

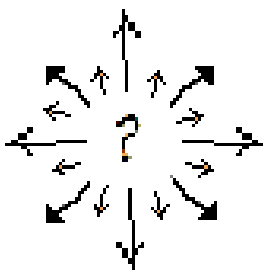
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I. PHILOSOPHY AVOIDING THE ROUTINE

Responsibility and Justice: Beyond Moral Egalitarianism and Rational Consensus

Maria Dimitorva
(University of Sofia)

John Rawls's theory is an attempt to legitimate "modern constitutional democracy." Rawls's intention is to avoid entanglement in metaphysical and religious debates. But disinterestedness is an unconscious backing of the status quo not only in politics, but in metaphysics too. Rawls's theory takes for granted many of the assumptions of modern ways of thinking. In postmodern times, however, many of them are already called into doubt.

John Rawls wants to show justice to be:

1. The political conception that includes the fundamental intuitive ideas of democratic society implied by its institutions and their interpretive traditions.
2. The first virtue of social institutions and all human activities.
3. The norm or standard whereby the distributive aspects of the basic structure of society are to be assessed.

In other words, Rawls aims at a political justification of the modern constitutional regime, uniting into a consistent system the three discourse levels:

1. Indicative or descriptive
2. Evaluative or axiological
3. Normative or regulative

In such a way, he wants to portray "the society as a system of social cooperation." But in order to view the system in its entirety, we

need also a point that transcends it. “The original position” is this *focus imaginarius* that allows seeing, assessment, and regulation of the system *sub specie universi*. Legitimation, uniting the three above-mentioned discourse levels, not only constitutes the whole of society as a system of meanings, but goes beyond it by referring to a sort of transcendence. For John Rawls this is not anymore the transcendence of power exercised on behalf of eternal entities such as God, Human Nature, Reason, State, Society, etc., but the transcendence of the freely chosen ideal of Justice.

Actually, Rawls shares with the contractualists their conviction that humans are equal by their reason and moral sensitivity. This conviction is taken for granted, being a secularized version of the belief that we are all God’s children. It is translated further on into an ideal of moral, social, and political equity. However, equity is the most artificial of all social and political relations and always depends on a comparing authority. The place of God, as an authority comparing and governing us, was taken, in secularized culture, by Reason. By the human capacity of reasoning each of us, assuming the quality of a disinterested observer, could correlate ourselves to a principle (or norm). Rawls adds that by the same capacity we could deliberate the principle (or norm) itself.

The ideal of justice that Rawls binds with moral equity and rational consensus has to be, according to him, made concrete by principles. The conversation about them springs not from a clash of different positions that are intrinsic to the totality of group and individual interests—these would be only particular, conditional positions competing for universal validity (a particular interest elevated to the rank of the universal one), but from positions that are concealed behind the veil of ignorance. Only then, according to Rawls, would the ideal of justice be freely recognized as universal and as Kant would say “*als ob Notwendigkeit*”; it is only hypothetical, but once receiving unanimous approval, it would become apodictic; “the original position” is just simulated, but by its optics all other positions could be judged. Rawls believes that all real conflicts and/or agreements can be transcended by means of the original position thanks to the veil of ignorance.

We are not going to give up the idea that a conversation is capable

of transcending any reality and we even are going to stress its transcending function. In a conversation, we can reject or agree with any principle, value or fact—at least hypothetically or in an imaginary fashion. However, the conversation among people begins not because of their equity, but because of their initial inequity. For we are different, we look for each other. If we are the same, why should we communicate? Any speech, including one aiming at rational consensus, implies the difference of status between the addressee and the addresser of the message. While the One is speaking, the Other is listening and the words would be reduced to a vain noise, if they were not heard and understood by the collocutor, i.e. if they do not receive an answer. The conversation becomes possible not due to equal positions and mutual indifference, but, first of all, thanks to the difference between the appealing and the responding agencies, and—here we should highlight—thanks to the responsibility of the One for the Other. Any conversation begins as asymmetrical relationship by attention to the collocutor's alterity. But in Rawls' theory participants, being monologically immersed in their own life projects, are taken in advance as symmetrically positioned around an ideal that is elevated above them—Justice; each participant correlates fairly to the principles of Justice by something like auto-censorship. They make their judgments by considering themselves as particular cases of these general principles. This is the way in which everyone thinks within a reflective indicative discourse. However, where responsibility and justice are concerned, we are dealing not with descriptions, narrations, judgments or, in general, indicative sentences but with imperatives and prescriptions. The otherness of the Other can rupture any ontology, any already established principle and even the entire system of principles, as well as any already reached consensus. Prescriptions form discourse which is deontological.

The prescriptions or imperatives have to be fulfilled. The prescription, command or order does not ask to be thematized or commented on; the true understanding of the order is its execution. "Close the window!" is properly understood by closing the window. The imperative form always presupposes "you" and not the third person

forms “he,” “she” or “they.” But someone, who comments on or thematizes the order, expressed on the level of natural language, is transforming it into a descriptive sentence and meta-language—for example, via the reporting sentence, “He said that I have to close the window.” Then, this reported sentence could be generalized as “Everybody being in my situation has to close the window.” After these operations the prescription “Close the window!” is transformed into a principle or norm with validity for everyone—every “he” or “she.” But the norm or principle neutralizes the executive force of the order. This is the case with Kant’s principle of autonomy: Kant says that the moral imperative requires generalization of the maxim of my behavior as a universal norm and this is precisely a kind of neutralization achieved by declaring prescription as a principle or norm. The result is that Kant’s autonomous person is at the same time the prescribing agency and the executive force, the legislator and the judge—all these roles are united in each of us being a citizen of the modern society. In this way according to Kant’s conception, the asymmetrical relations—between the appealing and the responding, the governing and the governed, the judging and the judged, and so on—are transformed into and reduced to the equity of everyone before a norm. By the principle of autonomy the difference between the One and the Other disappears; as autonomous citizens we are all made to be average. John Rawls follows Kant’s conception of autonomy and *ipso facto* escapes from the universe of prescriptions to that of principles or norms.

The addressee of an order is in quite a different situation than the thinking or judging subject. The recipient of the order has to carry or not carry it out. If one argues about it, comments on it, negotiates about it, s/he inevitably substitutes for the received order commentary or argument. Doing so, s/he takes the order as a reference to a new speech. The one, who promotes an obligation to the status of a norm, moves from the addressee of that obligation to the position of the addresser of a new speech which declares the norm. The situation is then merely displaced: someone must not have “taken upon her/himself” the order s/he heard, but makes this order an object of commentary, even if this

commentary consists of a declaration that the order is valid as a norm for everybody starting from me and including me. An expression can be considered prescriptive only from the point of view of its responder. If it is received as obligation and seizes the one who receives it, the listener becomes “obliged.” The political and moral questions do not begin with the autonomy enjoyed by “I think,” but with obligation by which “You” are seized. That is why, we have to speak about another kind of heteronomy—the appeal of the Other for whom I am obliged to take a responsibility.

The ideal of equity claims to outline the general institutional framework of social cooperation but the cooperation could not even start if it were guided by equity. Institutional relationships imply the need for a certain category of citizens and a response on the side of the authorized institutional officials. Institutional procedures are the due order for fulfilling this responsibility. Doctors are responsible for patients, teachers for students, the governing for the governed, the media for the public, and so on. The direct relation between the One and the Other is produced if the “in order to” motives of the One become the “because” motives of the Other. This transitivity has nothing in common with autonomy, symmetry and tolerance mediated by the principles upon which Rawls’ theory is based. The institutions determine not merely actions but interactions; the cooperation implies not autonomy but heteronomy. The heteronomy of others’ presence and their needs, in response to which the institutions are created and to whom they are dedicated, imply not equal positions and equity with regard to an ideal of Justice. Instead, they take into consideration the otherness of others and find resources in order to respond properly to them. The One’s obligations are provoked by the primacy of the Others’ difference. The objectivity of justice begins with a question about the right of the Other; it limits someone’s autonomous expansionistic claims. Responsibility for others requires a protection of their rights and an engagement with them.

The major error of egalitarianism consists in its separation of institutions from responsibility and, accordingly, from care. Justice can be understood as an already institutionalized order, wherein, through

formalism and codification, similar cases can be treated in a similar way—formalism is possible because of the common form and common notion by which someone is categorized. Then justice is handed out according to this common form, common rule or common law and it has validity for everyone who can be subsumed under it. In institutionalized justice the relationship between people is mediated by the law to such an extent that it is as if people are only role performers and everyone is correlated merely to the rule and not to the other person. An act is deemed a crime, because it trespasses, violates or does not abide by the law, and not because it has caused damage to the Other.

However, without the responsibility for the Other, which is inscribed even in the anonymity of social functions, institutional behavior would be inconceivable and unjustified. As truth turns into dogma when it is not re-discovered, so, in the same way, justice becomes injustice, deviates and can even involve cruelty and perversions if it is not monitored by responsibility, that is, if we are not searching for a better justice. The very search for justice, without which justice is impossible, is inspired by responsibility. Injustice is already present in the act of depersonalization by bringing people under principles and classifications, substituting anonymous role performers for them. The movement for correction of existing conceptions of justice and the establishment of a better justice is provoked by the otherness of the Other. Because of it, there is an always present distance between *de jure* and *de facto* conditions of human interactions. That distance demands the change of existing policies, of the work of institutions, of the established system—all this is questioned. The current legislation and the current ideas of rights face criticism and are shaken; they have to be justified; the search for justice is awakened by our sensitivity to that incongruence. The very transition to a better justice is a never-ending attempt to find a more appropriate response to the alterity of the others. When justice falls asleep, relying on its past achievements or some immutable principles and norms, it turns into a caricature of itself. To prevent this from happening, it takes a never-ending self-critique and concern by the state in relation to guaranteeing the rights and freedoms

of citizens by improving the institutional framework. But while rights are perceived as “my rights” and their defense consists in making expansionistic claims by certain groups and individuals within the whole, the state is torn apart by contradictions and struggles. In order to avoid these conflicts, John Rawls proposes his two principles of justice and relies on fairness to have everyone comply with them. He also stakes the possibility of justice on an autonomy and tolerance that implies a sense of indifference to the otherness of others and their life projects. But the work of institutions and social cooperation itself is inconceivable without non-indifference to each other. In the state, responsibility attaches one to the others making them associates in justice by means of social institutions.

On Reading Philosophical Books

Donald Phillip Verene (Emory University)

Abstract

The study of philosophy and the production of original philosophical ideas are based in great part on the reading of philosophical books, in which the reader encounters a standard for philosophical thought. This standard is captured in the idea of a canon, through which the reader is directed to those works from which philosophy itself has taken shape and continues to take shape. The existence of this canon entails the question of how these books are to be read. They are not to be first approached in terms of searching out the arguments they may contain, as is so often the form that philosophical education takes. Instead they should be first approached in terms of the images, questions, inner form, and aporiai that generate and inform the arguments they may contain. In this way the reader learns first the ars topica of these works and then the ars critica embodied in their arguments.

Introduction

In the last pages of the preface to the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Hegel writes of the difficulties of reading philosophical books. But besides urging readers to read more than reviews of them or their prefaces and first paragraphs, Hegel offers little guidance except to read the whole of any work. He says there is no “royal road” to *Wissenschaft*, but he does not provide any particular principles by which the way of any work should be traveled.¹ We might add to this view the Vichian observation that a great philosopher, especially one of the ancient world, is a whole university, and hence a method of study of the works of such

¹ G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Vol. 3 of *Werke*, ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel (Frankfurt on Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), 65.

a mind is much needed.² And to these two views we might add Cassirer's assertion, at the beginning of the third volume of the *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*, that to hurl forth one's ideas into empty space without questioning their relation to the whole of the development of philosophy has "never appeared to me effective or fruitful."³ The one way to avoid thinking and expressing oneself in empty space is to be engaged in the great conversation that exists among the works of the great republic of philosophical letters.

Is there a way to enter into this republic? Are there certain things for which to look that may be keys to comprehending its works? My following remarks are intended only to raise these issues, not to pronounce a final word on them. Any great philosophical book always overtakes the reader's ability to master it. Great books are always about other books. And such books always stand ready to be reread.

Philosophy and Western culture

Philosophy, in its strictest sense, is an invention of Western culture, as this culture arises from the life of the ancient Greek peoples. All cultures contain a system or body of insights, doctrines, and teachings that constitute the wisdom of each, but only Western culture has such wisdom resulting in the invention of philosophy. The original love of wisdom of the *philosophoi* took a particular shape that has remained a distinctive element of Western culture and education for more than twenty-five centuries. The wisdom contained in any culture provides a grasp of human being and the real, but *philia*, the friendly bond and attraction to wisdom, provides a means for this grasp, based in reason.

The individual, using the power of reason, can freely inquire into the nature of the self and the nature of things. Furthermore, this love of

² Giambattista Vico, *De nostri temporis studiorum ratione*, in Vol. 1 of *Opere*, ed. Andrea Battistini (Milan: Mondadori, 1990), sec. 14.

³ Ernest Cassirer, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*, vol. 3, *Phänomenologie der Erkenntnis*, Vol. 13 of *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Birgit Recki (Hamburg: Meiner, 2002), Vorrede.

wisdom is separate from the love of the *polis* or politics and from the love of *poiēsis* or poetry. The philosopher is in but not of the city. The friendship with reason is separate from and beyond politics. The philosopher is governed by the Muses, by memory and the arts of humanity, but only partially governed, because the music of reason, unlike that of mythopoesis, makes the truth when it can and does not settle for both true and false songs.

Philosophy, no matter what form it takes, is always committed to the spirit of the Socratic *elenchos*, the questioning that is the basis of inquiry. It is also committed to the Western endorsement of the individual and the possibility of self-knowledge this endorsement entails. And it is committed to the fact that knowledge is power, a power separate in kind from political power; philosophy is never properly reducible to politics. The love of wisdom, as an invention of the West, has in common with all other cultures, ancient and modern, the interest in wisdom, and it can profitably learn from them, but it is not them and they are not it. This said, the word “philosophy,” in a wide and vaguely conceived sense, can be and is applied to any doctrine of wisdom arrived at by tradition, meditation on life-experience, mythic or religious insights, apart from the practice of the love of wisdom, as cast above. But philosophy proper has its own inner form that cannot rightly be taken from it. This inner form is what is taken up by those who can actually hear the call of philosophy’s voice.

Philosophia, the love of wisdom, entails *philomatheia*, the love of learning, as Socrates explains in the *Phaedo*. But learning is not the same as wisdom. Wisdom is a knowledge of things divine and human and the causes of each, that is, the object of wisdom is the whole of things and the whole is the True. *Philosophia* is a different activity of mind than *philologia*, the love of history, literature, and language. If this were not so, issues of philosophical thought would be resolved by the productions of intellectual historians. To understand philosophies or philosophical ideas in terms of the elucidation of their precedents and the consequences of their influence is philology in its widest sense.

But philosophers always think beyond their own time. The True is

not in time, and cannot be. The philosophical interpretation of any original philosophy begins where its historical interpretation ends. Philosophical interpretation seeks the grasp of the True embodied in a philosophy. The motivation of the philosophical interpretation of a philosophy is the same as the motivation underlying the formulation of that philosophy itself. The philosopher and the interpreter have the same aim. The interpretation of philosophies is the basis for the making of original philosophy, but only the few can pass from the activity of philosophical interpretation to the making of an original philosophy.

The purpose of philosophy is made clear by Socrates in the *Phaedo*: *hoi orthos philosophountes apothneskein meletosi*—those who rightly philosophize are practicing to die. Philosophy arises from the fact of human mortality. To philosophize rightly requires a standard of excellence. That standard of excellence begins with the learning of the Western canon of philosophical works. As Xenophon reports, Socrates philosophizes with his friends, and in so doing, they go through the writings of the wise and peruse them for what they may take from them to enhance their own pursuit of wisdom. “And the treasures that the wise men of old have left us in their writings I open and explore with my friends. If we come on any good thing, we extract it, and we set much store on being useful to one another.”⁴

The necessity of a canon

The master key to philosophical education has always been the study of the canon, and what is found there is placed against the powers of one’s reason, and these powers, so informed and shaped, are placed against those of one’s friends—for friendship is the second requirement of philosophizing rightly. Philosophy, like human being itself, is naturally social. There is no one set and precise canon of Western philosophical books. However the canon in particular is taken up, it will not stand far from any other particular way the canon is formulated. The great books of philosophy and their authors are identified in any of the

⁴ Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, trans. E. C. Marchant (Cambridge, Mass.: The Loeb Classical Library of Harvard University Press, 2002), 75 (1.6.14).

standard histories of philosophy, from Diogenes Laertius to Windelband, Bréhier, and Copleston.⁵

The idea of a canon is natural to thought. If thinking is not simply politics done in words motivated by an ideological purpose, thinking naturally inclines to a standard of excellence against which to form thoughts. A canon naturally arises in a tradition, a culture, a historical period, a field of knowledge, or in any individual reader's experience. It is those works that count most, that establish judgment, taste, and viewpoint. For example, there is an Eastern canon of works that begins with the *I Ching* or *Book of Change*, the oldest known book in human history, and that continues with such works as the *Analects* of Confucius, the *Tao tê Ching* of Lao Tzu, the *Lankâvatâra Sutra*, and, from India, the *Bhagavad-gita*, *Upanishads*, and so forth. It is not possible to oppose the idea of a canon as such, except by endorsing something else as canonical; even advocating a universal relativism entails some standard that expresses the principles of that relativism.⁶

Logical and ideological reading

Much of Anglo-American philosophical education approaches the interpretation of philosophical writings in logical terms. The reader is led to develop proficiency in locating arguments put forth in such works. Philosophy is thought to be about arguments and the evidence for them; thus one acquires ability in such activity by analyzing works in these terms. Basing philosophy on argument suffers from two problems. First, for any argument invented or found, it is never beyond human wit to devise a counter-argument, given opportunity and time. Philosophy dissolves into debate if some larger perspective is not kept in mind. Second, no argument is *sui generis*. All arguments in order to be of

⁵ For a version of the philosophical canon as such, see Donald Phillip Verene, *The History of Philosophy: A Reader's Guide; Including a List of 100 Great Philosophical Works from the Pre-Socratics to the Mid-Twentieth Century* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2008), pt. 1.

⁶ See Donald Phillip Verene, *The Art of Humane Education* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2002), chap. 4.

value presuppose directly or indirectly an intellectual narrative in which they exist. The narrative is not itself an argument. Any reader of the canon will note that authors of great philosophical works simply begin by making distinctions and telling the reader about the nature of things. Arguments appear along the way but are embedded in the larger speech. These arguments cannot be ignored. And, as Socrates insists, despite the limitations of argumentative thinking, we should not become misologists.⁷

Another approach to interpreting philosophical writings generally associated with philosophy in the continental tradition evaluates texts in ideological terms. Here the emphasis is not on argument but on what is often called the “hermeneutics of suspicion,” of which Paul Ricoeur identifies three masters: Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud.

On this view, the great narratives of the books of the Western canon can be deconstructed to expose that what appears to be the objective pursuit of truth or moral theory is in fact thought put in the service of gender, race, or class. Ideological interpretation regards the reader as a victim who has been given only an illusion. When we carefully look through the keyhole we see what is really going on behind the so-called truths of the great narratives, and it is simply politics, the wrong politics. Interpretation is *exposé*. It is *exposé* on behalf of endorsing what has been excluded. The love of wisdom becomes the love of politics, not politics that governs as a civil wisdom, but politics that governs thought. The ideological interpretation of texts is a kind of historicism. The philosopher is busy within time. Philosophy relinquishes its impetus to master time and think from the *topos* of the whole, the True. The problem of approaching philosophical books with suspicion rather than wonder is that nothing answers suspicion. Suspicion, like Hegel’s “bad infinity,” is a process that consumes the mind and its critical faculties without end.

⁷ See Donald Phillip Verene, “The Limits of Argument: Argument and Autobiography,” chap. 5 of Donald Phillip Verene, *Speculative Philosophy* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, Rowman and Littlefield, 2009), 47–54.

The art of jurisprudential reading

In contrast to the logical and ideological approaches to philosophical writings, I advocate a jurisprudential approach to their interpretation. This jurisprudential approach might be associated with hermeneutics, understood in the positive sense as a way of eliciting the meaning of texts themselves, not in the negative sense of the hermeneutics of suspicion, as described above. This jurisprudential reading and interpreting of texts differs in a fundamental way from hermeneutical reading and interpreting. Hermeneutics in its original sense is a way of restating the meaning of sacred or scriptural texts and in this sense the question of the truth of the texts being interpreted is established in advance. The truth of such texts is a matter of revealed truth and faith.

But the problem of the truth of philosophical texts cannot be solved in principle or in fact by hermeneutics. What texts are worth hermeneutical consideration is simply a matter of convention and tradition. Hermeneutics can establish meaning but it cannot establish truth. Jurisprudential interpretation, as will be made clear below, aims at grasping the text as a whole, and, once grasped, its presentation of the True can be apprehended. The wholeness of the text and the True that governs it reaches outside of time. Once the reader is at the limit of the text's coherence, thought is outside of time and the True can be seen with the mind's eye. In this way, jurisprudential interpretation passes beyond hermeneutical interpretation. The philosophical text takes us beyond itself when we learn to read jurisprudentially.

There are four principles to jurisprudential reading: eliciting the image and the question and discovering the inner form and the moments of *aporia*. I will explain each of them in turn. The idea of jurisprudential reading is derived from the conception of *ius gentium* in Roman law as put forth in the *Corpus Juris Civilis* or *Digest* and *Institutes* of Justinian. What the Greeks called *philosophia*, the Romans called *iurisprudentia*. The theoretical wisdom of the Greeks is the civil wisdom of the Romans. The *ius gentium* is the conception of an actual natural law—that part of the system of law of each nation that is held in common with

the systems of law of all other nations, distinguished from *ius civile* or positive law that is peculiar to any nation. *Ius gentium* is law that is in itself right and reasonable and in direct accord with human nature. It is law as a whole and universal, civil wisdom. In analogous fashion, any work that is truly philosophical has part of it that is held in common with any other such work. It is the ground on which any particular work can be identified as philosophy. In this manner, a particular philosophical work is part of *philosophia perennis*, much as it may differ in its content, method, and style from other such works.

Image and question

To become educated in such works, the reader must first look for the images employed in them. At the heart of the image is the metaphor, in which a connection is made through the power of *ingenium*. These are the acts of imagination, the verisimilitudes upon which the philosophy is based. A metaphor is always a *principium*, a beginning. It is how both philosophy and poetry begin, and it is what sustains them. The images are commonly passed over by the philosophical reader on the way to the arguments, but once the image is declared as an aim, the reader will quickly find image after image within any work of great philosophy. The image is the invention, within human culture, of the myth, and it is what philosophy shares with mythology.

If philosophy remained with the image, it would become poetry. What allows philosophy to move from the immediacy of the image toward thought is the question. The question is the invention in Western culture made by Socrates. The meaning of the image is confronted in the formulation of the question. The dialectic inherent in the union of elements in the metaphor becomes, through the introduction of the question, a dialectic of question and answer. In this dialectic, thought doubles up. The love of wisdom requires what James Joyce requires of the reader in *Finnegans Wake*: “two thinks at a time.”⁸ Nothing can be

⁸ James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (London: Faber and Faber, 1939), 583.07; James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, crit. ed. Danis Rose and John O’Hanlon (Dolphins, The Parade, Mousehole, Cornwall, G.B.: Houyhuhn Press, 2010), 454.6–7.

thought in and of itself; all things must be thought in terms of their opposites.

For the mythopoeic mind, every metaphor is a fable in brief; the internal bond of the metaphor can be expanded into the fabulous narration. But for the philosophical mind in possession of the power of the question, the metaphor can be expanded into the *elenchos*. Fables or myths occur through a speech of opposites, but the opposites are held together by feelings and the words they engender. In philosophies, opposites are held together by thoughts in a kind of twice-told tale of question and answer. The reader of philosophical writing must look for the images and the questions they engender, whether the questions are explicit or implicit in the work. Arguments are always simply part of the larger questions and answers that course through a philosophical work. The truth emerges through the process of questions and answers, just as it does in a legal proceeding, and a full and rationally comprehensible narration of the matter comes forth.

The Socratic invention of the philosophical question allows for the invention of philosophical irony. Irony, as Quintilian notes, makes something understood by expressing its opposite.⁹ In great philosophical works, the reader will find not only metaphors but ironies. Ironies are as easily read past as are metaphors. Logical and ideological interpretations of such works are literal-minded and have no ability to respond to irony. Irony in philosophical works arises from the fact that what is spoken about always outstrips language. Great philosophical speech is never literal; it is always digressive, metaphorical, and ironic. When Plato, in the *Republic*, raises the possibility of philosophers becoming kings in their countries, or kings taking up the study of philosophy, the reader must consider whether this is an ironic assertion pointing to the principle that there can be no union of philosophy and politics.

One might ask, of an ironic statement: if the opposite is meant, why not state the opposite as a literal claim; why take the reader to it

⁹ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, trans. Donald A. Russell (Cambridge, Mass.: The Loeb Classical Library of Harvard University Press, 2001), 59 (9.2.44).

indirectly? A philosophical irony forces the reader to apprehend the opposite, and in so doing to have two thinks at a time. It changes the mind's vision and forces it into the formation of a question. All irony is dialectical and all dialectic is ironical. We are brought into the doubleness of philosophical thinking that cannot be achieved by the single-minded pursuit of argument or ideological exposé. Non-ironic philosophizing, like non-metaphorical philosophizing, never has much to say.

Inner form and *aporia*

The process described above leads the reader progressively to discover the inner form of the philosophy of the work. To grasp the work's inner form is to grasp its particular beauty, in the sense that Plotinus describes it in *Enneads*. This *endon eidos* allows us to enter into the whole of a thing. As Plotinus says: "When sense-perception, then, sees the form in bodies binding and mastering the nature opposed to it, which is shapeless, and shape riding gloriously upon other shapes, it gathers into one that which appears dispersed and brings it back and takes it in, now without parts, to the soul's interior and presents it to that which is within as something in tune with it and fitting it and dear to it."¹⁰ The reader must think the philosophical work in its own terms, in the same way that each form of human culture must be grasped through its inner form. We naturally are inclined to make the unfamiliar over into our own terms. But the true comprehension of the work requires that we enter, into our own inner form, the inner form of the work itself. In this way we are educated. Not until this mastery of its inner form is done can we separate ourselves from it to assess where it stands in relation to the True, to the whole of that philosophy that is perennial.

Jurisprudential interpretation regards the reader as a heroic mind, capable of taking on the pursuit of truth in the text by grasping its thought as a whole. The grasp of the whole requires an epiphany, on the part of the reader, that makes thought sublime. The reader then enters

¹⁰ Plotinus, *Enneads*, trans. A. H. Armstrong (Cambridge, Mass.: The Loeb Classical Library of Harvard University Press, 2000), 241 (1.6.3).

into the world of the author and begins to move forward in the subject of the work. The reader's own thought can become eloquent because eloquence is the ability to speak wholly on a subject, to be "wisdom speaking," as Cicero and the Humanists called it.¹¹

The final discovery of jurisprudential reading, and that which is the key to the penetration of the inner form of a work, is the location of those places in the work where there is an *aporia* (*aporos*, impassable, difficult + *poros*, passage). These are points where the author states something that is seemingly out of place, that seems to be a mistake, that is inconsistent, that ought not be said, where the thought developed in the work seems to come apart from itself. But if the meaning of such an *aporia* can be interpreted, the reader can experience the sublimity of which Longinus speaks, the flash of synthetic insight in which the unseen meaning of the text is seen. "The Sublime consists in a consummate excellence and distinction of language, and this alone gave to the greatest poets and prose writers their preeminence and clothed them with immortal fame. For the effect of genius is not to persuade the audience but rather to transport them out of themselves. Invariably what inspires wonder, with its power of amazing us, always prevails over what is merely convincing and pleasing."¹²

This principle of interpretation has an analogue in the law, in the principle that the certain is part of the true—that what is true regarding any particular case (a certain) requires it to be brought under a law that applies to it. The reader, in relation to the certain of an *aporia* in the work, assumes the role of a jurisconsult. Taking on the task of bringing together what is true in the philosophy expressed in the work as a whole can include what otherwise stands as an *aporia*. If this task can be accomplished the work may likely emerge as having a different kind of

¹¹ Cicero, *De partitione oratoria*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, Mass.: The Loeb Classical Library of Harvard University Press, 2004), 369 (23.79). The phrase commonly used by the Humanists for "wisdom speaking" was *la sapienza che parla*.

¹² Longinus, *On the Sublime*, trans. W. H. Fyfe, rev. Donald Russell (Cambridge, Mass.: The Loeb Classical Library of Harvard University Press, 1995), 163 (1.3–4).

wholeness and hence a different grasp of the True than was previously thought by the reader, who was progressively eliciting the inner form of the work.

In Aristotle's *Topics* is stated: "an equality between contrary reasonings would seem to be a cause of perplexity; for it is when we reflect on both sides of a question and find everything alike to be in keeping with either course that we are perplexed which of the two we are to do."¹³ An *aporia* is experienced from the encounter of conflicting arguments that create a gap in our thought or in a text. *Aporia* and its cognate verb forms are closely connected to *dialektike*, which suggests that the resolution of such a difficulty requires *diaporia* or the exploration of various routes out of the difficulty.

In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle makes his famous claim that philosophy begins in *thauma*, wonder.¹⁴ *Thauma* arises from the encounter with an initial difficulty. Thus in reading a philosophical text and encountering a break in its thought, we are brought back to the very response from which philosophy itself stems. Through *aporiai* we experience the essence of the philosophical mind and temperament. We find ourselves in a state of ignorance in the midst of what we thought was comprehensible.

Examples of *aporiai*

We experience such *aporiai* when reading Plato's *Republic* X, where we encounter his criticism of poetry and then are presented with the myth of Er as the conclusion of the work. How are these to be resolved? In reading Descartes' *Discourse*, he excludes from right reasoning all forms of humanistic knowledge and then immediately informs us we may read his work as an *histoire*, or fable. In Leibniz's *Monadology*, we discover that God, like all monads, is windowless. All monads have only immanent causality; thus how can God be the cause of the world?

¹³ Aristotle, *Topics*, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 1:245 (6.145b).

¹⁴ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, in *Works*, 2:1554 (1.982b).

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, when we reach the pivotal section of the Schematism, and learn that it is in the schema that concept and sensible intuition are held together, Kant suddenly tells us that: “This schematism of our understanding, in its application to appearances and their mere form, is an art concealed in the depths of the human soul [*ist eine verborgene Kunst in den Tiefen der menschlichen Seele*], whose real modes of activity nature is hardly likely ever to allow us to discover, and to have open to our gaze.”¹⁵ In the middle of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel launches into an extended criticism of Physiognomy and Phrenology that seems unnecessary to the necessary stages of the self-developing course of *Geist*, so much so that seminars in this work routinely omit reading those pages. Is this section an unnecessary digression, or does it contain a key to Hegel’s “science of the experience of consciousness”?

In Husserl’s *Ideas*, the stream of phenomenological reality divides into a “material” and a “noetic” stratum, which seems a vestige of that dualism of a cleavage between the physical and the psychic. What seems to justify an abstract separation between the “hyletic” and “noetic” factors which, although never separable in an absolute sense, seem to be independent variables in respect to each other?

In Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*, we are unsure whether his “family resemblances” is the solution to a problem, as it purports to be, or is in fact just a name for a problem. Is there no longer a need to presume a common property or attribute among the particular entities that a class concept denotes, and that can be designated, at least in principle, as an objective connotation or intension? Is not there something that is itself unseen, a form, that makes possible a given set of family resemblances that fall under a given concept? The principle of family resemblances is ingenious, and correct to our ordinary experience, but has it solved the problem of class inclusion such that one concept can be clearly separated from another?

¹⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1958), A141; B180–81.

When we encounter such *aporiai* in the great writings of the Western canon, these are the points at which the reader must commence to philosophize and to come to the level of the mind of the author of the text. It is here that philosophy as such is to be learned, and what is learned will be the result of self-teaching. The reader must be an autodidact, led by the *thauma* the text initiates in the reader. The reader's self-absorption of the text is the basis, as mentioned above, for philosophical thought to be extended into the *elenchos* that exists through philosophical friendship in which the individual's education can be expanded.

Conclusion

The reader may wish to add, to the above tetralogical approach to the reading of philosophical books, the threefold method of reading that Vico presupposes in the *New Science* and describes in his autobiography.¹⁶ Vico describes how he educated himself by reading the ancients against the moderns; in his particular case, reading the Latins against the Tuscans. He read one set of three works of ancient authors against another set of three works of modern authors, reading from these on three different successive days, and reading each work of them three times: first for the whole, second for the transitions of thought within the whole, and third for absorption of their particular turns of phrase.

These three readings are in accord with the three stages of composition for any written work, as discussed in classical rhetoric. To compose a work, the author must first amass the whole of its materials (*inventio*), then these must be arranged in intelligent order (*dispositio*), and finally what is ordered must be formulated and expressed in language (*elocutio*). Applying this method to philosophy, one might read Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero against Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche, or one might read Lucretius, Marcus Aurelius, and Plotinus against Locke, Descartes, and Leibniz, or further, one might read works of the Medievals, such as Boethius's *Consolation*, Augustine's *City of God*,

¹⁶ Giambattista Vico, *Vita di Giambattista Vico scritta da se medesimo*, in Vol. 1 of *Opere*, 13.

and Anselm's *Proslogion* against such Renaissance Humanist works as Pico's *Oration*, Campanella's *City of the Sun*, and Cusanus's *Learned Ignorance*. The dialectical nature of such reading leads to an agility of thought.

We may read the whole history of philosophy as a dialectical progression, one work leading to another in a historicist manner, or we may read one period against another in a cyclic fashion, strophe circulating to antistrophe. We are likely best served by cultivating the pursuit of both these dialectics.

Finally, as described above, all great philosophical works contain out-of-context claims. The reader needs only to begin looking for them, as the reader needs also to begin seeking out the images that guide such works instead of immediately looking for arguments to evaluate. The mind's eye must be retrained to perceive the greatness of the philosophical books of the Western canon. Only then can the reader recover wonder and discover how to philosophize and make the great conversation of this canon the teacher, and be saved from the confines of the present. Otherwise, "Ignari hominumque locorumque erramus" – "We wander ignorant of the peoples and the places."¹⁷

¹⁷Virgil, *Aeneid*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough (Cambridge, Mass.: The Loeb Classical Library of Harvard University Press, 1999), 285 (l.332–33). My trans.

II. A RUSSIAN ORTHODOX SOURCE

A Russian Orthodox Source of Soviet Scientific-Technological Prometheanism¹

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I distinguish three earlier Russian sources of Soviet scientific-technological Prometheanism: (1) moral-religious sources, the principal figure being Nikolai F. Fyodorov (1829-1903), (2) medical-scientific sources, the principal figure being Ilya I. Mechnikov (or, since he spent his last decades at the Pasteur Institute in Paris: Elie Metchnikoff) (1845-1916), and (3) Marxistr socialist sources, the principal figures being Georgi V. Plekhanov (1856-1918) and Nikolai A. Rozhkov (1868-1927). Fyodorov, a deeply religious thinker, is the most surprising name on this list, and, in my judgment, the most important. In this paper I shall focus on his influence and on that of Metchnikoff, paying somewhat less attention to the Marxist socialist sources of Soviet scientific-technological Prometheanism.

I

We need to address two fundamental questions: (1) How “Promethean” was Fyodorov himself? (2) How “Fyodorovian” were the Soviet Prometheans? A third, subsidiary, question, to which I’ll return later, would be (3) How “orthodox” was Fyodorov’s *pravoslavie*. Was

¹ My thanks to Boris Jakim for reading an earlier version of this paper at a 2008 New York conference in honor of Richard Gustafson and for reporting the varied responses of the participants to the question “Is Fyodorov’s ‘common task’ compatible with the principles of Russian Orthodoxy?” He has also made helpful comments on the present text, for which I am grateful.

he, in fact, as one critic has suggested, “unorthodoxly Russian Orthodox” (*neortodoksal’no pravoslavnyi*)?

To answer these questions, we need to look more closely at the concept of Prometheanism. It turns out to have four aspects or components, all of which are expressed, admittedly some of them more explicitly than others, in the original Greek myth. These aspects are: (1) rebelliousness; (2) theomachy; (3) what I call (using a very unGreek term) “Baconianism,” that is, the use of “knowledge” as “power,” the subjugation of nature by science and technology; and finally, (4) an “Aristotelian” or “Hegelian” cognitive optimism or self-confidence, the assumption that even the darkest corners of being can be lighted up by the torch of human reason.

Let me quote briefly from the *Prometheus Bound* of Aeschylus in David Grene’s translation.² I take the four aspects or components of Prometheanism in order:

(1) Throughout the play it is clear that Prometheus is a rebel against Zeus, “the father of gods and men” [*patēr andron te theon te*]. He exclaims: “have I not seen two tyrants thrown? the third,/ who now is king, I shall yet live to see him/fall...”³

(2) Prometheus declares – in the lines that Marx famously quoted (in untranslated Greek) in the Preface to his doctoral dissertation: “*haplō logō tous pantas echthairō theous*”⁴ (“In a single word, I am the enemy/ of all the gods...”)⁵

(3) He boasts: “I hunted out the secret spring of

² *Greek Tragedies*, Vol 1, ed. David Grene and Richmond Lattimore (Chicago 1968).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

⁴ Karl Marx, “Über die Differenz der Demokratischen und Epikureischen Naturphilosophie,” Vorrede, in *Frühe Schriften*, Bd. 1, ed. H.-J. Lieber and R. Furth (Stuttgart 1962), p. 21.

⁵ *Greek Tragedies*, p. 101.

fire/...which...became the teacher of each craft to men.”⁶ Before he taught them, Prometheus points out, men “did not know of building houses with bricks...; they did not know how to work in wood.”⁷ Moreover, Prometheus continues, “I...first yoked beasts for them” and “discovered ships, the sail-driven wagons that the sea buffets.”⁸ He concludes that he has given men “all arts that mortals have.”⁹

(4) Finally, Prometheus says that he has given human beings the gift of logos – reason and articulate speech. “I found them witless and gave them the use of their wits and made them masters of their minds....I discovered to them numbering...and the combining of letters as a means of remembering all things.”¹⁰ This, admittedly, is Aeschylus’ least explicit formulation of an aspect or component of Prometheanism, what I have called an “Aristotelian” or “Hegelian” cognitive optimism or self-confidence, the unquestioned assumption that the finest details of cosmic and historical being are in principle knowable. But it seems to me that Prometheus’ stress, in Aeschylus’ text, on reason, number, and writing at least points in this direction.

II

Our first question is: How “Promethean” was Fyodorov himself?

(1) Was he a rebel? Obviously, he was not a rebel or revolutionary in the political, social, or economic sense in which Marx and Lenin were revolutionaries. He had no interest in overturning the existing political, social, or economic order of his time, in Russia, or indeed in the wider world. But an aspect of what has been called Fyodorov’s “maximalism” is precisely his rebellion against the universally accepted fact of death, his insistence that not only the death of a young and gifted person, but the death of absolutely any human being, is in principle unacceptable. I

⁶ Ibid., p. 69.

⁷ Ibid., p. 81.

⁸ Ibid., p. 82.

⁹ Ibid., p. 83.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 81-2.

vividly recall the sharp comment of our esteemed colleague Richard DeGeorge when, many years ago, I presented an earlier version of this paper at the University of Kansas: “But what’s wrong with death? Death is just fine.” Fyodorov, I’m confident, would have greeted these words with the same scornful and impassioned rebelliousness with which Marx would have greeted an English shopkeeper’s words, “But what’s wrong with our market system and our competition? They’re just fine.”

(2) It is equally obvious that Fyodorov, whether or not he was “orthodoxly Russian Orthodox” in every point of doctrine and ritual, was a profoundly religious thinker. So the question becomes: can someone who rejects theomachy, who is not a militant atheist in any sense, be a Promethean thinker? Here, I think, the answer, perhaps surprisingly, is “Yes.” And this is one of the most original aspects of Fyodorov’s position. His *obshchee delo* (“common task”) is clearly a Promethean project. Indeed, in its maximalism (its ultimate goal of universal resurrection and the final overcoming of death), it might be called a “Hyper-Promethean Project.”

But for Fyodorov, in contrast to the Soviet Marxist-Leninists, this is not a project to be carried out “against God” or “in spite of God” but rather “with God” and as a part of “God’s work” in the cosmos and in history. In a word, Fyodorov’s Prometheanism is “theurgical,” as he himself suggests (without using the term ‘Promethean’) when he declares that art and science, in their ultimate union, will constitute a “real, not a mystical, theurgy (*bogodeistvo*).”¹¹ “*In us* [that is, in human beings], God’s word becomes God’s deed.” Mankind, Fyodorov adds, is called to be “God’s instrument” in the “sacred task” of resurrecting the ancestors.¹²

¹¹ *Filosofiiia obshchego dela* (Vernyi 1906) 1:416.

¹² FOD 1:67; emphasis added. George M. Young, in *The Russian Cosmists: The Esoteric Futurism of Nikolai Fedorov and His Followers* (Oxford University Press, 2012), uses the expression “Promethean Theurgy” as the title of his tenth chapter.—Taras Zakydalsky has argued that, despite Fyodorov’s religious and theological language, the common task is in essence a secular project, to be carried

(3) In his “Baconianism” Fyodorov is entirely Promethean and very close to the Soviet gamut of scientific-technological projects. It was the severe drought, crop failure, and subsequent famine of 1891-1892 that inspired Fyodorov to think seriously about “climate control” – the elimination of floods, droughts, and destructive storms. It was those same events that prompted Plekhanov (1856-1918) to assert: “Contemporary [Marxist] socialism is carrying out just such a task as the Greeks ascribed to *Prometheus*. It is giving men the [scientific and technological] means with which they will put an end to their dependence on blind, elemental forces and will subject those forces to the dominion of reason, thus attaining an unprecedented [social and political] development.”¹³ Incidentally, that same crop failure and famine motivated Tolstoy and Solovyov in a quite different direction: led by Tolstoy, they both made urgent efforts to raise public awareness of the famine and to provide relief to its victims.

According to Fyodorov, the “*ratsional’noe upravlenie...*” [rational management or control] (a quite Soviet term) and “*dukhovizatsiia*” [spiritualization] (a quite unSoviet term) of the cosmos will be carried out in stages, beginning with climate control, proceeding to “gravity control” and the construction of orbiting “space stations,” and then to interplanetary and eventually intergalactic exploration and colonization. Such space stations and cosmic colonies will provide living space for the resurrected ancestors as well as serving to introduce a humanizing control over blind natural forces. Human beings, Fyodorov declared, face the prospect “not only of visiting, but also of settling all the worlds of the universe... *It was for this that man was created.*”¹⁴

This bold thought was echoed in the 1966 essay “Chelovechestvo: Dlia chego ono?” (Mankind: What is it for? Or: What is its Purpose?) by

out by the science, technology, and labor of united human beings. See his Bryn Mawr dissertation, *N. F. Fyodorov: A Philosophy of Physical Resurrection* (1976).

¹³ G. V. Plekhanov, “O zadachakh sotsialistov v bor’be s golodom v Rossii” [1892], *Sochineniia* (M. 1923), 3:399-400.

¹⁴ FOD 1:416, 417; emphasis in original.

Soviet planetary geographer Igor M. Zabelin (1927-1986).¹⁵ Zabelin gives Fyodorov full credit for having introduced the “profound” conception of the human race as a “cosmos-creating” force. Zabelin’s own position is a secularized or naturalized Fyodorovianism. “Mankind,” he declares, “is nature’s agent, created by nature [itself] for the control and management (*upravlenie*) of [nature’s] elemental forces.”¹⁶ Mankind’s mission is to spread intelligent life, first to other planets in the solar system, and eventually to distant galaxies as well.¹⁷ Zabelin goes on to make a point not available to Fyodorov: he sees it as “not a matter of chance” (*ne sluchaino*) that, in the 1960s, serious overpopulation of planet earth is coinciding with the beginning of the space age. It will, he asserts, take a great many people (presumably organized into Fyodorovian “task forces” of scientists and technicians) to bring the cosmos under rational human control.

Fyodorov’s powerful emphasis on space exploration and space colonization, sketched above, helps to explain why in the late 1970s the devoted Fyodorov scholar and advocate Svetlana Semenova was able to enlist the support of Soviet cosmonauts in her eventually successful effort to persuade a major Moscow publisher to bring out a 700-page volume of Fyodorov’s selected writings, accompanied by her own long and sympathetic introductory essay.¹⁸ It was not the fault either of Semenova or of her supportive Soviet cosmonauts that the book aroused a storm of harsh criticism from Marxist-Leninist commentators.¹⁹

(4) Although Fyodorov does not explicitly espouse or defend the cognitive optimism that I have attributed to Aristotle and Hegel, he makes a number of statements that appear to presuppose the ultimate knowability of every detail of cosmic and historical being. Thus, he

¹⁵ That essay was reprinted in a book with the same title: Igor M. Zabelin, *Che lovechestvo: Dlia chego ono?* (M. 1970).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

¹⁸ Svetlana Semenova, ed., *Nikolai Fedorovich Fedorov: Sochineniia* (Akademiiia nauk SSSR: Institut Filosofii, Izd. “Mysl’,” M. 1982).

¹⁹ Cf. the harsh critique by S. R. Mikulinskii in *Voprosy filosofii*, No. 12 (1982), pp. 151-157.

declares: “*All* matter is the dust of our ancestors,” and “in the tiniest particles...we may find traces of our ancestors.”²⁰ A perfected science and technology, which will be able to control “*all* the molecules and atoms of the external world in such a way as to collect what is dispersed, to unite what is disintegrated,” will make possible the literal raising of the dead. This will require a detailed seeking out and recovering of the *prakh ottsov* (“ashes or dust of the fathers”) from the depths of interstellar space as well as from the bowels of the earth.²¹ The raising of the dead will be a redirecting of natural energies, a rational regulation of natural processes, based on exhaustive, even “absolute,” knowledge of the most detailed configurations of all such processes.

III

The second question is: How “Fyodorovian” were the Soviet scientific-technological Prometheans? I shall try to answer this question under four points, beginning with the most challenging, the point where the position of Fyodorov and that of 20th century Soviet scientists and engineers appear totally incompatible, and proceeding to the least challenging, the point where the general compatibility of the two positions is most evident.

Marxism-Leninism is a theory of progress, which interprets the movement of history as an inevitable, irreversible, and beneficent dialectical process. The historical movement that proceeds from ancient slave-holding societies through medieval feudalism to modern capitalism, and on to the socialism and communism of the anticipated historical future is a movement from the inadequate polities, societies, and economies of the ancient world, to the somewhat more adequate polities, societies, and economies of the medieval period, to the distinctly better polities, societies, and economies of the modern world, and on to the dramatically improved, indeed “optimized,” polities, societies, and economies of world communism in the anticipated historical future.

²⁰ FOD 1:329; emphasis added.

²¹ Ibid., p. 442; emphasis added.

Fyodorov sharply attacks *all* theories of progress, including the Marxist socialist one, together with the more general assumption that what is new deserves to displace what is old, that the birth and growth of the new requires the decline and death of the old. In sharpest contrast, he insists that those now living, who have received the gift of life from those now dead, are under an imperative moral obligation to attempt – no matter how staggering the task – to restore life to the no-longer-living.

More generally, Fyodorov ascribes primary value to the historical *past* and the historical *present*. In clear contrast, Marxist-Leninists ascribe primary value to the historical *future*.²² For Fyodorov, museums, like graveyards, are “sacred places.” Marxist-Leninists, in the 1920s, during the first flush of revolutionary fervor, closed ancient Russian Orthodox churches or converted them into warehouses or dancehalls, destroyed icons, and melted down church bells for secular reuse. Compare the incendiary lines (written in 1917) by the revolutionary poet Vladimir Kirillov:

In the name of our *Tomorrow* we shall burn Raphael,
Destroy museums, and trample down the flowers of art.²³

Nevertheless, it is important to realize that, after all, *one* aspect of Fyodorov’s position *is* decisively future-oriented, namely, his unquestioned reliance on the future historical development and ultimate perfecting of science and technology. Florovsky captured this aspect in a witty neologism, describing the Fyodorovian “common task” as a kind of “cosmic *mnogoletka*” (a “many-year plan,” on the model of a Soviet “five-year plan,” *piatiletka*).²⁴ This witticism seems to me to be one-sided, and in a sense unfair, because Florovsky here fails to distinguish

²² See my paper “The Use and Abuse of Hegel by Nietzsche and Marx” in *Hegel and His Critics: Philosophy in the Aftermath of Hegel*, ed. William Desmond (Albany, NY 1989), pp. 1-34, esp. sec. II (pp. 4-9).

²³ Kirillov, *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy* (M. 1970), p. 35; emphasis added.

²⁴ Georges Florovsky, *Puti russkogo bogosloviia*, (Paris 1937), p. 35.

between the *end* and the *means* that Fyodorov has in mind. The scientific-technological *means* are indeed future-oriented; the perfecting of science and technology to a highly advanced level, one that Fyodorov justifiably assumes will take a *very* long time to reach. However, the *end* served by these future-oriented *means* lies not in the historical future, but in the historical *past* and the historical *present*.

Karel Čapek produced a barbed and brilliant satire (first published in August 1930 in his “Letters from the Future”) in the very middle of the first Soviet *piatiletka* [1928-1932]), describing the solemn and elaborate way in which the Soviet authorities (in 2017) celebrated the centennial of the October Revolution by replacing their current *třistaletka* (“three hundred year plan”) with a more “rational and scientific” *seven thousand* year plan.²⁵ But I suspect that this barb would lose some of its sting if it were redirected toward Fyodorov’s *obshchee delo*. The development, for example, of the science and technology of “climate control” from the primitive cloud-seeding efforts that excited Fyodorov in 1892 to the actual elimination of floods, droughts, and destructive storms might well take three hundred years. And one could imagine that – on Fyodorov’s view – the perfecting of the scientific-technological means for actually restoring life to the no-longer-living might indeed require as much as “seven thousand years.”

IV

Elie Metchnikoff (1845-1916), who coined the term ‘thanatology’ (in 1907), i.e., the study of death and dying, and received the Nobel prize (in 1908) for his work on “phagocytes,” initiated serious discussion of the “prolongation of life.” He agreed with Tolstoy that the problem of death is the “fundamental question of human life,” but insisted that what is “dreadful” is not the fact of death but the fact of

²⁵ K. Čapek, “Listy z let budoucích,” *Lidové noviny* (Prague) August 8, 1930. These letters, long suppressed for political and ideological reasons, were finally included in an expanded edition of Čapek’s works: *Spisy* (Prague, 1991), 15:439. I am grateful to Norma Comrada for bringing this passage to my attention and to Peter Steiner for providing me with a photocopy of the text from *Spisi*.

premature death, of dying “too young,” before one’s work is completed. At the present time, he insists, human beings are “abnormal, ailing creatures.” Death comes unnaturally early, not just for those who die at twenty or forty but also for those who die at seventy or ninety. Following Georges Buffon’s *Histoire naturelle* (1749), Metchnikoff places the “normal” or “natural” ratio of age-at-skeletal-maturity to age-at-death between 1 to 5 and 1 to 7 or even 1 to 10. Thus, a dog, which is mature at two, lives to be fifteen or twenty. A horse, which is mature at three or four, lives to be twenty-five or thirty. Metchnikoff follows Buffon in assuming “normal” life expectancy to be one hundred twenty-five to one hundred fifty years.²⁶ He regards “orthobiotic” death as a welcome consummation of a completed life. After a long, vigorous, and joyous old age there will be a final period, at about age one hundred fifty, marked by a “sense of satiety” and a “passionate desire for natural death.”

Metchnikoff had learned from Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726) that physical immortality, in the sense of the indefinite extension of impotent senility is not a blessing, but a curse.²⁷ The birth, among the Luggnaggians, of a “Struldbrugg,” a child identified by a spot (of changing color) above the left eyebrow as “immortal,” threw the parents and siblings of such a child into despair.

In a few concise paragraphs Swift lays out the disadvantages, annoyances, and horrors of living forever. He assumes that the powers and senses of the Struldbruggs decay at about age eighty, after which they are treated as “dead before the law,” unable to own property or enter into contracts. If two Struldbruggs marry, the marriage is dissolved as soon as the younger spouse turns eighty. Because of the historical

²⁶ Walter Bortz, M.D., in his book *We Live too Short and Die too Long* (New York 1991) offers scientific-medical evidence that the “natural” human life span is one million hours, or about one hundred twenty years. And, like Metchnikoff, he cites a number of examples of people who have lived to, or slightly beyond, that age.

²⁷ Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels*, Pt. 3, ch. 10; in “Great Books of the Western World,” ed. Robert M. Hutchins (Chicago 1952), this chapter is in vol. 36 at pp. 124-129

development of language, those who were born several centuries ago are unable to understand the current vernacular. They don't even have the satisfaction of reading, as their memories have failed to such an extent that by the time they reach the end of a given sentence, they have already forgotten its beginning. Most Struldbruggs live out their lives in poverty; some are actually reduced to begging. For reasons such as these, they are "not only opinionative, peevish, envious, morose, vain, talkative; but incapable of friendship and dead to all natural affection..."²⁸ Moreover, Struldbruggs, especially, the females, become more and more hideous as the centuries pass. And they uniformly envy those around them who find in death the welcome release from which they themselves are forever cut off. In sum, Struldbruggian "immortality" is the dragging out of a thin and meager existence in creatures whose senses and powers have drastically decayed. For all such reasons, Metchnikoff is careful to insist that "the prolongation of life [must] be associated with the preservation of *intelligence* and of the *power to work*."²⁹

In the Soviet Union discussion of physical immortality, active and intense in the 1920s, was replaced during the half century that began in the late 1930s by discussion of a dramatic increase in average life-expectancy. The "prolongation of life" or "life extension" (*prodlenie zhizni*) was a topic to which much Soviet attention and research was devoted. The scientist most active in this work during the 1930s and 1940s was Aleksandr A. Bogomolets, President of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, who in 1938 published a brief but influential study, *Prodlenie zhizni*, which sold out in a matter of days and was translated into the major European languages. In 1939 he convened in Kiev an international conference, attended by more than a thousand scientists, on problems of aging and longevity. Bogomolets devoted much time and energy to the "struggle for normal longevity," where—as in the usage of earlier thinkers such as Vladimir Solovyov—the term

²⁸ Swift, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

²⁹ E. Metchnikoff, *The Prolongation of Life: Optimistic Studies*, trans. and ed. by P. C. Mitchell, intro. by C. S. Minot (New York 1910), p. 133; emphasis added.

‘normal’ means not ‘average’ but ‘conforming to a norm,’ that is, ‘ideal,’ or ‘desirable.’³⁰ Bogomolets assumed ‘normal’ in this sense to be about one hundred fifty years, but did not take that number as an absolute limit.

He expanded on Metchnikoff’s account of “natural” or “orthobiotic” death, claiming that “death itself, once it has become natural, will cease to be a tragedy. Old age will come imperceptibly upon healthy people. All the vital functions of the organism will be extinguished smoothly and painlessly, among them the life-instinct, and the end will come like a desired sleep.”³¹ In the 1930s Bogomolets sent researchers to Abkhazia in Soviet Georgia, where they found a number of people who claimed to be 120 or 130 years old. Unfortunately, these figures did not stand the test of time. As gerontologist Zhores Medvedev pointed out, during WWI many Georgians, to avoid conscription into the Tsar’s armed forces, had taken their *fathers’* identities, thus adding two or three decades to their own “documented ages.”³²

In 1951, when I was a young instructor at Columbia University in New York, Communist Howard Fast, who was still an apologist for all things Soviet, declared, in a public address that the progress of Soviet science and technology was bringing within the realm of possibility an “indefinite extension” of the human life span. When pressed by a questioner as to whether this implied the eventual realization of physical immortality, Fast smiled and replied that this was not impossible, but that the prospects then in view were only for a life expectancy of “some tens of thousands of years.”³³

³⁰ As in the expressions *normal'naia sem'ia* (normal family), *normal'nyi predmet* (normal object), and *nravstvenno-normal'naia...deiatel'nost'* (morally-normal activity) at Vl. Solov'ev, *Sochineniia v dvukh tomakh*, ed. A. F. Losev and A. V. Gulyga (M. 1988), 1:76, 591, 592.

³¹ N. Pitsyk, *Bogomolets* in the series “*Zhizn' zamechatel'nykh liudei* “ (Lives of Remarkable People), (trans from the Ukrainian by T. Stakh), (M. 1964), p. 182.

³² See Saul Kent, *The Life-Extension Revolution* (New York 1980), p. 359.

³³ When I first visited Soviet libraries in Leningrad and Moscow (in 1956) I found dozens of Fast’s books, in both English and Russian, listed in the card catalogues. After his criticism of the brutal Soviet suppression of the Hungarian uprising later

In 1959 Academician Vladimir A. Obruchev, an eminent Soviet geologist and geographer, asserted that Soviet citizens “justly demand” that Soviet science and technology extend their average life expectancy to 150 or 200 years.³⁴ A declaration closer to Fast’s was made by Soviet scientist Vladimir Keler, who asserted in 1966 that the average life expectancy will increase gradually until, in the year 2000, it will reach one hundred; and then, in the twenty-first century “if wanted, life will be continued for any period, even centuries.” A decade later American advocates of life extension were making similar claims. Thus Saul Kent wrote in 1980 that by the year 2000 we will be able to prevent the “age-related decline of the immune and neuroendocrine systems, and...restore some degree of youthful vigor in the elderly...And by the middle of the twenty-first century, we could well become true immortals—genetically reprogrammed to live on indefinitely.”³⁵

Bogomolets was honored by the Soviet government with two Orders of Lenin and the title “Hero of Socialist Labor” (1944). Nikita Khrushchev, at that time First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Ukraine, was a member of the honor guard at the Bogomolets funeral in 1946. But, despite much support and recognition from Party and government, Bogomolets’s “struggle for normal longevity,” during the forty-five years that remained in the Soviet period of Russian history, was generally neglected. Despite repeated claims that the Party and government would provide “a long and healthy life” for all Soviet citizens, the average life expectancy never increased beyond its high point of 70.13 in the period 1970-1980, a figure that was significantly lower than comparable figures for the Scandinavian countries during that period. And in post-Soviet Russia, partly because of the continuing

that year, which resulted in his expulsion from the Communist Party, all of his books were expeditiously removed from the catalogues. On my second visit (in 1957) I found no trace of any of them.

³⁴ Obruchev’s statement was highlighted by being placed, in a footnote, near the end of the standard ideological textbook, *Osnovy marksizma-leninizma* (M. 1959). In the official English translation of this book the statement was moved into the text

³⁵ Kent, *op. cit.*, p. 394.

heavy consumption of tobacco and alcohol, the average life expectancy has remained below the Soviet high point. The average life expectancy in the Russian Federation was 63.85 in 1994, 65.92 in 1999, and 69.6 in 2010.³⁶

It is important to note that, unlike the (unverifiable) claim that a given individual is (either actually or potentially) physically immortal, the claim that the average life expectancy in a given population has been increased to 100, 115, or 120 years, is statistically confirmable. For example, within two or three years after the discovery of a cure for cancer, there would be a marked increase in the average life expectancy, calculated on the basis of what demographers call “age-specific mortality.” This would result from the decreased number of cancer deaths in certain age groups, e.g., those 65-70 or 75-80 years of age.

Individual physical immortality is thus replaced by an increased average life expectancy. The increase may be moderate—to 120 or 125 years—or radical—to 1,200 or 12,000 years. But, no matter how dramatic the increase, the average life expectancy is only *statistical*. In a population in which the average life expectancy had been sharply increased, the resulting “statistical” longevity would be of only limited “consolation” to anyone who might die “young”—i.e., at an age only one-half, or one-tenth, of the age attained by the statistical majority of its members.

The situation is parallel to that of the “statistical” eradication of a disease like polio. Any given child born into a population in which the incidence of polio had been reduced to three percent, or even to 0.3 percent, might *still* be crippled by that disease. Such a calamity would be no less dreadful for being statistically rare. Indeed, for those involved it would be *more* dreadful, precisely because of its rarity, like the few “early” deaths, say, at age seventy-four in a society in which the average life expectancy had climbed to a Metchnikoff-Bogomolets norm of a

³⁶ Rosstat, *Demograficheskii ezhegodnik Rossii* (M. 2010), p. 101; Rosstat, *Predpolozhitel'naia chislennost' naseleniia Rossiiskoi Federatsii do 2030 goda (Statisticheskii bulletin')* (M. 2010), p. 205. My thanks to Murray Feshbach for providing me with these sources and these statistics.

hundred fifty years, or at age ninety-nine in a society in which it had soared to the two hundred years envisaged in Alexander Bogdanov's *Red Star* (1908).³⁷

In any case, it is the promise of a dramatic increase in the average life expectancy, coupled with the attainment of a Metchnikoffian "vigorous and productive" old age that Soviet spokesmen over the final decades of the Soviet Union, tended to stress, without offering any specific numbers. Ivan V. Vishev advocates "practical immortality," which seems to mean about the same thing as what Alvin Silverstein calls "emortality," and characterizes as follows: "Despite our best efforts, we will never truly be immortal. Unavoidable accidents and unforeseeable events will continue to take their toll in human lives. Death may persist, but it will be rare. People may live for hundreds and even thousands of years and will possess vigorous youth and agile and active minds..."³⁸

Vishev's own characterization of "practical immortality" stresses the word 'practical' rather than the word 'immortality'; death, he admits, cannot be eliminated, but an active, productive, and happy life can, with the help of the most advanced science, technology, and medicine, be extended *indefinitely*.³⁹ In a book published during his "Marxist-Leninist period" (that book included a standard refutation of religious doctrines of immortality, copious quotations from Marx and Engels, the citation of Party programs and pronouncements, etc.), Vishev attacked Ivan Frolov for claiming that any doctrine of indefinite life extension violates the

³⁷ See *Red Star: The First Bolshevik Utopia*, ed. Loren Graham and Richard Stites, trans. Charles Rougle (Bloomington, IN, 1984).

³⁸ Alvin Silverstein, *Conquest of Death: The Prospects for Emortality in Our Time* (New York 1979), p. 13.

³⁹ A. Vishev, "Vpervye na Vsemirnom Filosofskom Kongresse," [For the First Time at a World Congress of Philosophy], *Vestnik rossiiskogo filosofskogo obshchestva*, No. 3 (2003), pp. 62-67. He is referring to the round table on "Life, Death, and Immortality" that he convened at the World Congress in Istanbul in August 2003. His delight that this has happened is tempered by his realization that most of the seven contributors to the round table were still operating in terms of what he considers an outmoded "paradigm of death" (*smertnicheskaia paradigma*), p. 67.

parameters of the human species, in other words, that a creature who lives for thousands of years cannot be considered a representative of the species *homo sapiens*. Frolov, according to Vishev, misinterprets indefinite life extension as the indefinite extension of old age or senility (*starost'*). Frolov also claims that it would be very difficult to establish the self-identity of a ten-or twenty-thousand-year old being. Both of Frolov's points strike me as quite reasonable. But Vishev's only "refutation" of them amounts to calling Frolov's positions "pessimistic," contrasted with his own "optimistic" position.⁴⁰

V

To return to Florovsky's critique: the main point is that, although the development of given scientific-technological *means* might take a very long time, extending into the most distant future, the moral and religious *end* which these means are intended to serve lies not in the *future* but in the recovery of those values that were achieved in the immediate, intermediate, and remote historical *past*, as well as those values that are being achieved in the historical *present*. Fyodorov's position stands in clear contrast to the goal of a Soviet five-year plan: say, to double the production of coal, or to triple the production of steel by the end of a given *piatiletka*. It is precisely talk about a "three-hundred year plan" (formulated in 2017, and to be completed in the year 2317!) that would bring about, say, a five hundred-fold increase in coal production, or a "seven-thousand-year plan" (to be completed in the year 9017!) that would bring about a fifty thousand-fold increase in steel production that is—as Čapek perceptively noted—fantastic and absurd.

In a pamphlet published in 1906, the same year as the first volume of Fyodorov's *Filosofia obshchego dela*, an anonymous Marxist author declared that *homo faber* "will take possession of the universe and

⁴⁰I. V. Vishev, *Bessmertie cheloveka; Real'no li ono?* [Human Immortality. Is it Real?] (Minsk 1990), pp. 121, 124. Frolov's book is *Perspektivy cheloveka* [The Prospects for Man] (M. 1983). The points disputed by Vishev are set out at pp. 324 and 325 in Frolov's book.

extend his species into distant cosmic regions.”⁴¹ He concludes: “We who are now struggling for a [Marxist] social ideal are struggling, in the final analysis...for individual immortality.”⁴² In 1911 the Marxist economic historian Nikolai A. Rozhkov, who had written a preface for Koshkarev’s pamphlet, added that, within a few centuries, scientists will work out the mathematical formulas expressing the configuration of the electrons in any given human organism, making possible the elimination of disease and, eventually, death. “We mortals may hope to awaken.”⁴³ Even such trivial clues as a photograph of a dead person or a sample of his or her handwriting will be sufficient for reconstructing the unique individual formula of his or her electrons. “The task of immortality (*zadacha bessmertii*, a very Fyodorovian expression) will finally be carried out. We must try to be *worthy of future* resurrection.”⁴⁴

Despite their surface similarities, there is an important difference between the positions of Rozhkov and Fyodorov. For Fyodorov the raising of the (already) dead is a *selfless* act, the carrying out of an urgent moral obligation: the living have an imperative moral duty to summon all their scientific-technological powers in the collective effort to restore life to those who, directly or indirectly, gave them the gift of life. In contrast, for Rozhkov the future raising of the (not yet) dead is, at least in part, a *selfish* act. Physical immortality will not be achieved until some time in the remote historical future. Future resurrection “in the laboratory” will be for Rozhkov and his comrades a way of retroactively gaining the gift of *future* immortality for those — emphatically including themselves—who have had the bad luck to be

⁴¹ *O proletarskoi etike* (St. Petersburg, 1906), p. 39. More than sixty years later the author was revealed to be N. N. Koshkarev (cf. *Voprosy filosofii*, No. 4 [1968], p. 4). Unfortunately, I have been unable to discover anything further about Koshkarev.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁴³ Rozhkov, *Osnovy nauchnoi filosofii* (M. 1911), p. 131.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 132; emphasis added. For further discussion of Rozhkov’s position, see Michael Hagemeister, introductory essay in *Die Neue Menschheit* (Frankfurt am Main 2004), pp. 31-32, and George L. Kline, *Religious and Anti-Religious Thought in Russia* (Chicago 1968), pp. 164-166.

born at too early a stage in the long, slow historical development of science and technology

Sergei Bulgakov, who in the 1890s had been a committed Marxist, focused a sharp critical eye in 1902, during the transition period he himself described as a move “from Marxism to idealism,” on two closely related questions, both of direct concern to us here. As in his later theological works, which have been ably discussed by Paul Valliere,⁴⁵ Bulgakov here demonstrated striking originality, insight, and wisdom. He pointed out that (1) the historical future is simply not knowable in the way that Marxists claim, when they announce “with scientific certitude” that every present feudal-aristocratic socio-economic system will be superseded in a few decades by a capitalist socio-economic system, and that that system in turn will, in a few more decades, be superseded by a socialist socio-economic system, which in turn, in a century or two, will be superseded by a worldwide communist socio-economic system. In sharp contrast, Bulgakov sensibly asserted: “[T]he boldest theories of progress do not go further in their predictions than the visible historical future, and the historian’s eye does not see very far. Perhaps the fate of mankind in the 20th century, say, is known to us, but we know absolutely *nothing* about what awaits mankind in the 21st, 22nd, or 23rd century.”⁴⁶

Actually, Bulgakov goes beyond his own cautious warning when he says in 1902 that “perhaps the fate of mankind in the 20th century is known to us.” He could scarcely have anticipated the outbreak of WWI (1914), the fall of the Russian monarchy and the rise of the Soviet Union (1917ff), the Holocaust (1939-1945), the use of atomic weapons in WWII (1945), the launch of sputnik (1957), or the moon landing (1969). And of course he was absolutely right to insist in 1902 that *nothing* was

⁴⁵ See for example, his chapter “A Russian Cosmodicy: Sergei Bulgakov’s Religious Philosophy” in *A History of Russian Philosophy 1830-1930: Faith, Reason, and the Defense of Human Dignity* (ed. G. A. Hamburg and Randall A. Poole (Cambridge U. Press 2010), pp. 171-189.

⁴⁶ S. N. Bulgakov, “Osnovnye problemy teorii progressa” (1902) in *Ot marksizma k idealizmu* (St. Petersburg, 1903), pp. 113-160; emphasis added.

then known about the 21st century, at the dawn of which a handful of suicidal terrorists flew two hijacked commercial jet planes into two of the tallest buildings in the world, demolishing them, and taking nearly 3000 lives.

Bulgakov adds that (2) the Marxist's alleged "knowledge" of the historical future is in fact an assumption or supposition based not on knowledge at all but on "an irrational, blind faith." The "religion of progress"—the genus of which Marxism is a prominent species—builds its altar to "an unknown god." Every religion, Bulgakov adds, has its *Jenseits*, its transcendent realm "beyond present earthly existence." The *Jenseits* of the "religion of progress" is a "free, proud, and happy" *future* mankind.⁴⁷ Thus, by reducing its transcendent realm to the (perhaps extremely remote) historical *future*, the Marxist "religion of progress" reveals itself as a *pseudo*-religion.

VI

It is, of course, the central "Baconian" element of Soviet scientific-technological Prometheanism which would seem closest to Fyodorov's position, especially as it culminated in the Soviet space program. Presumably, Fyodorov would have welcomed the development of three-stage rockets—something envisaged in the general sense of multi-stage rockets during the closing years of the 19th century by Konstantin E. Tsiolkovsky (1857-1935), who as a sixteen-year-old met Fyodorov when he was studying in the Rumiantsov Library. This has led some commentators to call Fyodorov the "grandfather of the Soviet space program."⁴⁸ In any case, it is clear that Tsiolkovsky—even if he was more directly inspired by science-fiction writer Jules Verne (1828-1905) and astronomer and popularizer of science Camille Flammarion (1842-1925) than by Fyodorov—was indeed the "father" of that program.

Here, as elsewhere, Fyodorov, while emphatically approving the

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 122; emphasis added.

⁴⁸ See Vladimir L'vov, *Zagadochnyi starik: Povesti* (Lgd. 1977), an imaginative account of the lives and work of both Fyodorov and Tsiolkovsky, with some reference to both Gorky and Briusov.

space program's scientific-technological *means*, would have vigorously objected to its *end*, insofar as that end involved the construction, and hence the possible use, of nuclear-tipped missiles. For Fyodorov the distinction would have been sharp and clear: what he would *accept* and applaud is the peaceful exploration and colonization of habitable planets in our own solar system and, eventually, of whatever planets may orbit around their own vastly distant "suns" in our own galaxy or in other galaxies. What he would emphatically *reject* is any military use of space craft, presumably including what we now call "spy satellites."

Fyodorov would have had less strenuous but nonetheless serious objections to other aspects of Soviet scientific-technological development. (1) As a pacifist, he would have repudiated the entire output of the Soviet "military-industrial complex," from research and development to production and deployment. (2) As an ascetic and an acerbic critic of sensuality and self-indulgence, he would have condemned the manufacture of (a) fancy gadgets and luxury automobiles (including those which are armor-plated, with built-in television sets), provided for the Soviet political, economic, and cultural elites, as well as (b) fancy gadgets, jewelry, clothing, and cosmetics for their wives and mistresses, their sisters and daughters..

VII

I close with three brief remarks, the first about the distinction between the goal of "moderate," science-based life extension and the quite different goal of immoderate, radical life extension; the second about the "purity" or "orthodoxy" of Fyodorov's "Russian Orthodoxy; and the third about his attitude toward modernity, compared and contrasted with that of certain of his contemporaries.

(1) I favor the realistic goal of *moderate* life extension, aiming at an ultimate life expectancy of one hundred twenty or one hundred thirty years. In this I have the support of Metchnikoff, Bogomolets, Obruchev, and Bortz. Those who favor the *radical* goal of an ultimate life expectancy of 1,200, 12,000, or 120,000 years can summon the support of Fast, Keler, Vishev, Kent, and Silverstein. However, it seems to me that talk about human beings living for tens of thousands, or hundreds of

thousands, of years is quite as fanciful and absurd as talk about meeting the production quotas of a seven thousand year plan—e.g., a fifty thousand-fold increase in steel production—something that Čapek brilliantly satirized in 1930.

Where does *Fyodorov* stand in this dispute? It appears that, since his goal was to provide *eternal* life for all human beings, he would consider the difference between living one hundred twenty years and living 12,000 years, or even 120,000 years, to be inconsequential. He might also point out that the enormously difficult and complicated project of resurrecting the dead would hardly be worth the effort if persons long dead, once restored to life, were to live only a relatively “brief” one hundred and twenty or one hundred and fifty years. This is perhaps the most “utopian,” in the sense of “essentially unrealistic,” aspect of Fyodorov’s position. I leave it for the reader to decide whether it is Metchnikoff or Vishev or Fyodorov who is closest to the truth in this fundamental dispute.

(2) It seems clear that Fyodorov thought of himself as a devout and faithful Russian Orthodox believer. It was as such that he quarreled violently with both Tolstoy and Solovyov, the former for defending Buddhism, the latter for defending Roman Catholicism. On the other hand, as Berdyaev noted, Fyodorov repudiated the passivity and resignation traditionally preached by at least some Russian Orthodox clergymen, to demand an active, transforming attitude toward nature.⁴⁹ Philosophy, which has been either objective or subjective should become instead “projective.” Philosophers and scientists should come to see the world not as a datum (*dannoe*) to be known but rather as a task or assignment (*zadannoe*) to be carried out.⁵⁰ All of this, for Berdyaev, was a positive development in Fyodorov’s Russian Orthodoxy.

Similarly, when Fyodorov identifies Christ’s supreme achievement as the raising of Lazarus (Jn.1:43-4), declaring that Bethany, where this

⁴⁹ N. A. Berdyaev, “N. F. Fyodorov,” *Put’*, 1928, No. 11, pp. 88-94.

⁵⁰ See my discussion of Fyodorov at sec. 6 (pp 204-208) of my chapter “Russian Religious Thought,” in *Nineteenth-Century Religious Thought in the West*, ed. Ninian Smart, et al. (Cambridge, UK, 1985)

miracle occurred, is more precious (he is careful not to say ‘more holy’) than Nazareth, or Bethlehem, or Jerusalem, this seems to me a creative development of Russian Orthodox doctrine. I leave it to the theologians and church historians to determine whether it is in fact that, or rather a heresy, of the kind of which Bulgakov and Berdiaev were sometimes accused. In any case, the point for Fyodorov is that human beings, in undertaking the common project of universal resurrection, will simply be following Christ’s example to its logical conclusion.

Finally, if we measure Fyodorov’s “orthodoxy” by the rigorous standards of Aleksei F. Losev (1893-1988) he will indeed fall short. But Losev, already secretly a “monk in the world” (as of 1929) considered monasticism the purest form of Russian Orthodoxy and, in its stringent name, declared in 1930 that it would be simply absurd for a Russian Orthodox believer either to do anything essentially human, such as praying, by the harsh “abstract” illumination of an “American” *electric light bulb*, or, on the other hand, to set foot in an *airplane*.⁵¹ I assume that Fyodorov would gladly have done both, as have several Russian Orthodox clergymen of my acquaintance.

Still, in a larger sense, Fyodorov might be charged with the heresy of “cosmic hubris”—something quite incompatible with Christian humility—for his overly ambitious Promethean project of controlling the earth’s climate, as well as gravity, space, and time, with the ultimate aim of achieving eternal life, both for those now living and for those who have already died. Such a formulation comes dangerously close to the promise with which the serpent seduced Eve (*Genesis* 3:5): “Eritis sicut Deus” (Vulgate), “ye shall be as gods” (King James Version), and “you will be like God” (Revised Standard Version).⁵²

(3) Florovsky meant it as a criticism when he noted that Fyodorov wanted to replace natural and organic processes such as child-bearing by artificial scientific-technological processes such as resurrecting,

⁵¹ A. F. Losev, *The Dialectics of Myth* (trans. V. Marchenkov), (London 2003), pp. 50-51.

⁵² I owe this bold suggestion to Michael Hagemeister, who has also provided many helpful comments on the present text.

preferring the conscious and rational character of the latter to the unconscious and irrational character of the former. But I suspect that Fyodorov would have considered Florovsky's comment a (gentle) compliment. In any case, it seems to me that Fyodorov would have been quite comfortable in our world of the internet, cell phone, iPad, and genetic engineering, a world which his contemporary Konstantin Leontyev (1831-1891)⁵³ would have found absolutely intolerable, while his contemporary and frequent interlocutor Leo Tolstoy would also have found it, in many respects, unacceptable.

This is another way of saying that Leontyev's resistance to modernity in general, and to the process of modernization that was beginning to sweep across Russia in the last decades of his life was total: he rejected the sociopolitical aspects of this process: the spread of constitutional, democratic, and egalitarian principles. He also resisted its cultural and psychological aspects: the emergence of a standardized, homogenized mode of life and set of values, something that he saw as threatening the distinctiveness and variety of national cultures. In Leontyev's eyes, the advancing technologies of transportation and communication were mainly responsible for these malign developments. In a barbed comment, he pictured a future "worker's paradise" lit by electric street-lights, in which people are "talking by telephone from Kamchatka to the Cape of Good Hope."⁵⁴

In contrast, Fyodorov's resistance to modernity was carefully selective: he agreed with Leontyev in rejecting social, political, and cultural modernization, defending the Tsar and the aristocracy and attacking the socialists. He joined Tolstoy in resisting urbanization and defending agriculture. But he did not defend the horse-drawn wooden plow favored by Tolstoy. Rather, like Aleksei Khomiakov, he was

⁵³ See "Religious Neoconservatives: Leontyev and Rozanov," ch. 2, in Kline, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-72, and "Konstantin Leont'ev" in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (ed. E. Craig), (London 1998), 5:567-570.

⁵⁴ K. N. Leontyev, *Russkii vestnik*, Jan. 1896, p. 241; quoted in Kline, *op. cit.*, p. 46n.30. There was doubtless a telephone line between Moscow and St. Petersburg during Leontyev's lifetime, but surely there was none between Kamchatka (in northeastern Siberia) and the Cape of Good Hope (at the southern tip of Africa).

excited about the modernizing of farm machinery—including the development of steam-powered planters and harvesters—that was beginning in his own time.⁵⁵ In a word, here again, as in his Prometheanism, Fyodorov is unique in combining antimodernism in social, political, and cultural matters with a very modern, perhaps even, in a sense, “postmodern,” view of the decisive role in human life—in society, culture, and the economy—of the most advanced science and technology.

⁵⁵ A. S. Khomiakov, in an 1852 letter to historian A. N. Popov, wrote, “I have invented a planter [*sial’nitsa*] (simply a marvel) and I am improving the harvester [lit. ‘harvesting machine’--*zhatvennaia mashina*].” (*Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* [Moscow 1900], 8:212). Steam-powered agricultural machinery began to appear in Russia soon after the introduction of the steam locomotive in the 1840s.

III. RETHINKING OURSELVES

Philosophical Studies of Virtual Culture: How is a Philosophical Virtual Laboratory Being Made?

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The title “Philosophical Studies of Virtual Culture: How is a Philosophical Virtual Laboratory Being Made?” refers to a series of scientific research projects and innovational educational forms, which were created during the last 5 years (2008-2013), through the initiative of teachers with a specialty in Philosophy at Sofia University and developed with the active participation of their students.

The title reflects a heuristic attempt to combine the analysis of new, current, and still poorly researched philosophical phenomena, with possibilities of education and teaching derived from the virtual world of cyberspace as a place of digital technologies and global communication. The roots of this attempt lie in a Masters program with an interdisciplinary profile/character, entitled “Virtual Culture.” It was created in the 2000s by a group of teachers at the Philosophy Faculty of Sofia University. Back then they probably didn’t expect that the program would subsequently turn out to be the basis for the development of a new research and educational paradigm with a distinctive accent: the need for and possibility of philosophical reflection upon the modern application of technology. That need and opportunity comes from the fact that the ‘boom’ of information technologies is not only a technological matter. It changes social relations and culture. After the creation of typography, the steam engine, radio and television, we are today not only observers of yet another

revolution of technique and technology but are also its immediate moving forces. The everyday participation of regular people, of non-specialists such as consumers, is the new and different element in the modern technological and social transformation. This means that today we are not only objects but also subjects of change.

The internet is developing through big technological and economical corporations like Google and Facebook. They create social platforms—scenes where the actors are millions of users. The platforms are constantly improving, opening a new field for the activity of users. The better their creators predict the interests and potential for activity of users, the more successful the platforms are, in a commercial sense. That is why the development of virtual culture is so important and interesting in human terms, as well as from the perspective of individual identity.

Due to electronic networks, especially the Internet, communications channels and boundaries are constantly changing, leading to the emergence of new virtual communities and significant changes in human lifestyles and people's conception of nature, culture and themselves, their coexistence, communication and cooperation. The study of these phenomena and processes requires their own special philosophical research and consideration, supported by logical and fact-based arguments from the history of science, scientific theoretical constructs, and also the modern life and thinking of people influenced by the application of science. Use of these arguments provokes different questions and hypotheses about the tension between humanistic values and cyber perspectives, which allows the shifting and blurring of borders between man and machine, *socium* and technology, to the point of their fusion due to the penetration of cybernetics in social and humanistic fields.

On the other hand, life in a world of machines is an indicator of increased instrumentalisation of human life. This instrumentalisation is determined by technical means of communication. For example, computers, especially as “communication prostheses,” are assistive artificial organs that expand the scope of human beings and their impact

on the world.¹

In fact, the idea about a technical “prosthesis” is not a new one. Freud defines man as a “prosthetic God” thanks to technical advances. With such technical devices such as the telegraph, telephone, camera, and even text font, people can “extend” fleeting visual and auditory perception, to overcome time and space barriers, to communicate. And in this way, they immediately compensate for the lack of the presence of the other person. On this basis, Freud predicted the growth of human divinity in the future and at the same time warned that this would not guarantee human happiness. Moreover ensuring pleasure and comfort, technical “prostheses,” according to their instrumental context today, involve a specific anthropological perspective.²

The unusual instrumentality of new communication technologies, and the networks created by them, derives from the opportunities they provide for new ways of presenting human existence and new definitions of what it means to be human. Their source is not the modern utilitarian attitude of the mechanical age, when machines replaced simple tools, but the fact that over time, due to their massive use and permanent application, “communication prostheses” have accreted organically within daily human life and action. As a result, they begin to play a decisive role in the process of human self-identification as a dynamic virtual process.

The spreading of this process in cyberspace allows us to speak of ‘the production of virtual identities,’ and of the end of the mechanical and the occurrence of a new, virtual era. The key features of the new era are the popularity of computers and variations within identity, due to inorganic, disembodied presence and participation in the cyber-world of virtual reality. These features, in particular the virtual collectivity of electronic social networks, are a real challenge to the basic categories of

¹ Allucquere Rosanne Stone, *The War of Desire and Technology at the Close of the Mechanical Age* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1996).

² Sigmund Freud, *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (Wien: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag 1930). Accessed at <http://archive.org/details/DasUnbehagenInDerKultur> on 01/08/2013.

human existence and activity: work and play, communication and knowledge, time and space, body and personality.

Where virtual collectivity competes most successfully is against the primary communities and traditional institutions of family, neighbourhood and religion in modern cities—metropolises whose scale makes interaction and face-to-face meeting difficult. Virtual collectivity satisfies the need for sharing and a hedonistic attitude to peace of mind, as well as thirst for authenticity, without implying other commitments beyond that of co-residing as consumers within the same cyberspace.

Having been considered, until recently, to be a part of the science fiction realm, the virtual world is now an indisputable fact. Its global extent is growing continuously and allows the ‘expanse’ necessary to support a variety of activities, preferences and interactions. As a result, cyberspace is turned into an object of rapid cultural exaltation, a kind of metaphor that extends itself far beyond the usual simulations, military experiments and computer-mediated activities that we normally associate with its creation and existence. Its metaphorical character is unquestionable for researchers who see in computers, not only a tool, for communicating, but an opportunity for the emergence and spread of atypical forms of social interactions as well. Forms such as intellectual discussion, argument, even sex, as well as new roads to the creation, distribution and saving of art and knowledge.

Like any culture, cyber-culture has its source and its momentum: the interaction of people and machinery/technics. Interaction takes place under the sign of the intellectualization of fundamental human activities: labor and knowledge. The mechanization and computerization of labor and knowledge leads to the so-called ‘intellectual technologies,’ which expand people’s intellectual rather than the physical capabilities. Thanks to their intellectualization, labour, knowledge and human life acquire a value in modernity, unknown to previous eras. As is said by Oswald Spengler, human life is valuable when labour is the basic word for ethical thought, and when the machine runs and drives people to

cooperate with it.³

The introduction of ‘intellectual’ technologies causes not only alloplastic change to the environment inhabited by human beings, but also autoplastically changes human beings themselves. The anthropological dialectic of this process is that our intellectualization is supposed by technical automatization and vice versa. The link between human and machine is characterised by interdependence. It can be presented aphoristically thus: technology makes the human to the same degree as the human makes technology. Reasons for this formulation can be found both in the macro scale of socio-historical perspective and in the microsphere of the socio-psychological field.

Technique is a fundamental notion seen via the conception of headway as progress and development, as a move from simplicity to complexity, but also as a move from authenticity to the representativeness of human self-reflection, as mediated by the indirect relations and interactions between man and nature and between people as well. In relation to the notion of technique we can, and actually do, describe the history of society as a movement that represents technological progress: the path of humanity from the cannon to the machine, then from the machine to the computer and artificial intelligence. It is not surprising, then, that the process of such consecutive replacements is referred to as ‘a revolution.’ Revolution connects and separates—in ancient times—stone-, iron- and copper-eras, and—in modernity—the mechanical and virtual eras. Still in relation to ‘technique’ and its use, and presence in the lives of people, our discourse is about generations, differences, ‘reprogramming of the mind’ and the emergence of new concepts of the human being influenced by organized knowledge of electronic hypertexts and the new visual culture of computer imaging. These concepts are inspired by the virtually unlimited freedom offered by cyberspace for the shared play of imagination, for imaginary views of others and ourselves under the

³ Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes? Erster Band* (München: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1969) Accessed online at Projekt Gutenberg-DE Spiegel, <http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/buch/5332/1> on 01/08/2013.

spotlight of our desires and expectations. The main characteristic of this space is that it is defined by an egalitarianism of the various virtual interactions of its members, who are real people of flesh and blood. When everyone has an equal opportunity to present themselves in a space, where all excellences are disembodied, because they are excellences of the mind, imagination, intellect, then the willingness to participate is always available.

The study of these phenomena and processes requires their own special philosophical research and consideration. What exactly is philosophical cyber-anthropology? As was noted earlier, there are enough logical and fact-based arguments in the history of science, scientific theoretical constructs and also in the modern life and thinking of people, who are influenced by the application of science. And this conception provokes different questions and hypotheses about the tension between humanistic values and cyber perspective. The tension is one that allows for the shifting and blurring of borders between man and machine, socium and technology, to the point of their fusion due to the penetration of cybernetics in social and humanistic fields. Today, especially in common, everyday conceptions, cybernetics is associated with the ability to create artificial intelligence by simulating the human processing of information using computer technology. As such, these are the capabilities which provoke the interest of philosophy in cybernetics as a field of science and knowledge.

Combining cybernetics and philosophical anthropology also requires understanding Norbert Wiener's ideas about the nature and necessity of cybernetics as science of comparative research in the frontier areas of science, and the modern identification of cybernetics with the completely new field of computers.⁴ Philosophical cyber-anthropology interest is also focused on the human being and a kind of existence referring to cyberspace as a specific ontological reality that permeates through our everyday world (*habitus*)—as techno-social life,

⁴ Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics: Or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*. 2nd Revised Edition (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1961).

stemmed from the implosion of nature and culture. The ideal environment for this implosion is the virtual environment.

Hence, the crucial question for philosophical cyber-anthropology: What could happen to our human capabilities and virtues, if we were able to live most of our lives in cyberspace? In turn, is the vitality of modern publicity a kind of alternative or regression? Are traditional categories such as friendship and love transformed into ‘functions,’ ‘tools’ for connecting people only in a simply symbolic space of the virtual systems?

This understanding of philosophical cyber-anthropology, and its questions, is only a part of the research and results that were realized by the participants in our education and research platform, “The Philosophical Virtual Laboratory.” As a result the laboratory has turned into a focus for this type of research and for integrative forms of teaching in the Philosophy Faculty of Sofia University. How that happened can be understood from the history of its creation. However, before outlining that history it is important to know why we named it, “The Philosophical Virtual Laboratory.”

First, of course, the education and research platform was so named because we, the creators, are philosophers.

Second, because as philosophers we are faced with the challenge of the virtual world of the cyberspace today. It can be presented with the rhetorical question: is there something thought of, that exists only as an idea, without being turned into a material object, and to not be virtual?

Third, because our laboratory has turned into a creative workshop for the carving of philosophical concepts to describe and understand heretofore unresearched philosophical phenomena and processes according to their effect on knowledge, communication and the lifestyle of people, provoked by the modern and violent development of computer technologies, global communication and cyber culture. With this we confirmed Gilles Deleuze’s definition of the postmodern mission of philosophy: the art of inventing concepts and that way to fighting

with chaos “an ocean of uniformities.”⁵

With its aims and results, the laboratory project became a natural and successful continuation of a series of prior, related scientific research and innovative educational practices, realized during the last few years. Their topics and results allow for discussion of a newly-developing, postmodern tradition in Bulgarian philosophical research and education. It is connected with the highlighting of the problematic sphere and research parameters of the new, postmodern field of philosophical interest today—the virtual world of cyber space and its place, meaning and use in the life of the modern human and society.

In practice, the Philosophical Virtual Laboratory happened long before it got its name. For the short period between 2009 and 2012, diverse information and observations, points of view, analysis and assessments of different phenomena, defined as virtual were collected, systematized and discussed, relating to: the virtual world, virtual reality, virtual control, internet publicity, internet slang, epistemic responsibility in the network and others. A large part of the results of this process is present in the lectures of the Masters program “Virtual Culture” and also in specialized undergraduate philosophical courses. Others form part of the research of our doctoral students.

Of course, as with all laboratories, ours has its own collection of tools. They include different forms of expression, discussion and sharing of content, which the cyber world of cyberspace offers. Our key tool is our e-magazine, *Virtual Culture*. In it are published commentary, analyses, research texts, messages and feedback on academic events, but also presentations of bachelor and masters degree students, as well as graduates. The magazine was created in 2009. Its appearance was preceded by the first Bulgarian philosophical forum at Sofia University, dedicated to the theme of “Day of the Virtual Culture.” At that time, we published the first book of the “Philosophical Research into Virtual

⁵ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

Culture,” in which the reports of the forum participants were published.⁶

A Facebook page of the magazine was created in 2011.⁷ It has become a key ‘completing’ supplement to the main platform ‘place’ of virtual culture and the philosophical interest towards it. Two years later, the second book of “The philosophical research into virtual culture” was published with texts drawn from presentations at the conference, “Philosophy and Virtuality.” This conference was held during November 2012 in Sofia University, again with the participation of teachers and students from different specialties and universities and scientists from Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (B.A.S.).

Another innovative element in our platform is its experimental internet learning forum, integrated with the magazine. It was created with the active participation of students under my management in a specialized course, “Morals, interaction, communication.” Main highlights of the course are studies and analysis of the ethical dimensions of communication and different communicational practices, their historical movement and change from their traditional forms towards modern virtualized and globalized interaction and communication in electronic networks. In the forum the discussion of these processes found expression in a large number of topics, dedicated to bilateral interaction, internet-dependence, virtual love, slang on the net, online confession, alienation in the modern world. As a result the forum and the course became a natural part of our laboratory, thanks to the participation, curiosity and the heuristic spirit of our students. For all of us—the participants in the course—it was interesting, exciting and entertaining to try to talk philosophically online and offline about things that have become a part, sometimes trivial, of our everyday lives and which, for that reason, we often perceive to be obvious and self-explanatory.

The remaining, more delicate, subtle and invisible part of the

⁶ See the website of Virtual Culture magazine: <http://spisanie.virtualna-kultura.com/index.php>.

⁷ See the Facebook page of *Virtual Culture* magazine: <https://www.facebook.com/ESpisanieVirtualnaKultura>

laboratory tool-set is the intuition for the virtual that each one of the “Laboratoriest” has, in other words the firsthand knowledge-experience, that offer him his own ideas, nonexistent as material objects. But a lot more attention today, in comparison to any other intuition of the virtual, is deserved by something else. It is the alienating of the virtual from the human via its transformation of the human into artificial surroundings with the help of the new technologies. The alienation consists in the construction of the virtual world and cyberspace with these technologies. In it, the virtual objectification, through the power of mathematical calculations and program models, gets its own autonomous existence and functioning according to the other individual. Still, this objectification allows the simultaneous presence of many individuals in cyberspace—sharing. This circumstance gives grounds for aiming philosophy towards the question of its own future—how does the old philosophy combine with the new technologies?

But on the same principle we can ask the opposite: How do the new technologies combine with the old philosophy?

Our answer is: through modern philosophical education and philosophical research into virtual culture. Because philosophy has existed long before the new technologies and will continue to exist after their replacement with other technologies. Because unlike them, it doesn't have a replacement. We can rely on technologies to ease our lives and replace us in many other things, but they cannot replace us in our thinking and especially in our reflection, because we cannot remain thinking, while expecting something else to think instead of us. Because of this, the relation of philosophy with virtuality is described, probably most accurately, with Zeno's Paradox Achilles and tortoise. The Paradox is a metaphor of that relation—a relation between thought and possibility, an image and its reflection. A famous aphorism says that the fastest thing in the world is thought. Today we tend to give that description mainly to technology. It hurries much like the legendary hero from the Zeno's Paradox, driven by scientific discoveries, but it can never outrun the tortoise of philosophy, because people gather knowledge faster than society gathers wisdom.

No matter how ‘smart’ the technologies are, they cannot replace that wisdom, whose recognition we owe to Steve Jobs, through which philosophy and philosophizing is a unit of measurement and offers criteria for the value and worth of everything that we think of, feel and do, including technologies: “I would trade all of my technology for an afternoon with Socrates.”⁸

But the recognition of Jobs also hints at something else: that the care for our authenticity as unique and different creatures is unneeded and meaningless outside of communication, which is necessary for us to share with others like us and different from us. That is why we are unique and different and define ourselves as unique and different through communication. Our uniqueness is a consequence, not an aim of communication, because communication, as pointed out by John Durham Peters, is the name of the practice that compensates for the fact that not one of us can be the other.

And most importantly—without the other, two of the most human of human things, without which the human being wouldn’t be human, are impossible: life and freedom.

⁸ John Durham Peters, *A History of the Idea of Communication* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

Meaning in life and objective value “outside oneself”

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Abstract

This paper focuses on Susan Wolf’s conception of meaning in life, particularly on the notion of objective value in her account. To Wolf, objective value has no substantial content but refers only to values shared by a larger community. I claim that it is possible to reach a deeper understanding of a perceived or imagined value outside oneself in non-substantial terms when employing some of Levinas’ and Derrida’s observations as heuristic tools.

Introduction

In general terms, contemporary philosophers tend to regard the topic of meaningfulness as too broad and fuzzy. As Terry Eagleton asserts in the introduction to his booklet, *The Meaning of Life*, “The meaning of life is a subject fit for either the crazed or the comic...there is something absurdly overreaching about the whole subject, in contrast to the more miniature scale of academic scholarship.”⁹ To make his point, Eagleton mentions a doctoral thesis he once came across bearing the highly specific title, “Some aspects of the vaginal system of the flea.”¹⁰ The contrast with the broadness of meaning in life is striking and explains at least partly why the interest in this subject has diminished among philosophers.

Scholars nevertheless facing this intriguing topic take diverse

⁹ Terry Eagleton. *The Meaning of Life* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), ix.

¹⁰ Ibid.

positions. Some of them focus on the meaning of life in its largest sense, tackling difficult questions such as why there is something rather than nothing, sometimes seeking to find answers in religious domains.¹¹ Others reflect on how meaning comes about in people's lives, rather than concentrating on the wide-ranging issue of the meaning of life, though certainly both aspects of the question cannot be neatly separated. In the latter case, the concepts of meaningfulness or meaninglessness play a paramount role. Scholars such as Susan Wolf, Laurence James and Johan Kekes link meaningfulness with the possibility of being engaged in activities.¹² Other authors study the subject from the perspective of meaninglessness and come to overlapping conclusions. For example, to Oakley, meaninglessness is linked to the absence of being engaged in meaningful activities.¹³ Of special interest to us is the account of Susan Wolf, and more particularly the limits of her account. Wolf tries to get a grip on meaningfulness by presenting it as a category of the good that is not reducible to morality or happiness, and that comes about through "loving objects worthy of love, and engaging with them in a positive way."¹⁴ More concisely formulated, meaning in life arises "when subjective attraction meets objective attractiveness and one is able to do something about it or with it."¹⁵

From a commonsense perspective, it is quite obvious how we have to understand the subjective aspect of Wolf's definition: it refers to personal taste. However, it is far less clear how to conceive of the *objectively* valuable or, as Wolf also described it, "a perceived or

¹¹ John Cottingham. *On the Meaning of Life* (London: Routledge, 2003).

¹² Laurence James. "Activity and the Meaningfulness of Life," *The Monist* 93.1(2010): 57-75; John Kekes, "The Meaning of Life," in *The Meaning of Life: A Reader*, eds. E.D. Klemke and Steven M. Cahn (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 3rd edition, 2008). Susan Wolf, "Happiness and Meaning: Two Aspects of the Good Life," in *Social Philosophy and Policy* 14.1 (1997): 207-225; idem, "Meaning and Morality," In *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* XC VII (1997): 299-315.

¹³ Tim Oakley, "The Issue is Meaninglessness," *The Monist* 93.1(2010): 106-122.

¹⁴ Susan Wolf, *Meaning in Life and Why It Matters* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010), 13.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 26.

imagined value that lies outside of oneself.”¹⁶ For Wolf, perceived or imagined values outside oneself refer to values loosely established by the community at large and shared by this community, in contrast to values adhered to solely by one single individual. She, however, does not answer the tricky question of why they would be perceived or imagined as valuable, and, indeed, within mainstream frameworks on this question, there is no overt answer to it. In this article, I will investigate whether it would be possible to reach a deeper understanding of perceived or imagined values that lie outside oneself by embedding the phrase in the alternative discursive frameworks of what at times are called the ‘philosophers of difference.’ In short, diverse French philosophers of this generation (Deleuze, Derrida, Levinas and Jean-Luc Nancy, to name a few) share the belief that the world cannot be subsumed under conceptual categories. We cannot capture the whole of reality in a conceptual framework. The world and thought differ, even if both always touch, leaving an irreducible yet effaced ‘difference’ between both the world and thought.¹⁷

It is from within this radical stance of difference that I want to explore the idea of ‘perceived or imagined value outside oneself.’ To do so I will first concentrate on the conception of ‘outside oneself,’ disclosing it as an interruption of representation. Next I will attempt to get closer to the very ground of why something would be considered ‘valuable,’ hinting at one sense that moves us and that is directive. Some of Levinas’ observations will prove beneficial and will be employed as heuristic tools. With the help of Derrida’s account of undecidability, I will then further indicate how the very objectivity of a value outside oneself lies paradoxically in the absence of the possibility of being ‘perceived or imagined.’ Before embarking on this issue, let us first turn to a fuller introduction to Wolf’s reasoning.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁷ It is difficult to reconcile the distinctive approaches by these authors. One could say they only converge upon the challenge of how to evoke difference, but they considerably diverge on how they instantiate this challenge.

Susan Wolf's Account of Objective Attractiveness

To describe her conception of meaning in life, Wolf draws on two commonsense views of how to live your life,¹⁸ the first view emphasises a subjective dimension, the second an objective dimension. In order to live a good life, the subjective dimension urges people to do what they like, to follow their passions. Doing what one likes or loves doing, being involved in activities or projects that one appreciates is commonly assumed to lead to a particular type of good feeling, that of fulfilment. Fulfilling activities should not be confused with merely having fun, for even if fulfilment incontestably produces a good feeling, a fulfilling life is not necessarily always a happy life. Meaningful activities may well involve considerable degrees of frustration or stress. Still, what genuinely matters in this perspective is the subjective quality of one's life, the feelings of fulfilment as a good life. Ultimately, the kind of activity that brings them about and their objective worth are irrelevant.

On these grounds, Wolf combines this first outlook with a second popular view. This view holds that for something to be meaningful, one must be involved in, or contribute to something larger than oneself. She believes that we have to take the statement "larger than oneself" metaphorically, not as something more important than oneself, but as something other than oneself, having its sources of value outside oneself.¹⁹ Projects or activities larger than oneself can thus become conceived of as objectively attractive.

Linking these two popular views enables Wolf to connect both an objective and a subjective stance, on which her account, or working definition, is based. As indicated, she concisely but forcefully defines meaningfulness to be "when subjective attraction meets objective attractiveness, and one is able to do something about it or with it."²⁰

Wolf devotes a large part of her book, *Meaning in Life and Why It Matters* (2010), to the clarification and delineation of this tricky concept of objective worth. Indeed, this conception can no longer be declared

¹⁸ See Wolf, "Happiness and Meaning," and "Meaning and Morality."

¹⁹ Wolf, *Meaning in Life*, 19.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

self-evident in our contemporary worldview, for diverse reasons. There has been the fall of grand narratives in terms of a decline in their absolute substantive worth and there has been an anthropological wave of relativism of cultural values. As a consequence, the moral position that we ought to respect one another's values has fully gained momentum. This moral position gives people the right to ground their own way of life in values they deem important. Even if at times we reach the limits of its praxis, this theoretical stance still has a powerful radius. Wolf, in the context of meaningfulness, seems to adhere to this moral principle of respect for moral choice. Being embedded in it she describes objective value, not in its own substantial terms, but defined as merely the opposite of subjective preference.

It might be interesting to ask at what point we regard a value as outside of the realm of subjective preference and thus as objective. In what way does subjective preference differ from objectiveness? In a more general way, we tend to associate subjective preference with a personal, singled-out liking not necessarily shared by others. At times, this concept is given further connotations of fleetingness, transience and volatility. A strong flavour of bias adheres to it. In contrast, objectivity of value is likely to be perceived as—at the least—values shared by a larger community. A number of these values can become associated with so-called cultural or historical 'facts' (e.g. the value of freedom) and be overtly present in a society. Others can play a decisive orienting role in the fabric of society in a loose, non-tangible way. But all of them seem relatively constant over at least a prolonged period of time.

Wolf, by introducing the objectiveness of values, highlights objectivity from a parallel underlying understanding. One sentence in particular is revealing in this regard. She contends that she is "inclined to think that almost anything to which a significant number of people have shown themselves to be deeply attached over a significant length of time, has or relates to some positive value—that almost anything people find valuable (stably and in significant numbers), is valuable."²¹

²¹ Ibid., 128.

The idea of the objectiveness of value is thus proffered by linking it to the axes of time and quantity. The former provides it with durability. Attractiveness of a project or an activity is “stable,” and objectively valuable, in the first instance, Wolf claims, because it happens “over a significant length of time.”²² In turn, something has objective worth, when considered so by a “significant number of people.”²³ Together, these axes provoke an imagery of repeatability and generalisation, deepening the idea of solidity, and also coming close to the imagery of objectivity sought by scientists and scholars. I believe that it is in this manner that the objectivity of value ‘outside oneself’ is grounded by Wolf. As indicated, within the commonsense frame, it is the furthest that one can go. However, as a means of reflecting on what it means that values have worth ‘outside oneself,’ this referential frame is rather limited.

As mentioned, I will, in the following, consider objectiveness from a referential framework inspired by the so-called ‘philosophers of difference,’ aiming at a fuller conception of ‘outside of oneself’ and imagined value. In doing so, I hope to illustrate that ‘outside oneself’ in its unsettling connotation of ‘outside the subject’s ability to represent,’ is core to the praxis of meaningfulness itself; an aspect whose depth of apprehension cannot be uncovered through the commonsense schemes in which Wolf’s work is embedded.

To evoke such an apprehension—decidedly, such an apprehension can only be evoked—I will now introduce some basic assumptions employed by one of these philosophers, Emmanuel Levinas. Rather than give an elaborate theoretical exposition I will, in an indicative way, start with some of Levinas’ basic assumptions, to highlight the elements that are required for my argument.

One sense

Most Levinas scholars, endeavouring to grasp his comprehensive

²² *Ibid.*, 128.

²³ *Ibid.*

philosophy of ethical metaphysics, build upon careful phenomenological investigation. Key to this is the irreducible ethical proximity of the Other. I will not so much focus on this ethical stance but in a heuristic way employ the distinction between ‘totality’ on the one hand, and the questioning of this totality on the other, for this enables us to grasp the depth of the notion of ‘value outside oneself.’ To do so, I will first discuss how Levinas understands the opposite of ‘outside oneself’ (totality), and next, broach the issue of value outside oneself, paying attention to ‘outside oneself’ (as a questioning of making a totality) and value (in the sense of why this questioning would matter), respectively. To elaborate on this, I will start with the idea of totality and representation.

In science and in mainstream views, the perception of man as an exclusively rational being (as opposed to animals) is waning, making room for more complex insights. Also among philosophers we can increasingly find nuanced views, to which Levinas has contributed in a modest way. What is relevant to my point is his splitting up of subjecthood into separate and at the same time united modes. These modes are the ‘I’ of enjoyment, of dwelling, the hand that grasps and works, and the subject that represents,²⁴ as well as knowledge as critique. Each of these modes provides a unique access to the world—each has its own ‘kind’ of consciousness—and in each we can feel both independent of and dependent on the world. For instance with regard to the mode of enjoyment it can occur that at one moment we are swimming in a river and enjoy it thoroughly, feeling independent and master of the river, while a moment later we are scared to death by a whirlpool and realize how we are thoroughly dependent on the world. When referring to the ‘I’ of enjoyment, Levinas focuses on the senses,

²⁴ Here, I only consider uprooted representation, as Levinas also does at one point, but to him the search for the ‘intelligible’ commences together with knowledge as critique (ibid, 84). Because of the Other, we are able to take a distance from our own freedom of representation. This opening to taking a distance, next to the condition of the possibility of ethics, is the condition for the possibility of the formation of theory.

the 'I' as a gut-feeling that arises at that particular moment and in which we can be totally enveloped.

With regard to representation, this double relation of independence of and dependence on the world is experienced less, totality shining through even more. Indeed, Levinas deems that representation neutralizes the independence of reality. It makes reality the same by way of spontaneity. As he extensively discusses (a discussion which can only be repeated here in a very concise way), representation is freedom, creative freedom. While the hand reaches out for something, grasping it, this something is already clarified by representation. We should not understand this as representation discovering anything ahead of itself and the hand, discovering 'that what is.' Rather it projects forth, projects the world as an objective element. In this way, representation determines the world, and it does so without indiscretion. This is its very nature. No doubt, projecting as an objective element can seem a great illusion, yet it can also be considered the constitutional force of representation. Definitely, representation is able to provide thought content to what the hand grasps. It gives meaning to what the hand grasps or gropes for and this process of re-presenting the world is to present it anew. While arising, reality takes on meaning as truth.²⁵ As Levinas portrays in his article "Sense and Signification,"²⁶ while representation creates, this creation is always already illuminated by a referential cultural background. Representation receives and adds anew to this horizon. This circle makes up totality.

The question arises, however, if the world does not resist this being neutralized and thus totalized? To Levinas, resistance vanishes. It surrenders to the totality of clarity, allowing the other to master it. It gives in to representation and, accordingly, disappears in the creation.²⁷

²⁵ Again, the coming about of representation is even more subtle, for it already presupposes the possibility of a withdrawal of the 'I'. It presupposes the possibility of separation, and the condition of possibility for this is the Other.

²⁶ See Emmanuel Levinas, *Humanism of the Other*, trans. Nidra Poller (Urbana and Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2006). Originally published 1972.

²⁷ A critique of Levinas could be that representation is always accompanied by other

Of particular interest to Levinas is the fact that representation does this to everything it perceives, including its fellow human beings. When we meet somebody, we tend to spontaneously create and extrapolate what our senses perceive, and lock this person into a context and into categories. We are inclined to re-present people according to certain preconceptions, such as nationality, state, city and street, family relationship (the daughter, sister, mother of so-and-so) and profession. We conceive of the others by way of what they do or fail to do. So, all that is, is always immediately thought-of. Thought is absolute, absorbing, appropriating and thus, totalising.²⁸

Let us for a minute go back to Wolf's account. Above it was indicated that Wolf understands 'perceived or imagined values outside oneself' in non-substantial terms of values shared by a community over a certain time, and shared by a certain number of people. To Levinas, starting from different underlying assumptions, shared values, strictly speaking, are not outside oneself. Rather they are conceived of as part of an illuminating horizon from which representation receives meaning and to which it creatively adds meaning in order to make the world the same, to adapt it to its standards.

Against this, Levinas posits the likelihood of an interruption of representation. The spontaneity of making the same can be broken. This is the very radicality of 'outside oneself.' Representation, spontaneously creating anew, is interrupted because it is questioned. But how can this happen? Levinas, focussing on relations between people, maintains that our spontaneity to represent is called into question by the 'Other.' To understand what this implies, we first have to account for the 'Other,' as

senses, such as the hand that grasps. In that sense one could claim that the object that is being represented determines the 'I' of representation more than Levinas wishes to admit. Representation has to start from reality itself and as such has to receive the other and not totally subject it. Representation is not just independent of reality, creating it anew, but as much dependent on it. In order to represent, we first have to receive it.

²⁸ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 2002), second section.

a core aspect of Levinas' thought. The image of the Other that Levinas evokes is not one of just any other person as explained above, in terms of representation. The Other does not refer to any physical form or personality (associated with state, family, nationality etc.) within this referential horizon but to what Levinas calls the face of the Other. It is a face that manifests itself beyond the merely phenomenological form; it presents itself "in a mode irreducible to manifestation."²⁹

Levinas' formulation might be somewhat abstract to readers not acquainted with his work. Real life, however, provides a range of situations in which the face disrupts this formal structure of thought. I will now, as an illustration, introduce an example while analysing this next in terms of totality and an interruption of it. (The situation described has actually taken place.)³⁰

Last week, I was waiting for the bus. Next to me, there was an older man. The bus did not show up, so we started an ordinary conversation. The man was in his mid-forties; he had hardly any teeth left, was disabled in both legs but could still walk. On the surface, he looked somewhat marginal. He started talking about his two long-haired Chihuahuas, which seemed to be the most important thing in his life. A bit later he changed subjects, and it appeared that his mother died of alcohol abuse. His disability was the result of polio. His mother had tried to drink him to death while she was pregnant, but he was mentally OK. His sister, on the other hand, had an intellectual disability due to his mother's drinking. Several other sad stories followed.

His sharing his stories with me, a complete stranger at a bus stop, his openness, his straightforward sense of justice, his courage, his take on life and his original views of a number of topics made him come across as very kind. I forgot all about the petty things that had been bothering me. The encounter really made my day. It was a unique experience I hadn't had for years.

²⁹ Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985), 200.

³⁰ The quotation is part of an observant student's testimony written for a course on meaningfulness.

Why was it so meaningful? Was it because I thought that I had made him feel good because I had lent him my ear and not turned him down for his marginal looks? Yes, I think so. But also because he had exceeded all my expectations and overcome my first impressions. Indeed, I noticed that I found him inspiring.

It is inherent in the coincidental nature of this kind of encounter. You cannot willingly create or look for this kind of circumstance, because it naturally arise. You might try and have a similar kind of conversation, but that would never bring about the same feeling or experience.

This example has two moments, one of spontaneous representation, and another of interruption of spontaneity, or the being questioned. To illustrate the latter, let us first look at the former. The interlocutor initially and in a spontaneous way represents the man she met at the bus in a meaningful referential context. She describes him in his mid-forties, toothless and disabled. He strikes her as somewhat marginal, as a bit strange. The nature of the description is quite obvious and typical, probably many of us would have described him as such. Indeed, as referred to before, when she first becomes aware of the man, the interlocutor cannot but perceive him spontaneously in the manner she does, by virtue of the nature of representation. Representation represents something as meaningful from within existing categories, while likewise adding new meaning. To point to the depth of it, it is not that through representation the interlocutor first perceives this man, and next and on top of it, puts a meaning to it. In its spontaneous ignorance, representation projects forth while representing this as objective.

In a second moment, representation appears to be questioned by the Other. It is interrupted. We can notice this because the perceived-as-marginal man is nevertheless inspiring to her. How come a marginal man is inspiring and the encounter is meaningful to her? She seems to be puzzled by it herself, wondering whether it is due to his openness, his courage, or her lending him an ear instead of turning him down. Yet, she next apprehends that it is because he exceeds all her expectations and first impressions. Indeed, the exceeding is precisely the questioning. Former views are breached, the naked face of the man—naked, because

stripped of representation—shining through. The Other is this naked face. A naked face that is irreducible to representation. Coming closer to this face is what originated this unique experience, making her day and inspiring her. The questioning put her outside herself, outside representation.

Following Levinas line of thought, we might wonder how it is possible to sense something that exceeds representation, if it is inherent in our thinking that we totalize the Other and produce meaning? Is not this a contradiction?

Indeed, it is an amazing feat that we are apparently able to contain more than our capacity can. We cannot capture this face through representation and yet we do somehow get a sense of this irreducibility. Seen from the opposite perspective, we are open to it in a way that our tendency to represent cannot prevent. This constitutes what, to Levinas, is hospitality. Thought or representation totalizes, yet a receptiveness for it outside representation is possible. Falling out of time for a split second, we are able to receive—as hospitality—that which exceeds thought.

Turning back to our main theme, we can now come to fathom the radicality of the conception of ‘outside oneself,’ that is, if we accept the Levinas’ core assumptions. It is a questioning of our representation, a questioning as an interruption of our existing representation or preconceptions. But why would this be valuable? Indeed, we not only need to thoroughly grasp our being ‘outside ourselves,’ we also need to try and comprehend what it means that it is a perceived or imagined value outside ourselves. For a better understanding of this point we may turn again to one particular aspect of the above example, namely, the fact that the narrator found the man inspiring despite his marginal looks. We had already related her feeling inspired by the man’s exceeding all expectations, and thus to the very interruption itself. Levinas offers us some hints on how this interruption can come to be conceived as something that matters.

The face shining through, the face as irreducible to manifestation and nevertheless towards which we can be hospitable, provides sense. It provides a signification without context. To Levinas, there is the

possibility of signification outside representation. To him, at the moment of questioning we are reminded of the command not to kill. This is taken literally, for Levinas, who seeing this as an ethical event, says “The face is what one cannot kill, or at least it is that of which meaning consists in saying: “thou shalt not kill.”³¹ Elsewhere he states that the opposition of the Other is “not some superlative of power, but precisely the infinity of his transcendence. This irreducibility, stronger than murder, already resists us in his face, is his face, is the primordial expression: ‘you shall not commit murder.’”³² Otherwise said, the face’s irreducibility points to the danger of absorption, of making the same, the wrongness of it.

Levinas articulates ‘signification without context’ also in terms of one orienting sense. To him, this one sense is directive for it goes against the multiplicity of significations. He claims that “absurdity does not lie in non-sense but in the isolation of countless significations, the absence of sense that orients them.”³³ This one sense makes us apprehend that what matters again and again is that we should try to refrain from totalizing the Other according to our own concepts, even if we—paradoxically—cannot prevent ourselves from doing this all the time. This very paradox is the irreducible and effaced difference. The interruption indicates that the interruption matters, to which we will try to put words within a frame of reference, words that however can become totalizing again, needing a subsequent interruption. Each time, the interruptions are unique experiences that are orientating and directive.

‘Orienting’ or ‘directive’ should not be understood in terms of a certain essence having been revealed in any clear-cut manner—in the

³¹ Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, 87. Interestingly, Levinas adds: “Murder, it is true, is a banal fact: one can kill the Other; the ethical exigency is not an ontological necessity. The prohibition against killing does not render murder impossible, even if the authority of the prohibition is maintained in the bad conscience about the accomplished evil – malignancy of evil.”

³² Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 199.

³³ Levinas, *Humanism of the Other*, 24.

above example, the encounter with the man in his mid-forties did not yield any kind of lucid normative framework, in the sense of a set of standards that we should live by. What was inspiring here was precisely a lack of essence. The characteristic of this encounter that makes it valuable (and thus meaningful) is that it unsettles identity, that it undoes essence. The complacency of being had been disturbed—the man exceeded all her expectations—and what this evoked was not embarrassment but rather an inarticulate sense that something about the situation ultimately mattered.

Derrida wrestles with the same insights without so much expressing this in terms of ethics, although he does not avoid this focus either. I will now consider his views and the possibilities that they offer to reveal to an even greater extent how to understand ‘perceived or imagined value’ as objective, in relation to the notion of ‘outside oneself,’ more in particular by focussing on the non-essentialist sense of sense. Important in this regard is that, if we approach a subject that is supposedly lacking in essence, we will be unable to employ clear-cut signification and conceptual demarcation, and thus turn to a language that is evocative. Indeed, the language of Derrida is even more evocative than Levinas’.

The coming of a possible signification

Up to now we tried to come to terms with conceptions of ‘value’ and ‘outside oneself.’ In this part I will focus on the idea of perceived or imagined values outside oneself, or more accurately on the unrepresentability of value outside oneself. The value of interruption (in terms of making sense) simply cannot be perceived or imagined by representation. As indicated previously, Levinas observed that we are able to ‘understand’ a ‘signification’ beyond signification. Derrida evokes this in his own manner, making us understand how this can be directive (how it makes sense to us) in a way that can never be put into language. The objectiveness of this ‘value’ lies inevitably in the very praxis of the interruption of totality.

Derrida has become famous for his practice of deconstruction.³⁴ This practice can be found on two intrinsically related levels, literary deconstruction and philosophical deconstruction. While the former relates to textual interpretations, philosophical deconstruction takes up the task of deconstructing metaphysics. According to Derrida, metaphysics, or more modestly, Platonism, generates logocentric paradigms, such as binary oppositions (e.g. subject–object, man–woman, present–absent, etc.), installing a hierarchy between pairs of concepts that regrettably privileges one of the two. These dichotomies underpin our dominant ways of thinking. Indeed, historically, our main orienting narratives start from hierarchies—Plato’s perfect, eternal, and immutable ideas versus material, imperfect transient reflections, or the Christian originating myths, such as the Garden of Eden, as pure versus its accidental corruption. Logocentrism ontologically favours the solid: the foundational, essence, existence, substance, subject, presence.³⁵ To Derrida these terms are too sedimented. Both literary and metaphysical deconstruction then is an approach to open these hierarchies up in a two-step way: by reversing oppositions and showing the inherent contamination within each of these dichotomies. Otherwise said, to Derrida there is no such thing as purity, a pure state or completeness. No idea, no reality, no term or temporality is ever pure. Impurity is an inherent part of the purity; purity has always germs or traces of what it excludes, regardless of whether such exclusion is deliberate. It is always

³⁴ See Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore & London: John Hopkins University Press, 1976); idem. *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).

³⁵ To quote Derrida: “The enterprise of returning ‘strategically,’ ‘ideally,’ to an origin or to a priority thought to be simple, intact, normal, pure, standard, self-identical, in order then to think in terms of derivation, complication, deterioration, accident, etc. All metaphysicians, from Plato to Rousseau, Descartes to Husserl, have proceeded in this way, conceiving good to be before evil, the positive before the negative, the pure before the impure, the simple before the complex, the essential before the accidental, the imitated before the imitation, etc. And this is not just one metaphysical gesture among others, it is the metaphysical exigency, that which has been the most constant, most profound and most potent.” (Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 136).

open to the other and as such contaminated by it. Each totality always leaves the possibility for an openness, nothing is ever fully closed upon itself. The structure of the worst amounts to this tendency of complete appropriation of all the others, but, as Derrida has convincingly demonstrated, this tendency is never reached.

Crucial to his account are what could be called the pivotal points of inherent contamination, expressed in different notions such as trace, undecidability, deferral, or *époque*.³⁶ Undecidability, on which we will concentrate here to further point to the non-essentiality of the ‘valuable outside oneself’ as directive, is introduced in Derrida’s work on various occasions and in various contexts. In literary deconstruction, as a point of inherent contamination, the undecidable has this ambiguous position between and betwixt oppositions, enabling Derrida to demonstrate how a duality in speech and writing becomes complicated. One well-known example is that of the phenomenon of the “ghost,” which, he argues, does not fit into the dichotomy of present versus absent. It does not fit into the opposition of dead versus alive either, since a ghost is neither present nor absent, neither dead nor alive, but rather both present and absent, alive and dead. Here we can see the destabilizing effect of the undecidable, breaking up dichotomies.³⁷

On other occasions, the undecidable is no longer associated with the literary and conceptual but is given a position on the edge of thematising thoughts. This is more interesting to our subject, as we can see from his contribution in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, to which we will now turn. Here Derrida makes a distinction between justice and law. Law, he says, stands for legitimacy, for the calculable, for a system of regulated and coded prescriptions. Law is that which is generally applied to all. Justice, on the other hand, is not that which results from law. It cannot result from law, because there are

³⁶ Derrida’s refusal to apply only one name to his concepts is a deliberate strategy to avoid a certain sort of metaphysics.

³⁷ Jacques Derrida, “Force of Law: The ‘Mystical Foundation of Authority’,” in D. Cornell, M. Rosenfeld and D.G. Carlson, eds., *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice* (New York, London: Routledge, 1992).

individual, unique cases that cannot be judged, even though a judgement is required by law. In that sense, justice is the opposite of law. It is that which is insubordinate to rule and foreign to regularity, it is heterogeneous. The dichotomy between both is problematic for they are supposed to be entangled; the *raison d'être* of the law is to enable the administration of justice, while justice itself depends on the existence of enforceable legislation.

Thus, to Derrida, the ideal moment of decision, of a “fresh judgement,”³⁸ will never exist. As indicated, in order for the judgement to be just, the decision of the judge must approve and confirm the value of the law, as well as interpret it creatively, adapting it to the specific case in question. Judges must both comply with existing laws and suspend them at their own discretion so as to reinvent them; otherwise their acts would reflect nothing but machine-like repeatability, and hence fail to be just. A just decision cannot be based on both regulation and non-regulation; arbitrariness and strict calculation never perfectly match. Under no circumstances is there a moment in the present in which a decision is just, even if the decision can be called legal or in conformity with the law. Yet, Derrida rightly affirms that even if judges cannot reach a properly just verdict, a just decision cannot wait. Judges cannot wait until they have infinite information at their disposal. And even if this were theoretically possible, if they did have all the time and facts they needed, then, still the decision would be—in Derrida's words—“in the night,” “madness,” for a decision is always a first decision. Time and again, decisions involve a reinstitution of rules. Each case is singular, unprecedented, unlike any other previous or future cases. Any new decision necessarily interrupts existing jurisprudence.

What role does the undecidable play in this process? To Derrida, it is a ghost, the “ghost of the undecidable.”³⁹ Undecidability in this context does not refer to this inherent contamination not fitting into opposing significations, such as the one mentioned, the unique

³⁸ Ibid., 23.

³⁹ Ibid., 24.

singularity of a case and the generality of law, but to a dynamic that prevents the system from closing fully. As with Levinas, but differently expressed and deployed, Derrida seems to refer to a very subtle and specific event being produced at this moment; one that most of us tend to ignore in the experience of making a decision. It is the experience of having to respond, or of having “to give itself up to this impossible decision.” It is an experience of obligation to that which defies full articulation—defying, in that it is foreign to the calculable. The obligation—not duty—stems from its compelling nature, because it strikes us as significant and requiring a response.

But this is not all. As an inherent aspect of undecidability, Derrida links this happening to the phenomenon of “always to come.”⁴⁰ Though making it more complex, the entanglement between both helps us to understand the depth of what Derrida means. The author plays with the French word *avenir*, which means both future and to come. Derrida makes clear that there is a distinction between both, even if paradoxically they are inseparable. The phenomenon of the ‘to come,’ in spite of its semantic connotation with time, does not refer to a timely and linear perception of past, present and future and thus to a final and just decision possible in the future, an ultimate potentiality turning into actuality. As indicated above, this is impossible as such, for each newly-made decision will follow a rule and eventually establish new rules. ‘To come’ does not refer to thematised time, but to a dynamic, to a happening to which we cannot give a conceptual location. It is this barely discernible moment of which we cannot say whether it is now-ness, immediate past or immediate future. The moment we decide what it is (present, future or past), we no longer refer to this very happening—a happening that keeps taking place—but to a moment in time.

Justice ‘to come,’ as an undecidable quintessential pre-decision happening, is crucial to Derrida. Why would this be so? This is where non-normative ethics comes in. He argues—and we believe rightly so—that, if we could repeat the present, repeat cases, this would generate a

⁴⁰ Ibid., 27.

feeling of good conscience, of self-righteousness and a belief that we have done enough to render justice. We would become self-complacent. Justice ‘to come’ as undecidable, with its insistence on giving itself up to the impossible experience, is this very reminder of the urgency to always be open to reinterpretation, to self-questioning, to cautiousness, and the non-absolute quality of the foundations of justice. The ‘to come’ provides for the possibility of transformation, a recasting and refounding of law, and in this sense it provides for the future of justice, without this ever referring to definite positions. It is in this sense that we should understand undecidability as a condition of the possibility and impossibility of justice.

All this may suggest we have reached a dead end, albeit one that does offer a glimpse of hope. If there is only a possibility, an event, a dynamic—which is not the same as potentiality—and if there is no actuality, where does this leave us? What is left? It would seem to put us “out of the running,” as Derrida states.⁴¹ Yet, to the author, there is more than mere possibility. The endless possibility, of a *peut-être*—in its double sense of ‘maybe’ and ‘can be’—of justice is “what keeps us moving with renewed strength and speed.”⁴²

To turn back to the main theme, we can see that both the dynamic of undecidability and the happening of the ‘to come,’ provide us with a clue about a kind of objectivity as ‘outside oneself’ and how this is directive without being perceivable or imaginable. The experience appears to impose itself as significant, as full of meaning (not always as meaningful), revealing that it matters in an extra-linguistic way, beyond essence. We indistinctly grasp the depth of its compelling force. It is of significance independently of personal subjective well-being or meaningfulness. The very happening provokes non-normative indications—non-normative because they are not yet part of the decision—striking us as just. To be clear, the compelling dynamic strikes us as just, not the way it is articulated, for at that moment we are

⁴¹ Ibid., 26.

⁴² Ibid.

already back into time and signification. It is the very happening that makes the difference, for it is the very compelling dynamic that keeps us going, despite our ‘selves.’

Meaning in life and objective value outside oneself

It is time now to return to the query brought up in the domain of meaningfulness. At the outset of this article, I sketched Wolf’s account of meaningfulness. To her, meaningfulness arises when subjective attraction meets objective attractiveness and one is positively engaged in it. Objective attractiveness is further explained as a perceived or imagined value that lies outside oneself. Broadly construed, this means values transcending subjective preference. Wolf is prepared to accept almost anything as valuable (as objectively important) which a significant number of people have considered valuable over a certain amount of time. She appears reluctant to go for substantial claims, and within her referential frame this is the furthest she can go.

In this article, other plausible responses to the question of objective signification were explored, without making substantial claims. I approached the issue from the underlying assumptions of the so-called ‘philosophers of difference.’ With Levinas, I tried to illustrate how ‘outside oneself’ can be apprehended as a questioning of the subject’s representation, and how the subject will ultimately sense this interruption as valuable because of the unique sense it reveals. Derrida further provides the language to point to the lack of substantiveness of this interruption, its sense—as directiveness—residing only in the coming of a possible signification, not in signification itself. There we can find the full weight of ‘value outside of oneself.’ A subject will never be able to represent this entirely in words; it cannot be argued or reasoned in an analytic way, using mainstream philosophical standards. Its directiveness can only be evoked. So Levinas, and Derrida to an even greater extent, try to evoke this sense in between words, instead of using clear-cut concepts to define it.

To end, I will turn once again to Wolf’s account while doing more justice to her description. For, whereas in the above I focused on some of her mainstream ideas, it is possible to discern another line of thought

in her work as well. Indeed, some phrasings in the author's book show that she is inclined to supply the objective side of her formulation, if not with substantiality, at least with some orienting sense outside the normative domain. This seems the very reason for Wolf to place meaningfulness into the category of the good, while differentiating it from morality as duty. Wolf assumes that people are inclined to be oriented towards indications suggesting what road to follow to live a good life. She claims that "without the concept of meaningfulness and a vocabulary with which to discuss and explore it, we are apt to accept distorted concepts of happiness and morality, to seek the wrong things, and to be at a loss to understand what is going wrong."⁴³ The author strives for a clearer vocabulary in order for people to find the appropriate direction, while implicitly recognising that meaningfulness has an orienting function.

Yet there is more. Wolf fathoms that there is a kind of deeper ground related to the orienting function of meaningfulness. While she is aware that this deeper ground escapes her account, she is nevertheless able to give it a place center stage. She makes a conceptual opening for it the moment she brings in the issue of 'prone-ness.' To her, "prone-ness to being moved and guided by such reasons...is at the core of our ability to live meaningful lives."⁴⁴ She seems to grasp that there is something significant happening at this very moment of being moved or being gripped, in being engaged or acting out of love,⁴⁵ emphasising the centrality of this act taking place by using the phrase "at the core."

We can sense that expressing something in terms of prone-ness is conceptually closer, even if far from identical, to the notion of 'outside oneself' or rather 'happening' as portrayed here in this radical sense. It

⁴³ Ibid, 129.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 7 (*italics mine*).

⁴⁵ At one point, Wolf, puts being gripped and moved on the same level as being interested and being occupied, which we think might be incorrect. While being moved and gripped precisely presuppose an ability to respond, as Wolf herself is aware, phenomenologically intentionality is reversed if we talk in terms of people being interested in something.

is closer because there seems to be a changed intentionality at work. As is the case for ‘value outside oneself,’ it refers to a certain passivity of the subject’s will in the sense that the subject is not actively steering a project. Also, we can feel that it is far from evident—parallel to ‘outside oneself’—how to thematise or conceptualise proneness. As a happening, it escapes articulation. Partly because any attempt to define it is inherently infeasible, for Wolf, it is far from obvious to what a claim about proneness would amount. She realises its central importance, but lacking the tools to pursue this line, she turns back to known paths.

There is another reason why Wolf makes a U-turn at this crossroads. Wolf embeds her account in the context of values and searches for a clarification within mainstream boundaries. As indicated, she cannot but follow the discussions and discourses currently evolving in this domain. These conceptually remain within the thematisable and the determinable and so does her outlook. Wolf at one point clearly confesses that this is a deliberate choice. She claims that she lacks a positive account of non-subjective value enabling her to satisfy her queries, for “radically objective accounts of value are implausible and obscure, but the most obvious conceptions of value that fall between those and the radically subjective are problematic as well.”⁴⁶

In this article, we tried to show what insights can be gained if we do press on at the crossroads and take less trodden paths in the domain of meaningfulness. Decidedly, having introduced a perspective that goes on where Wolf turned around, does not provide all the answers for the many quandaries in the field, and the stance taken might even lead to new concerns. So in this regard, this article first and foremost points to the need to bridge different philosophical perspectives, namely a phenomenological one, a more analytically oriented one, and a perspective of the ‘philosophers of difference.’ This will be essential if the goal of the actors in the field is to comprehend how meaningfulness ‘works.’ From this perspective, the article is a modest attempt to make a start with that project.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 45.

IV. PHILOSOPHICAL INTERPRETATION

Review of Arab Kenoche's dissertation on *The Hegelian Return to The Barbarism of Reflection in the Light of the Vichian Imagination of Power*

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I recommend the acceptance of the doctoral dissertation, "The Hegelian Return to the Barbarism of Reflection in the Light of the Vichian Imagination of Power," by Arab Kennouche. In my judgment, this work is an original contribution to scholarship in the areas of Vichian and Hegelian thought. The themes, ideas, and arguments it presents are well grounded in the scholarly literature of these areas of philosophical and historical research. In making this recommendation I do not require any revisions or corrections. Should the author wish to make any minor revisions in content or in wording or style, I give my approval in advance.

Mr. Kennouche's approach is in itself original, in that he applies the principles of Vico's *Scienza nuova* to the fundamental works of Hegel's system, principally to the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. Benedetto Croce began the study of Vico in twentieth-century thought by conceiving him as the "Italian Hegel," as having advanced an essentially Hegelian philosophy before the appearance of Hegel. This conception of Vico was overturned in the second half of the twentieth century by the Italian scholar Pietro Piovani, in an essay, "Vico senza Hegel" ("Vico without Hegel"), by the introductions to the American translations of Vico's autobiography and *New Science* by Max Fisch and

Thomas Bergin, and later by Sir Isaiah Berlin's study in the history of ideas, *Vico and Herder* (1976). From this basis came a variety of interpretations of Vico, involving little attention to connections between Vichian and Hegelian ideas.

Mr. Kennouche's work, one could say, has brought the connection of these two figures full circle. He has formulated a Vichian reading of Hegel, but not simply in the sense of a reversal of Croce. His aim is not to remake Hegel as the "German Vico." In fact, there is no evidence that Hegel ever read or in any sense studied the ideas of Vico, although a German translation of the *Scienza nuova* by W. E. Weber appeared in 1822, just short of a decade before Hegel's death in 1831. Herder knew of Vico before writing his *Ideas toward the Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (1784–87), and Goethe, who had been presented with a copy of Vico's work in Naples during his *Italienische Reise*, carried it back to Germany and lent it to Jacobi in 1792. Also, the classicist Friedrich August Wolf published an article, "G. B. Vico on Homer," in 1807, the same year that Hegel published the *Phenomenology*. Mr. Kennouche rightly maintains no historical connection between Vico and Hegel; his connection between them is purely philosophical.

When we look back in the history of philosophy Vico, as Cassirer points out, is the founder of the philosophy of history. This was also clear to Cousin and Michelet in the early 1800s. Hegel is the second founder of the philosophy of history conceived, as mentioned above, independently of Vico. Although known to some scholars, Vico's views have not been influential until of late, whereas Hegel's absolute idealism and conception of history became the dominant influence on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Marx knew Vico's *Scienza nuova* and cites Vico's conception of the relation between human and natural history in a long footnote to the thirteenth chapter of *Kapital*. Marx corresponded with Engels about the importance of Vico and he and Engels likely may have taken from Vico the formula that is a factor in their historical materialism, "men make their own history," yet it is Marx's inversion of Hegel's idealism, "standing Hegel on his head," that commanded the attention of modern theorists.

Put in brief, Mr. Kennouche's aim is to take Vico's position as

primary—to uphold Vico’s conception of the origin of the history of the nations in the “imaginative universal” (*universale fantastico*) of Jove or Jupiter and his conception of modernity as the final stage of the *ricorso* as typified by the “barbarism of reflection” (*barbarie della riflessione*)—and to inquire into what this signifies for Hegel’s conception of Reason (*Vernunft*), especially the achievement through the power of Reason to grasp itself as Absolute or as absolute knowing (*absolute Wissen*). The result is a criticism of Hegel but not a condemnation. Hegel’s attempt at the overcoming of nature by the self through a dialectic of the development of human consciousness in which all of history is subject to a drama of speculative Reason is seen as a “heroic,” even Herculean task.

Behind Hegel’s view of history as grounded in the “cunning of Reason” is an imaginative grasp of an ultimate that Mr. Kennouche designates by the term the “*Göttliche-Idee*” (literally, the godlike, divine, or godly idea). Another way to put this in English is the “Idea as Godly.” The issue, in terms of Hegel’s system, is whether there is an act of imagination that underlies the form of consciousness at its ultimate stage of absolute knowing at the end of the *Phenomenology* and of the absolute idea reached at the end of the *Science of Logic*. The traditional interpretation is that at the stage of “Religion” in the *Phenomenology* the Absolute is realized as the object of consciousness in the form of *Vorstellung* (“pictorial thinking”). This is the concrete concept of Reason (*Begriff*) in a scriptural form that is rational but still pictorial, still involved with the image, although in a rational sense. When consciousness passes from Religion to Absolute knowing the *Begriff* is grasped directly, in the form of the *Begriff* itself. Reason has been grasped rationally. Reason thus takes the form of the Idea itself, which generates the basis for the beginning of the *Logic* and, through the progression of the categorical forms of the idea, the absolute grasp of the Idea is finally attained.

Mr. Kennouche’s account, however, holds that Reason is not self-sufficient in this process, as Hegel appears to claim. Primordially, beneath this process is the apprehension of the “*Göttliche-Idee*.” The

“*Göttliche-Idee*” is the counterpart of Vico’s Jove-experience that lies at the beginning of human history and culture. Connected to this is a very original turn or perspective, introduced by Kennouche in his phrase: “the Vichian Imagination of Power.” Usually the primordial Jove-experience is interpreted in terms of what may be called the power of the imagination, meaning that the first or proto-humans, who experience nature as a divine presence—in thunder and lightning—by the imagination or *fantasia*, form this new natural event as an image or imaginative universal. The *giganti* are unable to form the world through the power of the mind, to think intellectually in terms of genera and species. Kennouche’s account focuses on the fact that the *giganti* for the first time in their experience confront power, the power of nature that is also a divine power, and they can confront this only through the imagination or *fantasia*.

This Vichian approach suggests that not only are the *giganti* unable to form such power rationally because of the limitation of their minds, but that such power of nature can be confronted only through imagination. This power can only be imagined. Thus, despite Hegel’s presentation of the history and development of consciousness as the story of Reason operating through specific stages and events, the guiding force is in fact imaginatively grasped as the “*Göttliche-Idee*,” which is felt as fear and the passions, as is the original appearance of Jove-Jupiter in Vico.

The barbarism of reflection that Vico claims is the state of thought and society in modernity is not overcome, as Mr. Kennouche holds, in Hegel’s heroic effort to pass beyond *Verstand* (the Understanding) to *Vernunft* (Reason). *Verstand* provides us with only a “table of contents” of experience, that is, a classification of all that is in experience in which the subject of a proposition is externally connected to its predicate, which designates the class into which it is placed. *Vernunft* depends upon the “speculative sentence,” the *spekulativer Satz*, in which the subject dialectically passes over into the meaning of the predicate and, once there, passes back into the subject plane, now having become a new stage of the meaning of the subject. This speculative sentence is the basis of the logic of the development of consciousness and of thought.

Hegel, more than any other thinker, has attempted to pass beyond the negative diagnosis of modernity that Vico claims and describes in the conclusion of the *Scienza nuova* in terms that resonate with Dante's description of the lowest region of the Inferno in the *Divina commedia*. Mr. Kennouche distinguishes and analyzes at length four stages of the barbarism of reflection in Hegel's system, but ultimately they do not allow Hegel to escape its bounds.

I suggest that the possible cause of Hegel's inability fully to involve his account in Vichian elements is the lack of an account of mythical thought in his system. Cassirer, in the second volume of his *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*, in which he presents his philosophy of myth, states he intends to take Hegel's ladder of consciousness in the *Phenomenology* one rung lower. He claims that Hegel begins his account of consciousness at the level of thing and attribute. This stage presupposes the more primordial stage of mythic expression in which the object is apprehended by consciousness by its feeling of the object as a benign or malignant force. Hegel certainly could have formulated a phenomenology of mythical consciousness. The presence of myth in human experience had been confronted by various thinkers from the late 1600s forward throughout the Enlightenment. If Vico, before Hegel, could formulate a philosophy of mythology, why could Hegel not do it—and make it a first stage in his phenomenology?

As Cassirer said: "Vico is the real discoverer of the myth." By not beginning with myth, Hegel has no proper basis from which to generate the role of imagination in human affairs. Thus imagination becomes a topic in only some sections of the *Encyclopedia*. Yet, as Mr. Kennouche rightly brings forth, Hegel's phenomenology has a supposed basis in the imagination—and must so have. It is not possible to base human affairs solely on reason, nor to understand them purely as a journey of reason. It is even more mistaken to think human action is governed by reflection, for when reflection reduces *fantasia* to an inessential faculty to confront power, we have no defense from power, whether natural or social.

Mr. Kennouche ends his dissertation with reference to Adorno's *Negative Dialectics* and the presence of Auschwitzian evil. He states: "The Negativity of Auschwitz is absolute and irreversible: its evil character surpasses both human senses and human reflection" (p. 262). The reference here is both to Vico's conception of the first barbarism, the *barbarie del senso*, and to the barbarism of reflection. Kennouche's claim is that this evil is beyond even these two possibilities and, furthermore, that "The Göttliche-Idee, with Auschwitz, has been sacrificed forever, it is no longer the object of an imagination of Power, as Power is now synonymous to Absolute Evil" (p. 263). He says that Hegel, with his philosophy of history and conception of Reason, could not have foreseen the actual manifestation of evil in history.

Mr. Kennouche seems also to imply that absolute evil is beyond a full comprehension of Vico's conception of barbarism, and he concludes that there is a need for a "phenomenology of evil." The actuality of Auschwitz is beyond Hegel's "labor of the negative," which Hegel claims is a necessary element of his dialectical phenomenology, because on this view the negative can be encompassed by Reason. This actual evil seems to lie beyond Vico's sense of Providence as the cyclic order of the historical life of the nations. Or does it? Vico's *corso* as present in Western history terminates with the dissolution of the ancient world and the reduction of humanity to the beginning of the dark ages. Here humanity is brought back to the forest, once again to feel life lived under necessity, without comfort or luxury. In the ensuing *ricorso* the Diety attempts once again to teach its truth to the gentile nations. Thus the *ricorso* is an optimism suppressed within the end of the *corso*. Yet Vico offers no comment in the *Scienza nuova* as to what would follow the "ultimate civil disease" of the barbaric third age of the *ricorso*, i.e., of the demise of vital humanity into obscurity.

Many commentators on Vico speak freely of Vico's *corsi e ricorsi*, but at no place in the *Scienza nuova* does Vico use these two terms in the plural. Nor does he, on my reading, make any claim as to what to expect in history after his *ricorso*. This may be because he does not know and, in accord with his adherence to the Socratic doctrine of ignorance, he will not include in his Science what cannot be spoken

about. Perhaps the end of the *ricorso* is a total collapse of history itself in which all is reduced to a state corresponding to the universal flood that preceded the *corso*. The *ricorso* arose from the ruins of the *corso*, which were not equal to the universal flood, only analogous to those original conditions. The *ricorso* is built upon a memory of the *corso*. The reduction of the *corso* entails the revival of religion as the first principle of humanity, but the *ricorso* does not require the repeat of the Jove-experience as such.

In Mr. Kennouche's dissertation, a strong argument has been made that Hegel necessarily employs the metaphorical term *Göttliche-Idee* as well as other images and metaphors, especially in the *Phänomenologie*. In fact, in the chapter on Absolute knowing Hegel calls the whole of the *Phänomenologie* a "*Galerie von Bildern*," a gallery of pictures or images. Vico, in his discussion of poetic logic, regards metaphor as the master trope of poetic wisdom or myth, and claims that the trope of irony enters mental life with the arrival of philosophy in the history of nations. He likely has in mind the appearance in Greek history of Socratic irony. Hegel's *Phänomenologie* is full of ironies, such as his claim that an Absolute based on identity is a "night in which all cows are black." The stage of the inverted world is ironic, as is his treatment of phrenology or *Schädellehre*, etc. The work abounds in irony. Irony is also to be found in the *Scienza nuova*, beginning with the title, in which Vico transfers the term "*scienza*" from the science of nature to the science of the world of nations, holding that there can only be a science of what the knower makes, turning the science of nature into an elaborate form of *coscienza*. Does irony as a master trope of philosophy have any role to play in Mr. Kennouche's Vichian interpretation of Hegel? Gadamer has pointed out that Hegel was a Swabian and that Swabians like to shock!

Bertolt Brecht has captured this feature of Hegel's thought in a little-known, curious work on *Flüchtlingsgespräche* (Refugee dialogues). In it, one of its characters, Ziffel, says of Hegel: "He had the stuff of one of the greatest humorists among philosophers: Socrates is the only other one who had a similar method.... He had such humor that

he could never think of something like order, for example, without disorder.” Ziffel then says he once read Hegel’s *Wissenschaft der Logik* and found that: “It deals with the life of concepts, their slippery, unstable, irresponsible existence, how they revile each other and do battle with knives and then sit themselves down together at dinner as if nothing had happened. They appear, so to speak, in pairs; each is married to its opposite and they settle their affairs in pairs, that is, they sign contracts in pairs, enter into legal actions in pairs, contrive raids and burglaries in pairs, write books and give affidavits in pairs, and do so as pairs whose members are completely at odds with each other. What order affirms, disorder, its inseparable partner, opposes at once, in one breath where possible. They can neither live without one another nor with one another.”

Brecht has Ziffel conclude that: “Like all great humorists Hegel brought out everything with a dead serious face.... I have never met a person without a sense of humor who understood Hegel’s dialectic.”

Does irony have any role in confronting the barbarism of reflection of modernity? Does irony offer us any relief from the condition of modern barbarity? Is it a trope by which we can approach the vicissitudes of history? Is there perhaps an ironic dimension to Absolute knowing? Irony allows the philosopher to pass beyond literal statement and take the reader to a meaning that escapes the confines of language. In “The Earliest System-Program of German Idealism” Hegel advocates the need to think beyond “our literal-minded philosophers [*unsere Buchstabenphilosophen*].” I leave this feature of Hegel’s thought as worth consideration. Let me stress that I do not mean, in making these remarks, that it is necessary to treat Hegelian irony in the dissertation, but only that it is an issue that is interesting to consider in expanding on the thesis of barbarism.

Mr. Kennouche’s account in his Auschwitz example leaves us with the Vichian *aporia* of what is to follow the modernity of the *ricorso*. This is a fair question and one in my opinion that no contemporary philosophy has the ability to address. We are left with the exclamation of Stephen in James Joyce’s *Ulysses* “History is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake.” Perhaps a “phenomenology of evil” might

allow us better to understand the actuality of the present, but I do not conceive a solution as lying within it. We may be left with only the transformation of Vico's Providence and Hegel's *Göttliche-Idee* into Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, being unable to apprehend God or Reason in actual history. Or perhaps our response can only be Joyce's response to the Danish writer Tom Kristensen, when he asked Joyce in the late 1930s about how to understand *Work in Progress*, that was to become *Finnegans Wake*. Joyce referred him to Vico's *Scienza nuova*. Then Joyce emphasized the book's humor and said: "Now they are bombing Spain. Isn't it better to make a great joke instead, as I have done?" Indeed, the irony of Hegel's dialectic may allow us to live in a world that has lost its sense of purpose, a world in which Vico's primordial passions of *spavento* (divine fear) and *pudore* (modest shame) are no longer preserved, allowing for the pursuit of power without limits.

The Processes of Imagination within the Hegelian Sphere of “Consciousness” in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*: Dissolution-Projection-Parthenogenesis

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Abstract

Imagination, an absent figure in the crucial stages of the development of Spirit, is far from being a mere tool for Consciousness. We depict here the intertwining relations of these two instances present in the human mind without presuming the superiority of one over the other. When consciousness faces sensitive being and thinghood, in view of the constitution of the Ob-ject, Imagination reveals its unquestionable power of dissolution of matter, perceptible in the *Image/Idea of Itselfness*, deriding the conception of an intentional consciousness mastering its environment, or of the idea of a fixed conscious Subject bound to be spiritualized. Imagination replaces the intentional power of Consciousness, and can also bring life into matter which becomes essentialized. The imagination of movement into matter is accompanied by an imagined projection of life which is understood as human thinking and not merely biological life. The Hegelian substance/essence, endowed with life can execute its own form through the imagination of a Concept whose origins are human. Imagination also supersedes consciousness when it comes to imagine the essence's internal differentiation (a parthenogenesis) as the correlating manifestation of human understanding and thereby as Self-consciousness itself.

In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel points to the progressive constitution of Absolute Knowledge via six main ordered stages: Consciousness, Self-consciousness, Reason, Spirit, Religion, and lastly Absolute Knowledge. In this sequence, imagination fails to appear as a

major stage of Spirit's evolution. Hegel's task in his masterwork also relates to the apprehension of the Thing, which indeed becomes his focus throughout his epistemological analyses, and a primordial matrix describing a progression towards Spirit. The *Phenomenology of Spirit* therefore rests on Hegel's vision of thinghood and his subsequent theory of Consciousness which derides the traditional inclusion of imagination within the sphere of Consciousness because it constitutes a transitory phase or function, always too feeble for progress towards self-consciousness, reason, and Spirit.¹ We should also bear in consideration the classical legacy concerning imagination epitomized in the negative distinction that Descartes establishes between the power of the intellect which belongs to the human spirit, and that of imagination which stems from the physical body and cannot conceive.² Hegel's account of the Thing is also concerned with the question of the possibility of Knowledge, in Kantian terms, which Hegel criticizes for focusing only on the End, the Essence, or the Result expressed in the Thing and not on its processes, its execution or its Becoming sustained by contradictory moments. Hegel's plea for a progressive development of truth out of

¹ Jennifer Bates notes that Hegel himself considers imagination as a deficient tool towards the acquisition of the Concept, maybe too much enthralled by Genius, which would signify the possibility for philosophy to become scientific: "So, nowadays, philosophizing by the light of nature, which regards itself as too good for the Notion [Concept], and as being an intuitive and poetic thinking in virtue of this deficiency, brings to market the arbitrary combinations of an imagination [*Einbildungskraft*] that has only been disorganized by its thought, an imagery that is neither fish nor flesh, neither poetry nor philosophy." (Jennifer Bates, *Hegel's theory of Imagination*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 2004), 138.)

² In his *Sixth Meditation*, Descartes argues that imagination can represent a pentagon but fails to actualize the image of a Chiliogone, a triangle with ten thousand sides. Only the mind can conceive of such a triangle while imagination is too weak to produce its image and feels it is being oppressed ("*animi contentione opus esse ad imaginandum*"). What imagination fails to do, the Mind can do in intellect. Hence the strict separation of the two functions ("*...unde sequi videtur illam ab aliqua re a me diversa pendere*"), and the superiority of the Mind over Imagination. Descartes, *Méditations Métaphysiques, Objections et Réponse*, (Paris: GF Flammarion, 1992), 177.

temporary contradictions makes him also believe in the possibility of human liberation, however painstaking, from the mere ontological state of nature. In such a perspective, man's endeavour towards knowledge must cease to be merely philosophical, that is, based on an eternal unsatisfied love for knowledge (Greek *philo-sophia*) but on *effective* knowledge.³

Hegel's unrelenting efforts to equate Science with Philosophy will be supported by the Concept. The Concept in Science is true solely on account of its forms: it should be expected to be applied in the same manner in philosophical systems for them to attain effective knowledge. Hegel will therefore oppose the form of the Concept to Ontology in general, whether perceived as a poor intuition, Being, or the *immediate* Knowledge of the Absolute. The idea of immediacy (*Unmittelbarkeit*) in feeling, intuition, and sentimental perception of the Absolute is constantly discarded by Hegel in favour of the rise of the Concept.⁴ The Scientific Form is for Hegel the objective to reach in order to gather the particularized moments of the content of Spirit, but not in a formalist fashion describing the reign of the *formal* Absolute Idea over its multiple manifestations.⁵ Hegel is in need of a specific form of

³ Hegel becomes explicit on the task he set to himself which would encompass the whole of his system: "Die wahre Gestalt, in welcher die Wahrheit existiert, kann allein das wissenschaftliche System derselben sein. Daran mitzuarbeiten, dass die Philosophie der Form der Wissenschaft näher komme-dem ziele, ihren Namen der Liebe zum Wissen ablegen zu können und wirkliches Wissen zu sein-, ist es, was ich mir vorgesetzt." (G.W.F Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft, 1986), 14.

⁴ Hegel criticizes the intuitive seizing of the Absolute which rejects the power of the Concept as *Begriffen*: "*Das Absolute soll nicht begriffen, sondern gefühlt und angeschaut [werden], nicht sein Begriff, sondern sein Gefühl und Anschauung sollen dass Wort führen und ausgesprochen werden.*" (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 15.)

⁵ For Hegel, the oversimplified Form makes consciousness only remember (*erinnerung*) but not seize the form in its elaboration and particularization: "*Es vermisst an der neu erscheinenden Gestalt die Ausbreitung der Form, wodurch die Unterschiede mit sicherheit bestimmt und in ihre festen Verhältnisse geordnet werden.*" (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 19.) Abstract universality cannot stand for the Absolute: abstraction is defined as the possibility of emptying to

knowledge which is thus not *formally* Absolute but truly *differential*, thus mirroring the Concept (*Der unterscheidende Begriff*),⁶ which searches for unleashed, undetermined differences gearing towards effectiveness, and accomplishment. In a nutshell, the main Hegelian themes almost univocally give vent to the use of imagination. The power of self-differentiation is where Hegel unconsciously places the first moments of imagination. Since the substance can self-differentiate itself, it may posit the subject as the true bearer of truth. Hegel puts forward his conception of the Substance with its capacity to pose itself as Subject, or a pure simple negativity:⁷ the movement of positing itself outwardly (*äusserung*) or the mediation of itself in view of a self-generation. It is thus important to analyze the part dedicated to Hegel's own imagination in asserting the rise of Absolute Knowledge out of the experiences made by Consciousness towards the Thing/Object, which in fact describe the science of the experience of Consciousness. Generally speaking, Hegel rejected the power of imagination in the realm of *phantasie*, suspecting it of undermining the power of the Concept over matter. In the relationship between the subject and the object, Hegel disregards the function of imagination arguing that Spirit alone will support the tension of the *Gegen-stand* until its dematerialization. We will see however, throughout the Hegelian definition of the experience of Consciousness, in the *Sinnliche Gewissheit*, *Wahrnehmung*, and *Verstand* phases, that intuitive imagination can be useful to interpret Hegel's desire to penetrate the world of *itselfness*, which will lead to his

represent something for another. But such an abstraction always leads to the dissolution of differentiation. (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 22.)

⁶ Hegel would criticize a theory of the Concept based on oversimplification and order (*Ordnung und Einfachheit des Begriffs*), thus neglecting its power of differentiation enabling the particularities of thinking to be gathered: "*Ordnung und zur Einfachheit des Begriffs zurückbringen, als vielmehr die Sonderungen des Gedankens zusammenschütten.*" (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 16.)

⁷ Hegel perceives the traditional substance as too much enclosed in itself. He therefore calls for a new edification or *Herstellung* of the Substance, which would break its enclosure (*Verschlossenheit*) to raise it to human self-consciousness. (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 16.)

interpretation of self-consciousness.

I. The Dissolving Imagination and Itselfness

Hegel's imagination needs to penetrate the inner world of thinghood understood as the knowing of *itselfness*.⁸ The Hegelian *Erfahrung* is a double movement of Consciousness against the Object, and from Consciousness towards itself, as consciousness of its knowledge.⁹ The presence of matter is thus not only opposed to spirit: the latter has to penetrate the very self of the thing to seize its essential part. If the Subject may face *Gegenständlichkeit*, Spirit by essence cannot resist penetrating what pretends to be self-dependent. Spirit would not be content with the mere seizing of the essence of something, as *itselfness*. It should also *be* such an essence as itself. One seminal question that could be related to such a project involves the role played by imagination in the experience of dissolution of matter, or dematerialization of the essence, in Hegel's intentional consciousness directed towards the thing/*Gegen-stand*.¹⁰ Obviously, Hegel can be opposed to Husserl on such a relation. Hegel would put emphasis on the thwarting power of the Ob-ject, a resisting force which can only be dissolved through the abandonment of Consciousness into itself. Husserl may sound more optimistic in asserting the human capacity to scrutinize

⁸ Hegel states that the truth of science is directly related to itselfness: “*Untersuchen wir nun ide Wahrheit des Wissens, so scheint es, wir untersuchen, was es an sich ist.*” (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 76.)

⁹ Hegel describes the movement as follows: “*Denn das Bewusstsein ist einerseits Bewusstsein des Gegenstandes, andererseits, Bewusstsein seiner selbst; Bewusstsein dessen was ihm das Wahre ist, und Bewusstsein seines Wissens davon.*” We could raise the question why is the knowledge of the thing equated to the knowledge of oneself? (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 77.)

¹⁰ Husserl makes a clear distinction between the pure act of seizing the thing, which is a mere representation of the thing, *das Sachevorstellen*, with the *Objekt*, the *Gegenstand*, which bears the mark of an estimation, *Wertens*. The act of observation deals with the thing itself, but the act of posing the object entails an evaluation, which can be compared to the Spirit's eyes. Regarding the *Sache*, see Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*, (Hamburg, Felix Meiner Verlag, 2009), 76.

the structures of pure Consciousness through intentionality, and eidetic variation. In this work, we will just retain the Husserlian conception of intentionality, or intentional aiming as the essence of consciousness, which gives meaning to the Ob-ject while it is aiming at it (*Gemeinten*).¹¹ If, in such a Husserlian perspective, the intentional consciousness aims at seizing the inner part of the Thing as *itselfness which bears some meaning*, what is the role dedicated to Imagination in asserting the truth of such an act, whereby the meaning of *itselfness* would be effected? If consciousness locates the *itselfness* of the thing thanks to intentionality, is not Imagination the warrant of its assertion, as an absolute seizing?¹² If intentional consciousness can reduce the thing it aims at to an *itselfness*, to what extent does imagination redeem the impossibility of escaping the intentional act of constructing for oneself the in-itselfness of the Thing which reality cannot provide?

Hegel rejects the idea of a substantial truth or of an essential truth when it is only a fixed determinity and not an evolving process related to the Whole. The vision of the essence by the subject who becomes impressed by the sole presence of the essence as the ultimate truth shall be dematerialized to stir movement. The dematerialization of the substance/essence is supported by an imagination which has the power

¹¹ For Husserl, the intentional object always harbours a structure of meaning which originates from a donation of meaning, whatever its real existence or not: “...*Alle realen Einheiten sind “Einheiten des Sinnes”. Sinneseinheiten setzen...sinngabendes Bewusstsein voraus, dass seinerseits absolut und nicht selbst wieder durch Sinngebung ist.*” (Husserl, *Ideen zu einer Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*, 120.)

¹² Husserl defines the noetic moment of Consciousness as the “eidetic presupposition of the idea of norm.” In the Hegelian context of the discovery of *itselfness*, the noetic moment of the intentional consciousness would give sense to the form of effective *itselfness*, by enacting its form while the correlated noematic moment would be the vision of essence as *itselfness*. These two moment are correlated, *the posing of itselfness by the intentional consciousness is determined by the noematic meaning of itselfness*: “...denn kein noetisches moment ohne ein ihm spezifisch zugehöriges noematisches Moment, so lautet das sich über all bewährende Wesengesetz.” (Husserl, *Ideen zu einer Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*, 215.)

to dissolve the compound of matter representing the essence through the image. The image itself would carry every single dismantled element of the previous substance. It is thus necessary in sustaining the intentional process of deconstruction. Imagination in such a case is not only the passive bearer of the elemental part of the essence, a figurative process. The image itself produces the dissolution and sustains it. The *aiming at* the essence is followed by the dissolution of its matter, the explosion of which becomes mainly meaningful through the image and not intentional consciousness. The ontological state of the essence becomes the object of a new dimension, whereby consciousness first intends to penetrate the core of the thing, but then becomes sublated by Imagination in the act of figuring the elements of the essence. In the process of knowing the thing, imagination engulfs consciousness and acts as if it were consciousness itself. The process of intellection does not need the objectal activity of consciousness, since knowledge is released by the outburst of images. Intentionality in such case is also annihilated since the subject does not control the flow of images, but lets itself be impressed by them. The *Sinngebung* does not originate from consciousness but from the images themselves. Yet, such an impression does not necessarily thwart knowledge, it is a form of knowledge that does not require the power of consciousness over its object. If with the intentional consciousness, the thing's core can be penetrated, it is above all the image of penetration that helps the intentional act to be ascertained not logically, but with the acuity of the vision of penetration.¹³ Therefore we may deduce that Imagination as such cannot uniquely be envisaged as only a medium towards knowledge, which the subject possesses as a tool.

Hegel thus needs first to dissolve the essence perceived as too embedded in itself, a static state which he criticizes and which he desires

¹³ Such an acuity could be defined as the use of *Inventio* itself, following Cicero's explanations in the *Tusculanes*: "a force that can scrutinize the concealed things". Alain Pons, *De Inventio, L'invention chez Vico* (Document du Forum du Conseil scientifique MCX-APC), 1.

to turn in a self-movement.¹⁴ Behind the critique of *itselfness* lies the great Hegelian principle of motion which can be perceived in the thing only through the imagination of Spirit. To the static representation of an essentialized truth, Hegel responds with a set of representational images which carry by themselves the process of a developing truth in a holistic manner, manifesting the Absolute. Imagination's efficiency here is twofold: the image of the static essence/substance yields another set of images out of its dissolution. It is the multiplication of images within Hegel's mind that makes him believe in the possibility of motion ascribed to the inner core of the thing. Behind Hegel's desire for the dissolution of matter confronted by spirit, we may encounter the great Hegelian axiom of movement conducing to truth.¹⁵ The Hegelian *Bewegung* could be merely intentional, conducted by a consciousness upon its object, but such mastery should be put into question. In setting, as an intentional act, the process of the imagination of movement between the subject and the object, we would already state the objectivity of the Image of movement, that is a movement of the thing's *itselfness* as it is intended by Consciousness. In such a case, what would be the nature of the image of movement when it is inserted in an intentional consciousness, compared to that of an image overarching the Mind/Subject relation with its object? When the image of movement is controlled by the mind, the thing put in movement is still at hand and might be objectified but always as a giving of meaning. In such a case, it is Hegel's own intentional consciousness that gives the meaning of truth to the objectified movement. However, when the movement released by the flow of images cannot be arrested by an intentional act, the thing

¹⁴In Hegel's formulation of the critique of universality, the theme of movement expressing a revelation of truth is opposed to the substantial truth which lacks movement and therefore only evokes motionless simplicity (*Die träge Einfachheit*), and unitorality (*Eintönigkeit*). (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 21-23.)

¹⁵Hegel describes the auto-revelation of the substance endowed with lively subjectivity: "*Die lebendige Substanz ist ferner das Sein, welches in Wahrheit Subjekt, oder, was dasselbe heißt, welches in Wahrheit wirklich ist, nur insofern sie die Bewegung des Sich-selbst-setzens, oder die Vermittlung des Sich-anders-werdens mit sich selbst ist.*" (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 23.)

becomes completely dematerialized, depicting the death of thinghood and objectivity, and the sinking of Consciousness, or its fusion with the object. The essential or substantial representation of matter becomes progressively transformed in the perception of movement, which can only be arrested in the best Hegelian form of materiality, the refined Concept. It turns out to be instrumental in bringing out the dialectical process he intends to depict as the scientific experiences of consciousness. Hegel's imagining of the Concept as a decisive tool in bringing thinghood to a state of total mastery is part of his strategy to blend the etherized Spirit of the World, a divine breathing propelling the nations, with the human mind, whose consciousness is tyrannized by the object. Why not acquire the Form instead of the essence? Why not reduce matter to its most meaningful expression, the form?¹⁶ Would not such a tyranny of the material substance be overcome if the refined form, the enlightened one, were definitely acquired as both the expression of matter and spirit? Can imagination help Hegel in his enterprise of formal refinement? How can Hegel set his intention of refining thinghood, without using flimsy imagination? And if imagination aids conceptualization, what consequences does the former bear on the latter, or on Science? Once more, if the idea of the penetration of *itselfness* can only be guaranteed by a substantive image, how can the process of refinement be ascertained as conducive to Science? The relation of *itselfness* with its substantive bearer, an image, finally sets the question of the aporetic validity of its truth. The image always transcends the reality of the thing perceived as the final stage of penetration. At the end of the intentional act, it is not the absolute *itselfness* of the thing that we find but a substantive image. Secondly, intentionality never ends and always keeps intending something above what it has already intended. If, for Husserl, the essence of

¹⁶ Hegel has in mind that the essence itself is not equal to the Form: "*Wenn die Form als dem Wesen gleich ausgesagt wird, so ist es eben darum ein Missverständnis...*" (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 24.) Thus the former cannot replace in meaning the latter. The seizing of the essence is insufficient in expressing the absolute and has to be rooted in the form which gives vent to a true effectivity.

consciousness is intentionality, the essence of intentionality entails endless re-presentation, and thus is not Imagination a necessary function for intentionality?

Yet, Hegel's dematerializing imagination may not be equated to a state of total neantization of matter, if we bear in mind that there is a limit to Hegel's desire for free intelligence, understood as Absolute Knowledge represented by the Concept. It is hard to define Hegel's imagining of the Concept without referring to his will for etherization of matter, in order to put an end to any surge of feeling and intuited knowledge of the Absolute. As we noted, Hegel's search for truth discards the implementation of an immediate knowledge of the Absolute through the love or feeling of God, a classical position held in philosophy. In the conceptual understanding of the Absolute, man's feelings and intuitions are rejected. Hegel's desire to reconcile the Spirit of his time, lost in a fake transcendence, with Philosophy lies in the task of a new edification and not in a mere intellection. The renewed experience of a substantial spirit must not be carried out upon an oversimplified concept, but on the massivity of its being, which would bring back the essence of Spirit to an earthly substantial presence. In the renewed substance as massive and expanding out to the world, Hegel's desire to put an end to the Abandonment of Spirit, which has been too much rooted in its earthly condition, leads him to consider Science as the main actor of this *renewed edification*. To the finite and chaotic multiplicity of the spiritual Substance, Hegel responds with the infinite expansion of Spirit whose concept refers to the whole as the completion of a new becoming. The question of movement supported by imagination is therefore crucial in the Hegelian program of the re-edification of Spirit out of a dead ontological state. Imagination brings movement which enables Hegel to believe in a truth which is not only substantial but the Subject itself. With the subject, Hegel can imagine a self-developing substance, which is no longer motionless but can tend towards the limits of the formal whole expressing an absolute truth.¹⁷

¹⁷ Hegel argues that the exteriority of the predicative Subject fails to express the

Such a movement which is borne by the power of imagination does not only dissolve the particularized contents of sensitive meaning, it does not only release the essence as a mark of truth but aims at *executing the form*, which for Hegel becomes the divine “self-movement of the form” (*Die Entwickelte Form*).¹⁸ Hegel's power of dissolution of the *itselfness* of the thing is an attempt to ascertain that knowledge must be accompanied by the power of executing the Form. Consequently, he does not wish to equate the essence with the form, which would mean that the mere knowledge of the essence would produce the form directly. For Hegel, the development of the form brings out the effectivity of knowledge. Thus, Imagination is now concerned with the process of building the form of the essence within the realm of movement. The problem set by the execution of the form also deals with its validity as a manifestation of truth. Hegel obviously believes that the *itselfness* can execute its form alone without the intervention of the human mind, whether through imagination or an intentional consciousness. He must have reckoned that the self-execution of the form must be understood first as totally disconnected from the human mind. However, nothing can guarantee him such an independent process unless by the use of imagination or inventiveness. That is why Hegel imagines that the substance has to be a Subject. The thing or the Object is not only the product of external change, but has the quality of conducting change itself on its own. How does Hegel perceives subjectivity in thinghood/*Gegen-Stand*? At the beginning of the perception of the essence, Hegel imagined that the thing could be penetrated up to its *itselfness*. The dissolution of matter could lead to the core of the thing, and dissolution was carried out by imagination itself which dismantled

movement of the self reflecting itself in itself: “*Das Bedürfnis, das Absolute als Subjekt vorzustellen, bediente sich der Sätze: Gott ist das Ewige, oder die moralische Weltordnung oder die Liebe u.s.f. In solchen Sätzen ist das Wahre nur geradezu als Subjekt gesetzt, nicht aber als die **Bewegung des sich In-sich-selbst-reflektierens** dargestellt.*” (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 26.)

¹⁸ With the idea of the self-movement of the Form, Hegel introduces the concept of *for-itselfness*, which betrays an intention of inseminating life in matter. (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 24.)

the cover of matter to release an essence. In fact, Hegel views Science as *the movement of essences* (*Die Bewegung der reinen Wesenheiten*) which for him must be spirited and not only based on fixed determinities.¹⁹ But the essence itself should also be dematerialized to let the form be executed properly. Imagination will be given the task of sublating the aiming at the essence and support the process of formalization, in a second phase of de-materialization.

In such a perspective, the form is not considered to be covering the essence as its representative, but comes out from within the dissolution of the essence itself. Imagination does not only dissolve but also executes the form, which is released from the essence, with the Subject he placed in it. Then Consciousness ceases to be intentional. And if Consciousness loses its intentionality, the object it deals with vanishes altogether with the Subject which created it in meaning. If we define consciousness as essentially an intentional act, then it is not sufficient in bringing out the executing form of the essence, since only images can render the process of execution intelligible to the mind. The execution is not an aiming, but an imaginative unfolding of images releasing the form in an act of *Sinngebung*. If the essence can execute its own form, being a Subject, then intentionality has to be suspended by Consciousness, together with its donation of meaning. In the moment of suspension, intentionality no longer prevails and is sublated by Imagination. The motion of the form is also based on the imagination of a *becoming-other*, a *mediation* that is not necessarily deprived of absoluteness, because in such a case the movement is directed towards oneself, as a self-reflected motion, whereby otherness is just a negative moment which will be sublated into a positive self-becoming. The Hegelian *itselfness* must pass into its *for-itselfness*. The question of the self is thus a cornerstone of the Hegelian imagining of the movement, as

¹⁹ Hegel would constantly raise against the fixed determinity (*Das Fixe*) of a thinking individual or thought: spirit will be given the task to animate the universal through the sublation of motionless thinking. The thematization of movement is aimed at gaining the true effectivity of knowledge which must not be only formal and abstract. (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 36-37.)

the bearer of truth and absoluteness. The Hegelian Subject is not only the constitutive moment of the substance, it is also a self endowed with life. The Hegelian imagining of self-movement brings him to consider the self-developing subject as the true bearer of absolute truth because such a movement is effected upon its own concept which is interior to it and not exterior to it. The predication of an absolute from a subject which has no power of self-differentiation based on the possession within itself of its own concept is bound to be never truly effected. The act of predicating accidents or attributes to a Subject is thus a barbarism for Hegel since any movement of alterity must not be uncontrolled by the Subject but always under its power of self-revelation. Hegel will strongly build his imagination of absoluteness upon a critique of alien exteriority which escapes the power of positive resolution. Effectivity means the Spirit being able to fashion a scientific system whereby knowledge then becomes absolute, because of the power of the essence to displace itself from itself, an ubiquitous presence that is felt to be the absolute itself. In the power of self-generation, the concept becomes pure and allows the Spirit to self-objectify itself freely. The destruction and conservation of *itselfness* means for Hegel a double movement: first of all, the essence is not only *itselfness*, but *for-itselfness*, and, then, being so, it enables self-consciousness to unite itself with matter, thinghood and objectivity and be itself Science thoroughly.

The Substance's *Dasein* acquires *itselfness*, but it is insufficient for Hegel who calls forth the need for *for-itselfness*.²⁰ This is a constant inclination in Hegel's way of projecting life or the human mind into the *being-in-itself*, which he wishes to put in movement. The Universal cannot be a fixed determinity for Hegel as the Ancients had it. Hegel therefore resorts to a sort of fusion between the fixed determinities of the substance which start to dovetail with the 'I', also abstracting itself to posit itself as a pure and fixed individual. Hegel aims at depicting the

²⁰ Hegel perceives two stages in the movement of Spirit which he projects into being. The *Da-sein* of Being must be sublated in *Being-in-itself*, evoking the idea of an inner space, a receptacle where the *Being-for-itself*, during a second process, will be activated as a lively Spirit. (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 44.)

end of fixity which for him would signify fluidity and thereby the rise of pure thoughts in terms of concepts. He sharply detects the process of fluidification of a thinking 'I' which was itself fixed by the determinities of the substance. It is important to stress that for Hegel conceptualization cannot occur without a fluid mind, which indeed signifies the power of Spirit. Thus, imagination is by essence a function which enables the disruption of fixity. To implement the dialectic of the thinking 'I' with the essential thing, Hegel resorts to the fluid power of imagination which can bring them in a togetherness full of spiritual commodities. Fluidity and Conceptuality also enable Science to develop into Consciousness as a moment of Spirit. Consciousness acquires experience only of that which is spiritual. It only appears as an object when consciousness experiences alterity within itself.²¹ According to Hegel, Abstraction must be accompanied by alienation, because only then can Spirit become absolute and effective. Hegel also values voidness, or lack, as Negativity which still lacks Selfness. This lack of selfness will be the occasion for him to advance his imagination of a substance endowed with life, so that effectivity should start. Thus, the essence's acquisition of life needed the dissolution of matter by imagination, and the apprehension of *itselfness* must now be followed by the imagined rise of *for-it-selfness*.

In Hegel's attempt to dissolve matter for the capture of *itselfness*, it has been shown that intentional consciousness which is aiming at thinghood in view of the construction of the object, becomes rejected because the object is a counter force, a *Gegen-stand*. The 'I', being conscious, tends to repeat the experience of intentional observation, and the image of *itselfness* nurtures the process of deepening the aiming at the object. The relation of Consciousness with imagination becomes problematic: the aiming of the thing makes us believe in the control of imagination by the conscious mind. The deepest action undertaken for

²¹ Hegel imagines how consciousness believes that it possesses Spirit as an object, which indeed describes an experience of Spirit within Consciousness itself. Spirit becomes itself through the other that is consciousness. See Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 38-39.

the seizing of *itselfness* is an act of consciousness which in a Husserlian fashion tries to penetrate what is considered to be the inner part of the thing and its ultimate eidetic stage. Consciousness in *intentional aiming at* seems to obscure the power of imagination, as if images were progressively repelled to open the path of meaningful *aiming at*. Yet, the image reappears in the form of a substantial or essential *itselfness* at the end of the aiming to validate the ultimate finding. The intentional consciousness needs the image to effect its very essence of aiming at, that is of asserting a final and decisive point where intentionality has fully developed. In light of the traditional consideration of an embedded process of imagination between the subject and the object, it becomes clear that the image cannot be only a sensitive medium for the seizing of *itselfness*, but makes up for the impossibility of ascertaining the vision of *itselfness* in pure reality as a Husserlian *Reales*. In such a case, imagination cannot be viewed as an obstacle that consciousness has to eliminate to enter the realm of pure reality. Even more, the image of *itselfness* becomes inherently that which attracts the *intentional* consciousness as it already intuitively an endless *beyond-the-image*. Once more, imagination, as an endless re-presentational force keeps moving back the intentional limit of the *Gegen-stand* and swallows up the dual connection of the Subject with the Object. Such a fusion can be regarded as positive since imagination then has no *Gegen-Stand* to confront and nurtures itself from the substantive matter it offers to the human *ingegno* enthralled by the *Beyond-the-image*. Yet, Hegel's intention is reversed towards something different, the fusion of the subject with the object, which can only be implemented by a projective imagination.

II. The Projective Imagination

Hegel constantly denies the self-existence of the object or substance outside the scope of the 'I'. The Hegelian processes of differentiation can be located on two different levels, at the level of the object and of the subject. When Hegel starts to imagine an unfolding substance which starts to self-differentiate itself, he also acknowledges that a difference is simultaneously born between the 'I' and the Object itself. The interplay of the knowing subject and the self-differentiating

substance as a Subject aims at reconciling two phases involved in such a process: the knowledge of the Object sublated in a Subject of truth. In fact, Hegel argues that the knowing 'I' can be transformed into a Self through the object. When the substance develops its own truth, it becomes a Subject on the same stage as the knowing 'I' which can then perceive itself as a Self. The projection of life in the object/substance returns to the 'I' in order to release a Spirit depicting a fusion. The self imagined and projected into the object makes it possible to abolish objectification as an oppositive process for acquiring knowledge. The knowledge of the Object is sublated into self-knowledge without object.

Hegel also wishes to overcome the question of a substantial truth which is perceived and added by the exterior 'I', something that would be seen from outside as true. In mathematics, Hegel argues that the knowledge of the triangle's essence requires the construction of the triangle itself: the mathematical proof does not belong to the essence of the object but to an exterior act, the construction of the triangle.²² Contrarily, Philosophical Knowledge produces the essence of the Object while it constructs it. The mathematical becoming of the triangle only produces its *Da-sein*, or its Being, but not its becoming from its internal substance. Hegel foresees the dialectical relation of the essence producing Being in Becoming, as if he were seeing in front of him a point representing the substantive part of the object, still lacking massivity and exterior boundaries to complete its being. Self-differentiation produces at the same time the form and the essence of the object, and their knowledge is simultaneous. Truth is simultaneously emerging from within and not from outside as an added item by the knowing subject. Hegel's critique of mathematical knowledge also deals with its failed relation with conceptualization. Because it is essentially concerned with measures, it cannot grasp the essence as the Concept.

²² Hegel states that the essentiality of the proof does not have the signification of a moment of the result itself: "*Die Wesentlichkeit des Beweises hat jedoch auch beim mathematischen Erkennen noch nicht die Bedeutung und Natur, Moment des Resultates selbst zu sein, sondern indiesem ist er vielmehr vorbei und verschwunden.*" (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 42.)

Besides, the rule of mathematical knowledge is simplified to the search for equality: in such a perspective, the differences of the essence are not taken into account.

The lifeless and abstract mathematical Measure does not account for the immanent movement of the substance whereas in philosophical knowledge, the unessential determination is considered so long as it also bears meaning to the essential determination.²³ Hegel is therefore criticizing abstraction which is lifeless and cannot posit itself from itself. To the total disappearance of the unessential, Hegel responds with the re-capture of the unessential as a moment and a determination of the essential. Imagination now helps Hegel to project life into the processes of differentiation that he attempts to explain in terms of recaptured essential inequalities. The movement which executed the form of the essence includes the vision of the unessential that brings meaning and truth to the essential. The aporetic vision of *itselfness*, as an act of temporary imagined intentionality is sublated in the vision of the “unessential essentiality.” As we already argued, if by nature consciousness is intentional, the *itselfness* is just what intentionality intends it to be. This can also be said of the essential versus the unessential. These are first of all built upon a perception of *itselfness* which is only temporarily envisaged as such. Nothing can guarantee the state of *itselfness* from itself alone. The *itselfness* of the thing is only presupposed, or attributed by the *Sinngebung*, as such by the intentional consciousness which finally resorts to the *image of itselfness* to stop the process of intentional penetration. Likewise, the unessential dialectizing with the essential is also built on a presupposed *essentiality*: the essential unessential acquires its status of truth from the image of *essentiality*.

²³ The notion of the integration of negative difference becomes Hegel's main focus to oppose abstraction to *wirklichkeit*. “*Die Philosophie dagegen betrachtet nicht unwesentliche Bestimmung, sondern sie, insofern sie wesentliche ist; nicht das Abstrakte oder Unwirkliche ist ihr Element und Inhalt, sondern das Wirkliche, sich selbst Setzende und in sich Lebende, das Dasein in seinem Begriffe.*” (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 46.)

As a consequence, the philosophical idea of individuality or *itselfness*, or idiosyncratic presence is ruled by the power of imagination which evokes such a singularity but cannot account for its absolute existence. Beyond the *itselfness*, there are other *itselfnesses* that are still unseen to the eyes. The Hegelian return of Consciousness to itself is thus a mere psychological affect sustained by imagination rather than a real process. If, for Hegel, it chooses to do so, it could also have continued to thread on the path of penetration, or stir *ingegno beyond-the-image*. The *Gegen-stand* would then keep moving back but this movement would need both the interplay of imagination and intentional consciousness. Still, instead of using the human power of *ingegno*, breaking through the ruthlessness of *Gegen-stand*, Hegel prefers to project life within it in order to proclaim the reign of the Absolute and then resorts to a sinking of Consciousness. The phenomenal thing is an unfolding of Being, which enhances the substance that was too much in itself. The unessential brings out the essential without disappearing, the negative moment of being is needed to be negated in its positivity. *Selfness*, as a projected image of life sustains the processes of differentiation as a compound of negative and positive moments for the development of Spirit.

Hegel also invents the possibility that the Concept be endowed with Life. It is hardly impossible to conceive the status of the Concept without some organic power. Becoming is thus an enlivened process which indeed describes a generation. The exteriorization of otherness is meaningful only when it describes the immanent content of the substance's self. The first exteriorization is taken back and becomes simplified in a determinity. Negativity is used by Hegel to posit the *Da-sein*, then, in the return of the *Da-sein*, the simple determinity is expressed. Therefore, the content is not acquired from the exterior, but is given by a self-developing self. The struggle against exterior predication is perceptible in imagination whereby the Self is able to release its effective content only from within. Hegel aims at clarifying the interior necessity of the Object which is self-evolving (*Entfaltung*) to release the

whole, as a resolved determinity.²⁴ As logical as such an *Entfaltung* may be, it is structurally sustained by powerful images. Hegel is also concerned with the fusion of the self-developing substance with the knowing self. When the knowing 'I' sees the self-developing content of the thing, it indeed becomes fused with it. He concludes that the self-movement of the substance, perceived in its interiority, is indeed reflecting the movement of thought. The Hegelian *Verstand* is thus a becoming which represents rationality itself. The perception of the movement within the object describes the movement of thought itself. Hegel feels almost constrained to use imagination or self-perception to connect the two realms.²⁵ The analogical development of matter with that of human thought is constructed upon the substratum of imagination, which unexpectedly creates rationality.

Furthermore, Hegel ingeniously invents the possibility that a thing can *be directly its concept*. This is a *logical necessity which is the only possible rationality*. The knowledge of the content is equated to the self-developing Concept. The Form is not imposed from an exterior actor, but is released logically through the execution of the Concept. It is obvious that Hegel inseminated selfhood into matter with the power of the execution of Form on the basis of the Concept. In mere rationalizing, the negative movement is just positing what is not or what is lacking, but, in conceptualizing thought, the negative movement already belongs

²⁴ Hegel becomes explicit on the necessity of movement as self-development which aims at a positive resolution: "*Die Bewegung des Seienden ist, sich einestheils ein Anders und so zu seinem immanenten Inhalte zu werden; andernteils nimmt es diese Entfaltung oder dies sein Dasein in sich zurück, das heißt, macht sich selbst zu einem Momente und vereinfacht sich zur Bestimmtheit.*" (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 51.)

²⁵ Hegel explains how differential thinking disrupts the determinity of the substance: "*Die Bestimmtheit scheint zuerst es nur dadurch zu sein, daß sie sich auf Andres bezieht, und ihre Bewegung ihr durch eine fremde Gewalt angetan zu werden; aber daß sie ihr Anderssein selbst an ihr hat und Selbstbewegung ist, dies ist eben in jener Einfachheit des Denkens selbst enthalten; denn diese ist der sich selbst bewegende und unterscheidende Gedanke, und die eigene Innerlichkeit, der reine Begriff. So ist also die Verständigkeit ein Werden, und als dies Werden ist sie die Vernünftigkeit.*" (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 54).

to the content itself, as a moment heading towards wholeness. The Concept is life, movement, self-revelation and not exterior form. It can take in itself its own determinations, set them externally and recapture them to release the whole. In such a perspective, the object is not pre-determined, but it is the movement itself that creates the object. Hegel's imagination of the knowing subject is also divided into two phases: it firstly determines itself as a fixed and objective self. Then the *knowing-self* may start to link the predicates of any subject, and tries to hold them. But in fact, in Hegel's view, the human Knowing-self will inevitably face the Self of the substantive content which stops being *for-itselfness* and fuses with it.

Hegel adds to this phenomenon of fusion the possibility that differential predication may become speculative by just keeping the difference alive and not destroying it. The unity of the subject and the predicate is effected by the conservation of the difference. That is why Hegel despises mere ontological predication, as Being without essence. When God is mere being without essence, God cannot pass from the state of Subject into that of predicate: the essence of the predicate must also express the Subject. In linking the essence of the predicate to that of the Subject, Hegel expresses a true effectivity which is for him effective universality. Indeed, Hegel imagines how human thought can become effective by passing into the Subject up to the predicate to the point of coming back to the content of the substantive self and not to the knowing self.²⁶ Imagination becomes a necessary tool to disrupt the tyranny of the ob-ject: the projection of life into the thing makes it move within itself and by the same token, the form is executed as if it were its own. The anthropomorphized thing becomes the object of human thinking itself which receives its form from the movement of the

²⁶ For Hegel, the act of predicating itself (the order of the proposition) absorbs or makes the subject disappear in the predicate where it vanishes, when for instance one says *the Effective is the universal*. Therefore, thinking in predication fails to express the effectivity of the Universal while the conceptualizing Subject can make this return to the Subject of the Predicate. (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 59-60.)

essence, in its *itselfness*, *for-itselfness*, and *being-for-the-other*. Thus, Hegel's projection of life into the substance calls forth a renewed question on the role of imagination against the subjective and intentional consciousness aiming at the object. If the vision of *itselfness* could somewhat be interpreted as the force of intentionality, which does not use imagination temporarily to reach the end, it is now less obvious that the projection of life into the essence mainly requires the intentional act. Let us recall that Husserl's noematic *Sinngebung* hinges on noetic consciousness itself. However, if we consider imagination to be utterly disconnected from the subject/object relation present in the mind, it appears that the construction of meaning already starts in sensitive perception and is not only a conscious process. Hegel projects his own human mind into the substance, though not on the premise of an intentional consciousness. The projection is effected through the image of oneself, and through the image of a consciousness endowed with life and the power of effecting movement. The disruption of the intentionality of consciousness towards *itselfness* requires the sinking of consciousness itself into imagination: *consciousness becomes imagined itself for the sake of projection*. Imagination brings the projected consciousness up to the core of the substance. In such a perspective, imagination embeds the power of intentionality, which becomes dissolved, to let Hegel's mind enter the network of relations, which the thing may oppose or possess against its counterparts. It also created the conditions for a real control of *otherness*, which the essence possesses as a part it wishes to unravel, in a sort of parthenogenesis.

III. Imagination and the Essence's Parthenogenesis

Hegel argues that truth cannot be *predicated*, as, since meaning is speculative, it can only be perceived in and through a process depicting self-development and return to the self. The exterior proof disconnected from the Subject lacks conceptualization releasing immanent content. Hegel will compare such an exposition of truth to the *positive*

expression of divine life that Plato recounted in his *Parmenides*.²⁷ Hegel also solves the question-matter of the Kantian aporetic *Thing-in-itself* with the Pure and Extatic Concept which has to be possessed by any self-conscious reason. In view of such a perspective, Hegel is intent on de-ontologizing thinghood, and the first step in his enterprise stands in a critique of *Sinnliche Gewissheit*. Consciousness' fixity is superseded in a powerful imagination, which is the only function able to transmit the richness of movement, understood as a parthenogenesis.

The sensitive consciousness can only ascertain truth at the level of Being, and it can thus only say of a thing that it *is*. Consciousness is also reduced to the 'I', a pure singularity confronted to another one, that of the thing. This leads to their being as mediated: the thing can *be* because it is mediated by the 'I' and *vice versa*.²⁸ The ontological state is for

²⁷ The paradoxes raised in the Dialogue between Socrates and Parmenides depict a tension that Hegel attempts to solve as a divine resolution. The platonician *Absolute Eidos* is a problem rather than a presupposed belief: how can a thing, participate to the Idea of Similarity simultaneously to the Idea of dissimilarity, having both properties? If a thing bears similar properties and dissimilar properties to others, how can it participate simultaneously in the Idea of Similarity and Dissimilarity, thus contradicting the theory of Absoluty in Plato's *Parmenides* (If the One is defined as absolutely one, it is in no sense many or a whole of parts: Hypothesis I-137-cd)? The paradox of unity and multiplicity also concerns the possibility of absolutization: the multiple, even as such, can be considered through the prism of unity, the unity of the multiple. It seems quite impossible to envisage the Idea of multiplicity outside the scope of the Idea of unity or Oneness (*To En*), since otherwise such a multiplicity would not even exist or be (*To On*). The conclusion of the dialogue seems to admit that a thing possesses both its Being and Non-being, its appearance and non-appearance, irrespective of the existence of Oneness or not (*Ostensible conclusion of all the Hypotheses*, 166 c). See Francis Mac Donald Cornford, *Plato and Parmenides*, (London: Routledge, 2000) 111, 244.

²⁸ Hegel points out to this dual interdependence as a poor universality: "*Beides geht die Wahrheit der sinnlichen Gewißheit nichts an; weder Ich noch die Sache hat darin die Bedeutung einer mannigfaltigen Vermittlung; Ich nicht die Bedeutung eines mannigfaltigen Vorstellens oder Denkens, noch die Sache die Bedeutung mannigfaltiger Beschaffenheiten; sondern die Sache ist; und sie ist, nur weil sie ist; sie ist, dies ist dem sinnlichen Wissen das Wesentliche, und dieses reine Sein oder diese einfache Unmittelbarkeit macht ihre Wahrheit aus. Ebenso*

Hegel a poor one, since its essence is indifferent to the fact that it can be known or not.²⁹ Hegel's critique of the poor ontological state is based on the reversible character of the sensitive certitude in time and space, which creates an universality based on generality, or the *general fact of Being*. Hegel needs a disruption of this tyrannical ontological state and it is the knowing 'I', which will be given the task of annihilating the essential state of Being. Knowledge which was unessential to the universal Being, becomes essential when the 'I' attempts to know something of it. Hegel's critique of the Universal which can be predicated from any singular, (my 'I' is the same 'I' as the other's, this *Hic* can be any *Hic*, this *Nunc* can be any *Nunc*) leads to the consideration of a poor intersubjectivity, since the 'I' just opines as any other 'I'. Such an universality is not scientific for Hegel: there cannot be a Science of the Singular. The essence of the Object cannot be reached by the Knowing 'I' because before the Universal 'I' the essence of the Object becomes unessential: the universal 'I' deals with a universal object. Generality confronts generality. The Knowing 'I' only sees the tree as a tree and not as a non-tree. At the level of inter-objectivity, all the trees are only trees and can never be understood through the prism of *non-treeism*. Equally speaking, when the 'I' starts to know something, such an 'I' is not related to another 'I' which would be seen as a *non-I*.³⁰

ist die Gewißheit als Beziehung unmittelbare reine Beziehung; das Bewußtsein ist Ich, weiter nichts, ein reiner Dieser; der Einzelne weiß reines Dieses, oder das Einzelne." (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 83.)

²⁹ This state of indifference also echoes the lack of truth: "*Der Gegenstand aber ist, das Wahre und das Wesen; er ist, gleichgültig dagegen, ob er gewußt wird oder nicht; er bleibt, wenn er auch nicht gewußt wird; das Wissen aber ist nicht, wenn nicht der Gegenstand ist.*" (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 84.)

³⁰ The poor state of intersubjectivity also relates to a universal sensitivity: "*Ihre Wahrheit erhält sich als sich selbst gleichbleibende Beziehung, die zwischen dem Ich und dem Gegenstande keinen Unterschied der Wesentlichkeit und Unwesentlichkeit macht, und in die daher auch überhaupt kein Unterschied eindringen kann. Ich, dieses, behaupte also das Hier als Baum, und wende mich nicht um, so daß mir das Hier zu einem Nichtbaume würde; ich nehme auch keine Notiz davon, daß ein anderer Ich das Hier als Nichtbaum sieht, oder daß Ich selbst, ein anderesmal, das Hier als Nichtbaum.*" (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des*

Undifferentiation leads to a sensitive totality. Such a totality has to be deconstructed through motion to release the true movement of thought.

Hegel shows that the discovery of truth can only be a movement of thought. The knowing 'I' first indicates the *Nunc* or the Now as the bearer of truth, but such a showing is right away followed by a negative phase: the precedent *Nunc* has vanished. When the thing is put under the spotlight, when it is shown, it loses its ontological state and ceases to be. The *Nunc* which *is* differs from the *Nunc* that is *shown*. Showing is a deontologizer. But Hegel believes that the negativity of *showing* has to be sublated to produce a new positivity from the negation of the negation. Hegel will implement a dialectical process which is not only internal to the object but implies the 'I' directly in two different activities, *showing* and *affirming*. When the 'I' shows the *Nunc* as true, it also shows it as something which was or as something sublated (I). The second phase is not a showing but *affirmation*: the *Nunc* is affirmed as a past one and a sublated one (II). But that which is past cannot be. Sublation therefore operates on the second truth (II) and brings the *Nunc* to the original state of being (III).³¹ Hegel demonstrates that both the showing of the *Nunc*, and its affirmation cannot be immediate but describe a movement on their own with different moments.

Being seems to escape being for Hegel: the *Hic* is never immobile under the spell of the knowing 'I' which indicates the *Hic* not as a point but as a *Seiende*. The natural consciousness thus is bound to experience not the being of exterior things but an endless movement upon multiple *Hic* and *Nunc* until reaching the universal. In the *sinnliche Gewissheit* stage, Consciousness experiences the Day as a multiplicity of circular

Geistes, 87-88.)

³¹ The question of movement is thus related to the appearance of negativity and to its sublation: "*Wir sehen also in diesem Aufzeigen nur eine Bewegung und folgenden Verlauf derselben: 1) Ich zeige das Itzt auf, es ist als das Wahre behauptet; ich zeige es aber als Gewesenes, oder als ein Aufgehobenes, hebe die erste Wahrheit auf, und 2) Itzt behaupte Ich als die zweite Wahrheit, daß es gewesen, aufgehoben ist. 3) Aber das Gewesene ist nicht; Ich hebe das Gewesen- oder Aufgehobensein, die zweite Wahrheit auf, negiere damit die Negation des Itzt, und kehre so zur ersten Behauptung zurück: daß Itzt ist.*" (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 89.)

nunc, but never as an absolute truth for it. Hegel's attacks on the impossibility of clinging to universality, based on singularity as the seizing of the *effective* thing, induces a conception of language based on either conjecture, thinking, opinion or saying. To *say* the effectivity of the thing, in an attempt to account for the totality of its essence in its singular aspects remains impossible for Hegel, because language is not able to access such a remote world. Language is a part of consciousness which is universal, therefore not absolute: if language is bound to release only the circular universal, can imagination help Hegel produce the Absolute? If language itself is a tool only for a universal consciousness endlessly missing the goal of absolute truth, we shall see whether the acute imagination (if not intentional consciousness)³² may help Hegel in giving vent to the spiritualization of the human mind. The state of absolute differentiation is unknown to language and natural consciousness is bound to experience a false ontological universality which cannot reach truth. Thus, sensitive certitude is not synonymous with an immediate knowledge but only with perception. As we noted, the truth of universality replaces the unattainable truth of the *Dieses*. This in perception (*Wahrnehmung*) becomes the *Seiende* of the object, which this time becomes perceptible in its manifold aspects. The object becomes the essence whether it is perceived or not, while the movement of perception can be operated or not and is unessential. With perception, the multiple aspects of the object are released while these were unessential in the mere sensitive certitude.³³ This set of multiple

³² If the intentional consciousness also harbours the meaning of the object it aims at, the art of Topics enables the human vision to see multiple *topoi* where meaning is just waiting to be aroused, provided the mind uses its acuity of imagination. Vico will enhance this faculty as the art of recalling things in a synthetic and appropriate manner, hence the need for a profound imagination and a powerful memory. See Alain Pons, *De Inventio, L'invention chez Vico*, 2.

³³ Hegel explains how the poor *sinnliche Gewissheit* becomes sublated in the richness of perception: "*Der Reichtum des sinnlichen Wissens gehört der Wahrnehmung, nicht der unmittelbaren Gewißheit an, an der er nur das Beiheerspielende war, denn nur jene hat die Negation, den Unterschied oder die Mannigfaltigkeit an ihrem Wesen.*" (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 94.)

properties also figures a negation and a conservation of diverse determinities, which in fact are differentiated. Thinghood is a unified set of differentiated properties inclined towards universality: salt is a simple thing, but it is also a multiple, when it is white, cubic, etc. All these properties share the same *Hic*, the same positive universality.

The question raised by Hegel relates to their level of indifference: are these properties absolutely only reversed to themselves, or are they determined properties, that is, related to one another? What is the degree of togetherness of the fact of salt being, sour, or white, cubic...? It seems that here imagination can provide for the explanation of voidness or togetherness between such properties. Imagination connects the qualities it has just gathered to form the thing. If the display of qualities is conceptual and executed by the form, imagination, as we pointed earlier, has not vanished for all that and attempts to solve their connectedness. It is by exclusion of other properties that the quality of being white, sour or cubic finally accounts for salt, which is therefore viewed by Hegel as an excluding unity. Thinghood develops into a thing by a process of exclusion and unity.³⁴ In the expression of the universal simple thing, the fact of being white relates to itself, but as a negative unity, whiteness is non-blackness, therefore salt. Thinghood becomes for the perceiving consciousness, the Ob-ject. Hegel argues that such a consciousness may therefore start to seize it for itself and warns that the Object being the essential and the truth, consciousness that which varies and is unessential, it may therefore suffer from illusion (*Die Täuschung*).

³⁴ Hegel already foresees in the thing itself the processes of differentiation which he will develop in other spheres of human activity: “Nämlich wenn die vielen bestimmten Eigenschaften schlechterdings gleichgültig wären, und sich durchaus nur auf sich selbst bezögen, so wären sie keine bestimmte; denn sie sind dies nur insofern sie sich unterscheiden, und sich auf andere als entgegengesetzte beziehen. Nach dieser Entgegensetzung aber können sie nicht in der einfachen Einheit ihres Mediums zusammen sein, die ihnen ebenso wesentlich ist als die Negation; die Unterscheidung derselben, insofern sie nicht eine gleichgültige, sondern ausschließende, anderes negierende ist, fällt also außer diesem einfachen Medium; und dieses ist daher nicht nur ein Auch, gleichgültige Einheit, sondern auch Eins, ausschließende Einheit.” (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 95.)

Hegel describes how the pure seizing of sensitive truth by Consciousness is also accompanied by a return of Consciousness towards itself.³⁵ Then, consciousness changes what was true in itself and this change becomes the new focus of consciousness itself. The Hegelian return of Consciousness is the occasion to make a difference between the truth of seizing the object and the untruth of perceiving. Imagination which stems from perception would be understood as a negative process leading to illusion, though also stirring reflection. This difference signals the beginning of reflection: consciousness becomes 'conscious' of its reflection.³⁶ Reflection is the contradiction emerging from the perception of the untruth. Yet, it is rooted in imagination. The object is returning to consciousness as well as an object of consciousness: salt is white not *in-itself* but for our eyes. Hegel depicts how the perception of the multiple properties in the thing can stir a process of unification by consciousness. The *for-itselfness* perceived in the object will trigger another form of perception, the *being-for-the-other*. The variations in the experience of thinghood by consciousness are twofold: from the thing to consciousness, from the thing's *for-itselfness* to its otherness. In the second phase, Hegel tends to value the limit between what is pure difference and what stands for a pure determinity. Intrinsic multiplied properties are also confronted by the

³⁵ The Hegelian return of Consciousness towards itself begins with perception which triggers opinion (*meinen*) and not science: "*Eigenschaft ist sie aber nur am Eins, und bestimmt nur in Beziehung auf andere. Sie bleibt als dies reine Sich-auf-sich-selbst-beziehen nirsinnliches Sein überhaupt, da sie den Charakter der Negativität nicht mehr an ihr hat; und das Bewußtsein, für welches itzt ein sinnliches Sein ist, ist nur ein Meinen, das heißt, es ist aus dem Wahrnehmen ganz heraus und in sich zurückgegangen.*" (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 98.)

³⁶ For Hegel, reflection begins with the illusion of perception: "*Durch diese Erkenntnis aber ist es zugleich fähig, sie aufzuheben; es unterscheidet sein Auffassen des Wahren von der Unwahrheit seines Wahrnehmens, korrigiert diese, und insofern es diese Berichtigung selbst vornimmt, fällt allerdings die Wahrheit als Wahrheit des Wahrnehmens in dasselbe. Das Verhalten des Bewußtseins, das nunmehr zu betrachten ist, ist also so beschaffen, daß es nicht mehr bloß wahrnimmt, sondern auch seiner Reflexion in sich bewußt ist, und diese von der einfachen Auffassung selbst abtrennt.*" (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 99.)

consciousness of alien unessential properties.

Hegel is definitely intent on reproducing the movements of autostance and differentiation which are never absolute (*Absolute Differenz*) but are stabilized in a sublation which the author evokes as *Wirkliches Entgegensetzung des Dings*.³⁷ Hegel can thus put some critique on the presupposed universality which would come from a mere simple and sensitive singularity without the interplay of differentiation. In his opinion, it is inconsistent to argue that from the sensitive matter, we can extract the universal which would be absolutely equal to itself since according to him the essence of the thing always derives from a process of opposition, or from the unessential. The *for-itselfness* is always affected by the *being-for-the-other*. The essence is thus both the perception of the *for-itselfness* in the thing and its *being-for-the-other* which are now seen in a unity: this is for Hegel the true universality, the Absolute Unconditioned Universality.³⁸ With the integration of the *being-for-the-other* within the sphere of the Essence, Hegel marks the advent of *Verstand*. The Hegelian attempt to overcome the *in-itselfness* of truth with the idea of conceptualization or *being-for-itself* will be conducted upon a critique of *Verstand*. Truth must not be self-developing in itself but needs the full participation of consciousness. Hegel will thus resort to the birth of forces or *Kräfte* to imagine the dovetailing of essentiality and non-essentiality in both the determination of difference

³⁷ Hegel states that the process of differentiation must be conducted by the thing itself and not by the mind which poses the absolute difference as the essence of the thing: “Das Ding hat hiemit zwar in seiner Einheit das gedoppelte Insofern an ihm, aber mit ungleichem Werte; wodurch dies Engengesetztsein also nicht zur wirklichen Entgegensetzung des Dings selbst wird, sondern insofern dies durch seinen **absoluten** Unterschied in Entgegensetzung kommt, hat es sie gegen ein anderes Ding außer ihm.” (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 103.)

³⁸ The Hegelian Understanding starts with the perception of *itselfness* with *being-for-the-other*: “Diese reinen Bestimmtheiten scheinen die Wesenheitselbst auszudrücken, aber sie sind nur ein Für-sich-sein, welches mit dem Sein für ein Anderes behaftet ist; indem aber beide wesentlich in einer Einheit sind, so ist itzt die unbedingte absolute Allgemeinheit vorhanden, und das Bewußtsein tritt hier erst wahrhaft in das Reich des Verstandes ein.” (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 104.)

and the differentiation of determinity. Hegel is split between two processes which for one part, in the process of determining what the essence of the Object is, must take the difference into account, as a constitutive part of the essence, and, secondly, in what the essence of the Object is not, must take into consideration the determinity as a constitutive part of the difference. This leads the German author to imagine the subsisting essences as both porous and capable of compenetration. The relation to unity is therefore a crucial stage for the expression of essences and differences: their self-subsisting position must pass to the unity of the object and then be brought back to their former position as a reduction. The being of the essence also entails the being of the non-essence or the unessential as a repressed force. Unity, differentiation or development, then reduction, are the expression of forces as *Verstand*.³⁹ Hegel imagines the thing to be endowed with a force inside it: it could be in fact a source of physical energy, exploding and making apparent the essences and differences that were repressed inside it. The matter explodes to release its differences which are brought back to the unity as its own belonging. Hegel specifies the notion of Force as Difference that is *Being-for-the-Other*.⁴⁰ The

³⁹ Hegel only describes in linguistic terms a movement which casts little doubt on its physical or biological origins: "*Oder die selbstständig gesetzten gehen unmittelbar in ihre Einheit, und ihre Einheit unmittelbar in die Entfaltung über, und diese wieder zurück in die Reduktion. Diese Bewegung ist aber dasjenige, was Kraft genannt wird; das eine Moment derselben, nämlich sie als Ausbreitung der selbstständigen Materien in ihrem Sein, ist ihre Äußerung; sie aber als das Verschwundensein derselben ist die in sich aus ihrer Äußerung zurückgedrängte, oder die eigentliche Kraft. Aber erstens die in sich zurückgedrängte Kraft muß sich äußern; und zweitens in der Äußerung ist sie ebenso in sich selbst seiende Kraft, als sie in diesem In-sich-selbst-sein Äußerung ist. - Indem wir so beide Momente in ihrer unmittelbaren Einheit erhalten, so ist eigentlich der Verstand, dem der Begriff der Kraft angehört, der Begriff, welcher die unterschiedenen Momente als unterschiedene trägt; denn an ihr selbst sollen sie nicht unterschieden sein; der Unterschied ist hiemit nur im Gedanken.*" (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 110.)

⁴⁰ Hegel seems to define Force as the mere possession of internal difference: "*In der Tat aber ist die Kraft das unbedingt Allgemeine, welches, was es für ein Anderes, ebenso an sich selbst ist; oder welches den Unterschied - denn er ist nichts*

differentiation of determinity and the determination of differentiation is therefore only a movement aiming at holding the Thing in its essentiality, it is as such a force. Finally, Hegel describes a sort of parthenogenesis of the essence where the other solicits the essence insofar as the essence already possesses that otherness. For Hegel, the thing incorporates two kinds of force: self-reflection of the content or the essence itself, and mediation of multiple matters or differences. The second force is described as a solicitor and a solicited.

It is therefore difficult for Hegel to essentialize a movement, hence the intervention of an imagined Concept to settle the aporetic seizing of movement. If language only attains the poor universal, the Concept makes it possible to incarnate the absolute movement as the resolution of undetermined movement. For Hegel, the force, or the *being-for-the-other* that is present in the essence cannot be repressed as a substance in its objectivity and exteriority but has to be logical, that is conceptualized as the *itselfness* of the thing. *Verstand*, as the play of forces enables consciousness to mingle with the inner part of things.⁴¹ Indeed, Hegel believes that consciousness as understanding can see the unseeable of the thing when the Force mediates the inner part of the thing through the phenomenon. The Hegelian phenomenon is not an appearance but a whole, a play of forces which is a self-reflection, a dovetailing of the essential with the unessential. However, the play of forces is still void, it is an emptiness which needs filling. The phenomenon will stand for the filling of the inner part of the thing. The inner part of the thing is thus accessible through the phenomenon, which is not a mere *schein*, but a total *er-scheinung*, giving vent to imagination. Hegel argues that the perception of difference is still a product of *Verstand* and is not posited

anderes, als das Für-ein-Anderes-sein - an ihm selbst hat.” (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 110.)

⁴¹ The forces bring consciousness into the essence of the thing: “*Dieses wahrhafte Wesen der Dinge hat sich itzt so bestimmt, daß es nicht unmittelbar für das Bewußtsein ist, sondern daß dieses ein mittelbares Verhältnis zu dem Innern hat, und als Verstand durch diese Mitte des Spiels der Kräfte in den wahren Hintergrund der Dinge blickt.*” (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 116.)

in the thing itself. Yet, for effectivity to be ascertained, the expression of difference must not only be the product of understanding but must be reverted to the thing itself.⁴² With understanding the force is exactly displayed as the expression of law. It is the movement of understanding that is imprinted on the force itself as if it were the possession of the latter. The differentiation operated by Understanding is mirrored through imagination in the play of forces when these were spotted in the imagined phenomenon. Through the phenomenon, the inner part of the thing becomes understandable for the human *Verstand* which shares the inner part of the thing as a law of the phenomenon. However, the first law of a self-subsisting difference must be sublated in a second law, which for Hegel would signify the conceptualization of the becoming unequal of the equal and the becoming equal of the unequal.⁴³ The passage to absolutivity is thus reflected in a dual movement: the differentiation of equality and the equalization of difference. In fact, Hegel disturbs the calm kingdom of laws. In the concept of internal difference, Hegel makes a decisive statement concerning the power of self-differentiation: the essence can differentiate itself in an already possessed difference because it is endowed with Spirit. The Internal Difference also represents the principle of life, the soul of the world, and the universal Blood because then differences are just tautological. The birth of self-consciousness will strive on the objectification of infinite

⁴² Hegel insists on the necessity to perceive inner difference not in understanding but in the thing itself. “*Aber dieser innre Unterschied fällt nur erst noch in den Verstand; und ist noch nicht an der Sache selbst gesetzt. Es ist also nur die eigne Notwendigkeit, was der Verstand ausspricht; einen Unterschied, den er also nur so macht, daß er es zugleich ausdrückt, daß der Unterschied kein Unterschied der Sache selbst sei.*” (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 125.)

⁴³ The role of consciousness is important in the unifying resolution of the two realms of laws. “*Ein zweites Gesetz, dessen Inhalt demjenigen, was vorher Gesetz genannt wurde, nämlich dem sich beständigen gleichbleibenden Unterschiede entgegengesetzt ist; denn dies neue drückt vielmehr das Ungleichwerden des Gleichen, und das Gleichwerden des Ungleichen aus. Der Begriff mutet der Gedankenlosigkeit zu, beide Gesetze zusammenzubringen, und ihrer Entgegensetzung bewußt zu werden.*” (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 127.)

self-differentiation. The 'I' objectifies the internal differentiation of the thing which then becomes immediate to it. Yet, differentiation operates on the 'I' which is undifferentiated. The 'I' tries to differentiate itself from itself but feels only that it is conscious of itself, or self-conscious. Consciousness only experiences itself in the game of forces, hence in the phenomenon. Therefore, Consciousness discovers itself when it is syllogized with the supra-sensitive part of the thing.⁴⁴

With the idea of internal differentiation, Hegel merges the life of the organic substance, self-differentiating itself with that of the human mind itself. The projection of life resulted in the imagination of a parthenogenesis, whereby the difference was put under the control of the essence. The parthenogenesis of the essence understood as an internal differentiation now becomes applied to the human mind itself and is said to share the same form. That which is imagined to be the Absolute manifesting itself through self-revelation is now projected onto the human consciousness to release the executed form of Understanding. The insemination of organic self-differentiation within the mind can be a conscious act, the intentionality of which would require the return of the first projection to the mind. Yet, only the acuity of imagination can provide for the definitive fusion of the mind with the object it has just penetrated. Hegel perceives the similarities of the movement within the substance with that of the mind and on account of their fusion purports that the phenomenon, as the filling of Force, will spill over to the mind to make it fuse with the supra-sensitive world. Still, Hegel argues that the whole process is conducted by Consciousness which finally

⁴⁴ Hegel's poetic imagination helps to enter his own world of self-perception when directed towards itselfness: *"Die beiden Extreme, das eine, des reinen Innern, das andere, des in dies reine Innre schauenden Innern, sind nun zusammengefallen, und wie sie als Extreme, so ist auch die Mitte, als etwas anders als sie, verschwunden. Dieser Vorhang ist also vor dem Innern weggezogen, und das Schauen des Innern in das Innere vorhanden; das Schauen des ununterschiedenen Gleichnamigen, welches sich selbst abstößt, als unterschiedenes Innres setzt, aber für welches ebenso unmittelbar die Ununterschiedenheit beider ist, das Selbstbewußtsein."* (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 135.)

discovers itself. Then if consciousness can control the process of imagination, which is submitted to intentionality, imagination which permitted the return of internal differentiation from the substance to the mind, reveals a new essence of consciousness which in self-consciousness becomes unintentional.

Only in such a new configuration can imagination become conceptual. It executes the essence of consciousness in the form of unintentionality. At the same time, Consciousness reveals its true essence, that of never being able to seize *itselfness* unless through the prism of unintentional self-consciousness. Does a conceptualized self-consciousness still possess imagination as a function? Whereas imagination is understood as a re-presentation of visual elements, or affects in the act of knowing, with self-consciousness, imagination is sublated in conceptualization, namely without its substantive and material elements. Yet, we could not conceive of a concept without at least some refined form that imagination evokes. Even when the self-consciousness becomes unintentional, imagination does not disappear for all that.⁴⁵ It seems that the differentiation of the knowing 'I' with its self is processed by Imagination which shares the same unintentional nature as self-consciousness. Consciousness's return to itself means the rejection of the world of thinghood, as imagination itself could be interpreted when it only deals with sketchy forms. With the advent of the internal differentiation, the spirited consciousness ceases to be merely intentional, having a specific *aiming at*, and finally represents a

⁴⁵ According to Vico, invention was the first human activity and shaped thinking at the infancy of human history: "And in the returned barbarian times fantasia was used for ingegno, and an ingenious or witty man was called a fantastic man...Now, since the human mind at the time we are considering had not been refined by any art of writing nor spiritualized by any practice of reckoning or reasoning, and had not developed its powers of abstraction by the many abstract terms in which languages now abound, as we said above in the Method, it exercised all its force in these three excellent faculties which came to it from the body." (Giambattista Vico, *The New Science*, trans. from the third edition (1744) by Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1948), 236, SN 44, § 699.)

process of making visible the invisible with acuity.

The Hegelian critique of the state of consciousness departs from a fixed subject which he opposed to the *Gegen-Stand*. But with imagination being able to dissolve matter, to implement movement and project life into the substance, it becomes hardly arguable that it is at best a medium towards knowledge. When imagination is used to execute the form from within the essence and when the internal differentiation becomes fused with the human mind, it becomes obvious that it is imagination itself that triggers the intentional consciousness until its total annihilation. Such a capacity to insinuate itself in the sphere of mere consciousness entails a new vision of the human mind that questions the modern conception of Reason enslaving imagination. Saint Augustine was already faced in his *Confessions* with the dilemma of imagination which he perused within the more fundamental and abysmal power of *memoria*: while perceived objects through sensations could deposit an image in memory, he realized that memory was not exclusively linked to sensitive matter and human sensations, as for instance, when the sounds produced by the pronunciations of words do not only release images but notions,⁴⁶ like the notion of line. These notions were not transmitted by his eyes and yet Augustine could remember them. Still, it was unclear to him whether affects, notions were also transmitted by images when they are remembered:⁴⁷ the recollection of an affect or an object which is not being perceived is processed by an Image, because otherwise, one could not remember a past state of joy, or fear. The very act of naming necessitates an image, even in the act of naming memory: is thus memory recalled itself through its own image? Therefore how can oblivion be recalled?

Augustine aptly remarked that the pristine “presence of oblivion” in his memory should logically prevent himself from remembering it: to recollect a state of oblivion requires the recognition of forgetfulness, hence the use of memory to recall the state of oblivion. Augustine

⁴⁶ Saint-Augustin, *Les Confessions*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1998), Livre X, X. 17, 992.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Livre X, XV. 23, 996.

assumes that perhaps it is not the notion of forgetfulness that is present in memory but thoroughly its image. This fundamental question leaves Augustine uncertain about the relation between the image of oblivion and the notion of oblivion. Still, the very fact that memory can recall the very notion of oblivion proves that it can only be effected through an image because otherwise, we could not remember oblivion.⁴⁸ At least, Augustine recognized the unsolved question of abstractness when related to the sensitive matter of the image in *memoria*.⁴⁹ The Augustinian mystery of the overarching image could easily be applied to the modern relation of consciousness with imagination: the latter makes consciousness see or recollect its Self through an image. In self-consciousness, imagination does not disappear from the mind even when the object is no longer present. When reversed to its self, the 'I' does not see any object, but a mere differentiation that deepens consciousness. Yet, imagination is still present to capture the moments of abstraction of the self. Therefore, we could say of imagination that it can penetrate any form of thought from the beginnings of sensitive perception up to the acute vision of oneself as a conscious subject: it is always there where one believes it has been vanquished. Imagination does not only operate as a subservient medium to an epistemological consciousness. In that respect, Hegel's own dissolving imagination proved to be more efficient in perusing the access to some forms of knowledge than Consciousness itself. This topical imagination, a typical Vichian form of imagination could not be enslaved by a centered Consciousness. Likewise, the projective imagination was the driving force which enabled reflective movement to stir in matter. Finally, the parthenogenetical moments of consciousness could not be solely ascribed to a thinking subject deprived of the processes of imagining the production of meaning and truth outside the scope of consciousness itself. Immersed in a world of images, it is true that the subject can recapture itself and seize this flow

⁴⁸ Ibid., Livre XVI.24, 997.

⁴⁹ According to Vico, all the cognitive functions of the mind are imaginative and *memoria* is just the Latin translation of the Greek *Phantasia*, which means imagination. Vico, *The New Science*, 236, SN, 44, § 699.

of mobile images as an object over which it gains control. Still, this powerful drive is always pervading the activity of representing meaning in the mind. With its force of extraction, Imagination can reveal the unsuspected dimensions of beings and as such appears to be a fabulous adjuvant to Husserlian intentionality. With its force of acuity, it propels the mind beyond the already seized image. It thus reveals one important side of human thinking, the capacity to overcome oppositive objectivity with *Inventio*. Kant, and even Hegel, though less blatantly, were perhaps misled in just opposing the phenomenal world to the noumenal supra-sensitive world, without sensing that the imaginative mind could delve into the infinite matter, which once confronted by the *acutrezza d'ingegno*, reveals an infinite world of self-creation.

V. DEBUT

Logical manipulations in Woody Allen's films *Midnight in Paris* and *To Rome with Love*

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When considering myth and its formation—in relation to the problem of logical manipulations in the two most recent Woody Allen films, *Midnight in Paris* and *To Rome with Love*—a good starting point is Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis and Ernst Cassirer's work on political myths. Both authors, Cassirer and Barthes, succeed in forming a complete picture of the construction of modern myth as a verification of a "history," a status quo that must remain unchanged. Myth plays a very important role in shaping the consciousness of the post-modern subject; and its role in the analysis of Allen's films is crucial, since a number of hidden meanings, which imply the characteristically post-modern notion of the presence of irrationality in putatively non-problematic rationality, can be highlighted through their functional structure.

According to Roland Barthes, in contrast to structuralism's idea of a multilayer social structure, there is in every society one particular superficial structure. All the other possible substructures interact with each other on a horizontal (and not on a vertical) level.¹ Thus these

¹ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies: Myth Today* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 109-159.

substructures do not determine the entire construct of the social world. The very existence of this “superstructure”² conditions the lack of a historically determined referent that might be taken for granted, for “nature.” According to Barthes, criticism of everything that has been taken for granted so far is itself a *fruitful art*, precisely because liberated critique provides an opportunity to reconsider the embedded structures. So he starts searching for the problem in the structures of human life and arrives at the conclusion that behind the product of mass consumption, there’s a hidden aspect that provokes the consumer. To find a way to decode the products and the figure that generates their hidden meanings, Barthes uses semiotics and creates a system explaining the formation of myth. Focusing his study on re-discovering these mechanisms, he seeks a way to destroy consumer consciousness. According to him the only possible solution is individualization, in which the lonely ego will live and create its own projects individually and in freedom, and will live with its own creations in complete loneliness. That is why the essential change necessary so that the individual can be free, is the destruction of the idea of the “author.” The creative freedom of the “self” suggests a lack of any power structures—we are the ones who interpret a text according to our own desire. Through semiotics, Barthes views the human world as a world of symbols and signs and discovers their internal coherence, agreement and harmony. To Barthes, as long as there is coherence between symbols and the world, we do not have to search for congruence—they are truthful because they are self-sufficient in their harmony and don’t need a referent.

His goal is to trace out how a sign transforms into a myth for the purposes of manipulation. According to Barthes, myths are tricky structures because they incorporate history that makes the world seem natural through the *doxa*. The world is taken for granted until we abolish the figure of the author. This is when creative freedom will be achieved by the reader, as s/he will have the opportunity to consider multiple

² The term used by Karl Marx and adopted by Barthes himself. (Barthes, *Mythologies*, 133-141.)

interpretations. When one has this freedom, one owns the world and any restriction of freedom is accomplished by myth. In his analysis of myths, Barthes distinguishes two semiotic systems—first-order and second-order. In the first-order system, there are a signifier and signified and their synthesis results in a sign. The relation between these two is natural. In the second-order system, the already-formed sign takes the place of the signifier, which adopts an entirely new meaning, and, together with the signified, the result is a myth. The relation between the two is mediated by elements adequate to the situation. With a sign, there is a direct perception of a particular object while with a myth the object is mediated by the intention of the myth's constructor.³ And if with a sign, there is a signifier in the form of *meaning* and a signified in the form of *concept*, with a myth the difference is that this already formed sign is devoid of the meaning attached to it as an object construct and is immersed in various new meanings that now carry the characteristics of the new myth. That is why the signifier in a myth is perceived as *form* and the result of the synthesis is now called *meaning*. It is interesting to note the mutual penetration between sign and myth—myth is dependent on sign, meaning that the myth's concept can be present only through the sign's concept, entailing a shift in the sign's meaning; myth takes the place of the sign without severing the connection to it. This means that even if there are some particular intentions set in the process of constructing a myth, the form perceptible by the recipient is overlapped by the objective structure of the sign. In this way two realities form: the reality of the sign using an objective language and the reality of the myth using a meta-language. Myth turns the sign's meaning into its own form and, therefore, it is, in a way, a theft of language—this meta-language overtakes the objective language and shapes it in accordance with its own purposes. And this is so because rarely is the objective language complete; it often allows for free interpretation which is

³ An example here of a referent is Sofia University. This example is given by Alexander Gungov in *Logic of Deception* (Sofia: Avangard Prima, 2009), 46. Another example is that of the rose as a symbol of love used by Barthes himself. (Barthes, *Mythologies*, 109-121.)

fruitful ground for myth. As stated earlier, the relation between the myth's signifier and signified is not natural. Instead, the goal of the myth's constructor is to keep it so that real intentions are blurred and possible logical disparities covered over. This results in distortion of the meaning and the myth is perceived as a system of facts despite its semiotic nature. To make this possible, a universal quality is attached to the concept of myth, "a universal fact," and thus a persuasion in the natural obviousness of realities is sought, realities hiding the lack of density—be it cultural, historical or of any other form. In this manner, everything that can be seen as an object of discourse can be constructed as a myth. Myth has only formal borders which are not substantial and everything that can be seen as mythological does not have to be verified by truth. Thus, according to Barthes, myth has some sort of invocational character—it is meant for "*me*," but only until it reaches its purposes, whereupon it returns to its general form, so that it can be used again.

In both Allen films, namely *Midnight in Paris* and *To Rome with Love*, the process of mythologizing plays a major role and therefore will be given central attention in this analysis. At a later stage of this essay, the analysis of the myths present in one way or another in both of the storylines manifests as fruitful grounds for the transformation into a self-realizational simulacrum that engulfs the main characters. The beginnings of both films are similar and it is noticeable that Allen takes time to present to the viewer what seem to be the geographical cities, which are to be the main *topos* of the stories. In a more careful viewing, however, one would notice that the director has selected and sequenced the frames in such a way that they transcend their purely geographical and descriptive nature. They are given a completely new meaning and a blurry, almost mythical vision of the city itself is formed. The simplicity of the shots, the serenity, everything seems to impart the idea of encapsulation and stillness, defined as the proper context of what is about to happen. There are no superfluous elements, everything is exactly in the place where Allen wants it to be, without any frippery, no hustle and chaos, quite obviously and objectively—as if we're observing a 'system of facts.' In Paris, the sunny days alternating with rainy

afternoons that again return to sunny weather, show the city's multiple layers. The frames combining every moment of an everyday life from morning till night, the rain that is so tempting to the main character, the magical lights of the Eiffel Tower, the emphasis on well-known symbols of the city, all seek to form an untrue whole image, magically entangled as unreal, and yet completely true. This mythologization of the city is later highlighted by the vision itself constructed in the main character: "Paris—it's a place for artists."⁴ In Rome, on the other hand, the narrator himself, a traffic-controller, presents the city as "the town—it's a history," which takes us to Barthes' idea of myth incorporating history and history reproducing myth. The Paris, which has been read and depicted, is beyond the real historical referent. Allen, however, is not trying to conceal the cities' mythologization. On the contrary, he is boldly highlighting it. In *Midnight in Paris* the main character's fiancée, referring to his immersion in the city, says: "You're in love with a fantasy." This, however, doesn't result in the destruction of the myth, but to its more vigorous reproduction.

In this manner, both cities form a 'reality' beyond the everyday life, in which the characters reside. The two main characters,⁵ Gil in *Midnight in Paris* and Jerry in *To Rome with Love*, seem to inhabit two different dimensions. The first is that of the mythical city and the second (as the referent) one of the luxury hotel which corresponds to the idea of a more "grounded" setting. The acknowledgement of this dual positioning is very important when considering *Midnight in Paris*, because it determines the appearance of the reference group made up of the bride and her family, which causes a crisis in the thinking of the character, a crisis that in its own turn reaffirms the power of the mythical chaos.⁶

As has been mentioned earlier, Barthes considers the author to be

⁴ A quote from the movie.

⁵ "Main character" is a phrase conditionally used with regard to *To Rome with Love* for the purposes of this analysis.

⁶ The idea of crisis as a means of reaffirmation of the myth/simulacrum has been fully developed later but is used here for the purposes of the analysis' wholeness.

the one who takes away the freedom of interpretation and precisely that contributes to the reaffirmation of the myth. So, in fact, while Gil refuses to seek criticism for his book and keeps to his one-dimensional interpretation (“he allows of no other opinion”)⁷ the myth operates in full force precisely because of its invocational form. At the very moment, when, with the development of the story line, Gil re-discovers the alternative point of view (that of Gertrude Stein), he seems to find coherence between the symbols that run his thinking, and the world, so the need for a referent disappears. We witness the liberation of the artist, which is marked by the decision to remain immersed in Paris and to end the engagement with the ‘referent,’ because “the task of the artist is to find meaning in the emptiness of existence.”⁸

In *To Rome with Love* one notices the formation of an interesting myth—the ‘femme fatale’ in the face of Monica. Describing Monica, Sally does not forget to mention that “men always fall in love with her.” Magical chaos sets around her image, rich in a variety of qualities. Her image is put out of any context and it becomes an object of magical speaking, entangling her into the idea of desire, owned by the manipulative nature of mythologization itself: “There is something beyond logic in her.”⁹ Her consistent manifestation of omniscience, which is recognized as imitation is not problematized. On the contrary, it is used again as a means to achieve the coherence of the image and, furthermore, to re-validate the myth.

In this film, there is another illustration of the formed myth. When the newly-wed girl meets her idol, the famous actor, he is, for her, an embodiment of everything she has ever read or heard about him, but not a ‘real’ person. For her, he is a myth and this perception is supported by the place where they meet—the set of a movie. When the moment of crisis is reached, which interrupts the stream of ‘magical thinking’ because of the appearance of a referent figure (the wife of the actor and the thief in the hotel), the actor is demythologized, acquiring the real

⁷ A quote from the movie.

⁸ A quote from the movie.

⁹ A quote from the movie.

image of a married and cowardly man.

Of course, when we discuss myths, we should also pay attention to Ernst Cassirer's interpretation of this matter.¹⁰ In his analysis, he starts from political myths created by the national-socialist party between the two world wars and explains myth's function in primitive societies so that he can draw a parallel to contemporary political myths. His aim is to reject the 18th and 19th centuries' theses on the gap between the primitive societies' and contemporary thinking. According to Cassirer, even today, mythical behavior exists and he tries to describe the way new myths are being constructed. Myth is the way to maintain social order relying on already established functional mechanisms. In this sense, myths are not a result of unconscious social activity, as they were in primitive societies, but on the contrary, new myths are very well calculated and rationalized. The first step toward affirming a political myth is the change in the language's functions from descriptive to emotional. For the myth's purposes, the descriptive function drops out and the emotional one takes precedence. This is very important because it corresponds with Barthes's thesis of myth's invocational orientation. Language gives the feeling of wholeness and this feeling is amplified by the second step: the creation of new rituals. Through ritual individuality is lost, people think as one. In primitive societies this 'one' is the tribe or the group, while today this 'one' is the nation. The last step in constructing a myth is "prophecy" yet again, in parallel with primitive societies, Cassirer considers Spengler a contemporary fortune-teller. According to Cassirer, Spengler's work *The Decline of the West* plays a huge role in the preparation of minds to accept certain political myths. Finally, Cassirer makes an analogy between magic and politics. If magic is the belief that the priest's or people's will can change nature, then, in politics, we have the irrational conception that the minority of rulers can enforce their visionary ideas upon the majority.

In this line of thought, as an illustration of political myths, I'll

¹⁰ Ernst Cassirer, *The Myth of the State: The Technique of the Modern Political Myths* (New Haven: Yale University, 1946), 277-290.

adduce the masterful interlacement of political disputes, which Allen uses in both his films. In *Midnight in Paris*, he promotes republican ideas in the dispute between Gil and Inez's father and, in *To Rome with Love*, Jerry's understanding of communism and the working party, which provokes an argument with young Michelangelo. In this way, the director emphasizes the contrast between the parallel worlds of the characters. What is more, the pervasive power of the political myth is reaffirmed—a myth that not necessarily has to be interpreted definitively in order to be accepted by the respective recipients.

It is appropriate at this stage to give an illustration of the idea of myth as a way of maintaining the social order. An adequate illustration is the reaction of the newly-wed man in *To Rome with Love*. When his family happens to catch him with a prostitute, he chooses to entangle himself in a simulation in order to preserve the myth of marriage as a sacred institution and his own self-image—beliefs should not be harmed. The main problem that gives rise to crisis is “they will think...” Similar is the situation of the young architect in a moment of infidelity. The emphasis in this situation is on preserving the logical elements—“if we do it here, it will be infidelity, but not in the car.” The myth of home as a sacred place is preserved, but this doesn't make actions more rational. One notices the same emphasis upon the reaffirmation of an already introduced myth when the prostitute offers to teach him “how to make love to his wife”; he refuses because to him she is a “saint.” Anna, the prostitute, is also a mythologized image because it emphasizes her *loose behavior* which makes her the center of attention of many influential men and here again emerges the idea of the “femme fatale,” recognized not only as a prostitute but also as an embodiment of desire and temptation, which binds men and corresponds with Barthes's idea of pleasure as the main goal of social existence. The other emphasis, on her origins, contributes to the reaffirmation of the myth of the *battered 'easy woman.'*

While searching for logical mistakes in both films, it is sufficient to consider in addition the question of symbolic manipulation, mainly

via the work of Pierre Bourdieu.¹¹ There are always differences in society, either because of social status, position, or way of thinking—differences in action or opinions. These differences are accepted by everyone and this allows every member of society to orientate themselves in a given situation. That is why Bourdieu calls them *symbolic differences* and the conscious resources that result from these differences *symbolic capital*. The latter is distinguished for the opportunity it has in order to exercise particular symbolic power without explicitly imposing it and relying instead on obedience provoked in a “magical, miraculous way.” This is a basic conception that leads to the idea of manipulation through the understanding of symbolic power which could reincarnate as symbolic violence. This type of violence is a subject of special interest when it comes to studying the manipulative mechanisms because it can lead to a radical turn of the context of deception, without it being problematized. This is a turn where power relationships shift their direction and we start to observe the dependent side becoming fond of the dominant one. When we consider Bourdieu’s theory, we should keep in mind the fact that “*symbolic*” here means an emphasis on revealing or concealing the nature of a given social relationship. Thus, in the case of symbolic violence, there is a concealment of the symbolic character of the relationship for the dominant, and an open opportunity for the dominant to exercise power that is perceived positively by the other side. This is very important because it shows a power interaction which, due to its symbolic character, manages to increase the range of its influence and to imbed itself inconspicuously into the social interactions of the mediated sides. In this way, it creates an exceptionally favorable ground for symbolic manipulations, recognized as the natural motion of society. This ambiguity is starkly tangible in the so-called *symbolic economy*,¹² or economy of symbolic goods, where we have an exchange of pseudo-commodities, with both sides of the trade being aware that the exchange

¹¹ The interpretation is based on Alexander Gungov, *Logic of Deception*, 76-80.

¹² *Ibid.*, 77-78.

is illusory but that it is still a fact. This is an economy of inexactitudes and indefiniteness, based on a unproblematic taboo, leading to a continuous contradiction and ambiguity. Thus, here we see the appearance of the ‘magical’ which in turn leads to the rise of a ‘reality’ as much illusory as real. This realness seems to embody Jean Baudrillard’s idea of simulacrum as a self-fulfilling myth which doesn’t allow any other conscious reality but its own.

As an illustration of Bourdieu’s idea of an economics of symbols consider the situation in which the main character of *Midnight in Paris* falls. Becoming part of a simulacrum, which includes all his idols, Gil seeks interaction with them at a meta-level, meaning that he is looking for an exchange of experiences and ideas—pseudo-services of a non-material, non-object character. In contrast, Allen does not fail to mention his girlfriend’s purely material quest in Paris—furniture, decorations and a complete absence of specific direction in the exchange. One should point out the determining role of symbolic capital, carried by Paul’s image—Paul, whose presence is mediated by a constant manifestation of intellectual capacity, which defines his position as a dominant figure among the rest, who accept his dominance benevolently (for example, in the dispute with the tourist guide), and this seems to erase the power relationship.

Following the storyline in both films and considering in-depth myth’s role, we cannot but reach the point where the main characters are immersed in a reality which is much more comprehensive than the idea of myth as a single mediator of the social life. In this respect, Baudrillard’s ideas of the simulacrum as a self-fulfilling myth should be emphasized.¹³ He introduces the term *simulacrum* to indicate something that simulates the initial image of a given phenomenon. The simulacrum inherently is a cyclic recurrence of symbols which create something like a *magnetic field* that we perceive as truth. We are not able to find references and the one who holds the power to define true or false is the simulation’s author. There is no reference point, no referent of the truth

¹³ Jean Baudrillard, “Precession of Simulacra,” in: *ΦΙΛΟΣΟΦΙΑ* 5.1 (1992): 4-17.

that can help us expose the simulation. The latter itself is a structuring of something real without any origins or reference to be verified. According to Baudrillard there are four types of imitation: an adequate copy of reality, a deliberate distortion of reality, an imitation covering the lack of an original and an imitation pretending to be reality. The last two types of imitation, of which the essential simulacra are part, are of principal interest in this analysis. In imitation concealing the lack of originality, there is an apparent fiction or reality that is an implicit exception, the purpose of both being to hide a certain phenomenon that either doesn't exist as such or is something that has a negative connotation and needs to be acknowledged as an exception. In an imitation that claims to be reality, there is no distinction between reality and simulation—there is total overlapping. The created simulacrum is neither truthful, nor false; it is beyond the range of the correspondence theory of truth because it cannot be related to reality, nor can it follow its logic. A correspondence with a particular code of simulation is created and this creates a hyper-reality driven only by its own logic and absorbing in itself different discourses and phenomena; a hyper-reality that changes completely the traditional grounds for truth and untruth because there is a foundation of certain codes and patterns.

This line of logic forms on the basis of the deformation of already established norms. This deformation remains invisible, particularly because of the lack of a referent figure. And this, in turn, makes the objects of simulation a part of it, affirming and reaffirming it; they are the active element in the simulacrum. They become part of the mechanism; they are not imposed. We observe what seems to be “freedom of choice” and on this basis the participation in the simulacrum becomes voluntary and desirable. Precisely the desire, the temptation becomes a basis for the reproduction of the code of simulation, which would directly correspond, even though on a meta-level, with Barthes’ idea that the main goal of social activity is the fulfillment of a desire. The entanglement into the simulacrum is easily achieved through the idea of completely subjective gratification. What follows is a turning to a “we/you” form of perception of the social norms which corresponds with the transition from panopticon to

synopticon, and in the process of development, to reversed synopticon. This transition actually determines the simulacrum's pattern which is being reproduced—whether the observation will be from the periphery to the center or it will go both ways, as Zygmunt Bauman emphasizes.

The only way to escape a simulacrum is by finding a referent figure to destroy the already constructed 'rationalizations' used as a way to adapt to the simulacrum. According to Baudrillard, precisely the post-modern age is the time when the simulacrum is completely accomplished, since there is an endless circulation of signs that are no longer based on any referent and, therefore, lack any sense of realism. This way a world of simulations is created. The simulations themselves are produced by the propaganda's code and their purpose is to create credibility serving the main goals of the propaganda. When considering such credibility, one of the approaches to it is, from a logical point of view, to openly and flagrantly violate the logical principles which are very well developed in Allen's films. Magical thinking as a tool of this method overcomes the rational narrow-mindedness precisely through this open introduction of the absurd, and by creating a sense of other-worldliness—the hyper-reality already mentioned. The logical contradictions and paradoxes here are not problematized but, on the contrary, they are accepted rather easily. The recipient feels that the impossible is possible. One of the ways to dis-identify from this imposed veritableness is through a passive attitude or its inclusion in another world of another type of veritableness—a kind of mutual infiltration, a myth within the myth, simulacrum within the simulacrum. As Baudrillard points out, this is exclusively inherent in art and, therefore, an adequate tool used by Allen, as we are going to verify below. Irony is a means for coping with manipulation in a situation of simulacrum as it can be used in creating a completely different attitude toward reality. This results in a conscious duplication of the world undermining the foundations of this veritableness.

As an illustration, we could adduce Gil's ironic statement in *Midnight in Paris* when arguing with the "pedantic gentleman" and the tour guide about Rodin's history. These ironic hints are the way to

oppose this deliberately created veritableness. This tool is used at several other places in the film, for example, in the scene at Monet's exhibition.

Midnight in Paris is an excellent illustration of forming a 'hyper-reality' on the basis of simulacrum. The main character is entangled in a simulacrum, which is not problematized, however obviously is its nature untrue. He enters a world that is the product of his own "nostalgic thinking."¹⁴ This is a simulacrum where reality merges with simulation and there's no clear boundary between them. Its code incorporates the character and he sees himself as a part of the mechanism, which is the reason why he tries to create an algorithm, a scheme of fusion between simulation and reality. Gil tries to discern the elements that were present during the first fusion so that he can ensure that he enters the simulacrum: "What am I doing wrong?! – the place is the same, I just had a little wine..." As the character becomes a part of it, he starts searching for his own rationalizations to help him adapt. Initially, the activated mechanisms of the rational veritableness—"Are you kidding me?"—are replaced by a number of questions and the enumeration of various facts, verifying the existence of this simulacrum and Gil's participation in it: "Gil, the boy scout, is the same, whose novel will be read by G. Stein."¹⁵

The way our character '*really*' realizes the absurdity of what is happening to him and the absolutely obvious merging of the two realities are not hidden. On the contrary, they are emphasized and we witness a deliberately displayed credibility as well as a focus on the absurdity aiming precisely at an amplification of the manipulation mechanism of the simulation. Thus, Hemmingway's image is also of interest. This character states in his conversation with Gil about the latter's creative work, that "No subject is terrible if the story is true." This statement shows the clear search for reference, for verification of the truth and opposition to the social status quo. We seem to observe a

¹⁴ The idea of nostalgic thinking is fully developed later on in the analysis.

¹⁵ A quote from the movie.

myth in the myth through the stereotype of *great personalities*, who are great precisely because of their opposition to what is universally accepted, i.e. they break the simulacrum and set free the creator, which again corresponds to Barthes's idea. It is interesting to notice that even Gil's novel is in harmony with the blending into the simulacrum: "What was prosaic and even vulgar to one generation, had been transmuted by the mere passing of years to a status at once magical and also camp."

In this already formed simulacrum, where Gil enters as if by his own choice, there is an overemphasis on the absurd and one of the manifestations of this absurd is the effortless communication. Although he has never met these people before and they belong to different generations, there are no crashes in their communication, there's no problematization (even a term like "art groupy"¹⁶ is not problematic). In the communication with Gil's girlfriend, 'the referent' becomes problematic though, when he tries to get her involved in the simulacrum: "Stop this nonsense. We're meeting dad for lunch." On the other hand though, when he tells his story of living in two parallel worlds to the surrealists of the 20th century, they seem to understand him. Here comes the role of the myth's meta-language as a 'stolen language' because they understand him on a meta-level. They see the story as real but in the context of an idea for a film; as a photograph, but not as a real-life situation. And if in the 'rational' world the fact that he has been in "another time" is perceived as "non-sense," in the "simulated" world (telling his story to others, non-surrealists), there is no historical referent because the future hasn't come yet and this explains the lack of problematization.

It would be useful for the complexity of the analysis to consider Adriana's image, because with her the idea that "even the past has its own past" is very well developed. Through her image, a complicated entanglement in the "magical chaos" is accomplished. We witness a myth within myth, a simulacrum within the simulacrum. For Gil, the leading myth is Paris in the 20s, to Adriana it is the Belle Epoque and

¹⁶ Used by Gil to describe Adriana.

this imparts the idea of “nostalgic schemes,” which will be unfolded at a later stage of the analysis. In brief, even the past longs for its past. When we go one level deeper into this simulation—the Belle Epoque time—we can see the development of the idea of *free choice*. The ‘free choice’ that Adriana makes, deciding to stay in the time of Belle Epoque, is no free choice, but just a change in the code, in the pattern of the social order.

In *To Rome with Love*, there are interesting illustrations of the idea of the simulacrum. These illustrations though contain mixed elements in general and I will consider only specific details of the movie's storyline. What is essential for the storyline here is that in all the stories, the characters are removed from everyday situations so that each one of them is more or less a part of a certain simulation. As mentioned earlier, the story of the young couple is interesting precisely because it is a “series of unfortunate events” that determine the code conditioning the simulations. The young woman enters a simulative relationship with the famous actor, relying on the logic of *exception*, which is also essential in the scene with the thief. The newly-wed man, in turn, becomes part of the simulation with the prostitute in order to preserve the “pillars” of his family beliefs.

In the story with the young and older architect the simulacrum's code is expressed in the non-problematic, invisible presence of the older architect. He appears and disappears, talks to one character without the others noticing, that's why we can consider the formation of a “hyper-reality” which is rationalized through the notion “expect the unexpected.” His advice and guidance make him the ‘rationalizing,’ regulatory element in the simulacrum, which the young architect enters. John is this element, which is used to reaffirm the myth of the ‘femme fatale,’ based on past experience: “Wisdom comes with age? No, with age comes exhaustion.”

When we discuss the simulacrum, we should also consider how in fact it re-creates and reaffirms itself. One of the ways is through imitating crises equipped with ideologies to overcome them. The creation of a crisis and its resolution through an ideology is easily incorporated in the code of a simulacrum, namely because the latter is

inherently meant to combine with an ideology. The ideology itself plays a key role when it comes to preserving the code unchanged and non-problematized. What is more, ideology creates pseudo-communities that function by the principle of “we/you/they”; it is an easy and natural explanation of the world, not being immediately accessible. That’s why, ideology creates the illusion that it expands our horizon—“it is a false privileged point of view.”¹⁷ This is extremely important when it comes to forming the propaganda’s principles because this is the way to form an understanding of diversity and acceptance, achieved only by those who ‘understand.’ Propaganda fulfills the manipulative socialization in contemporary society and exerts such a strong influence that it transforms itself into a social object of partiality. Propaganda suggest the idea of ‘free choice,’ which is only imaginary, because propaganda removes the subject of free choice from its real context and even manages to put him in a new, manipulated one. It also creates a world parallel to the real one and this can be considered a “reality – fiction,”¹⁸ following W. Fisher’s term, because it refers to real people and events but, unlike ordinary reality, it cannot be verified as true or false. There is a residing at the frontier where everything is encapsulated and no one has the urge to cross that frontier.

In the film *To Rome with Love*, one would notice the reaffirmation of the simulacrum through the moments of crisis that have to be resolved. Michelangelo’s father has an extraordinary talent as an opera singer noticed by Jerry who hears him singing in the shower and persuades him into trying to go on stage and sing in front of an audience. But this is doomed to failure and leads Jerry to the idea that if the right order of things has to be restored, the same elements have to be reproduced. This is a classical example of the use of *pseudo-modus ponens* which achieves a seeming observation of logical rules, but ultimately highlights the absurdity of the created hyper-reality where Michelangelo’s father produces a successful opera singing performance

¹⁷ Gungov, *Logic of Deception*, 83-88.

¹⁸ Gungov, *Logic of Deception*, 85.

under the shower.

In this film, once again, we find an illustration of the idea of “reality – fiction” in the story of the newly-wed couple. Every time they experience their individual simulations, without violating any logical rules, they fall into absurd situations, including different people and events but, then again, they fail to draw a clear-cut distinctive line between ‘true’ and ‘false.’ The situation with the hired detective in *Midnight in Paris* is similar. Precisely because he fails to find a referent figure to give him grounds to discern between real and unreal, he finds himself ultimately lost in a time continuum.

As already stated, propaganda is the way to manipulate society. Therefore, a necessary emphasis must be placed upon manipulation itself and its implementation in contemporary society. There are two types of manipulation—one without the participation of statistical material, and another with the participation of statistical material. In a post-consumer society, propaganda’s goal is the adaptation of statistical units to the purposes of planning. This will guarantee comprehensiveness of the self-fulfilling myth in the simulacrum. But the most complete type of manipulation is the total manipulation typical of the information society. This means that free access to information is the most valuable achievement in all democratic states as it promotes the idea of being informed and, therefore, not being manipulated so that everyone could make free and informed choices. But, as we said earlier, there are many pitfalls that would distort information. Free choice is a tool for a new type of manipulation because the inundation with data, offered in a chaotic way without premeditated interpretation, is enough to confuse the *free* citizen making him a vulnerable object of manipulation. Thus, total manipulation is a *state* where the manipulated subject is in a way aware that premeditated actions have been taken against his own little world. He cannot find any premeditation in outside actions and everything seems to follow its natural path. Here, a reference can be made to Erma Petrova’s analysis,¹⁹ which aspires to

¹⁹Erma Petrova, “The Structural Brakes of Manipulation or the Constructed

showing how one would feel if everything in one's everyday life changes. The conclusion is that when the change is total, we have no referent figure to judge by whether things have changed. We won't notice this change at all because the change is total, comprehensive. Similar manipulations can be implemented in many different ways but the one of interest to this analysis is precisely the magical chaos where absurdities are not concealed but revealed. We become parts of the vicious circle of a world constructed on principles different from those we are used to, so we start to get orientated by following these different principles, thus imbedding ourselves in the designed pattern, being incapable of realizing the manipulation.

Of course, the 'type two' simulacrum has to be considered as well. In this simulacrum a referent is completely missing; it is not even discussed because there is a hyper-reality code in action organizing the world around us, and we inhabit the only possible world, an artificially constructed one—the bosom of total manipulation implemented through complete order and chaos.

The only way to break such totality of the manipulation is, on the one hand, letting it destroy itself naturally through controversies undermining it from the inside, or through intercalations that will attack it from the outside. On the other hand, there's the change through active opposition, direct or indirect, or even passive. In any case, these are the only paths that lead to some change in the system of total manipulation and they are gravitating around the same center—finding a referent figure.

Allen manages to recreate the idea of total manipulation in *To Rome with love* quite well, using the image of Leopoldo. In the beginning of the story, the emphasis falls upon the character's sheer ordinary way of living, focused on the tiny details of everyday life. But precisely this ordinariness becomes the introductory element to implement manipulation. All of a sudden, everything in his life changes, he is the center of everyone's attention and this is accepted by everyone

around him without being problematized. Thus, the manipulation is total because it is comprehensive and all-consuming, without leaving any opportunity to look for a referent outside of it. The logical mistake here takes the form of a proof for the existence of a vicious-circle: "You are famous because you are famous." The totality of the simulation is reaffirmed by the fact that the absurdity of the situation is in no way problematized. On the contrary, this absurdity is accepted and incorporated completely by everyone. Its destruction comes from within, which coincides with the moment when Leopoldo starts searching for a rationalization of what is happening by asking questions. In this way he breaks the simulacrum's code and the magical chaos, which has appeared absurdly in Leopoldo's life and just as absurdly disappears and moves over to another ordinary object of attention. What is interesting here is that, once out of the state of total manipulation, the character undergoes a crisis which reduces him to a state of "cultural schizophrenia."²⁰ He starts looking for the same attention, trying to fit the same elements of his behavior into a "nostalgic scheme." This is the result of the rapid change in the simulacrum's code, in the pattern of the "reality" that the characters enters, and this crisis is the reaffirmation of the totality of the manipulation precisely because even after its destruction, the elements of its code continue to be active in the character's consciousness.

We should also elaborate on a more obvious form of propaganda and ideology. It's quite interesting to notice that in Paris all the cars are French, except for those of the city's guests. Even the old car from the past is French. The whole company that draws the main character into the simulacrum brings out fine pieces, corresponding to the era and there is nothing to remind of the outside 'real' world. Thus, we can name total manipulation here. Moreover, even though Paris is a part of Gil's "nostalgic scheme," it is interesting to note that in this simulation, created in a French society, the characters communicate mainly with

²⁰ A clearer description of this term will be given later but here it is used to keep the comprehensiveness of the line of thought.

Americans, precisely because it is subject to the author's personal interpretation. His interpretation draws into a synthesized image all the leading figures of his inspiration, forming a kind of manipulation of the 'self-image.' Allen also brings forward the idea of two parallel worlds through the dichotomy 'native-foreign,' which in both films is represented by the "Paris/Rome – Malibu" polarity. An interesting manifestation of the ideological element is the fact that whether the characters are in Paris or in Rome or whether they are Americans or not, they watch Hollywood productions. This, on the one hand, shows the universality of the manipulation but, on the other hand, comes as an ironic hint on the director's part that he intends a specific confrontation with established veritableness.

As stated earlier, when we speak of manipulation and control in contemporary societies, societies divided by Bauman into that of producers and of consumers, we should also mention his very well formed scheme of enforcing power and control. Bauman develops three schematic formulations. The first one, the so-called *panopticon* is borrowed from Michel Foucault, in whose view the panopticon has a center and a periphery visible from the center and the center has free access to the periphery. Here we have forceful institutions of control and the principle of the overseer, an interpretation with which Bauman agrees. Panopticon is a method of control in industrial societies. However, in consumer society, according to Bauman, there is another form of control the so-called *synopticon*. Here, there are also a center and a periphery but the observation is from the periphery to the center and any action is undertaken from the periphery. Here we can speak of self-control, a voluntary participation in control.

In light of the time of the high-tech and the post-consumer society, Bauman defines a third form of control distinguished by the direction and the purposes of the control—namely, *the reversed synopticon*. Again, there is a center and a periphery; everyone watches the center and it attracts them, but the center not only seduces those who watch but also performs specific activities because the goal is to select only the useful consumers. This distinction of the three types of control is

important for this analysis because, considering the time line and the flow of the storyline in Allen's films. Interesting trends can be spotted in the transition from one type of control to another, as much in the different types of societies as within a particular society. These societies, being a part of the author's fairy notion, are open to different interpretations, because they are perceived as simulations, out of 'reality' (here, we can make a reference to Disneyland, as we are fully aware of the movie's art illusion but willingly ourselves immerse in it).

If we go back to the storyline in *To Rome with Love* and take a fast glance through it, we will notice a situation of reversed synopticism centered on the figure of the traffic-controller. On the surface, this minor and weakly developed character doesn't attract our attention, but if we listen carefully to his words, we will hear him say: "I'm here, everybody sees me and I see everybody." He is the main narrator of all the stories, outlining the main storyline for each one of them. His narrations begin in early morning and end up late in the evening, which gives the narration completeness. In this way the traffic-controller becomes the author and moderator of the constructed simulacrum, one under observation, which corresponds also to Baudrillard's idea that the author is always invisible.

As part of the theoretical basis of the analysis, we should also consider an alternative to the rational stance in Baudrillard's simulacrum—the alternative of magical consciousness where one can reach a complete loss of context and total immersion in the 'here – now' moment. As Fredric Jameson argues, this is one of the characteristics of the worldview in the age of post-modernism most precisely defined by the term "cultural schizophrenia." In such circumstances, attention is fully concentrated upon the materiality of particular objects without them being connected to a certain cultural or social background—a feeling of loss of connection with reality. The spectrum of consumer society's magical thinking is left; magical thinking doesn't keep its pure form but is transformed into "nostalgic thinking."²¹ The latter is a

²¹ Gungov, *Logic of Deception*, 110-111.

desperate attempt to retrieve history's meaning which leads to pseudo-historicism, akin to the simulacrum. The nostalgic notions are the schemes describing a particular period of history considered an ideal and worthy of imitation. This is a particularly important element in the analysis of Allen's films because he implements such schemes to build the storylines. Some of them were already discussed at previous stages of the analysis as a part of the practical manifestation of the simulacrum's structure. Nonetheless the emphasis here will be on the concrete displays of this particular idea. In the beginning of *Midnight in Paris*, the character puts an accent on his own 'nostalgic thinking': "Imagine this town in the '20s..." Gil's novel comes as an element backing up the idea of magical thinking. This novel is like a symbol of Gil's desire to entangle himself in a nostalgic scheme. Again, we witness a collision between the simulacrum world building around Gil and the world of the referent—that of his fiancé who responds to his longing for the antique, saying: "Who buys those, who needs it?", and supported by the "pedantic gentleman" saying: "People who live in the past. Nostalgia is the denial of a painful present."

Here again we can observe the power of reaffirmed myths. The knowledge of and the longing for a certain period of time results in the "Golden-age" complex. The entanglement in nostalgic schemes comes to show how a particular myth can "inject" a new mode of interpretation into prevailing objective historical meanings so that the result is not only the lack of a referent figure, but also its complete rejection. This, in turn, leads to a decontextualization which makes the comprehensive simulacrum possible (where the character seems to entangle himself voluntarily). He seems to be in search of an "escape from the boring present" which is his attempt to retrieve his meaning of history and to re-arrange his own world on the basis of the past one.

The character's nostalgic scheme has been reaffirmed by his constant purchasing of books and vinyl records from the time of the simulacrum. Even while in the 'real' world, he surrounds himself with the symbols of that age. For him, the record is not just music, it is a symbol of the time, culture, meaning, of which he wants to be a part.

Thus, when speaking of ‘nostalgic schemes,’ we should be aware that these schemes interact intensively with symbol economy, precisely because exchange of pseudo-services and pseudo-commodities of non-material interest is sought through them. It is important to note that Allen doesn’t leave his idea of nostalgia to wander ungrounded. On the contrary, he manages to make it complete, showing that these nostalgic schemes are repeated along generations. Every other generation turns to the preceding one. It is easy to see the role of ideology in the process of affirming the myth as a social mediator because this nostalgia is generated on the basis of a discourse shaping the image of each age. Thus, the conclusion of the director is extremely valuable: “Past isn’t past. Past is not dead, it still lives,” precisely through myths that reform history.

Nostalgic thinking has a place in *To Rome with Love*, too, where the viewer observes the unfolding of an older architect’s image, feeling nostalgia at his own past—“*melancholy of Melpomene*.” On meeting the young architect who lives where he used to live in the past, he seems to see himself in the boy. Like Gil in *Midnight in Paris*, the character entangles himself in a kind of simulacrum, based precisely on the idea of ‘nostalgic thinking,’ becoming a counselor to his young “self,” in an attempt to re-live the past. In both cases, there is a “re-living” of the past, but while to Gil it is a completely new experience in an attempt to become part of a world he has never visited before, to Jack it is an attempt to fully embody his own past history. What is essential here is that the reaffirmation of Allen’s idea of the past’s vitality through nostalgia is a way to re-create the myth of history’s totality over and over again.

In conclusion, we could only add that the films, directed by Allen, offer a rich ground for interpretation with a view to logical construction and the different “entrances” for manipulative and propaganda elements. Therefore, these films would also be of interest to analysis from different perspectives. Nevertheless, we consider the goals of this analysis to be met. Coherence of the logical manipulations, found in those films, was achieved. An interpretation, centered on the role of myth, and, in a wider setting, around its self-fulfilling form (the

simulacrum), was made. Leaving it open to future analysis, the line of thought of this article also pursues a relative implementation of Barthes's idea of the "disempowerment" of the author so that critique be left in the hands of the creative reader.

VI. ANNOUNCEMENT

Master's and Doctoral Studies in Philosophy Taught in English at Sofia University

Sofia University was founded in 1888 following the best patterns of European higher education. Sofia is the capital city of the Republic of Bulgaria. Bulgaria is a Member of the European Union (EU).

MASTER'S PROGRAM IN PHILOSOPHY TAUGHT IN ENGLISH

The MA Program in Philosophy taught in English provides instruction in all major areas of Western Philosophy. In addition, the master's thesis can be written on a topic from Eastern Philosophy - an expert in this field will be appointed as the supervisor. The program is structured, yet leaves enough room for student's own preferences. The degree is recognized worldwide including in the EU/EEA and Switzerland, the US, Canada, Russia, Turkey, China, Indian Sub-Continent, Latin America, and the Middle East.

Courses offered: Philosophical Anthropology, Ethics, Axiology, Philosophical Method, Truth and Meaning, Philosophy of Intercultural Relations, Social Philosophy, Continental Philosophy, Philosophy for Children, Philosophy of Culture, Logic in the Continental Tradition, Theories of Truth, Existential Dialectics, Philosophy of Subjective Action, Phenomenology, Renaissance Philosophy

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Duration of Studies: two semesters of course attendance plus a third semester for writing the master's thesis; opportunities for distance learning.

Admission Requirements: Bachelor's degree in any field of humanities, social science, science, or professional disciplines. No tests or application fee are required (for citizens of EU/EEA and Switzerland applying for a state scholarship €16 fee is charged and an interview is held). No previous degree in philosophy is needed.

Tuition fee:

- 1) citizens of EU/EEA and Switzerland – €815 per school year
- 2) international students - €3 850 per school year

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B) Fulbright Graduate Grants are offered to *American citizens* as a form of very competitive financial aid; for more information see www.fulbright.bg. Furthermore, American applicants are eligible for Federal Loans; please check for more details at the Education Department web site,

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSFAP/DirectLoan/index.html>; at Sallie Mae, <http://www.salliemae.com/>, and at the Student Loan Network, <http://www.privatestudentloans.com> and

<https://www.discoverstudentloans.com>. It is possible for the American citizens to use some other sources of government financial assistance (please contact the Program Director for details).

C) Financial aid to *Canadian nationals* is provided in the form of Government Student Loans by the Province where they permanently reside.

D) *The Western Balkans citizens* are welcome to apply for Erasmus Mundus/BASELEUS Project scholarship carrying full tuition waiver and monthly stipend,

<http://www.basileus.ugent.be/index.asp?p=111&a=111>.

E) *Students from Turkey* can receive financial aid within the Erasmus Student Exchange Program.

F) Financial aid for *Chinese students* is available within the bilateral Chinese-Bulgarian Cultural Agreement. Please contact the

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H) ***Students from Russia*** (Financial aid for ***Russian students*** is available within the bilateral Russian-Bulgarian Cultural Agreement. Please contact the Russian Ministry of Education for more information). ***Students from the Ukraine, Belarus, and the other CIS countries, the Indian Sub-Continent, Latin America, and the Middle East*** receive financial aid in the form of inexpensive dormitory accommodation (about €50 per month including most of the utilities) plus a discount on public transportation and at the University cafeterias. The same type of financial aid is available for ***the citizens of EU/EEA and Switzerland, American citizens, Canadian nationals, Western Balkans citizens, students from Turkey, and Chinese students.***

Application deadline: September 30, to start in October; January 31, to start in March.

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Checklist: CV, two letters of recommendation, standardized tests scores are NOT required. No application fee (for citizens of EU/EEA and Switzerland a €32 fee is charged and an entrance exam is held).

Tuition fee:

1) citizens of EU/EEA and Switzerland – €1450 per school year; extramural: €2440 per school year

2) international students - in residence: €6 500 per school year; extramural: €3 300 per school year

Dissertation defense fee: €950

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Financial aid:

A) *Citizens of the EU/EEA and Switzerland* studying in residence

are eligible for state scholarships carrying full tuition waiver and waiver of the dissertation defense fee plus a significant (for the Bulgarian standard) monthly stipend. For extramural studies only tuition waiver and the dissertation defense fee waiver are available.

B) Fulbright Graduate Grants are offered to *American citizens* as a form of very competitive financial aid; for more information see www.fulbright.bg. Furthermore, they are eligible for Federal Loans; please check for more details at the Education Department web site, <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSFAP/DirectLoan/index.html>; at Sallie Mae, <http://www.salliemae.com/>, and at Student Loan Network, <http://www.privatestudentloans.com> and <https://www.discoverstudentloans.com>. It is possible for the American citizens to use some other sources of government financial assistance (please contact the Program Director for details).

C) Financial aid to *Canadian nationals* is provided in the form of Government Student Loans by the Province where they permanently reside. This type of aid is usually unavailable for extramural studies.

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