seen as grounded in a structurally stable semiotic 'competence', efficient across variations in 'performance.'" [3]

Research in semiotics and neurocognitive sciences showed that being physically present in a certain space and time frame impacts the understand-

[2] S. Psarra, *Spatial culture, way-finding and the educational message: the impact of layout in the spatial, social and educational experiences of visitors to museums and galleries*, in S. MacLeod (ed.), *Reshaping Museum Space: Architecture, Design, Exhibitions*, Routledge, London and New York, 2005, p. 81.

[3] P. A. Brandt, *Space, Domains and Meanings – Essays in Cognitive Semiotics*, Peter Lang, Pieterlan, 2004, p. 258.

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ing of the relation subjects have with their surroundings.[4] In the same way, different environments can direct and affect in different ways the meaning-making process on an object. The conscious experience of such context is tied to the sphere of the unconscious and the preconscious in the same way cognition and mental activity are influenced by subjective emotions and feelings. Many affective experiences, as affect theorist Marta Figlerowicz claims, are tools that mediate many forms of self-awareness and empathy.[5]

The combination of a constructivist approach with a semiotic one, together with the emergence of phenomenology and the further development of cognitive sciences, expanded the studies of architecture and its experience according to a subject-based understanding. Architecture presents by its nature a strong embedded intentionality in its functions, which can be grasped in design, materials, location, and so on. Architecture started being addressed as a human-driven form of governing space, resulting from the combination of a work of conception (mental) and implementation (physical). For this reason, a discipline studying its semiotics, architecture theorist Nikolaos-Ion Terzoglou claims, "should focus on the process of the production of meaning through the articulation and organisation of space (and time)."[6] Temporality is a constitutive element of this semiotics, since meaning changes according to use, appropriation, and change: the structural building code evolves as a discourse through time. Architecture ceases to be discussed as mere buildings, highlighting its complexity of signs, references, and their fruition and interpretation by users. Buildings exist in relation to one another, and in the same way plots organize actions, architecture entails multiple spatial narratives. Despite (but also in virtue of) the importance of design and style, architect and scholar Nathan Silver claims that it is people's interpretation, according to needs and habits, that makes architecture. In fact, he continues, there could be architecture without architects and even architecture without buildings, but there cannot be architecture without people: users are the ones setting intentions in the use-situation relationship they develop with and within space.[7]

[4] H. U. Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2004; J. Lindblom and T. Ziemke, Embodiment and social interaction: A cognitive science perspective, in T. Ziemke, J. Zlatev and R. M. Frank (eds.), *Body, Language and Mind. Vol 1. Embodiment*, Mouton, Berlin 2007.

[5] M. Figlerowicz, *Affect Theory Dossier: An Introduction*, in *Qui Parle*, Vol. 20, No. 2, Spring Summer 2012.

[6] N. Terzoglou, *Architecture as Meaningful Language: Space, Place and Narrativity*, in *Linguistics and Literature Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 3, 2018, p. 120.

[7] N. Silver, *Architecture without Buildings*, in C. Jencks and G. Baird (eds.), *Meaning in Architecture*, Barrie and Jenkins, London, 1969, p. 280.

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In the point of encounter between these traditions and innovations, several scholars have started a discussion around the importance of bodily experience and spatial contexts when it comes to the experience of aesthetic objects. The significance attributed to what surrounds art in the physical world does not pertain only to the academic context: substantial investments have been allocated to the construction of new purpose-built spaces and the renovation, refurbishment, and redesign of pre-existing exhibition contexts. Greater importance in terms of research and budget has been given to temporary display design too.

The relationship between the aesthetic experience and the architecture of museums and exhibition spaces has become of central attention today. Museologist and exhibition design expert Kali Tzortzi addresses the idea that our experience of exhibitions is profoundly affected by the space they are framed within, both in terms of its built and physical form, but also considering the succession of rooms and design modules as a veritable system of spatial relations "through the way in which the building organizes space and constructs connections: between *galleries*, affecting the way in which we explore and use them; between *objects*, affecting the way we perceive and read them; and between *visitors*, creating possibilities of co-presence and encounter." [8] Adopting space syntax, which considers architecture as spatial configuration, in both theory and methodology, Tzortzi detects patterns and differences in spatial layouts in relation to their use, morphology, and fruition. At the end of her work, she outlines three key tensions to describe the experience of exhibitions: "between the *organization of spaces in a visitable sequence* to facilitate viewing and the *creation of spaces that bring visitors together*; between the *informational* and the *social* dimension of museum experience; and between the *architecture of space* and the *object display*." [9]

Architecture, exhibition design, and the contemporary audience

As the interest in museums and exhibitions evolved from parameters strictly based on the historical and economic value of the works exhibited, increased importance has been given to architecture and audiences, and the experience of the exhibition has become as significant

[8] K. Tzortzi, *Museum Space: Where Architecture Meets Museology*, Routledge, London and New York, 2016.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

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as the exhibition itself. In particular, moving from a collection-centered approach, Suzanne MacLeod writes that exhibition space "is increasingly recognized as an environment created through a complex of practices and systems of knowledge." [10] This attention follows many other new concerns that understand exhibitions according to contemporary practices (didactic approaches and pedagogical activities, user-led meaning-making, and so on). For this reason, exhibitions' architecture and display design have become a veritable social and cultural product, which functions through occupation, fruition, and use. [11]

Following this audience-oriented attitude, the action undertaken by cultural, political, and economic bodies has laid specific emphasis, as German architect Anna Klingmann writes, not on what architecture is, has, or does, but on how its users feel and, ultimately, on who they are. [12] This approach contributed to a new focus that moved experts' attention from content to experience, which "necessitates a dramatic shift of the aim of architectural design, from producing static and discrete objects to the generation of a consciousness of desire and a desire for consciousness through a deliberate construction of context." [13] In other words, architecture should be intended to stimulate in visitors a desire to experience in support of the artworks displayed.

Despite having been long overlooked, the organization of space has always played a dominant role in shaping the way we think about the physical and experiential structure of architecture dedicated to the exhibition of art. Today, space ceases to be understood as a container only, and architecture is understood as both a response to and outcome of different forms of social organization, needs, ideas, and beliefs. According to MacLeod, this shift resulted in a new approach in which "the architecture of the museum is no longer limited to a static physical building, but expanded to include the physical structure, the layout of functions in space, the layout of collections in space, the management, the programming and so on, in a constant state of (re)production through use." [14]

[10] S. MacLeod, *Reshaping Museum Space: Architecture, Design, Exhibitions*, Routledge, London and New York, 2005.

[11] Id., *Rethinking museum architecture: towards a site-specific history of production and use*, in S. MacLeod (eds.), *Reshaping Museum Space: Architecture, Design, Exhibitions*, Routledge, London and New York, 2005.

[12] A. Klingman, *Brandscapes: Architecture in the Experience Economy*, The M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2007, p. 1.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

[14] S. MacLeod, *Rethinking museum architecture: towards a site-specific history of production*

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With time, societies have changed their needs and ambitions, and so have museums. Strategical display devices have been adopted to reach different goals in terms of collection management and wider audiences through information and communication technologies. [15] As Parry and Sawyer write, "equally significant within this process have been the changes in ways of seeing and ways of knowing that each society has built for itself […: a]s disciplines, discourses and taxonomies change so do museums" which "carry on being reoriented by the historiographies, art connoisseurship and paradigms of science that our societies continue to re-articulate and re-code." [16] While space has for a long time solely depended on the size of the collection, today display and related technologies have become the core elements that influence exhibition architecture, both permanent and temporary.

As semiotician Per Aage Brandt maintains, artistic value, whether intended as technique, beauty, or taste, is not sufficient to arouse and sustain attention in the observer. [17] In fact, the experience of artistic objects has been part of collective habits since the origins of civilization(s), and it has been coded and framed in terms of different but specific environments and conditions. From religious rituals to the cleansed milieu of contemporary museums, framing plays a central role in the aesthetic experience to be successfully carried out. "Social ceremony as a preferred context of art, and technical mastery as a condition for the display of art, are thus the two mutually reinforcing factors of *aesthetics* in this sense," [18] he writes. Exhibition spaces and techniques have been changing over time, influencing and being influenced by human sensibility and interests, as well as affecting the evolution of artistic trends and movements.

Precisely because of its roots in biology, behavioral neuroscientist Dahlia W. Zaidel claims, artifacts are equally tied to their creators and observers, and artistic practices are dependent upon other people's judgment. [19] The skilled attention dedicated to artistic forms, details,

and use, in S. MacLeod (eds.), *Reshaping Museum Space: Architecture, Design, Exhibitions*, Routledge, London and New York, 2005, pp. 20-21.

[15] R. Parry and A. Sawyer, *Space and the machine: adaptive museums, pervasive technology and the new gallery environment*, in S. MacLeod (eds.), *Reshaping Museum Space: Architecture, Design, Exhibitions*, Routledge, London and New York, 2005.

[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

[17] P. A. Brandt, *Space, Domains and Meanings – Essays in Cognitive Semiotics*, Peter Lang, Pieterlan, 2004.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 213.

[19] D. Zaidel, *Neuropsychology of Art*, Psychology Press, London and New York, (2005) 2014.

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and techniques is purposefully directed to stimulate perceptual reactions in subjects who are engaging in aesthetic observation. This particular form of observation is a complex, multisensorial experience, architect and author Michael Brawne maintains, and it "is intended to sharpen the encounter between object and observer, to make possible a communication between artefact and individual." [20] Brandt concludes that it is in specific environments that aesthetic attention is enhanced and amplified. Artworks can be appreciated in any context, but attention intensifies when shared and collectively experienced. Not only can the attention artists put in their works generate attention in the observer, but also the one which is perceived in other people performing a similar process simultaneously. It is in, and thanks to, such spaces that attention generates attention. [21] Especially after the progressive democratization of the arts, spectatorial fruition is an increasingly collective phenomenon.

As Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas claims, the experience of visiting a museum involves the entire body since artworks are "subsumed by motion, noise, smell and the physical presence of flesh." [22] When experiencing our surroundings, and artworks in this specific case, our body plays a constitutive and primary perceptive role. According to linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, embodiment contributes to the mental structuring of cognitive processes, as well as to the phenomenological classification of bodily translated schemes: the bodily is the primary level that feels and experiences all complex phenomena of the outer world. [23] The aesthetic experience (and even, it could be claimed, artistic practice itself) depends on a phenomenological level on spectatorship. Individual and collective positioning in relation to artworks affects perception and interpretation in psychophysical terms. And, when addressing artistic objects exhibited in designated spaces, this situated perspective is influenced, oriented, and directed by special techniques in terms of architecture, interior design, and display narratives.

[20] M. Brawne, *The New Museum: Architecture and* Display, Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, New York and Washington, 1965, p. 7.

[21] *Ibid.*, pp. 203-204.

[22] R. Koolhaas, *Content*, Taschen, New York, 2004, p. 255.

[23] G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought*, Basic Books, New York.

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Conclusion

The attention given to exhibition display and architecture has reached the point where, especially in the case of contemporary buildings erected in strategic locations, [24] the prevalence of content over context has been questioned. As former director of National Museums Liverpool David Fleming suggests, not without criticism, "[m]any museums were designed to overwhelm visitors", while many "[m]useum architects do seem to think that the building is more important than what's in it." [25] The peculiarity of individual cases within the realm of exhibition architecture has made the category extremely heterogeneous and commonalities hard to discern. The evolution of museum architecture, former French Minister of Culture Jack Lang writes, "has made the task of designing the museum virtually 'impossible' [...:] each museum is unpredictable, always formed on the basis of new expanding collections, exhibitions, and needs – needs defined by the public." [26] For this reason, understanding the mechanisms involved in the experience of spaces so fragmented and diverse is a challenging task.

As claimed by Brawne, "[b]oth in biology and architecture there is a complex and important interaction between function and anatomy. Each influences and modifies the other. The architectural anatomy of a museum will be strongly influenced by two aspects of function: the general role assigned to that particular museum and the crucial relation within it of object and spectator. The first will affect the relative disposition of spaces, the second their nature." [27] My current research extends the established theoretical framework. While exhibition spaces, their fruition, and aesthetic attention have individually garnered substantial attention, there remains a noticeable paucity in their integrated exploration. This research seeks to rectify this gap by reflecting on the reciprocal influence of these elements.

[24] The very famous case of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao (Spain) designed by Canadian archistar Frank O. Gehry is a great example of a strategic operation to call attention to the city and attract new visitors.

[25] D. Fleming, *Creative* Space, in S. MacLeod (eds.), *Reshaping Museum Space: Architecture, Design, Exhibitions*, Routledge, London and New York, 2005, pp. 213-214.

[26] J. Lang, *Foreword*, in D. Davis (eds.), *The Museum Transformed: Design and Culture in the Post-Pompidou Age*, Abbeville Press, New York, 1990, p. 6.

[27] M. Brawne, *The New Museum: Architecture and* Display, Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, New York and Washington, 1965, p. 10.

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Rebuilding Responsibility through Artificial Moral Advisors and Moral Assistant Systems

Marco Tassella

Introduction

The present is characterized by globalization, the environmental crisis, and economic turbulence, once again fostering the growing specter of uncertainty. In such complex times, the conceptual status of humanity and its associated elements occupies the center stage in philosophical discourse: questions about the essential role of humankind, its relationship with both nature and technology, and - even more crucially - its relationship between individuals, are slowly restarting a cycle of rebuilding societal trust after a dark century of post-modern individualism and subjectivism. Thanks to the technology-given ability to relate to the world and its inhabitants, the last few generations are gradually regaining awareness of their responsibilities. However, on the flip side of the coin, such a new "age of accessibility" increases the need for our (moral) availability, compelling us more and more to make swift, well-informed choices.

In recent years, the field of moral philosophy has undergone a notable transformation. A growing number of scholars are reevaluating how we approach moral judgments.[1] This shift goes beyond the traditional boundaries of "logical thinking" to incorporate mental states such as desires, beliefs, and intentions into the moral framework of a decision.[2] The central premise driving this transformation is the recog-

[1] S. Guglielmo, *Moral judgment as information processing: an integrative review*, in *Frontiers in psychology*, 6, 2015.

[2] D. Davidson, *Actions, Reasons, Causes*, in *Journal of Philosophy*, 60, 1963.

nition of the inherent imperfection of our moral capabilities, marked by noticeable cognitive and psychological constraints and limitations. At the core of this paradigm shift lies an essential challenge: our difficulty in grasping the broader, more comprehensive picture of the contexts in which we make our choices. For these reasons, achieving what is "morally correct," or at the very least, a "more accurate" decision, demands substantial logical and conceptual skills. Additionally, individuals must also have access to a great amount of pertinent empirical data, enabling them to effectively navigate the intricate landscape of their moral judgment. Without these essential prerequisites, individuals are left exposed to inherent epistemic vulnerabilities and will face the substantial risks associated with experiencing "moral slips".[3] These "slips" refer to unintended errors in judgment by a well-intentioned agent, resulting from a significant lack of awareness of the circumstances. This growing body of research around agent control on moral decision-making underscores the need for a comprehensive reconsideration of moral contexts, on a path toward a more nuanced and holistic understanding of human moral skills.

Among the causes for these moral slips, a significant role is assumed by the limited control we have over the methods of conscious information acquisition, association, and access. Recognizing the complexity of decision-making processes poses a formidable challenge for contemporary moral philosophy. However, it is a challenge we can proactively address, without resigning ourselves to our inherent limitations. The primary hypothesis of this paper is that the emerging Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies could be used to serve as a scaffold for our moral life, akin to how medicine has been to our physical well-being in the past century. The long-term objective is to possibly reduce the intrinsic limitations of our decision-making mechanisms, ultimately fostering a more free and responsible existence.

Epistemic Failures

When an agent faces an important decision, the first thing that naturally comes to mind is having the correct amount of information to proceed with the choice. Getting a solid grip on the situation can be

[3] F. Rudy-Hiller, *Give People a Break: Slips and Moral Responsibility*, in *Philosophical Quarterly*, 69, 2019.

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a real challenge. Decision-making scenarios are often quite complex, with numerous factors all intertwined, and it is not always clear where one aspect ends, and another begins. There's so much information out there that it can be overwhelming, even for the more "morally experienced" individuals. Hence, we suggest that some external support might be needed. One could use a moral instrument that, much like a pair of eyeglasses, could serve as an aid to grasp a more comprehensive perspective while enhancing our reflection through feedback and moral guidance.

Another crucial point to consider is how we handle information and how we access our conscious decision-making process. In every rational choice, there's a lot that goes on between what we *think* we understand and what we actually do. This includes all sorts of different issues, such as the influences of society, culture, our own unconscious mind, and even the physical laws of the world around us. Sometimes, we have such limited control over our thoughts that we don't even notice that we're being influenced by strong biases or a misunderstanding of the situation.[4] Moreover, it is essential to note that our "working memory," our ability to keep things in mind while we make a choice, has a relatively limited capacity. Some popular research in this field suggests that we can temporarily retain approximately "seven items, plus or minus two".[5] These "memory slots" can quickly become saturated, especially in emotionally charged situations or amid external distractions. It is relevant to highlight that similar limitations exist in both our long-term and short-term memory. Specifically, within long-term memory, the continuous process of detail loss over time, coupled with a reduction in our ability to store new information, can create an unsuitable environment for decision-making.

A significant part of the research on moral enhancement has the goal to try and reduce the impact of such limitations and biases on the decision-making process. Moral philosophy and moral psychology have long analyzed these limitations, with recent attention focusing on strategies to enhance our moral abilities. Some scholars have even suggested that the imperative to improve morality is so compelling that it justifies the employment of chemicals to enhance our moral perfor-

[4] W.J. Chai -A.I Abd Hamid -J.M. Abdullah, *Working Memory From the Psychological and Neurosciences Perspectives: A Review*, in *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9, 2018.

[5] G.A. Miller, *The magical number seven, plus or minus two: Some limits on our capacity for processing information*, in *Psychological Review*, 63, 1956.

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mance (bio-enhancement).[6] However, as one might easily see, this option has prompted a broad spectrum of criticisms and is currently the subject of fervent philosophical and bioethical debates.

Artificial Moral Advisors

A viable alternative in this context, however, might be found in the realm of "Artificial Moral Advisors"[7] (AMAds): a novel category of AI-based software, engineered to provide moral assistance to human agents. These advisors may serve as a reversible, non-invasive tool to support individual moral responsibility and strengthen decision-making, potentially extending this enhancement to a more collective level. Before delving into the specifics of these systems, it is crucial to clarify the nature of this tool to delineate the scope of our investigation.

Artificial Moral Advisors do *not* constitute a panacea for resolving all moral dilemmas or ethical questions one might encounter, nor do they aim to offer universal solutions to all moral quandaries in philosophy. Furthermore, these systems do not provide users with the easier path of delegation for their ethical choices; rather, they integrate morally relevant data into the agent's decision, emphasizing their ability for self-determination. Thus, these advisors could serve as invaluable aids in integrating missing information, identifying biases, and guiding us toward more virtuous, more responsible decisions.

In our framework, the Advisor embodies three main technical abilities: the "Moral Organizer", the "Moral Observer", and the "Moral Expert". Let's briefly clarify the utility of each function.

The Moral Organizer's role is to steer the individual toward a more comprehensive evaluation of the context and its relevant information. It presents users with considerations pertinent to their decisions, thus facilitating more considered, aware, and responsible choices. In this process, users gain enhanced insight into otherwise hidden information, most of which may hold moral significance. This information will be used to integrate what the users already know (but might have overlooked or forgotten), new data they might not yet be familiar with, or information that would otherwise be challenging to discover inde-

[6] I. Persson -J. Savulescu, *Unfit for the future: The need for moral enhancement*, OUP Oxford, 2012.

[7] M. Klincewicz, *Artificial intelligence as a means to moral enhancement*, in *Studies in Logic, Grammar and Rhetoric*, 48, 2016.

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pendently. The Moral Organizer streamlines the gathering of newly provided and previously known information, grouping it by category or by relevance. Through this organizational process, the Assistant will be able to support both our working memory (the amount of data we can handle) and our long-term and short-term memory (our conscious access to our mind).

The Moral Observer processes, verifies, tests, and cross-references all previously gathered information, thereby highlighting potential conflicts between users' personal values and those of the society in which they live. Conflicts between values can also be found in the agents' internal system of interests (e.g., they believe that "it is important to treat everyone equally," but they also believe that "family has priority over strangers"). By doing so, the Moral Observer can predict unforeseen consequences for each available choice or, at the very least, point out their most probable consequences. The system would also be equipped with the ability to learn from the actual outcomes of users' decisions, identifying counterfactuals and alternative scenarios and contrasting them with the chosen path. These cross-references can then be used to assess future instances of similar scenarios, building from previous resolutions.

The role of the Moral Expert comes into play during the ethical decision-making process. It functions as a guiding force during the deliberative procedure, serving as both an "ethical counterpart" (a *contrapoint* to one's beliefs) and a "Virtual Socrates" [8] (a questioning method aimed to corroborate values). In this capacity, the Moral Expert plays a dual role, offering expertise in ethical matters (as would do any human expert in the field) while also assuming the role of a "devil's advocate". This unique dual role aids users in making well-considered and methodical decisions. Supported by the Expert, users may be able to engage in a thoughtful analysis of the advantages and disadvantages associated with each available option. Thus, the Moral Expert will encourage ethical reflection both before and after the decision-making process, promoting both ethical reflection and user autonomy. By acting as a moral compass, the Moral Expert ensures that users are able to navigate the complexities of ethical decision-making with a heightened sense of awareness and deliberation. The user's process of choosing is enriched by this more comprehensive consideration of factors and

[8] F. Lara, *Why a Virtual Assistant for Moral Enhancement When We Could have a Socrates?*, in *Science and Engineering Ethics*, 27, 2021.

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perspectives, ultimately contributing to more responsible and ethically sound decisions.

As we highlighted, AMAds are only *procedural machines*: they streamline and compound the process, but they do not "recommend" any option, nor they argue for any specific ethical framework over the rest.[9] On the contrary, they align with a model of moral improvement that upholds ethical pluralism (i.e., "democratic liberalism"), allowing users to freely choose the values they want to support. This tool's impact, should it find wide adoption among individuals, could also extend to the collective and socio-political environment. Grounded in ethical rationalism, AMAds promote individual moral responsibility, potentially enhancing not only individual autonomy, but also practical choices.

Open Challenges

Numerous challenges, encompassing both technical and philosophical domains, await further exploration. For instance, a core question arises regarding our willingness to consider "moral guidance" from a "machine".[10] Additional inquiries encompass matters of privacy implications, the theoretical possibility of formalizing moral reasoning processes and frameworks, the role of ethical relativism, and the constraints on our inclination to act in a morally upright way (see "Akrasia"[11]).

From a technical standpoint, our suggestion to employ Multi-Objective Reinforcement Learning for system implementation is just one of several viable options.[12] Ongoing discussions also revolve around the ideal user interface, whether it should take the form of an interactive feedback system, a chat simulator, a simplified graphical interface, or any other alternative design. While these concerns, which are notably valid and of significant importance, are already under careful analysis in specialized literature, the primary objective of this paper is

[9] J. Savulescu, -H. Maslen, *Moral enhancement and artificial intelligence: moral AI?,* in *Beyond artificial intelligence*, Springer, 2015.

[10] B. Rodríguez-López -J. Rueda, *"Artificial moral experts: asking for ethical advice to artificial intelligent assistants"*, in *AI Ethics*, 2023.

[11] A. Mele, *Akrasia, self-control, and second-order desires*, in *Nous*, 26, 1992.

[12] M. Tassella -R. Chaput -M. Guillermin, *Artificial Moral Advisors: enhancing human ethical decision-making*, in *IEEE-ETHICS23 International Symposium on Ethics in Engineering, Science, and Technology*, 2023.

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to evaluate the theoretical desirability of such tools and, most importantly, to scrutinize their potential usefulness. Our aim is to contribute to the ongoing discourse on the interplay between technology and ethical practice, with a particular emphasis on individual and collective moral enhancement.

Looking beyond the philosophical and technical aspects, the implications of AI in the field of ethics are closely tied to the theme of rebuilding trust in contemporary societies, as trust represents a measure of social harmony, and there can be no trust without accountability and moral responsibility. The incorporation of Artificial Moral Advisors into the process of decision-making has the potential to redefine and improve trust, not as blind faith but as reliance on rigorous ethical systems and people acting in the most moral way possible. The use of an AI support system for ethical interaction reanimates a novel dimension of humanism in the contemporary era, where technical supports are not relegated to the more trivial aspects of our daily lives but can also aid in the more complex and essential endeavor of navigating the ethical landscapes of our increasingly connected world. The objective of these systems is not only to enhance individual moral agency but also to democratize access to moral decision-making tools to open a novel avenue for collective moral growth. Although still in its earliest stages of development, we expect this tool to serve as a valuable and positive model for future research in AI ethics, following the progress observed in fields such as medicine and biotechnology.

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Ectogenesis in the Feminist Debate

The Bioethical Limits of Artificial Gestation

Costanza Vizzani

1. *Introduction*

The first objective of this paper is to highlight the bioethical aspects of the practice of ectogenesis. Ectogenesis [1], from the perspective of gestational futurity, can be considered the *evolution of* surrogacy. Through a critical analysis of the recent literature on the subject, it is intended to show that this practice not only fails to accomplish the task of solving the ethical problems associated with surrogacy, but also creates additional ones, posing new and difficult challenges. The fact that ectogenesis is still stuck at a pre-experimental theoretical stage [2] should not exempt us from the task of investigating the permissibility of this practice, including examining its absence or presence of ethical conditions of experimentation. Conversely, an appropriate theoretical and critical framework must be developed from the outset to correctly interpret a phenomenon that is increasingly the subject of economic and political evaluations aimed at its forthcoming effective application.

Our second objective is to analyze the debate concerning ectogenesis within the feminist question. According to some authors belonging to the feminist current close to technophilic positions, ectogenesis could promote female *empowerment*. It would, according to this view, be a matter of using ectogenetic practice for the purpose of pregnancy avoidance, so as to permanently emancipate women from the task of procreation. Indeed, if the subordination of women, within any patri-

[1] By 'ectogenesis' I am referring, unless otherwise stated, to 'complete ectogenesis'.

[2] As far as partial ectogenesis is concerned, animal experimentation is ongoing (see F.R. De Bie et al, *Ethics Considerations Regarding Artificial Womb Technology for the Fetonate*, "The American Journal of Bioethics", 2022, p. 67).

archal society, is due to the *bio-function* of procreation, avoiding pregnancy through the use of a gestationally neutral practice would constitute the ultimate goal of women's emancipation. However, the debate within feminism sees a technophobic counterpart, which is adamantly arrayed against the use of ectogenesis. In general, this current, in its essentials, believes that the path toward women's emancipation cannot be substantiated by a practice that, instead of structurally intervening in women's status within society, merely denies women the possibility of pregnancy, thereby elevating 'man-being' as *biologically* lacking the gestational possibility to a role model. According to this current, then, it is society itself that ought to change in its essential structures, to fully accommodate women-mothers within its fabric, without them having to change their *biological* status. Only in this way can women consider themselves truly emancipated.

2. *A definition of ectogenesis compared with surrogacy and the purposes of ectogenesis*

Ectogenesis[3] literally means extra-corporeal gestation, that is, gestation that occurs outside the mother's womb, inside a so-called 'artificial womb'. It can be considered, in some respects, as the evolution of surrogacy .

Surrogacy consists of an agreement, governed by a contract, between a commissioning couple and a gestating woman.[4] This practice raises numerous bioethical questions, some of them related to the economic factor that comes into play when deciding to use it. Surrogacy is very expensive, so it is accessible only to those with suitable financial resources. This means that, far from being a possible general solution to the problem of infertility, it contributes to exacerbating social inequality. In addition, many women from low- and middle-income countries agree to pursue surrogacy to lift themselves out of the state of poverty in which they find themselves. In doing so, they engage in a practice of exploitation to the detriment of the pregnant woman. However, such

[3] Etymologically from the Greek *ecto-* and *-genesis* (see https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/ectogenesi/).

[4] In cases of paid surrogacy, contracts are made in which the commissioning couple takes control of the pregnant mother's life: they can decide on diet, physical activity, prenatal diagnoses and more (see C. Corradi, *Motherhood and the contradictions of feminism: Appraising claims toward emancipation in the perspective of surrogacy*, "Current Sociology Monograph", 69, 2, 2021, pp. 158-175, p. 165).

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exploitation is not only involved in cases where the surrogacy is paid for. In fact, even in cases where it is oblative, psychological-emotional pressures, detrimental to personal dignity, may present themselves: in other words, exploitation may not depend simply on the exchange of money, as in cases where the pregnant woman is linked to the principals by bonds of another nature. [5]

To obviate the issue of exploitation implied by surrogacy, feminist thought has relied in part on a new, futuristic path, viable through new technologies: pregnancy can be delegated to a machine. [6] Such a practice, which goes by the name of ectogenesis, is proposed by some as an ethically superior stage, [7] as it would avoid the logic of exploitation of women by other women, and would resolve the complex surrogate-fetus link, allowing the commissioning mother to avoid pregnancy. [8]

The idea of creating an 'artificial womb' originated in the first instance as a therapeutic solution, to allow extremely premature infants to develop, when they would not be able to survive otherwise. [9] In addition to partial ectogenesis, i.e., out-of-body gestation in the machine for only a limited period of time, the idea also arose of being able to achieve 'total ectogenesis', i.e., the complete and integral development of the embryo for the entire duration of gestation in the 'artificial womb'. [10] Then thought was given to the many additional possibilities that ectogenesis offers, not limited to medical *treatment* purposes. [11] This practice could also, and more simply, be used in cases where a

[5] See L. Palazzani, *Dalla bio-etica alla tecno-etica: nuove sfide al diritto*, Torino, Giappichelli 2017, pp. 124-126.

[6] This has been termed a third era of human reproduction (see M.L. Di Pietro, 'Ectogenesi' in *Enciclopedia di Bioetica e Scienze Giuridiche*, ed. by E. Sgreccia and A. Tarantino, vol. V, pp. 135-141, Napoli, Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane 2012, p. 135).

[7] See G. Cavaliere, *Ectogenesis and gender-based oppression: Resisting the ideal of assimilation*, "Bioethics", 34, 2020, pp. 727-734, pp. 727-728.

[8] See K. MacKay, *The 'Tyranny of reproduction': Could ectogenesis further women's liberation?*, "Bioethics", 34, 2020, pp. 346–353, p. 350.

[9] See M.L. Di Pietro, 'Ectogenesi', cit. p. 135; see F. R. De Bie et al, *Ethics Considerations Regarding Artificial Womb Technology for the Fetonate*, cit., p. 68.

[10] In practical terms, ectogenesis in humans is still unrealizable: "This is a technique that still cannot be reproduced experimentally, given the functional complexity of the human placenta. Despite the fact that this technology has not yet actually been realized (at least with humans), bioethics is already debating its legitimacy or illegitimacy" (L. Palazzani, *Reproductive Technologies and the Global Bioethics Debate: A Philosophical Analysis of the Report on ART and Parenthood of the International Bioethics Committee of UNESCO*, "Phenomenology and Mind", 19, 2020, pp. 138-149, p. 146). The reason testing is so slow is because of the difficulty of testing on embryos (human and non-human).

[11] For a discussion of the possibilities of the application of ectogenesis see M.L. Di Pietro, 'Ectogenesi', cit., p. 136.

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woman does not want to carry a pregnancy for aesthetic, work or general socio-economic reasons.

3. *Ectogenesis and female empowerment*

The question has been raised as to whether ectogenetic practice could in any way promote women's *empowerment*, i.e., the achievement of gender equality, wage equality and the absence of discrimination. The question is, in short, to assess the impact that this new reproductive technology could have on the issue of women's empowerment. [12] If many of the limitations encountered by women along the path to emancipation are due to pregnancy, and the implications that it brings, then the implementation of a technique, such as ectogenetics, that allows women to avoid pregnancy, without thereby giving up becoming mothers, could lead toward new egalitarian perspectives. [13] The debate regarding ectogenesis from a gender perspective [14] is mainly divided into two currents. [15]

One of them, which we can call technophilic-egalitarian feminism [16] of a libertarian matrix, is in favor of the implementation of ectogenetic practice, and in general, reproductive technologies, [17] interpreted as indispensable means of female *empowerment.* Such feminism is called egalitarian, since it tends to assimilate men and women, hoping for the end of binarism until, in extreme cases, it attains a single gender, in which all difference is dissolved. Dissolved difference is supposed to dissolve (social) inequality. [18] It can also be called libertarian in nature, since it places individual free choice at the center as the fundamental issue. So, technophilic feminism often favors surrogacy, regardless of

[12] See F. D'agostino, *Una filosofia della famiglia*, Milano, Giuffré 1999, pp. 190-191.

[13] See C. Corradi, *Motherhood and the contradictions of feminism*, cit., p. 159.

[14] For an overview of the contemporary state of the art concerning ectogenesis from a bioethical perspective see J. Räsänen and A. Smajdor, *The ethics of ectogenesis*, "Bioethics" 34, 2020, pp. 328-330.

[15] See J. Eichinger and T. Eichinger, *Procreation machines: Ectogenesis as reproductive enhancement, proper medicine or a step toward posthumanism?*, "Bioethics", 34, 2020, pp. 385-391, pp. 386 and 391.

[16] A key reference point for technophilic feminism is Schulamith Fireston's text, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution*, New York, William Morrow and Co 1970.

[17] Not *all* 'technophilic' feminists are necessarily in favor of *all* the opportunities that technology offers. Indeed, within this current, there are exponents opposed to ectogenetic practice.

[18] See G. Cavaliere, *Ectogenesis and gender-based oppression,* cit., p. 730.

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the risk of exploitation by women of *other* women. In fact, according to this current, the pregnant mother's right to do what she wants with her body prevails.[19]

On the other hand, we find technophobic feminism,[20] 'of difference'. It distrusts reproductive technologies in general, highlighting the risky bioethical aspects caused by an increasingly invasive integration of the 'technological' with the dimension of *bios*.[21] In particular, it believes that ectogenesis is in no way helpful, as we shall see, to female *empowerment.* This current is also definable as 'difference' feminism, since it maintains duality and difference as its principle. This current believes that *equality does* not mean *indifference*, but equal rights within a structured society without discrimination. Finally, it can be defined as personalistic feminist thinking,[22] since it does not place individual will at the center but the person, that is, the human being from a relational and not an individual point of view. Therefore, personalistic feminist thinking, unlike libertarian feminism, also takes into account, for example, the relationship between the fetus and the gestating mother, a relationship that is disrupted in the case of surrogacy and annulled in the case of ectogenesis.[23] The crucial point, according to this theory, is that women in their path of emancipation, have the right to remain themselves, without turning into the 'male model', pandering to the patriarchal ideal that feminism, of all currents, should fight against.

4. *The internal debate within feminism*

The argument made by technophilic feminism concerns the emancipatory potential implicit in ectogenetic practice. Women could avoid

[19] A critical analysis of this theory in C. Corradi *Motherhood and the contradictions of feminism*, cit., p. 165; see L. Palazzani, *Biogiuridica: Teorie, questioni, analisi*, Torino, Giappichelli Editore 2021, p. 68.

[20] A reference point for this theoretical current is Gena Corea's text, *Mother Machine: Reproductive Technologies from Artificial Insemination to Artificial Wombs*, London, The Women's Press 1988. In the contemporary landscape we find, to mention just a few texts: L. Muraro, *L'ordine simbolico della madre*, Roma Riuniti 2006; L. Battaglia, *Bioetica senza dogmi*, Catanzaro, Rubbettino 2009; M. Gensabella Furnari, *Il corpo della madre: Per una bioetica della maternità*, Catanzaro, Rubbettino, 2018.

[21] Not *all* 'technophobe' feminists are necessarily against *all* the opportunities that technology provides.

[22] See L. Palazzani, *La filosofia* per *il diritto: Teorie, concetti, applicazioni*, Torino, Giappichelli 2022, p. 242.

[23] See L. Palazzani, *Reproductive Technologies and the Global Bioethics Debate, cit.*, p. 146; see M.L. Di Pietro, 'Ectogenesi', cit., pp. 139-140.

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pregnancy, without giving up their parental role: exactly as men do. Thus, the objection that feminists opposed to surrogacy make against those in favor of it would also disappear. Two of the arguments often used by technophilic feminism to justify its support for ectogenesis are (1) that it makes possible the *effective* equality of the parental role; and (2) that it prevents discrimination against mothers in employment. [24]

Regarding the first point – *if pregnancy is entrusted to a reproductive machine, it levels the parental role and in this way, even within the family environment, equality of function is achieved* – technophobic feminism makes a critical point, highlighting the fact that social roles are not a mere reflection of biological status. Ectogenesis can hardly foster *co-parenting*, preventing women from being given a greater workload in childcare than men. In fact, socially imposed roles are not only dependent on gestation and childbirth. [25] They have a more complex and layered origin. If within a social organization there is no room for *co-parenting*, then ectogenesis cannot in any way change the social role attributed to women. If, conversely, *co-parenting* was already present at the origin of that organization, then ectogenesis would, for this purpose, be unnecessary. It should, moreover, be noted that the above arguments still move within a theoretical framework based on the perpetration of an androcentric model, according to which *co-parenting* could only be realized by eliminating the female biological possibility of pregnancy. Technophobic feminism objects against such a framing of the problem that for *co-parenting to be* achieved, it is necessary to intervene in the socio-economic structures underlying the discrimination already operating at the family level. [26] The mother should be put in a position to be able to achieve *co-parenting* de facto and de jure without, for that reason, having to give up her pregnancy.

The second point concerns the impact ectogenesis would have in resolving economic discrimination in employment. According to the arguments of technophilic feminism, a woman who avoids pregnancy, thanks to ectogenesis, will not be discriminated against at work because motherhood will not impact the company's economic budget. Thus much sought-after gender equality in work settings would be more easily achieved. However, technophobic feminism rejects this

[24] For an analysis of these arguments see K. MacKay, *The 'Tyranny of reproduction'*, cit., pp. 351-352.

[25] See G. Cavaliere, *Ectogenesis and gender-based oppression*, cit., p. 729.

[26] See A. Cavarero and F. Restaino, ed. by, *Le filosofie femministe*, Milano, Mondadori 2002, pp. 80-81.

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eventual solution because this would admit the validity of the reasons that lead to discrimination in work contexts today. Instead of ensuring that women are compossible between work and pregnancy, they are denied either. Ectogenetic practice would only consolidate the *aut-aut* between a career and motherhood, characteristic of the patriarchal system. [27]

In other words, what feminism opposed to the introduction of new reproductive technologies objects to technophilic feminism is the fact that, the latter, in order to pursue the ideal of gender equality, is willing to deprive women of a fundamental prerogative of theirs. In this way, proponents of ectogenesis, as a means of female *empowerment*, unwittingly accept the essentially masculinist assumption of an alleged natural "defect" of women that should be supplemented, [28] in order to retrace the female figure on the model of the male figure. In short, for the achievement of women's *social* emancipation, it becomes necessary to intervene in such a way as to deprive them of their *biological* function. [29]

Technophilic feminism thus certainly turns out to be feminist in content and goals, but *anti-feminist* in form: feminism is such if it does not make the feminine a weakness to be *empowered*, but a strength to be *preserved*; it is such if it resists the patriarchal organization in its foundational socio-economic structures, and ceases to be such if it finds itself, even implicitly, contesting *being a woman*.

5. *Conclusion*

From the above, it appears that ectogenetic practice not only does not serve the pursuit of female *empowerment,* and ultimately, the emancipation of women, but contributes to the perpetration of a normative ideal designed on an androcentric model. An ideal based on the assumption that women, to be finally emancipated, must assume a parental role *identical* to that of men. Rather, therefore, than countering women's socioeconomic disadvantages by means of a renewed interpretation of motherhood that protects the right and desire for pregnancy, the an-

[27] See Z. Buturovic, *Formula feeding can help illuminate long-term consequences of full ectogenesis*, "Bioethics", 34, 2020, pp. 331-337, pp. 335-337.

[28] In the case of ectogenesis and surrogacy, this is a deprivation, but the general sense of the assumption remains unchanged.

[29] See G. Cavaliere, *Ectogenesis and gender-based oppression*, cit., pp. 730-731; see S. Segers, *The path toward ectogenesis: looking beyond the technical challenges*, "BMC Med Ethics" 22, 59, 2021, pp. 1-15, p. 6.

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drocentric ideal, which veiledly supports the introduction of ectogenetic practice, promotes the vision of an alienated femininity, setting the stage for a radical split between the biological and the social. In this way, woman finds herself invested to the very depths of the intimacy of her *bios* by the burden of equalization to the male model, which, strictly speaking, turns out to be a renewed subordination rather than an equalization. We must therefore conclude that ectogenesis turns out to be a technique, from the bioethical point of view, with a very high risk.

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Vers une démocratisation des sciences et des techniques avec Bruno Latour

Jérémie Supiot

En 1972, un rapport de l'OCDE intitulé « *Interdisciplinarity: Problems of Teaching and Research in Universities* » pointait l'incapacité de la recherche scientifique hyperspécialisée et disciplinarisée à produire des connaissances répondant réellement aux problèmes complexes rencontrés par la société. Le rapport insistait ainsi sur le besoin de produire des cadres plus synthétiques et interdisciplinaires afin de permettre une mise en œuvre efficace des savoirs scientifiques pour résoudre ces problèmes sociétaux. Au-delà d'un appel à plus d'interdisciplinarité, et donc à une organisation interne différente des institutions scientifiques, émerge déjà ici l'idée que le travail des scientifiques doit être en partie guidé par les besoins et problèmes de la société, interrogeant du même coup l'articulation entre les sciences et la société. Cette interrogation n'a cessé de s'amplifier et de remettre en cause l'organisation technocratique traditionnelle, avec notamment l'affirmation de plus en plus répandue d'accorder un rôle plus important aux acteurs non scientifiques de la société dans la production de connaissance visant à traiter des problèmes sociétaux.

En effet, les problèmes sociétaux complexes, tels que par exemple le défi de la transition écologique et solidaire, sont souvent décrits comme des "*wicked problems*", comme des problèmes épineux dont le traitement ne peut reposer sur les seules institutions scientifiques. [1]

[1] Confère CC. Pohl, B. Truffer and G. Hirsch-Hadorn, "Addressing Wicked Problems through Transdisciplinary Research", in R. Frodeman, J. Thomson Klein, et R. C. S. Pacheco, éditeurs, *The Oxford handbook of interdisciplinarity*, Oxford University Press, 2017, pp. 319-331.

Les problèmes de ce type incluent des questions scientifiques qui requièrent un traitement par les chercheurs, mais ils constituent aussi des interrogations et des défis concernant la manière dont nos sociétés devraient s'organiser et la façon dont les individus devraient vivre. Ainsi, les différents acteurs impliqués dans un effort de résolution d'un problème de ce type (qu'ils soient scientifiques ou non) sont souvent en désaccord " sur la pertinence de tel ou tel problème, sur ce qui est en jeu, ou sur ses causes et ses conséquences, ou encore sur le type de stratégie à adopter ". [2] Complexité et incertitude des connaissances font le terreau des problèmes épineux. Par exemple les rapports du GIEC (Groupe d'experts inter-gouvernemental sur l'évolution du climat) ne permettent pas d'établir avec certitude l'évolution du climat, mais permettent seulement d'établir des scénarios probables. Même si certains faits sont avérés (comme l'origine anthropique du changement climatique), d'autres font l'objet de controverses (sur la probabilité des différents scénarios par exemple). De même, déterminer l'opportunité d'utiliser un pesticide donné (comme les néonicotinoïdes par exemple) demande une compréhension globale des enjeux socio-économiques et écologiques liés à son impact, et de surmonter les apparentes contradictions (entre un intérêt économique et un intérêt écologique, par exemple). Lorsque les problèmes sont trop complexes, trop multidimensionnels, dès lors qu'il n'y a aucune certitude non seulement sur les résultats, mais sur les données du problème et la façon dont il doit être posé, les experts (scientifiques) et les connaissances qu'ils peuvent mobiliser en se tenant à l'écart des acteurs sociétaux (fusse en condition de pluri ou d'interdisciplinarité) ne suffisent pas pour prendre des décisions (notamment en temps de crise). Une recherche transdisciplinaire qui instaure un dialogue avec et implique les acteurs sociétaux devient dès lors nécessaire.

Pour comprendre comment un tel dialogue peut émerger, il est intéressant de considérer la question de l'articulation entre sciences et société d'un point de vue épistémologique, en particulier du point-de-vue des traditions constructivistes récentes. En effet, elles ont pour avantage de rendre compte du rôle des acteurs sociétaux dans les sciences, de leurs valeurs et du contexte socio-culturel dans lequel ils évoluent, sans nécessairement basculer dans la thèse d'un relativisme absolu des faits établis par les sciences. Selon Jean Louis Lemoigne, "le contrat social qu'impliquent les épistémologies positivistes et réalistes

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 323.

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se caractérise par un critère universel de légitimation des connaissances enseignables : celui de leur 'vérité objective'".[3] En contrepied de ce modèle, les épistémologies constructivistes reposent sur des critères de légitimation qui ne sont pas universels mais propres à un contexte donné, et reposent sur une co-construction de la connaissance par l'ensemble de ceux qui sont supposés la maîtriser plutôt que sur un modèle production-enseignement.

Malgré la diversité de points-de-vue que cela suppose (Jean Louis Lemoigne parlera plus volontiers de constructivismes au pluriel), il nous semble intéressant de nous interroger sur le nouveau contrat social qu'impliquent les épistémologies constructivistes, pour comprendre si et comment les constructivismes peuvent s'établir comme des alternatives sérieuses aux épistémologies modernes positivistes, et non pas seulement comme leur critique. Selon Jean Louis Lemoigne, "un 'métaparadigme constructiviste' peut aujourd'hui, sinon intégrer [les épistémologies constructivistes] en une réponse unique, au moins les fédérer de façon suffisamment visible pour inciter à l'élucidation culturelle des nouvelles formes du 'contrat social' qu'elles proposent peut-être aux institutions d'enseignement et de recherche.".[4]

Or, les approches constructivistes (Piaget, Lemoigne, Morin, Bloor) pour expliquer les sciences sont par nature fragiles et instables, puisqu'elles se refusent à tout fondement épistémologique définitif. Comment établir un contrat social solide entre les citoyens et les scientifiques, sur une base aussi friable ? Le risque est loin d'être simplement théorique : théories conspirationnistes, faits alternatifs et pseudo-sciences foisonnent à l'ère de la post-vérité. Et toute l'épistémologie post-positiviste nous l'indique : il ne s'agit pas uniquement de rappeler à l'ordre quelques hurluberlus qui auraient perdu contact avec la réalité. La perte de confiance en les institutions scientifiques se généralise, et parfois pour de bonnes raisons. Entre la culture du *publish or perish* qui mène à une diminution de la qualité des recherches et à une surestimation des résultats, les collusions d'intérêts privés avec la recherche scientifique (laboratoires financés par des fonds privés, marchands de doute),[5] l'utilisation des nouvelles sciences sociales (management, ges-

[3] Jean-Louis Lemoigne, *Les épistémologies constructivistes*, Paris, 5 éd. mise à jour, Que sais-je ?, coll. « Que sais-je ? » n° 2969, 2021, p. 37.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 60.

[5] Dans leur ouvrage *Merchants of doubts* publié en 2010 chez Bloosmbury Press, E. M. Conway et N. Orsekes montrent comment certains lobbyes (notamment le lobby de la cigarette) ont financé des recherches scientifiques pour semer le doute sur la dangerosité d'un produit (comme le lien entre la cigarette et le cancer du poumon).

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tion, marketing, communication) pour justifier des pratiques anti-sociales et anti-écologiques (greenwashing, social washing) et influencer l'opinion publique, il y a de bonnes raisons de se méfier. On ne sait qui croire, et les conséquences peuvent-être particulièrement néfastes. Pourquoi agir sur son empreinte carbone si on ne croit pas au changement climatique ? Comment distinguer une vraie science d'une pseudo science, un vrai savoir d'une fausse croyance, sans critères universels, sans garantie de certitude ? Comment inclure l'ensemble des parties prenantes impliquées dans la production des savoirs techno-scientifiques, pour garantir une pleine démocratisation des savoirs produits, sans risquer d'altérer leur qualité ? Est-il possible d'éviter l'écueil du relativisme absolu tout en prenant en compte la place importante qu'occupent les normes socio-politiques dans la construction des faits scientifiques avec le constructivisme social ? Dans cette optique, le constructivisme de Latour qui refuse tout réductionnisme social, ne serait-il pas une approche intéressante en vue d'un constructivisme sans relativisme ?

Notons d'emblée que le problème du relativisme se pose tout autant pour la connaissance des faits que pour celle des valeurs, d'autant plus que la distinction faits-valeurs n'est pas du tout évidente. [6] C'est pourquoi l'enjeu d'une politisation et d'une démocratisation des sciences et des techniques (confère P. Kitcher, [7] B. Bensaude-Vincent [8] ou S. Ruphy [9]) ne concerne pas seulement la capacité des sciences à décrire le monde correctement, mais aussi à la manière dont les sciences sont utilisées pour déterminer le bien-fondé d'une action, d'une décision, d'un point de vue éthique ou politique.

Comprendre pour agir : telle est la tâche qui incombe, selon Bruno Latour, aux sciences à l'âge de l'anthropocène, [10] qu'elles soient sociales ou naturelles. Cette affirmation concerne tout particulièrement les sciences qui traitent des phénomènes qui se déroulent sur Terre (sciences du vivant et de la terre, sciences humaines et sociales) et qui

[6] J. Courtillé, « Hilary Putnam et la critique de la dichotomie fait-valeur. Des antécédents scientifiques aux conséquents politiques «, *Le Philosophoire*, vol. 57, no. 1, 2022, pp. 85-105.

[7] Confère P. Kitcher, *Science Truth and Democracy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2001.

[8] Confère B. Bensaude-Vincent, *Les sciences dans la mêlée,* Seuil, Paris 2023.

[9] Confère S. Ruphy, " Pour un tournant politique des sciences ", I. Alfandary, J. Cohen, S. Laugier, R. Zagury-Orly, éditeurs, *Où va la philosophie française ?*, Vrin, Paris 2022.

[10] Sur le sujet de l'anthropocène, et de ses enjeux pour les démocraties contemporaines, confère J.-B. Fressoz, C. Bonneuil, *L'événement anthropocène : La Terre, l'histoire et nous*, Seuil, Paris 2013.

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ont donc un impact sur nos vies. Pour ces sciences, qui s'intéressent à ce que certains auteurs nomment la « zone critique », [11] les *matters of fact* sont aussi *des matters of concern*. [12] Non seulement ces faits scientifiques ne sont jamais établis de manière parfaitement neutre (comme nous l'enseigne l'épistémologie post-positiviste), mais ils sont aussi lourdement chargés de valeur quant à leurs conséquences et leur signification. Pour l'auteur de *Nous n'avons jamais été modernes* [13], il ne s'agit plus de comprendre la « nature-univers » [14] pour s'en rendre « comme maître et possesseur » [15] selon les mots de Descartes dans son *Discours de la méthode*, mais d'apprendre à agir en territoire inconnu, pour débroussailler, cartographier, inventorier nos conditions de vie et nos possibilités d'action pour les améliorer, ou du moins ne pas les dégrader.

Pour comprendre ce qui se joue dans l'analyse de la zone critique, le réductionnisme social tel que défendu par Bloor [16] est insuffisant selon Latour. En effet il rencontre certaines difficultés théoriques comme le fait qu'il est impossible d'établir de manière positive la construction sociale des faits sociaux, sans régression à l'infini : l'analyse sociale des faits sociaux " doit elle-même " être analysée socialement, et ce à l'infini. Le constructivisme social peut-il s'appliquer à la sociologie sans saper en même temps sa propre puissance explicative ? Question insoluble, à laquelle un réductionnisme socio-psychologique des faits scientifiques ne peut échapper. C'est pourquoi l'hypothèse constructiviste d'une construction sociale des faits scientifiques, si elle doit être prise au sérieux pour l'ensemble des disciplines (en sciences humaines comme en sciences de la nature), interdit tout réductionnisme social. Les faits sociaux ne sont pas moins construits que les faits naturels, c'est pourquoi il est important d'adopter une approche symétrique du constructivisme social qui traite de la même manière les faits sociaux (intérêts et rapports de force) et non-sociaux (les phénomènes décrits

[11] Selon OZCAR (Observatoire de la Zone Critique : Application et Recherche), la zone critique désigne "la pellicule la plus externe de la planète Terre, celle qui est le siège d'interactions chimiques entre l'air, l'eau et les roches." C'est aussi la seule zone de l'univers connu qui abrite la vie. La connaître, c'est définir nos conditions d'existence. Or selon Latour, c'est là le principal rôle des sciences aujourd'hui.

[12] Bruno Latour, "Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern", *Critical Inquiry - Special issue on the Future of Critique.* Vol 30 n° 2, 2004, pp. 25-248.

[13] B. Latour, *Nous n'avons jamais été modernes,* La Découverte, Paris 1991.

[14] B. Latour, *Où atterrir ?*, La découverte, Paris 2017, p. 95.

[15] R. Descartes, *Discours de la méthode*, Flammarion, 1637, 2021, p. 38.

[16] D. Bloor, "What is a Social Construct", *Facta Philosophica* 3, 2001, pp. 141-156.

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par les sciences naturelles). Grace à une telle approche, ne pourrait-on pas imaginer un méta-paradigme constructiviste et non-réductionniste, capable d'englober toutes les disciplines, et qui permettrait de les faire dialoguer ? Grace à cela, ne serait-il pas possible de dépasser le problème de l'incommensurabilité des paradigmes scientifiques posé par Kuhn [17] ?

L'enjeu concernant l'incommensurabilité se traduit au moins sur trois plans : sur un plan épistémologique disciplinaire, interdisciplinaire, et sur un plan politique. D'un point-de-vue disciplinaire il s'agit de penser la commensurabilité des paradigmes du point de vue de leur évolution historique (comment rendre commensurable en physique le paradigme newtonien avec celui de la relativité générale d'Einstein par exemple). Sur un plan interdisciplinaire, la commensurabilité est la condition de possibilité du dialogue entre les disciplines scientifiques les unes par rapport aux autres (faire dialoguer la microbiologie des sols et la botanique pour comprendre l'adaptation d'une plante à son milieu par exemple). Enfin, la commensurabilité politique concerne la capacité des sciences à faire société, un problème qu'on limite souvent à la question de la médiation, mais qui implique aussi de penser le développement de sciences citoyennes [18] et d'avènement d'une démocratie technique [19], et demande parfois l'intégration de citoyens non-experts dans la production de faits scientifiques (en médecine on parlera de patient-expert par exemple). Or l'anthropologie symétrique défendue par Latour semble être une piste intéressante pour construire des ponts intra et interdisciplinaires, mais aussi entre les sciences et les citoyens, c'est-à-dire rendre les sciences commensurables d'un point-de-vue épistémologique et politique.

Selon Bruno Latour, la crise de la modernité de laquelle ont émergé les différentes formes du constructivisme contemporain, et en particulier la tradition issue des STS (Science Technology and Society), se caractérise par une remise en question de la posture scientifique moderne qui n'est plus celle d'un observateur passif, mais celle d'un acteur qui contribue à la production des faits scientifiques. Ainsi, rien de ce qui est observé n'est pur de toute intervention de l'observateur : l'observateur construit ce qu'il observe. Autrement dit, il y a du phy-

[17] T. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1962.

[18] Confère P. Dias da Silva, L. Heaton, F. Millerand, " Une revue de littérature sur la 'science citoyenne' : la production de connaissances naturalistes à l'ère du numérique ", *Natures Sciences Sociétés*, 2017/4, Volume 25, pp. 370-380.

[19] M. Callon, Y. Barthe, P. Lascoumes, *Agir dans un monde incertain*, Seuil, Paris, 2001.

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sicien dans l'atome, du neurologue dans le neurone, [20] du biologiste dans le microbe. [21] Les objets sont traversés par de nombreux éléments qui président à leur construction : en particulier des concepts, du langage, un dispositif technique, des présupposés théoriques. Sur ce point, l'approche de Latour ne diffère guère des autres épistémologies constructivistes. Cependant, en prenant au sérieux les principes de la théorie de l'acteur réseau [22] (*actor-network theory*) dont il présente une introduction dans son livre *Reassembling the Social – An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* publié en 2005, [23] Bruno Latour fait état de l'agentivité de l'objet observé (qui ne se laisse pas observer passivement), et de l'ensemble du dispositif technique qui constitue sa condition d'émergence en tant qu'objet (du plus simple des microscopes optiques à l'accélérateur de particules). Autrement dit, il intègre dans le social qui préside à la construction des objets et des faits d'autres éléments que seulement des êtres humains, pour établir les bases d'une anthropologie symétrique.

Cependant, l'anthropologie symétrique telle que développée par Bruno Latour repose sur un « relativisme relativiste », [26] c'est-à-dire relatif à la fois aux conditions culturelles et naturelles dans lesquelles les savoirs ont été construits, dont il reste à élucider la teneur exacte. En effet il lui a souvent été reproché de ne pas réussir à se défaire complètement des conséquences relativistes de ses hypothèses. [27] Il reste donc aujourd'hui à montrer comment un savoir évolutif, construit collectivement par le chercheur et le cherché, peut amener à une connaissance véritablement positive (et donc non relativiste) malgré son enracinement inéliminable dans un contexte particulier.

Il s'agit aujourd'hui de faire droit aux enseignements de l'épistémologie post-positiviste sans pour autant dénoncer radicalement l'héritage de la modernité. Comme le développe Corine Pelluchon dans son livre *Les lumières à l'âge du vivant*, [30] la question n'est pas tant de se débarrasser de l'héritage des lumières qui a fait de la raison scientifique la pierre de touche de toute connaissance légitime. Il s'agit plutôt d'inventer un nouveau rationalisme (scientifique) qui soit réellement au service des fins plutôt que des moyens, au service de la démocratie et de

[20] B. Latour, S. Woolgar , *Laboratory Life*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1979.

[21] B. Latour, *Pasteur : guerre et paix des microbes*, La Découverte, Paris 1988, 2011.

[22] Confère M. Akrich, M. Callon et B. Latour (dir.), *La sociologie de la traduction – textes fondateurs*, Presse des Mines, Paris, 2006.

[23] B. Latour, *Reassembling the Social – An Introduction To Actor-Network Theory*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005.

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l'émancipation des individus plutôt qu'instrument de domination de la nature et des êtres-humains. Dans cette optique, le constructivisme de Latour (si l'on parvient à en consolider l'aspect non relativiste et non réductionniste) peut devenir un allié intéressant pour la construction d'un nouveau contrat social entre la science et la société, afin de renouer le dialogue entre les chercheurs, scientifiques, experts, et le reste des citoyens, pour le développement de sciences, techniques et technologies qui soient réellement au service du bien commun.

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Chi è Pavel A. Florenskij?

Status quaestionis e prospettive

Cecilia Benassi

Nina Kaukhchishvili paragonava l'universo spirituale di Florenskij a un mappamondo con un gran numero di isolotti [1], dove i vari frammenti di terra emersa erano per lei metafora delle numerose discipline di cui l'autore si è occupato nel corso della sua vita. La molteplicità delle discipline è tuttavia solo uno dei livelli di complessità legati alla sua opera, complicata da altri fattori di vario ordine. Ed effettivamente, il *déplacement* è l'ineludibile compagno di chiunque si accosti alla vita e agli scritti di questo autore.

Le sue presentazioni biografiche e bibliografiche iniziano sempre con un elenco di epiteti, sia riferiti alla sua condizione di vita che al suo contributo intellettuale e creativo: marito di Anna Giacintova e padre di cinque figli, sacerdote ortodosso, martire del regime sovietico, missionario, ingegnere elettronico, astronomo, inventore, biologo e biogeotecnologo, naturalista, scienziato marino, chimico, matematico, fisico, professore, redattore, filosofo, linguista, teologo, liturgista, poeta, musicista, mistico, storico e critico d'arte, storico del pensiero [2]... La varietà degli appellativi deriva dagli svariati campi del sapere e incari-

[1] N. Kaukhchishvili, *La formazione di Pavel Florenskij e il testo letterario*, in *Humanitas*, 4, LXIII, 2003, p. 555.

[2] Per comporre questo elenco ne sono stati integrati vari altri composti da diversi studiosi nel contesto delle loro presentazioni dell'autore. Ne segnaliamo alcuni: N. Kaukhchishvili, *ibidem*; Protoierei Vladimir Fedorov, *Pavel Florenskij kak missioner XXI veka: svjashhennik, bogoslov, filosof, matematik, estestvoispytatel, poet, muzykant, mistik, muchenik [Pavel Florenskij come missionario del XXI secolo: sacerdote, teologo, filosofo, matematico, naturalista, poeta, musicista, mistico, martire]*, in AA.VV., *Pamjati Pavla Florenskogo: filosofija-muzyka. Sbornik statej k 120-letiju so dnja roždenija o. Pavla (1882-2002) [Ricordo di Pavel Florenskij: filosofia - musica. Raccolta di articoli per il 120esimo anniversario della nascita di padre Pavel (1882-2002)]*, a cura di S.M. Sigitov, Sankt-Petersburg 2002, p. 7; Protopresbyter Columba G. Flegg, *St. Pavel Florensky: an appreciation*, in *Modern logic*, IV, 3, 1994, pp. 266-276.

chi lavorativi che l'hanno coinvolto, non di rado beneficiando dei suoi apporti originali e innovativi.

Lo stesso padre Pavel, nella lettera del 21 febbraio 1937 in cui desidera trasmettere al secondogenito Kirill l'essenza interiore del suo lavoro perché lo potesse proseguire, offre anche a noi un accesso a sì composito e disorientante panorama:

> «Ma non è di questo che volevo scriverti, bensì delle mie opere, o più precisamente, del loro significato, della loro intima essenza, affinché tu possa continuare questo corso del pensiero cui non mi è concesso di dar forma e condurre alla fine, ma solo rendere comprensibile agli altri, perché la fine qui non c'è. 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). [...] E io penso che Kirill, come *forma mentis*, abbia ereditato lo stesso orientamento di pensiero e possa pertanto continuarlo» [3].

Tale citazione dalle lettere è stata resa nota per la prima volta da Michael Hagemeister nel 1985, in occasione della pubblicazione in ristampa anastatica di *Mnimosti v geometrii [Gli immaginari in geometria]* [4]; nel

[3] P.A. Florenskij, *Sochinenija v chetyrekh tomakh [Opere in quattro volumi]*, vol. 4, a cura di Igumen Andronik Trubachev-Marija S. Trubacheva-P.V. Florenskij, Mysl, Moskva 1998, p. 672; ringrazio sentitamente Renato Betti per il suo aiuto nella traduzione di questo passaggio. Segnaliamo qui che, purtroppo, Kirill non riuscì nel corso della sua vita a svolgere questo lavoro di riordino che il padre gli aveva affidato, e che in una conferenza pubblica tenuta pochi mesi prima di morire dirà: «I materiali su Florenskij, o più precisamente intorno a Florenskij, sono molti. Oltre a quelli pubblicati, parte si presentano come manoscritti relativamente completi ma i più numerosi sono in forma di singole note, abbozzi, pensieri, appunti e date. Questo materiale è molto vasto e vario e per metterlo in ordine occorre "accordarsi alla tonalità" di Pavel Aleksandrovich, e questo non è semplice; beh, probabilmente dovrei farlo io, ma mi sono trovato così vincolato al lavoro nella mia precisa specializzazione da non essermici mai potuto dedicare interamente», K.P. Florenskij, *Vystuplenie v Abramchevskom musee 28 janvar 1982 goda na vechere, posvjashhennom 100-letiju so dnja rozhdenija svjashhennika Pavla Florenskogo [Intervento del 28 gennaio 1982 al Museo Abramtsevo durante la serata dedicata al centesimo della nascita del sacerdote Pavel Florenskij]*, in *Svjashhennik Pavel Florenskij v vospominanijakh svoikh detej Kirilla i Olgi [Il sacerdote Pavel Florenskij nei ricordi dei suoi figli Kirill e Olga]*, a cura di Igumen Andronik Trubachev-O.S. Nikitina-Trubacheva-M.S. Trubacheva, Moskva 2011, p. 13.

[4] P.A. Florenskij, *Mnimosti v geometrii*, Verlag Otto Sagner, München 1985, ristampa del precedente: Id., *Mnimosti v geometrii. Rasshirenie oblasti dvukhmernykh obrazov geometrii.*

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recensire l'edizione, Avril Pyman recepisce e subito evidenzia la pregnanza di queste parole per la comprensione del pensiero dell'autore [5]. Da quel momento, il passaggio è menzionato in quasi tutte le introduzioni e i saggi critici su Florenskij [6], anche se ancora non appare chiaro se e in quale senso esse abbiano suscitato una nuova comprensione e una nuova metodologia nell'approccio al suo contributo.

In effetti, come nota Valentini, «si stenta ancora a valutare la portata complessiva di questo pensiero, che per sua natura sfugge a ogni possibilità di cattura e classificazione secondo i canoni convenzionali» [7] e che, oltre a restare ancora in gran parte sconosciuto, è stato sottoposto negli anni a una consistente dispersione editoriale, caratterizzata da approcci settoriali e specialistici poco favorevoli alla comprensione della visione integrale del mondo che padre Pavel intendeva elaborare.

1. *Cause della frammentazione*

Riteniamo che la settorialità dell'approccio – caratterizzata per lo più dalla suddivisione in ambiti disciplinari – sia originata da cause multiple, alcune più evidenti e altre meno.

La prima e più manifesta è l'accennata poliedricità dell'autore, e la rarità di menti universali come la sua; sarà dunque estremamente difficile trovare uno studioso che abbia maturato in sé una varietà di conoscenze (ad alto grado di specializzazione) paragonabile a quella di Florenskij.

Opyt novogo istolkovanija mnimostej [Gli immaginari in geometria. Estensione del dominio delle immagini bidimensionali nella geometria (esperimento per una nuova interpretazione dei numeri immaginari)], Pomore, Moskva 1922. Questa piccola pubblicazione fu molto importante nella storia dell'autore; infatti, le intense critiche che gli attirò da parte del regime contribuirono ai suoi arresti del 1928 e del 1933. Trad. it.: *Gli immaginari in geometria*, a cura di M. Spano-A. Oppo, Mimesis, Milano 2021. Si segnala in particolare la versione francese, a cura di P. Vanhove e F. Lhoest, che si basa sulla traduzione in lingua francese realizzata da Sofia Ivanova Ogneva nel 1926: Id., *Les imaginaires en géométrie*, a cura di P. Vanhove-F. Lhoest, Zones sensibles, Bruxelles 2016.

[5] A. Pyman, *Recensione a: "P.A. Florenskij: Mnimosti v geometrii, Moskva 1922. Nachdruck nebst einer einführenden Studie von Michael Hagemeister"*, in *The Slavonic and East European Review*, LXV, 2, 1987, pp. 274-275, p. 275.

[6] Queste parole danno addirittura il titolo a una importante collettanea critica curata da Lubomir Žak nel 2017: *Pavel A. Florenskij - Ho contemplato il mondo come un insieme. Teologia, filosofia e scienza di fronte alla complessità del reale*, a cura di L. Žak, in *Lateranum*, LXXXIII, 3, 2017.

[7] N. Valentini, *Il cammino di Pavel Florenskij verso la verità vivente*, in a P.A. Florenskij, *La colonna e il fondamento della verità*, trad. Pietro Modesto, a cura di N. Valentini, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 2010, p. XV.

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Una seconda potrebbe essere la celata politicizzazione (sia statale che religiosa) degli indirizzi culturali [8] individuata da Clemena Antonova. In base al suo studio, gli orientamenti degli anni Venti hanno fatto di Florenskij un filosofo religioso, tra i principali rappresentanti della cosiddetta *Rinascita religiosa russa* [9]. Più tardi, negli anni Sessanta e Settanta, sarebbe divenuto un tecnico di semiotica, storia dell'arte e studi culturali religiosamente neutro «with frequently unorthodox ideas» [10], e infine, dopo la *perestroika*, sull'onda del rinnovato interesse per l'Ortodossia, sarebbe tornato a essere un grande teologo e pensatore religioso [11]. Sebbene tali movimenti interpretativi riguardino la ricezione dell'autore nella *scholarship* russa e sovietica, da essi dipendono ricadute a cascata nel resto del mondo culturale, specialmente per quanto riguarda la selezione e lo *status* dei testi dell'autore offerti al pubblico [12].

Una terza causa sembra collegata alle conseguenze derivanti dall'in-

[8] «Ideologically laden and politicized receptions of Florensky would focus on an isolated aspect of his works and interpret it to their own purposes frequently to the exclusion of the author's overall output. In this sense, the reactions to Florensky's oeuvre represent an intriguing example of the complicated and frequently tense relationship between knowledge and power. [...] hopefully, future studies would shift the emphasis away from practices of power and toward the production of knowledge», C. Antonova, *Changing perceptions of Pavel Florensky in Russian and Soviet Scholarship*, in *In Marx's Shadow: Knowledge, Power, and Intellectuals in Eastern Europe and Russia*, a cura di S. Oushakine-C. Bradatan, Lexington Books, Lanham 2010, pp. 73-95, pp. 78; 89.

[9] Dall'importante testo: N. Zernov, *The Russian Religious Renaissance of the XX Century*, Darton-Longman Todd, London 1963.

[10] C. Antonova, *Changing perceptions*, cit., p. 74.

[11] Cfr. i*bidem*, pp. 73-74.

[12] Si rimanda ad altra sede l'analisi della ricezione dell'autore dentro e fuori la Russia nelle sue varie fasi; si ritiene che l'interpolazione tra le molteplici complessità caratterizzanti il lavoro di padre Pavel e le sue vicende editoriali abbia storicamente portato alla genesi di tradizioni parallele. Tratteggiamo brevemente i principali snodi evolutivi avvenuti nel nostro paese, dove l'autore iniziò ad avere risonanza crescente a partire dalla prima pubblicazione in lingua straniera della sua tesi magistrale edita a Mosca nel 1914: P.A. Florenskij, *La colonna e il fondamento della verità*, a cura di E. Zolla, trad. P. Modesto, Rusconi, Milano 1974. Nonostante il fondamentale contributo della slavista georgiana Nina Kaukhchishvili, di sede all'Università degli Studi di Bergamo, grazie alla quale fu stimolata l'attenzione all'autore anche attraverso l'organizzazione di importanti simposi internazionali, verso la fine degli anni Novanta cominciarono ad arrivare le prime monografie italiane realizzate in contesto di teologia e filosofia della religione (segnaliamo qui, per brevità, solo i pluricitati Lubomir Žak e Natalino Valentini), che indirizzarono lo studio dell'autore nell'alveo di quel profilo disciplinare e della testimonianza di fede. Pur non mancando studi su aspetti matematici, linguistici, di storia dell'arte, filosofia della scienza o filosofia del simbolo contenuti nel pensiero dell'autore, sembra mancare ancora quell'orizzonte unitario che – solo – permetterebbe una loro comprensione autentica e non strumentalizzabile.

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tersecarsi del suo stile *work-in-progress* [13] con l'avvento del bolscevismo e soprattutto, più tardi, dello stalinismo, la cui influenza divenne sempre più decisiva nell'impedirgli di portare a maturazione le opere iniziate, fino a strapparlo completamente al suo lavoro e ai suoi famigliari con la deportazione del 1933 e la fucilazione del 1937. Egli, dunque, morì lasciando tanti lavori incompiuti in un cantiere aperto. Il peso della censura sovietica, inoltre, gravò ancora a lungo sulla sua opera, la cui memoria fu condannata a un oblio forzato che proseguì ininterrottamente fino ai primi timidi passi di riscoperta degli anni Settanta e che si sciolse effettivamente solo negli anni Novanta. I lunghi anni di silenzio non furono tuttavia privi di svariati tentativi di recupero e diffusione dei suoi scritti, specialmente attraverso i circuiti clandestini del *samizdat*. Attraverso questo canale la memoria del suo lavoro fu mantenuta viva generandone, però, una diffusione che potremmo definire *pre-guthenberghiana*. Intendiamo dire che, a parte le opere che l'autore pubblicò prima dell'avvento del regime (e che fino agli anni Ottanta rimasero comunque quasi irreperibili) [14], il resto degli scritti (per lo più autorialmente incompleti) subì una diffusione stralciata, frammentaria e talvolta viziata da attribuzioni erronee [15]. Dalla tortuosità della *tradi-*

[13] La vita di Florenskij è caratterizzata, come egli stesso si premura di annotare, da un continuo fermento interiore («Per nove decimi, se non di più, il contenuto della mia vita interiore sono sempre stati i miei pensieri mai quieti, sempre gorgoglianti e accesi, la mia continua eccitazione intellettuale. Il mio pensiero non scorreva sistematicamente, ma mi eccitava e mi sbalordiva in continuazione», P.A. Florenskij, *Ai miei figli*, Mondadori, Milano 2009, p. 205) che lo porta a trattare le proprie opere come cantieri mai conclusi e in continua elaborazione. Questo carattere di indomabile creatività, unito alle vicende della censura sovietica e della morte precoce, lascerà ai posteri molte opere incompiute.

[14] Si rimanda ad altra sede la ricognizione dei libri di Florenskij disponibili alla lettura nei decenni della censura sovietica. Segnaliamo qui solo la testimonianza del già citato protopresbitero Vladimir Fedorov che dice di aver incontrato per la prima volta il nome di Florenskij («Quel nome non mi diceva nulla», Protoierei Vladimir Fedorov, *Pavel Florenskij kak missioner XXI veka*, cit., p. 9) negli anni Settanta, quando era studente presso la Facoltà di matematica e meccanica di San Pietroburgo, attraverso le prime pubblicazioni fatte dall'Università di Tartu, in particolare *La prospettiva rovesciata* (P.A. Florenskij, *Obratnaja perspektiva. Glava iz raboty "U vodorazdelov mysli"*, in *Trudy po znakovym sistemam*, III, 1967, pp. 381-416; pubblicazione lacunosa proveniente da materiali *samizdat*). Fortemente interessato dal testo letto, decise di proseguire le ricerche e fece richiesta presso la Biblioteca dell'Università statale di San Pietroburgo de *La colonna e il fondamento della verità*, che fu ritrovata nel suo collocamento bibliotecario dopo molti anni che non veniva richiesta (cfr. Protoierei Vladimir Fedorov, *Pavel Florenskij kak missioner XXI veka*, cit., pp. 8-9). Come si evince anche da altre testimonianze, non erano spariti i libri di Florenskij, ma l'oblio del suo nome era tale da far sì che nessuno li richiedesse.

[15] A titolo d'esempio, il saggio *Iconostasi* pubblicato in Italia da Elémire Zolla (P.A. Florenskij, *Le porte regali*, a cura di E. Zolla, Adelphi, Milano 1977) si basava su una *traditio* lacunosa; il testo integrale è stato più tardi restituito da Giuseppina Giuliano: Id., *Iconostasi:*

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tio deriva anche la difficoltà degli studiosi a muoversi entro un quadro organico, completo e attendibile dell'*opera omnia* di padre Pavel [16].

Una quarta potrebbe a nostro avviso essere definita *errore di prospettiva*. Si individua nel pensiero florenskijano una radicale obiezione al pensiero razionalistico-occidentale, talvolta fatto coincidere dall'autore con l'approccio accademico alla conoscenza e alla realtà, che egli vedeva come un «vendere la verità in cambio di un'esistenza comoda» [17]. Anche l'Antonova evidenzia il contrappunto asistematico che Florenskij offre al pensiero analitico-razionale caratteristico delle nostre latitudini [18], come leggiamo nelle parole che egli stesso scrisse nel 1925-1926, quando gli fu chiesto di tracciare un proprio profilo biobibliografico da pubblicare nella nuova enciclopedia russa:

> «Florenskij assunse a scopo della propria vita l'apertura di nuove vie verso una futura e globale visione del mondo. In questo senso può essere definito un filosofo. In quanto tale, però, egli prende le distanze da tutto il pensiero filosofico coevo, che si muove con costruzioni astratte e mediante la trattazione esaustiva dei problemi attraverso schemi precostituiti. In lui le prospettive più ampie sono sempre legate a indagini concrete e di aspetti singoli, se non specialistici. Quindi la concezione del mondo che egli elabora, si edifica contrappuntisticamente da un certo numero di temi concernenti la comprensione del mondo strettamente uniti da una particolare dialettica, ma non si presta a una breve esposizione sistematica» [19].

saggio sull'icona, a cura di G. Giuliano, Medusa, Milano 2008. Sempre Zolla, aveva voluto presentare Florenskij ai lettori italiani poco prima dell'uscita de *La colonna e il fondamento della verità*, con la pubblicazione de: Id., *L'icona*, in *Conoscenza religiosa*, 4, 1977, pp. 311-336. Il testo era in realtà un riassunto del saggio *Iconostasi* fatto ad uso personale dall'arcivescovo Sergij Golubcov.

[16] Tra gli obiettivi del nostro lavoro dottorale vi sarebbe anche la ricostituzione ragionata del *corpus* ad uso di studiosi e appassionati.

[17] Cfr. Protopresbyter Columba G. Flegg, *St. Pavel Florensky*, cit., p. 269; e aggiunge: «About the papers which his work required him to read, he wrote: "There is a smell of death around them..., because they have all been written by eunuchs" – by which he meant people castrated spiritually and intellectually by worldly criteria and the ecclesiastical and academic conventions which he had come to detest», *ibidem*.

[18] La studiosa rileva come, secondo alcuni, la filosofia di Florenskij sia rappresentativa di una tendenza, tipica nel pensiero russo, che contrasta la moderna e razionalistica filosofia occidentale; secondo altri, egli si armonizzerebbe invece con determinati spunti che, attinti dal pensiero russo, si ritrovano – come fiume carsico – all'interno dello stesso pensiero occidentale. In ogni caso, sottolinea come il contributo offerto da Florenskij presenti numerosi affondi capaci di offrire alla modernità vie alternative e più genuine per descrivere il mondo e il posto dell'uomo in esso di quelle derivanti dal razionalismo. C. Antonova, *Changing perceptions*, cit., p. 88.

[19] P.A. Florenskij, *Autoreferat*, in *Sochinenija v chetyrekh tomakh [Opere in quattro volumi]*, vol. 1, Mysl, Moskva 1996, pp. 37-43, p. 38. Il dizionario enciclopedico russo pubblicò questo

Nel discorso sugli *Immaginari*, l'autore sottolinea inoltre come, nella conoscenza di qualsiasi oggetto, sia naturale scegliere unità di misura omogenee con l'oggetto di studio, e quasi sua stessa parte vitale [20].

Nonostante le plurime affermazioni in cui Florenskij prende le distanze da un certo stile accademico/sistematico di pensiero, è sempre stato studiato con metodologie adeguate a pensatori di tale indirizzo. Un caso analogo, che intendiamo proporre come monito e insegnamento per gli studi florenskijani, è rintracciabile – pur con le dovute differenze – nella storia dell'interpretazione di Giovanni Damasceno. Come chiaramente illustrato da Andrew Louth [21], il monaco benedettino dom Bonifatius Kotter ha pubblicato i suoi studi filologici sull'opera del Damasceno tra il 1969 e il 1988, mostrando come la *vulgata* secondo la quale egli sarebbe il più occidentale tra i padri orientali e la sua opera *Sulla fede ortodossa* una sorta di "lavoro proto-scolastico", derivi da un iniziale errore di prospettiva. In Occidente, spiega Louth, *Sulla fede ortodossa* è sempre stato presentato come virtualmente suddiviso in quattro libri con un andamento affine ai lavori della scolastica medioevale; in realtà, nella tradizione greca, l'opera appare come una *centuria* (libro composto di cento capitoli relativamente brevi), genere letterario monastico pensato per la lettura lenta e meditativa della *lectio*. «In fact, centuries are often not systematic at all, and sometimes appear rather random» [22], proprio come gli scritti di padre Pavel.

«Here – conclude il patrologo inglese – the *method of the florilegium* reaches beyond itself, to a kind of highly allusive *poetry*» [23]. Riteniamo che un affine riposizionamento prospettico nei confronti dell'opera florenskijana possa facilitare la sua appercezione come un intero organicamente interconnesso, e avvicinarci a cogliere in esso quelle nuove chiavi noetico-pratiche di cui la cultura contemporanea ha urgente bisogno.

testo nel 1927 in una versione ampiamente ridotta: P.A. Florenskij, *Avtoreferat (frammento)*, in Enciklopedicheskij slovar Russkogo bibliograficheskogo instituta Granat, 44, Granat, Moskva 1927[7], pp. 143-144.

[20] P.A. Florenskij, *Gli immaginari in geometria*, cit., pp. 24-25.

[21] A. Louth, *St. John Damascene as Monastic Theologian*, in *The Downside Review*, CXXV, 440, 2007, pp. 197-220: «Saint John of Damascus is not normally thought as a monastic theologian, though he was a monk, and indeed a priest», *ibidem*, p. 197.

[22] *Ibidem*, p. 201.

[23] *Ibidem,* p. 218, corsivo nostro.

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2. *Il mondo di Florenskij*

Riteniamo che gli studi florenskijani si trovino ancora – come direbbe Virginia Woolf – a una delle prime fasi del processo di lettura, in cui si percorre l'opera registrando le impressioni e cercando di acquisirne la massima comprensione possibile. Come la scrittrice inglese si premura di sottolineare, questa è solo una metà del processo di lettura: occorre oltrepassare la moltitudine di impressioni con il suo corteo di pensieri e approfondimenti, e prenderne le distanze. Come Florenskij stesso suggerirebbe, dopo aver fatto una passeggiata, aver staccato (e magari disegnato sul taccuino, come egli suggerisce ai figli di fare) petali a una rosa o essere caduti addormentati [24], «Then suddenly without our willing it, [...] the book will return, but differently. It will float at the top of the mind *as a whole*. And the book *as a whole* is different from the book received currently in separate phrases» [25].

Pavel Florenskij, infatti, è venuto maturando nel corso della sua vita una personale visione del mondo all'interno della quale si muovono, armonicamente con gli scritti, i tratti della vicenda esistenziale e intellettuale. Da questo punto di vista, lo si può paragonare a Dante Alighieri, la cui visione del mondo ha preso forma nella *Commedia*; a differenza di Dante, però, Florenskij non è pervenuto, come abbiamo visto anche per motivi da lui indipendenti, a plasmare compiutamente quella nuova concezione del mondo che si era sentito chiamato a elaborare come scopo della sua stessa vita. D'altro canto, nonostante l'incompiutezza dell'eredità, «There should be an awareness that Florensky, at least as much as Nietzsche, cannot be properly understood out of the context of his overall work» [26].

Emerge con evidenza la necessità di acquisire una nuova consapevolezza della vita e dell'opera di questo autore, e di elaborare nuovi metodi di approccio al suo contributo – in un certo senso, potremmo dire, di ricostruire *il mondo di Florenskij* – per arrivare a poter vede-

[24] «We must pass judgment upon these multitudinous impressions; we must make of these fleeting shapes one that is hard and lasting. But not directly. Wait for the dust of reading to settle; for the conflict and questioning to die down; walk, talk, pull the dead petals from a rose, or fall asleep», V. Woolf, *The common reader*, II, Vintage publishing, New York 2003, ebook. Questo passaggio della scrittrice inglese manifesta una certa sintonia con alcune idee di Florenskij. Citiamo, a titolo d'esempio, un suo riferimento al valore "spiritualmente produttivo" del sonno: «Il sonno non è assenza di vita, ma una vita *sui generis*; senza il sonno noi cesseremmo di nutrirci dal punto di vista spirituale», P.A. Florenskij, *La concezione cristiana del mondo*, a cura di A. Maccioni, Pendragon, Bologna 2019, p. 42.

[25] V. Woolf, *The common reader*, cit., ebook, corsivo nostro.

[26] C. Antonova, *Changing perceptions*, cit., p. 88.

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re chi veramente fosse padre Pavel Florenskij e quale sia stato il suo contributo alla storia del pensiero e dell'umanità, evitando il rischio di sistematizzare un pensiero volutamente asistematico, e di trattare in maniera frammentaria ciò che è stato concepito ed elaborato dentro un orizzonte unitario di senso.

Nella estrema parcellizzazione che caratterizza la «*hybris* della *volontà di sapere del Moderno*»[27], l'unità ontologicamente fondata del conoscere è la profezia quanto mai necessaria, come ci ricorda Massimo Cacciari nel suo ultimo lavoro (*Metafisica concreta*), con cui conclude l'esposizione del suo sistema filosofico[28]. Il filosofo italiano attinge il titolo dall'incompiuta opera-*summa* di padre Pavel: *U vodorazdelov mysli. Cherty konkretnoj metafisiki [Agli spartiacque del pensiero. Lineamenti di metafisica concreta]*[29], in cui convergevano quasi tutti gli scritti a cui egli si era dedicato dopo la pubblicazione della *Colonna* nel 1914. Secondo Cacciari, la metafisica

> «così *concretamente* intesa non coglie l'essente oscillante tra nulla e nulla, bensì tra Inizio e Impossibile, tra l'Inizio irriducibile al concetto di Causa e il Fine oltre ogni scopo determinato [...], l'Impossibile inteso come *eschaton* del possibile»[30],

e ha la responsabilità di

> «'salvare' la sostanzialità dell'essente nelle diverse forme in cui ne facciamo esperienza e oggetto di scienza, 'salvarlo' fino all'estremo, all'*eschaton* del possibile [...] e sullo *s-fondo* di questa idea, *ascoltandola*, ricercare il senso dei diversi saperi, in sé stessi e per la *vita* di cui partecipano, mostrare la possibilità che il *logos* di ciascuno possa essere comunicazione, *philia* del comunicare, co-scienza che *divino è il colloquio*, colloquio tra loro e di loro col mondo, *philo-sophia* e *philo-agathia*»[31].

[27] M. Cacciari, *Metafisica concreta*, Adelphi, Milano 2023, p. 416, corsivo nostro.

[28] Cfr. *ibidem*, quarta di copertina.

[29] P.A. Florenskij, *U vodorazdelov mysli. Cherty konkretnoj metafisiki [Agli spartiacque del pensiero. Lineamenti di metafisica concreta]*, a cura di Igumen Andronik Trubachev, Akademicheskij Proekt, Moskva 2013, sono gli estremi della più recente pubblicazione dell'opera che Florenskij non portò mai a compimento ma a cui dedicò gli intensi anni di lavoro successivi alla pubblicazione della *Colonna* nel 1914. Vari frammenti che egli pensava di destinare a questo libro circolarono tramite il *samizdat* e ricevettero una prima pubblicazione integrale (successiva a una edizione parigina parziale del 1985 a cura di Nikita Struve: Id., *Sobranie sochinenij: stati po iskusstvu. U vodorazdelov mysli [Opere raccolte: scritti sull'arte. Agli spartiacque del pensiero]*, YMCA Press, Paris 1985) a cura dell'Igumen Andronik Trubachev nel 1990: Id., *U vodorazdelov mysli*, 2 voll., Pravda, Moskva 1990.

[30] *Ibidem*, pp. 413-414, corsivo dell'autore.

[31] *Ibidem*, p. 416, corsivo dell'autore.

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Tutto questo, ovvero la pericoresi del pensiero nella pericoresi delle persone, la conoscenza come atto d'amore e unione reale tra conoscente e conosciuto[32] nel cui ambito la verità di ogni cosa emerge dalla relazione e co-inabitazione con le altre, è quanto Florenskij non solo intuì più di un secolo fa, ma è anche la visione per cui spese l'esistenza, tentando di *incarnarla* e *manifestarla* nelle opere e nella vita stessa. Tutta l'opera di padre Pavel, infatti, si tiene insieme per reciproche trasparenze e legami simbolici che sembrano manifestare quanto scriveva Massimo Confessore: «Occorre che le cose che si manifestano le une per mezzo delle altre si riflettano le une le altre in tutta verità e chiarezza ed abbiano tra loro una relazione che non sia spezzata»[33].

Se questa è la chiamata odierna del filosofo, a chi si occupa dell'opera florenskijana è chiesto di lavorare affinché tale profezia[34], che presiede a tutta la sua vita e opera, possa essere compresa e dis-piegata. Occorre inoltre ch'essa divenga accessibile ai non addetti ai lavori, sorgente conoscitiva e metodologica per la *volontà di sapere del futuro*.

Già nel 1992 Elémire Zolla, l'innamorato di Florenskij che per primo lo portò in Italia[35], scriveva:

> «Si aspetta una mente capace di riprendere e comporre il sistema che Florenskij stava erigendo, questa è la prima somma opera che compete alla nuova generazione russa. L'unica raccomandazione stretta che farei con un sussurro a chi si accingesse a riproporre Florenskij e Vernadskij nella loro unità sarebbe il terribile verso di Tjutcev, poeta che entrambi amavano: "Un pensiero espresso è una menzogna". *Mysl izrechennaja est lozh*»[36].

[32] Cfr. P.A. Florenskij*, La luce della verità. Lettera quarta*, in *La colonna e il fondamento della verità*, a cura di N. Valentini, trad. P. Modesto, Mondadori, Milano 2010, p. 84.

[33] Massimo Confessore, *Mistagogia*, in *L'iniziazione cristiana. Testi patristici a cura di A. Hamman*, Marietti, Casale Monferrato 1982, pp. 211-246, p. 218.

[34] Di cui oggi il mondo culturale (e non solo) ha così bisogno da pervenire a elaborare saperi e discipline trasversali che possano in qualche modo supplire alla sua mancanza, come l'*ecologia integrale* e affini.

[35] A questo riguardo, egli stesso scrive: «Non so se ho fatto bene a divulgare le mie annotazioni su Florenskij. Incontrarlo fu forse un evento da tacere? In lui le stesse idee erano apparse, riunendosi, svolgendosi in steli e foglie di pensieri, come in me oggigiorno. Va da sé, su di lui aveva sfolgorato ciò che sopra di me barlumeggiava, dentro di lui s'era incastonato ciò che in me aveva lasciato una tenuissima impronta, ma tanto più l'essenziale identità mi sbalordì», E. Zolla, *Uscite dal mondo*, Adelphi, Milano 1992, ebook.

[36] *Ibidem*.

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