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## BOOK REVIEW

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*Jean-Pierre Cléro, Essai sur les Fictions,  
Hermann, Paris, 2014, 570 p.  
Arab Kennouche (Paris, France)*

In this pertinent ambition to expand his theoretical concerns, Jean-Pierre Cléro notes first that there has traditionally been very little epistemological investigation into the very notion of fiction without falling into a sort of general fictionalism, a position subject to harsh criticism in the field of the sciences. Cléro's concern essentially relates to the need for a sound trans-disciplinary theory of fictions, one which would overcome the too classical opposition between object-depicting language and objectless fictions, the latter being characterized by the absence of objects in discourse. Another interest expressed by Cléro relates to the link fictions erroneously establish with truth and error. As a matter of fact, any fiction is bound to be perceived through the lenses of truth and falsehood but without ever absolutely making one prevail over the other, as fiction itself partakes of some elements of reality while simultaneously conveying the idea of a fictitious presence. As a bolt-notion, fiction, notes Cléro, may account for a certain part of reality without compulsorily engaging in a truth-condition relationship. It seems that for him fiction entails other ideas like constructability and utility, which incline towards the acceptance of fictions outside the scope of a truth/falsehood relation. This in turn makes it possible to think about fictions on the level of values, which also have to be determined. Acceptance without belief seems to open the way for an ethical approach in theorizing fictions. Throughout his book, Cléro articulates his attempt to discuss the possibility of a theory of fiction through the works of Jeremy Bentham, pointing to the relevance of the notion of utility in extirpating the vagaries of fictions perceived from the realm of truth. Far from trying to extract logical elements in mathematical, literary and scientific fictions, Cléro claims that fictions are liminal beings in ambiguous relations with truth and falsehood, as their fictitious traits do not necessarily lead to a fallacious meaning. Cléro thus explains how the notion of truth can be analyzed through the prism of Bentham's utility.

Apart from the few attempts to theorize fiction started by C. K.Ogden in 1932 (through the etymological heritage of the Latin *Fin-*

*gere*, opposed to *Facere*, as well as the failed contribution of John Stuart Mill who mistakenly transformed Bentham's theory of fallacies into a theory of judgment), the project of a contemporary and well-founded theory of fiction has lagged behind other developments. Or, as it seems, the very idea of fiction harbors in itself all the obstacles that such a project would encounter. A definition of fiction is at first sight full of difficulties. Cléro explains how the social contract in political philosophy, despite being fictitious, serves the purposes of legitimate government for the governed people who act "as if" it was true. Such an unreal contract operates on the level of reality when it provides some kind of utility. The problem raised by Cléro is related to the nature of these efficient fictions. Do they cease to be fictitious because they are efficient? This recalls another efficient fiction, Hume's continuity of objects, where the impressions released by such objects are always discontinuous. Our discontinuous perception of objectivity allows us (through fiction) to perceive objects as having a continuous substratum. Another example of efficient fiction is the idea of a unified "I," or the illusion of a substantial self, which is believed to be true, although fallacious. When Leibniz constructed a coherent space, it was also through a fiction, the useful idea that space is inherently the substratum for any object. In mathematics, rectifications, corrections are made possible through the use of fictions, as in the case of infinitesimal fragments of space that are deemed to function as zeroes. Apart from being useful, Cléro argues that fictions produce their own rationality. The notion of probability, another fiction since it deals with nonexistent objects, can produce a highly rational calculus, as well as a whole system of values with an efficient influence on human activity. Therefore, as Cléro remarks, an object's ontological status has no necessary relation to its efficient and productive effects within the human sphere of activity. An intermediate state of existence does not preclude *per se* the possibility of an effective perception of reality. Even in the field of experience, fiction becomes unavoidable in order to describe an "as if" existing item for the perception of movement. The ontological perception of movement is realized through its fictional construction. Cléro also ascribes to such a fictional existence of movement a capacity of substantification applied to a mere ratio between two objects. This in-between may be called movement, a term that is understood on the ontological level, and from which any further rationality or mathematics can take its point of departure. As a matter of

fact, Cléro wishes to survey the objective links that such fictions as the question of the indivisible in mathematics, or physical movement, or the fictitious social contract in political philosophy, or even the fictitious psychological self-identical “I,” have in common. Bentham discarded in his classification of fictions what he named fabulous entities, whereas Cléro is ready to accept such tales as Robinson Crusoe as pure fictions on account of the “as if” criteria encountered in the life of the hero. Defoe acts or writes as if he was himself told about the details of his character’s life. Likewise, Diderot’s nun did not exist but the book invites the reader to ponder her real existence in a way that may make him consider her life as “true.” Beyond the Benthamian tool of substantification, Cléro lists several other procedures for the construction of fictions. Building a set of contradictions will have the effect of releasing useful truths. There is another way of obtaining truthful effects by simply putting forward an absurd judgment based on false assumptions, expecting that the latter will bring forth some truths. Montesquieu would build up ideal constitutions in order to examine their possible effects on society. With the Galilean-Cartesian approach to fiction, Cléro argues, only a few elements are retained to account for the possible actualization of a fiction. A line is never perfectly straight, a thread is never fully extended, but they are artificially perceived as such for the sake of explanation. Abstraction may also be efficient in eliminating all the fuzzy parts of an idea to build a fiction out of stable elements. Generalization would remove every peculiarity through the use of language in view of constructing a total fiction. The totalizing effect of generalization leaves no space for analysis since contradictions are left unresolved. Singular entities must not, however, be taken as real because they would escape the fictional effects of generalization. Peculiarities or individual entities can only be apprehended by a fiction which is a general idea. Cléro also determines how ideologies may be efficient in transforming reality. Here again, the erroneous aspect that we can perceive in them is insufficient to thwart their effects. Error is productive even if it is unconscious in the ideologically formed person.

Cléro also points to the role of language in the theory of fiction. The grammatical form of language makes it possible to construct fictions “as if” they existed. Language’s ability to build fictitious entities upon the prerequisite of real entities gives the author of fiction the ability to take for real things that have no existence. The intrinsic relations

of meaning between the real and the fictional entity maintain the fiction in the vicinity of truth and reality. The entity's fictitious character depends on the nature of the relation it holds with the real one. Cléro, following a Benthamite argument, explains how a fictional entity can further develop into new fictions, like the movement of movement. However, language alone cannot be the focus of fiction without considering its users and their intentionality. The intention to abuse or deceive someone introduces a clear difference between error and falsehood. As regards the role of language, Cléro aptly asks whether the intention of the language-user is completely disconnected from the essence of fictional discourse, or whether there are intrinsic elements of fiction within language. He can then perceive the dialectical relation that fictions have in themselves. Is Descartes' new world of principles and laws, or of hurricanes, a world of fictions when confronted with the real one, or is the real world a mere fiction, being unable to explain unknown phenomena, when faced with the world to come? Besides, Cléro has it that fictions enable man to overcome contradictions. In the aporetic delimitation of selfhood and otherness, given that it is impossible to feel something on the level of absolute otherness without involving the self, the fiction of sympathy allows for a temporary overcoming of these contradictory entities. Sympathy is a fiction which allows for reciprocal understanding of selves outside the grip of a critical theory attempting to define the possible limits of selfhood and otherness. But is Sympathy real as Hume supposed, or is it fictional as Bentham argued? Is Sympathy an acceptable fiction or not? What is to be retained in a theory of fiction? Imagination, affects, symbolic language? Fiction represents a means for stabilizing contradictory relations, as the fiction of identification, to take one instance, overcomes the problem of a given or constituted human nature. Fiction is a third term which gathers into a single construction the contradictory elements of two possible entities. Whether human nature is merely given or, conversely, only constituted, identification enables us to explain one aspect of human nature.

Another aspect of the theory of fictions lies in the relation between the symbolic and the affective, Bentham having drawn attention to the symbolic forces concealed behind perceptions. Once again fictions capture the entanglement of affects and symbols, maintaining them or dissolving them to the detriment of an acceptable theory of fiction. However, even if rational utilitarianism may vanish under the spell of sym-

bolism, since it is not conceivable to account for a society merely in terms of pleasure and pain, it is still the expression of defective control, as Lacan asserts, and this allows Cléro to pin a possible theory of fiction to the very concept of Authority. Cléro, echoing Hume, comes to question the notion of pure analysis, as most concepts are intermingled with or rooted in others. These congeneric concepts may lead to another kind of intertwining of values. Pascal's problem of shares cannot be solved except with the help of close notions like justice and equity. As a structure, a fiction can be theoretically set forth in the double perspective of values syntonized with affects. Therefore, a mind is inclined to accept a fiction not on account of its objectivity but rather on the relations it bears to kindred values and affects introjected into it. But how then does authority make some fictions more acceptable and less fallacious than others? On which value does a fiction establish its ability to be accepted by the mind confronted with concurrent values such as pleasure, utility, truth...? Is there any hierarchy of values or a value of value? Would authority be the one prominent figure among all the other values? Bentham explained how authority was the exemplar of fiction in opposition to the use of reason. Authority opposes the idea of causality and may enslave reason to impose a noun or even a representation. Being self-constituted, authority can enter into language and make the mind obey a sign more successfully than physical force could do. In the field of concurrent values, authority plays a decisive role. As a dynamic process, a theory of fiction based on authority is characterized by the pretension to truth while at the same time deriding the idea of truth, as one value among other concurrent ones. How to escape the dogmatism of truth? Does authority really prevail over other values such as utility and interest?

Cléro seems compelled to distinguish between force and authority. Even ill-grounded fictions may prevail over more established ones if their power of authority is greater. Force may destroy any kind of superior authority to which it is not related. The paradoxical relation of authority with force perceived as a unique and prominent value capable of determining other values casts light on the acceptance and predominance of some fictions over others. Authority is at the core of the acceptance of a given fiction and force can provide more authoritative power than authority itself, since authority in its essence would not require force. Cléro's aim is to avoid the critique of fiction that Kant would have advocated so as to establish an *a priori* analytical chart of fiction.

He would rather plead for a more cultural and introjective stance based on the acquaintance of the mind with all the dimensions of fiction. The principle of mirroring perspectives in a game of productive values and affects would be the condition for a cultural approach to fiction.

Bentham's theory of fiction can be summarized in three main ideas. Fictions are first opposed to real entities, which they presuppose. Secondly, fictions are the product of language, which allows for the construction of different perspectives. Lastly, fictions do not relate to the question of truth insofar as their existence is due to the play of many internal and external contradictions. However, it seems, argues Cléro, that a first difficulty arises from the perception of reality as *opposed* to fiction, and at the same time, of a *complete gradation* between the purely real and the purely fictional. Whether as oppositional or gradually perceived fictions, Bentham's theory also fails to recognize that although a product of language, it is hard to show which entities within language are fictional or real by referring only to the features of language. A linguistic proposition is not the right place to demonstrate the presence of a fiction; only the speaker's intention may do so. A third difficulty lies in the fact that fictions are always somewhat false: what makes us believe that some would be less false than others? Cléro points to a movement of values to assert the acceptability of some fictions as truer. Still, is not such a distinction another fiction? Bentham's response seems clear: truth itself is a fictional entity. Bentham thus resorts to utility to overcome the fallacy of truth so as to explain the fundamental existence of fictions despite their obviously false character. Cléro very aptly remarks that utility along with truth, becomes problematic as we do not know if fictions impose themselves naturally or if they are imposed from the outside. Both values, truth and utility, could be interpreted as either self-imposing or prescriptive.

Cléro's project becomes clearer: a theory of fiction can be extracted from John Stuart Mill's *System of Logic*, a text which he considers to be a false interpretation of Bentham's theory of fiction. Mill's logical reorganization of Bentham's fallacies is indeed based on the rehabilitation of induction. Three main difficulties emerge in an attempt to build a theoretical discourse on fictions. Language does not tell *per se* which one is a fictional entity among all the entities it creates. Secondly, it is difficult to replace the idea of truth with the principle of utility without raising the question of justification. Is utility by itself sufficient

to justify the acceptance of a fiction, or is it still entangled in a specific relation with truth? If it is not, the philosophy of utility in Benthamite terms appears to hinge on the symbolic force of authority. Cléro argues that there is no transcendental point from which we could decide which fiction is acceptable or less fallacious. Therefore, can the logic of induction, as Mill employed it, be useful in dealing with such difficulties? Mill does not necessarily question the implication of linguistic schemes in our perceptions, as he stresses that a cultivated man would be able to extricate himself from the verbal substratum against the inductive effects present in language to ascertain knowledge, that is, for Mill, to be able to pass from individualization to generalization. Induction would allow for the linking of singularities, as well as for a rational generalization. Cléro explains that inductions may well produce fallacies, but warns that all fallacies do not necessarily originate from erroneous inductions. A theory of fiction based on false inductions would be insufficient to account for all types of fictions. This is also true for judgments from which logicians and Kantian philosophers tend to remove forms from contents, another fictional procedure aimed at attaining truth. Cléro, however, retains from the characteristics of language its ability to represent and express ideas within itself, immanently, without any need for imitation. Reality and fiction are internal to language and only depend on a specific syntactical use. Reality and fiction are brought about by the use of grammatical or syntactical rules which themselves develop into a particular rationality. The logic of signs and relations that arises from this interplay makes up the fiction. Through the richness and multiple features released by a fiction, it is hard to tell where the limit of reality lies since what is at stake is not the degree of resemblance with a would-be real entity but rather the connotations it creates, for instance, with literary works. Cléro asserts that even though language is not directly linked to a transcendent reality, it has the capacity to establish a mode of transcendence by means of codes and even simply the way in which it uses these codes, as in, for instance, the allusion to the literary work of Cervantes in an etching of Don Quixote. Cléro would point to the illusion of conformity and truth in language. Truth is not exterior to language. It is a self-construction, a *verum ipsum factum*. Furthermore, such a construction is not deprived of sensations, as some would argue. Reality is not therefore the only locus where sensations emerge as fictions too may stir a kind of sensation without having to refer to tran-

scendent objects. A theory of fiction would therefore, says Cléro, be articulated according to three postulates. Reality is not a transcendent realm dwelling beyond linguistic signs. Secondly, using the symbolic power of language implies reality itself, which is then constructed within language. Truth, therefore, is internal to that construction and not the result of an outside operation. Language not being a tool for the imitation of reality, there cannot be only fallacious fictions. A fiction will always posit a kind of reality. This can also be a critique of Mill's way of implementing inductively the construction of an anthropological fiction, a "human nature" which provides little insight for theory. Indeed, as a construct which is said to be external and able to explain fallacies from the point of view of false representations of oneself, so-called human nature would be fallaciously stable enough for forecasting and predictions. The fiction of a stable human nature has led to considering the future knowledge of objects as stable but, nonetheless, fictional.

Far from considering fiction as only a median or intermediate figure between certainty and the inadmissible, Diderot can boast of having delved into self-defining fictions, a sort of prosopopoeia. In Diderot's view, utility is similarly only one prominent value covering other more important values. Cléro indicates three major points in Diderot's prosopopoeia. First of all, the French author manages to eschew the question of assumptions which tend to entail the obligation of invalid or valid observable experience. Fictions would be the negation of hypothetical discourse because they simply presuppose virtual experiences which do not have to be tested. Fictions are nurtured through the thread of narration or testimony. In Diderot's *Letter to the Blind*, experience is always bracketed since there is no need for anything related to science to be recounted in details and subject to scientific evaluation. Diderot does not focus on the recovery of sight itself but rather on its effects. Furthermore, he turns very cautious and lets the cure be related by an "intelligent" character. In fact, fiction works out the relations brought out by terms that suddenly cease to be so important. The relation to verifiability turns out to be more important than experience itself. Diderot also resorts to the conversion of attributes into substances. An attribute can be turned into a substance, which then may create a new referent. Conversions allow Diderot to give predominance to relations over terms, ascribing to the former a kind of thinghood. Language therefore becomes crucial in making new transcendent objects, pretending that they are

real. Diderot, thirdly, was inspired by Descartes' *dioptrics*, in a way pointing to a possible theory of fiction. Language possesses this capacity to create screening effects aiming at bringing about a resemblance among non-parallel sets of causes. An infinite set of visual objects could give rise to the same impression. We are never too far from making one object resemble another, thanks to the words in use, so much so that from different perspectives we may achieve the same impressions. Indeed, language is a creator of infinite possible worlds which allow us to see the same object. Deriving conditional or possible worlds from one visual object, language enlightens the multiple and plural sides that vision fails to grasp. The linguistic screens can be compared to optical tools. Suzanne proceeds to such a screening of reality in her letters to the Marquis of Croismare. The reader is forced to abstain from an interpretation of reality, facing instead the way that Suzanne manages to create a screened reality by cutting out some aspects, which themselves bring about new possible worlds. She does not straightforwardly assert that she is innocent but invents representations destined to prove that she is. Cléro believes that such a procedure is similar to the prior circulation of a currency: fiction needs creation and above all circulation as a new focus prevailing over what circulates.

Cléro believes with Diderot that there is an advantage in making fictions without resorting to assumptions. In two of Diderot's letters, events can only be considered from a fictional point of view. Fiction enables the reader to elaborate a rationality that would be impossible on the basis of mere hypotheses, like for instance the fondness of the blind for arithmetic. The use of arithmetic in blindness does not create a new mathematical theory but helps to build a new fiction of the perception of space and time. Another fiction which avoids scientific evaluation is the possibility of synesthesia or displacement of a sense, tasting the sound of music or deliberately looking at a painting with a blind eye. A "blind" eye turned on a picture forces the spectators to look at things they could not see. Lastly, with fictions, it is possible to extend the relations of equivocal meanings, and maintain this equivocal construction as if in metaphysics. The fictional impression can never be subdued by a scientific verification through assumptions. Fiction is also bred with connotation and denotation, offered by language as an ideological power, turning any singular point of view into a universal one. Language is never quite exterior to itself, as a meta-language, but rather develops exteri-

ority within its own internal structure.

Cléro says that Bentham never departed from the idea that truth is a “fictitious entity.” Is truth a determination of utility? What is the reason behind the fact that one fiction is considered to be true while another is just said to be useful without ceasing to be less true? Diderot’s critique of religion is where such a question might find an answer. Hume’s natural religion is enhanced by applicable experience whereas theology presents dilemmas and one’s obligation to make choices. Opposing Hume’s critical views on theism, deism, and atheism with Suzanne’s neurotic circle, another fictional form of circulation, Cléro believes that Diderot’s in *The Nun* reaches the apex of fiction. Far from being thetic, the nun’s tales are produced outside an assertive discourse and point Suzanne to the deliberate construction of hidden shelters from where an innocent kind of truth could emerge. Diderot creates deeper and deeper layers of fictional elements in the structure of his text, elements which have the effect to distance it from an unlikely entity. Besides, Croismare is believed to be the sole reader of her letters, leaving other readers in the uncomfortable position of feeling interlopers. There is thus no test for true events, as nothing can be plainly asserted in religion, truth melting in the circular movement of multiple and fictional truths. The hyperbolic hubris that emerges from Suzanne’s letters, through the ever-complicated system of fictional layers of truths, gives expression to a specific interpretation of religion. Diderot succeeded in overcoming Hume’s experiential sensualism in that he could deconstruct the criteria implemented in the acceptance or rejection of fictions. Besides, truth is not ontologized in fictions, since, as Cléro argues, effects of truth are just necessary to maintain fiction in a state of veracity, as with the struggle of neurotic and psychotic characters depicted in *The Nun*. The whirling neurotic fits of passion place religion beyond the scope for the need of an ontological truth. Diderot also manages to postpone the search for a definite truth since assessment then continues to evolve beyond a stabilized and all-encompassing value like utility. Diderot’s semi or three-fourths openings lead to a kind of knowledge which does not pretend to disclose truth. Cléro concludes that even if both fictions and utilitarianism are mere constructions, it would be wrong to see in utility the essence of fiction. Likewise, fictions could be subsumed under the category of concepts in the empirical sciences, to recall Van Fraassen’s interpretation, but then the clear distinction between real and fictitious en-

tities ceases to be valid.

Bentham also declared that fallacies were not all necessarily sophistic judgments and that fictions precisely need to be disconnected from a truth relation. Vaihinger described how a philosophy based on “as if” pervades Kant’s critique of pure reason, implying fictions without any dogmatic attitude. Concepts are developed throughout the book without exterior justification other than *sensus communis*. Before the tribunal of reason, such fictions were, however, not limited to the proper use of reason itself. Cléro believes fictions cannot be limited, like the use of reason, since, unlike concepts, they ignore the principle of the excluded middle. A fiction can be a quantity and an absence of quantity. A fiction is also nurtured by exaggeration or hubris, as noted by MarmonTEL. It is also self-evading. Cléro would be content to see some structuring features within fictions according to the Humean principle of “to be or ought to be.” Is there any intrinsic distinction between a real and a fictive entity or is this just posited by a subject? Cléro would also like to see if fictions do indeed belong to a world, or if worlds are completely alien to them. The question of limits seems inconsistent since a genuine fiction is always self-dissolving, and must have a birth and a disappearing phase both. Descartes’ evil genius will come up fictitiously but with just enough time to allow one to presuppose a *res cogitans*. Fictions are reversible, so there is never a need for maintaining the negation of the negation, or the resolution of negative effects through dissolution and conservation. A fiction is reversible but not dialectical. In mathematics, Platonism decrees the existence of objects out of sheer nominalism. From many different signified types of circle, for instance, we infer the existence of an object, a circle, an absurdity if not a fiction. Fiction penetrates the deepest “realist” texts in mathematics. The multiplication of fiction in mathematical discourse led H. Field to assimilate concepts with objects in a kind of fictionalism destructive for a theory of fiction. It is easy to skeptically glide on the meaning of fiction and endow the absence of any real object with a nominalist or so to say fictionalist existence. Shall we stop thinking that we listen to or read the same thing because intersubjectivity is a mere fiction?

Cléro also warns that even real entities are subject to the same decidable existence as fictions. In Burgess and Rosen’s book, *A Subject With No Object*, a proposition could be interpreted hermeneutically, that is, with the intention to disclose a hidden sense, or revolutionarily,

namely, with the aim of reconstructing and substituting a new meaning for the deconstructed one. In the latter approach, new elements of meaning emerge to release novelty and initiate a new discourse. Whether revolutionary or just hermeneutical truth, Cléro believes that behind any perception of truth there can only be some prescriptive attitude deriding the simple idea of a descriptive stance. With prescription, a fiction ceases to be true, or believed to be true, since it simply has to be accepted. Acceptance strikes in the middle of contradictory truths and errors giving expression to a *status quo* within the fiction. Kant would elaborate such an ultimate accepted fiction, the synthetic unity of apperception to ascertain all his theoretical concepts and judgments. The “I think” is posited assertively, or apodictically, as the *sine qua non* condition of knowledge. The Kantian decision to posit the “I” as a fictitious core of all his theoretical considerations sounds like an ought-to-be rather than a descriptive fact. However, argues Cléro, substantive Being can be uncovered and release some deontological aspects. Glimpses of decision would inhabit the most profound layers of fictitious beings. Cléro also asserts that Bentham’s reflections on fiction are always derived from a single world. For instance, if acceleration is inherent to movement, it does not belong to another world with completely different laws. Fictions thus can refer to the real entity or to the second-order fiction to which it is related, something that is impossible in the opposite direction, at least in some scientific domains. Literature would, however, allow some kind of interpenetration, pointing to a sort of deregulation unseen elsewhere. In *Madame Bovary*, Flaubert creates a world with its own reality, one completely alien to external reality. The fictitious effects do not emerge from a so-called genuine external world. Fiction in literature creates a set of different worlds thanks to the interplay of signs evolving sometimes in empty spaces. The rules in play emerge from the frame of the text itself and are never depleted, as new possible rules, new world conceptions appear in the course of time and bring about a new reading of the text. For instance, Kepler’s laws of 1615 changed the reading of Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*, which had been published ten years previously. The relation between fictitious and real entities itself is thus submitted to change; secondly, within a set of fictitious entities, change is perceptible according to the ability to evoke new worlds, or to presuppose possible worlds, or simply by being a series of substantive entities. If fictions are just possible interconnected worlds,

these can be either actualized or possible, as P. McCormick once theorized. The possibilist theory explains that possible worlds have a certain reality competing with actual worlds. The actualist theorists believe that fictitious worlds can only be accounted for within reality, of which they are imaginative modifications based on reorganized characteristics. In fact literature, through the fictitious power of language, cannot be opposed to a so-called sensory reality. Reality is derived from the function of language. Reality pertains to the essence of language, as words, sentences and propositions are more inclined to circumscribe reality. It remains to ascertain how the use of words can do this.

Cléro argues from a logicist stance, that for a fiction to produce real effects, it has to be expressed with facts. A sentence like “*Sherlock Holmes lives in Baker Street, London*” inserts the reader into a realist interpretation of the fact. Here, fiction is highly efficient as all notions of authorship, the awareness of characters set in a literary world, vanish to leave the reader in a state of simple strong belief in a real fact. The act of literary creation is bracketed, leaving the object alone to produce a kind of truth which has nothing to do with a truth derived from a constructed world. The “belief” effect diffuses over the other characters, when, for instance, it is said that “*Sherlock Holmes had a cup of tea with Gladstone*”; whereas the inverse would produce a counter-effect of deep skepticism, despite the same linguistic meaning. Fiction can tell more than reality itself. The infinite worlds of fiction can overcome the strained perception of infinity as it is experienced in reality, and a character may thus appear to be more profound than a real individual. Empirical interferences, edges, cuttings, ruptures, antinomies, like death and life, are somewhat dissolved in the frame of fiction or grow less perceptible. Otherness becomes the hinge on which language thrives, as it nurtures itself on the unsayable. Cléro believes that reality cannot be opposed to fiction. With the possible worlds of literature, it becomes obvious that reality is penetrated by fiction, and vice versa. Fictional characters are commensurate with our perceptions, sensations, and memories. Cléro argues that Lubomir Doležal was wrong in stating that literary worlds were incomplete, lacking homogeneity, and merely textual fabrications. Any signifying structure like a text is bound to have some effects outside its own framework, affecting what we call reality.

Cléro also argues against Mark Eli Kalderon (*Moral Fictionalism*) that reality itself does not have to be invested with a belief or a judgment

to produce effects. Man behaves as if reality existed without any superposition of beliefs. Men and women have eternal being, they are separated not out of conviction or belief, but on the principle of acceptance. Some fictions just require acceptance to be sensed as real. Calderon distinguishes between a factual perception of language, namely, words that would be simply representational, and a non-factualist approach, which would imply that words do not express facts at all, something that Cléro believes to be a new form of fictionalism. But here again, belief is called forth, as a voluntary act. One can remove all credence in a constructed object while behaving as if it had some links with a real object. The role of acceptance, so to say, is to eliminate the need for belief (hermeneutic fictionalism). In doing so, fictionalism would be the hypocritical attitude of those who refuse to confuse acceptance with belief, a lack of sincerity or, to be less harsh, a Lacanian quasi-assertion. Between pretending to give existence, or believing in the representational existence of an object, and refraining from taking a position on acceptance there are several forms of fictionalism depending on the axiological intention of the creator. However, Cléro, citing Lacan, believes that knowledge is never linked to the critical finding of truth. A fiction is thus always a reconstruction, whether limited or not, proliferating, more *being* than *having-to-be*, more possible plural worlds than substantive entities. Cléro concludes that real entities and fictions are entangled, creating sequential tensions between each other, and having immediately disruptive effects on truth and reality.

Cléro would also like to know if a theory of fiction would be useful for a new understanding of perception. A theatrical stage would allow one to ask what the spectator sees on a stage, and what the actor receives from this perception. Cléro believes that a theatrical stage has an oval form constituting one focus while the other would be the spectator himself. These express a tension, one focal point being present as long as the other is also perceived as an absence. Their interdependency does not however constitute, claims Cléro, a subject/object relation, as the objects on stage are rather signs than “objects.” The characters’ bodies are also signs evolving in a definite composition. Cléro argues that a subject/object perception is itself a mere fiction. He would replace such a relation with a fictitious/real entity one. Berkeley had already foreseen the power of language to build transcendent beings across the perceptual series given to the human eye. Language, as a symbolic activity, per-

forms perception beyond the subject/object relation. The illusion of transcendence and autonomy ascribed to objects originates in the symbolic power of language and its effects on reality. On stage, this power is very effective, claims Cléro. The question is not one of a superior degree of reality but of the deliberate and conscious use of symbolic language. The symbolic structure of language is thus much deeper and more meaningful than the fictitious subject/object relation. Perception, understood as a fiction/real tension, finds support in Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*, an ontological stance that puts perception at the core level of signifiers, of which the corresponding affects would stand for the signified. A grammar of affects can be read in the more fundamental percepts. On stage, signs are more vivid, to the point of giving expression to a sort of *Stimmung*. In Merleau-Ponty's text about the cruelty of World War II, the stage is set by a German soldier, in agony, lying over steel barriers, with his blond hair flowing in the wind, begging to be killed. The affect of horror is perceptual. Cléro asserts that all words are abstractions in a way, and do not belong to the "I" or to the "object" but to a "we." The word's perceptual existence makes it possible to use it for a shaping of reality or, as Cléro calls it, an explosive movement of reality. Symbolic language is interpreted in Cléro's words as a constructive power as well as a separating force having effects on reality. On stage, the actor has the power to affect reality and to stir emotions in the audience. He makes us see things that the naked eye could not perceive. This requires the stage to have boundaries, as a microscope or a telescope would to make us see the invisible. This delimitation seems to work on the principle of fiction. The edge delimiting the outside is a threshold where imagination plays with perception, as Descartes himself pointed out. Cléro also uses the metaphor of pictorial perspective. In the perception of a painting the rules of perspective seem to change: we do not see the trees' vertical trunks fusing in the horizon into a single point as we do the borders of roads or river banks. In a painting, the rules of perspective are used to separate remarkable objects and give them autonomy and reciprocity. Cléro argues that in such a setting the object's edges seem to be more real than the center with which they are placed in an idealized relation. This power of reversal applies in the relation between fiction and reality, since what is at stake are not substances but modes of being producing effects of reality or fiction. Cléro believes that the internal and external dialectic perceived in a painting

describes a movement of fiction with effects of reality. All the vertical and horizontal lines, as well as the internal dimensions of the painting, are in interplay for the perceiving eye which selects a certain interpretation, deciding which line is more real, and which more fictitious. Like language, these lines, oblique or vertical, are cuttings and selective processes to make us see a certain kind of reality which reality itself would not present. Cléro warns that this process aims not only at depicting and representing the real world but also at establishing a return to reality itself. The idea of a horizon involving mathematical points ascribed to definite objects is fictitious. A new horizon can be attributed to any object by simply moving forward. The same applies for any kind of line supposed to represent a sensory reality. The sensory objects from which lines are said to originate disappear and call forth new ones as they move.

Cléro asserts that the reciprocal relation between fiction and reality is like that of a spiral. Reality appears through a fiction precisely when an infringement of the rules of reality occurs. Reality never appears as it is but rather on a de-centered point of view. Paradoxically enough, perceptual reality appears to be more real when it is distorted by fiction in a spiral movement. The violation of rules will have the effect of producing an unseen reality without having to conform to reality. The affective evaluation of reality does not impede the production of a super-reality which is not less real for all that. Based on dissociation and dismantlement, fictions do not require the imitation of forms, but rather depend on violent disjunctions having a creative effect. Theater, as well as literature, is not less real or more fictitious than what happens in everyday life. It is rather what works as real and what is said to be fictitious that delineate a new perception of reality through fiction, which is cast in a new light. Cléro, on the basis of a comparison of the mind with the theatrical stage, develops an interpretation of the logos of feeling and impressions that are both introjections and projections. Of course, such a mind becomes an illusion when it is placed on the axis of real and fictitious entities.

Cléro now wishes to articulate perception with affectivity within his reflections on fiction. Affectivity, perhaps too evanescent, as passion was for Bentham, because of its masking of the real and the utilitarian play of pleasure and pain, has to be analyzed outside of this reductive conception. The essential relation that fictions have with affects can

be seen in Michel Henry's critique of a structuralist view of the passions. Henry believes that a sentiment, a feeling, is not only a "structure" but also bears a tonality, a tone, or *Stimmung*, which is often neglected in the structuralist approach. Henry says that no structure ever quite coincides with what is being felt. Can philosophy really grasp this quality of what is being felt? Henry argues that the feeling itself is not the situation where and through which it arises. Neither is feeling the seizure of a situation. A feeling is completely disconnected from the set of relations that otherness manifests. Feelings have a special flavor which is perceptible without any outside context or relations. Jealousy, love evoke something without the persons who would inspire them. We tend to relate the context to the feeling itself in necessary terms. In his critique of Sartre's confusion of a feeling of failure with its context, Henry states that it is not only the context that is irreducible to the feeling, but the tonality of the feeling itself. A logic of modality thus imposes itself on a simple logic of the context of communication, or a logic of structures. Cléro warns us against a mere linguistic analysis which would end in circularity (one word would be used to account for another and vice versa) preventing any structure from emerging logically. If some terms are not implemented logically, and not merely linguistically, it is quite impossible to create the intended structure. To this principle of limitism, Cléro adds the need to maintain necessary disjunctions between the elements of the structures: subject, object, causes... Cléro believes that such relations are transcendental, which is not necessarily sufficient to apply directly to the field of affectivity. Ricoeur, Sartre, Heidegger, Scheler all treated the question of affectivity as transcendental. Henry, against this transcendental approach, would take into account something that is irreducible to transcendental schemes and which never creates or discovers feelings. The tone or flavor of feelings is the focus of Henry's critique. For him, hatred has no object, it is objectless. On the other hand, Scheler would see in feelings special objects endowed with values or affective qualities and sentiments themselves as specific perceptions. Affective perception, says Scheler, is intentional. Affectivity is not a disorder and has its own structure, which is different from that of perception or imagination. Perhaps a sentiment as a value must be seized (*fordert*) as Scheler argues. Is this a seizing of "hatred" from a behavior or from a person related to the very hatred I am experiencing? To what extent can we assert that the "I" is implied affectively in the

seizing of what stirs hatred? Sentiments tend to be without objects. Pain is comprehensible without an object. Is there an essence of pain perceptible and seized without an intention? Henry criticizes the Schelerian welding of the perception of hatred in its essence and the being affected by this perception itself, as a mould consciousness more presupposed than observed. If the sentiment is ascribable to the feeling person and not to its source, it becomes a cognitive act meant to be true or false. If not, it would be a mere fact without any justification. In the act of seizing, Cléro believes that a feeling is not a representation. But it is not necessarily real when it is merely incipient and taking form in given circumstances. If it is seen as a being opposed to its should-be or ought-to-be, then the question of truth is posed in the vicinity of reality as a valuation, which restores the necessity of a subject. Henry seems to disrupt this regressive circle by assuming that affects have a power of self-revelation without the need for a truth-valuation. For him, there are no false pleasures or false feelings as these describe a bad understanding of their surrounding circumstances. It could also be that our affects were poorly identified. Henry's conception of truth regarding affects reduces to an *index sui*, a *pointing to*, discarding the idea of error. For Henry, a feeling can never be the feeling of something else. Cléro retains from Henry's critique his insightful attempt to avoid mixing a logic of affects with the logic of representations of his antecedents. Henry's isolation of tonality from any dimension of seizing or grasping seems less obvious for Cléro. This exclusion needs another perspective to criticize the synthetic links between tonality, *Stimmung*, structure and their seizing.

It is true that an act of judgment is generally separated from its affective counterpart, as Husserl had earlier claimed. The act of knowledge must seize the purity of the essence without the intervention of affects. But Henry believes that conceptual essences are not less arbitrary than affective ones. For him, any act of understanding is affective but it is not an *a priori* synthetic act between ideas and affects, echoing the Kantian difficulty of producing a schematic representation of pleasure on the model of the other faculties of representation. Henry *identifies* the affective tonality with the act of presentification itself in judgment. Every act of understanding is affective and every affection is an understanding. Affective tonalities constitute the reality of the acts of representation (imagination, perception, intellection....) and shape their modalities. Affectivity becomes then more fundamental than representa-

tion. Henry's rejection of all kinds of articulations (like the wide separation between joy and pain) with transcendental acts is questionable for Cléro. Another difficulty arises when the sentiment is the same, or self-identical, whatever the circumstances around it. How to think then about the differences among feelings? Seen as positive signs, and not linguistic differentiating ones, affects are self-differentiating, as joy is irreducible to pain. An affect, unlike a linguistic sign, is plainly meaningful. There is no system of feelings, and an affect is understandable in its mere appearance and not in its differences from other feelings. A difference is never being felt, it can only be represented. In addition, Henry argues that the objectification of an affect through the work of consciousness, when it attempts to put it in a frame of representation, is impossible. This troublesome mixture of cognition and affectivity indeed creates another real feeling.

Cléro criticizes this kind of discontinuous presentation of feelings by a debilitating representational consciousness and would wish to rehabilitate the work of difference among affects. In fact, if a sentiment is only what is felt, there is no space for intermediate or transitional feelings perceived in the difference between "feeling oneself falling in love" and "feeling oneself in love." The idea of becoming is then completely evaded by such a Zenonian atomic juxtaposition of feelings. This leads Cléro to a new interrogation: what is the absolute character of a positive tonality? Affectivity would not be the manifestation of something but its own self-disclosure. Indeed, Henry believes that the feeling being felt demonstrates another idea, the impossibility for the Self to remove itself from itself. Affectivity is both passivity and activity. It is both suffering and the burst of suffering and the difference between the two is not an opposition but an act of identification that the self cannot escape. Lastly, because the affect always escapes representation, it is never unreal. Will such a sentiment be unreal when for instance it is lived in the mode of "we"? Sartre showed that a common feeling seems to be less real than one experienced individually. But are these "we" affects so very unreal? It is time for Cléro to return to the rehabilitation of the capacity of seizing an affect in the degree of its tonality, a dialectic already at work in Scheler's writings. Michel Henry's reduction of affectivity to tonality becomes problematic when analysis or synthesis is implemented. Cléro prefers a dynamic conception of affectivity, bearing in mind all the forces in presence. A dynamic stance would overcome the representa-

tional features often encountered in a reflection on the psyche. It would have the advantage of presenting the mind as a dynamic space (and not a *res extensa*), and of allowing one to ponder affects as both fictitious and illusory.

Cléro believes that Henry prepared the way for an assimilation of affectivity to a high-degree fiction. Henry also showed that an affect is not real and true like a judgment. It depends on circumstances, is absolute and insists on its own existence. It is a relation of the subject to it self, and being absolute it does not function like the signs of language. The synthetic and analytic approach of affectivity can be replaced by the use of fiction itself, which would situate contradictory affects and their opposite relations in a more suitable locus. Feelings, although sometimes opposed to each other, have common features which are measurable to a degree. Common features are arrived at through a fictional approach to affects. This time, affects are not ontologized when they are considered as fictions. They become practical and are subject to deeper analysis thanks to the impossible ideas that they evoke. Cléro's deontological stance aims to reduce their contingent and empirical aspect. Henry himself attempted to differentiate feelings from affects, the former being rooted into the latter. But then the objective part of the feeling is eliminated and the self just feels itself reflexively. Affectivity would be the source of paralogism, since we are not sure if it is the same self that is affected. Besides, subjectivity is not concerned with the same pattern for every sentiment. To establish the identity of the self, as a substance, is a fiction in its own right. Affective experiences are turned into "affectivity," a substantive fiction able to maintain and create the existence of contradictory affects. Cléro questions this method of subsuming many diverse affective experiences under the same linguistic noun, for then the question of how such affects arise becomes pointless. A singular affect is swallowed by the self confronting itself. Cléro engages in a discussion about linguistic reality and existential reality. Unreality, when it is experienced in a feeling or a sentiment, can be very real. Unreality is not linked to fiction, and reality itself can be a matter of fiction. A real feeling of love for a woman can be treated in the mode of fiction, that is, by the use of language. Besides, Henry, says Cléro, uses affectivity to create the category of "possibility" of affects and their ontological existence. With affectivity, every affect becomes relative and absolute, singular and universal. Deprived of its eventual character, a "bad" feeling

can be considered in its deepest forms as a manifestation of Joy, being itself the essence of eventality. With "sympathy," Cléro succeeds in reducing the immense imagined space of possible experiences of affects into a more Leibnizian one where connectedness subsumes absolute-ness. The interconnected affects are now a useful fiction. Any affective situation is thus a comprehensive act grasping many different stand-points, while others are abandoned.

Cléro believes that a dynamic approach to affects could be more productive than a merely phenomenological one. This requires a sort of schematism to be applied to affectivity. How does the logic of affect corroborate the logic of situations? Schematism aims at resolving a problem: how do tones, *Stimmungen*, correlate with the structures in which they appear? The identity and the unity of a subject being unreal, how does the subject relate (if it is the same) to its context? Schematism does not aim at building a system of fixed and non-temporal essences of affects, as in a linguistic code of signifiers. Affects have their own logic, which is not linguistic, although we need contingent events and thus another logic to grasp them. Cléro's schematism is a hidden art based on different faculties, aiming at quantifying the affect, delimiting it, at seeing its various relations and modalities. Hence the question of space becomes utterly crucial in a theory of fiction, as space is used to identify types of psychism. A topical approach to affects also demonstrates that any exteriority is purely fictional, as in the transcendental relation between a fictitious entity and a real one. Kant explained that *Verstand*, or the understanding, does not by itself apply rules of judgment in a given situation. For that, we need an act of judgment, which is not "ruled" but intuited in a given situation. The accuracy of judgment is based on *a priori* links which allow for a conceptual approach to an intuitive context. Cléro claims that we can likewise find some kind of adequacy between a singular affect and its context, a conformity which is not a representation. The seizing of a rule is carried out without any prior rule, and accuracy emerges simultaneously in the activity of judgment.

Cléro also believes that schematism also makes it possible to understand the relation between tonality and inner sense, or temporality. Any affect has its own temporal bearing: love, for instance, would be eternal. But does this really mean that love is "eternal" in its essence? According to Henry, affects being absolute, they determine other attributes like time. Cléro would concede that feelings belong to existence as

well as being rooted in the radical and immanent sphere of affects. Language thus cannot account for all the affects, not being reducible to them, although affects themselves have their own language, which, for Henry, is “feeling” itself. It seems, according to Husserl, that the logic of affectivity is a logic of modality, which itself implies probabilities, as for instance when joy succeeds to pain. Cléro believes that a fictional approach to affects allows for a better grasp of their intensity and orientation. A dynamic approach also entails a conception of truth which is not static, but based on successive bursts of illusory truths, constituting points of reference for further research. The intimate relationship between affectivity and language would also be capable of locating affects in the structure of language beyond the mere individual’s own psychism and use of words. Affects are also intersubjective in essence and language produces affects within itself. Cléro is not content with Henry’s salient *Stimmungen* in his attempt to theorize affects. He would rather focus on “affective experience” to be able to analyze their differential aspects, and not merely the substantive forms representing fallacious fictions. Singularity should be the new focus for such an enterprise oriented toward the understanding of their historicity.

Cléro would also concur with Dessanti’s opinion that mathematics has to do with experience in general and especially experience in thought. Indeed, experience always entails a kind of exteriority whereby thought or discourse is confronted to something heterogeneous. The thing experienced is also believed to be returning or introjected into the mind. Cléro speaks of a specular effect when our acts of judgment are reflected as objects in our mind. These are not external things but just the mirroring of our own acts. Thus, it is important to know whether *mathemata* could be just *ficta*, that is, fictional objects fabricated with a view to understanding a problem. Does a mathematician feign perceiving them as true objects? Cléro asserts that it is easy to see in the demonstration of Pythagoras’ theorem that a right triangle is presupposed and given ontological existence. The generalization and universalization of one singular object lead to its transcendence. Such an object would be introjected into the mind and then projected outside. Such a process would be interpreted as making an experiment. Cléro also claims that Pascal’s calculus of expectations is based on the infringement of a rule which allows for the appearance of new objects. Ethical values ensure a new ruling which gives transcendence to the experienced objects outside

the scope of any mathematical consideration. In Pascal's example, it is justice itself which gives its reason to the mathematical object. Still, such a value has to vanish quickly so that an impression of rational calculus remains as the main result. Cléro asserts that one aspect of fiction relates to its reversibility and to the effect of the emergence of the "mathematical" object. The individual also poses himself as a subject who can create effective rules in a new world deemed to be "impossible." Incongruous *mathemata*, like Borromean rings, can give expression to productive effects if they are believed to be sufficiently consistent. Impossibility dovetails with possibility. The effect of reality is nurtured by the dovetailing of incongruity with congruity. But what is really experienced? Is a mathematical object really resisting the mind in thought, is it really striving toward its autonomous objectivity, or is this separateness and resistance just fictional? Cléro believes that the materiality of the object is more often than not obtained through deeper moral procedures like command, authority, agreement. Will and consent determine the final calculus against the view that the latter could be understood as a retrieval of some remembered truth. The substitution of the rule by the winner in Pascal's game will make consent emerge as the best solution. Cléro believes that such mathematical solutions are only grasped temporarily, so as to serve the purposes of demonstration. Field was therefore right when he asserted that *mathemata are just ficta*, the mere expression of a  *fingere*  by the mathematician. The question remains: why does the mind pose an object or a being through which it can supersede itself? Is it not strange that the mind will attempt to know and study an object which it alone created?

Cléro warns us against any form of subjectivism as mathematics is above all noncommittal, namely, neither subjective nor objective, as proof and refutation are intersubjective. Still, mathematical demonstration is also dependent on the use of language with the latter's own affective features. Demonstration has to retain the unavoidable traces of the signified/signifying which have some bearing on the process of demonstration, creating a new system of comprehension, one calling for intersubjective community. Mathematical objects are thus not simply ascribable to internal mental experience, but also result from shared affects and passions, observable in structured spirals. The illusion of given data, epitomized in Van Fraassen's *Scientific Image*, becomes the focus of Cléro's interrogation about the nature of experiment: it is just a piece of

argumentative discourse aiming at confirming a judgment without any connection to what the thing really is. When physicists use mathematical language, they do not reach any teleological truth at the end of their experiments but are just encoding their observations in written language. For instance, Gauss was able to demonstrate that the fictitious theory “*In a triangle, the sum of three angles equals that of two right angles*” was deduced from a false conception of pure and normative geometry, and that such a sum could be superior or inferior to  $180^\circ$ . Empirical measures defy the notion of purity that geometers join to the idea of truth. Experiments, says Cléro, are just “in” thought, and mathematics is not so different from literary creation since neither in fact enjoys the presence of an external real world. There is a free circulation between affectivity, passion, imagination and the power of logic.

Cléro insists on the fact that experience never originates in absolute pure data, but is rather fashioned in the way that theory is. Hugo’s vision of the surface of the moon is dictated by his own comprehension of what he can see. As Cléro asserts, Hugo started to see what he understood he was seeing. Experience is a selection of parameters, based on loose concepts which give an impression of truths. Some formulas are indeed impossible to translate into real experience, like the mathematical correspondence of the velocity of a body in free fall with the surface of a triangle. The surface of the triangle is supposed to account for the real fall of the body but it is imaginary. The imagination of a formula which would take into account every single point of the trajectory of a fall is just fictional and does not correspond to an experience in reality. A few observed positions are held as representing a thoroughly imagined formal movement. Even in physics, despite its material pretence, objects do not really account for the things they are aiming at. The discourse of physics aims at a superstructure, which itself prevents any kind of contact with the things studied. The sum of inner angles in a triangle will never equal exactly that of two right angles. In mathematics, objects are constructed so that they correspond to a theory. Cléro believes in his perspective of building a theory of fictions, that the more the constructed objects are kept at a distance from their material counterpart, the more they are embedded in a structure whose fictitious character becomes obvious. Besides, when the degree of sophistication becomes high, objects tend to manifest a better adequation to any experiment to which they would be submitted. The mathematician, and likewise the physicist, is

able to create effects of necessity without having to verify how things really work. Furthermore, a mathematician can start to build an impossible object which intuition would reject quite abruptly. How does intelligence succeed in explaining mathematically what it cannot conceive with the the human mind alone? It seems that the creation of a physical or mathematical law opens up a new field for the intelligence, one which it could not penetrate beforehand. Such laws, however, are applicable in determined conditions and never report the other side of the object being treated. The impression of regularity or stability is supported just by the transitivity of belief across things said to be close in appearance.

In Descartes' *Philosophical Principles of Nature*, physical laws are never put in equations, because their applicability is just confined to singular moments. Besides, such laws would be valid only if there were empty spaces as well as full ones, a conception rejected by Descartes' *res extensa*. Cléro claims that Descartes' laws based on the absence of void cannot be verified in reality. Moving and a plenum, Descartes' conception of matter also entails its constant fragmentation, while barring the emergence of empty spaces. Cléro's critique of the Cartesian conception of space goes so far as to consider it as a fabulous tale. Instead of being explained by laws, Descartes would lay out his whirls in the middle of his theory as a cornerstone destined to justify the coherence of all his physical considerations. As matter is constantly moving in a sort of whirling movement, fragmentation is bound to operate without leaving any empty space, that is, in perfect adequate cutting, contradicting the idea of constant movement itself. The Cartesian fantasy leaves no doubt, Cléro believes, as to the fictional imposition of geometry onto phenomenal reality. The French philosopher resorts to all kinds of objects, balls, to account for the necessary gaps he invented to support the theory of simple moving matter. Cléro believes that a fiction which is too inflated or not limited becomes an object of delirium. Descartes' need for connecting bodies without interstitial space brings him into the world of fantasy. He indeed invents some imaginary mathematics which will justify his conception of space. His filling of interstices is carried out by fictitious objects to maintain the coherence of his whole theory. When a mathematical theory fails to explain some isolated phenomenon, a "new" world is created made of *ficta*, which, despite being erroneous, can give rise to truths. But science proves to be something else than a mere representation of things or an adequation to things. Sci-

ence builds on fictional substitutions, a logic which rejects the necessity of saying the truth about reality. The use of a metaphorical discourse within scientific discourse seems to overlap with the logical elements and creates a new order of discourse. Cléro believes that Descartes' physics is not without such a metaphorical use of images. Fiction also possesses an argumentative function that helps with the refutation of a thesis more than with getting knowledge from it. Imagination, says Cléro, can start deconstructing an idea into several parameters, which will be used in a new configuration. He assimilates fictions to "thought experiments," a procedure aimed at surveying every single element encountered in a given situation (as in ethics) in order to focus on the main ones. When this is repeated by several individuals, a center of gravity is reached, allowing for consent among scientists. However, it seems that any law (even mathematical ones) barely touches the complex structure of matter, and does not say so much about reality. Physicists speak to physicists outside the range of matter and Cléro demonstrates that a law inevitably returns to the realm of thinghood despite its pretensions to rule over things. The process of abstracting from laws is itself submitted to the very laws it is trying to explain. Besides, such laws have to take into account the relativity of their parameters as sub-laws, as in Heisenberg's physics. The physics of effects will not, however, describe the totality of natural phenomena, but only deliver regional or fragmentary explanations, which some mathematicians, like Villani, will attempt to gather into a single theory. The links between completely alien ontological regions would be hard to find were it not for the strong power of the imagination, defying a nature which never gives itself out. Nature is not made up of regular movements but is expressed by a community of scientists through the construction of problems disconnected from "experiences." Most of the time, what we could not conceive as possible in reality becomes feasible in mathematics. Fictionalism helps build in imagination the equivalent of our sensations in symbolic terms, but with no representational warrant. The gap between the instrument and the object of investigation is also illusory, as the former is also part of the final result.

Cléro sees in Descartes and Pascal perfect examples of the adaptation of fiction to metaphysics. Fiction has to be introduced and retrieved at the right time so that it does not create problems. Descartes' implementation of a deceitful God or of an evil genius must be instantaneous

and have the capacity to overcome a true difficulty. In a given metaphysical situation, a fiction is created so that an effect is perceived for which a cause must be found. Such a fiction would be composed of a few select elements. In the fiction of the deceitful but powerful God, one single feature is hypertrophied, His omnipotence, so as to assert that, even in such a situation, where God could deceive human thought, it would be impossible to deny the being and certainty of thought despite the false beliefs created by God. The implementation of God's omnipotence is then instantaneously removed to establish the *cogito ergo sum*. Descartes acts as if the dissolution of the fiction itself is not incidental to his final conclusions. With the fiction of the evil genius, the same dissolution appears to give expression to the certainty of the thinking substance. Whatever the deceitful intentions of the evil genius, they cannot dismantle the certainty that I am thinking. But how comes it that a fiction is created and then swiftly removed to allow a definite result, losing its plausible aspect? It is still very doubtful, as Hobbes asserted, that such a cogito could be dematerialized. Besides, certainty is not foundational in that it can establish the essence of thinking. To be aware that we are thinking does not give knowledge to what is a *res cogitans*, to recall Mersenne's famous critique. The substantification of the process of thinking is based on a linguistic strategy which itself causes a new distribution of things. A thinking thing becomes problematic as we do not know if it is material or not except through the fiction of a separation from a pure *res extensa*. Hobbes spotted in Descartes' use of words a fictional and useful attitude aimed at reaching the core of things. Pascal would be more cautious about the fact that language is the focus of fiction, while Descartes believed imagination was merely the act of actualizing ideas. Pascal, argues Cléro, saw how the symbolic use of one rule can collapse into a new order of regulation. Cléro believes that the same scheme pervades Pascal's thought. Reversibility can, for instance, help in harmonizing two notions, which in the beginning were thwarting each other. As it is impossible to be fair in obeying fairness, it is feasible to be fair in obeying a coercive force. Force is feigned as the equivalent of justice. In the scheme of wagers, hence of the bet on life, Pascal describes a calculus of probable gains and losses, as if we were to live on earth forever. Pascal also makes use of fictitious dialogues whose nature is to stage experiences. The reader is not given a rhetorical demonstration but feels sympathetic to the scene described. Fiction opens a place

for the observation of determined principles. The fictitious orders produced in Pascal's fragments have profound effects of resolution. He would also create figures, not for their character, but in order to put forward a problematic situation, in which the negation of error would suffice for constructing a truth. Cléro claims that *per absurdum* reasoning is inherent to fiction.

Pascal also uses the classical French "*Il faut que*" (it is necessary that) to pin down the necessary commensurable notions of justice present in both Man and God. Cléro surveys the notion of necessity in Pascal's perception of the infinite attributes of God, of which some are more intelligible to humans. For instance, it is not necessary to understand the immensity of God's mercy, even for those who do not deserve it, as it is sufficient to enjoy it. By nature, mercy is bound to be endless while condemnation, to a much lesser degree, is bound to limit its action to the establishment of justice. Cléro's analysis, of necessity through the Pascalian *Il faut que*, goes so far as to reject God's absolute transparency, and to advance man's attempt to scrutinize His intentions. These are assumed through a fictional conception. Man is invited to assume that God has intentions, in which justice is great but always less than his mercy. *It is necessary that* stands for an induction which by the same token starts a process of reconstruction. Justice is also intimated in a series of deontological grievances. Cléro argues that the Pascalian *it is necessary that* is a mixture of theoretical necessity and deontological prescription. Human nature is thus both revealed by Holy Scripture's rules and the figure of Christ (deontological), and the rules themselves are justified only through the human condition (ontological). The deontological rule is both the act of creation of human nature and the remedy for its pains. Man is entirely free to act sinfully but it is inevitable that he should never do so. Religion is both *ratio cognoscendi* and *ratio essendi*. Cléro believes that this is a fiction, in that for religion to be acceptable, the human condition has to have some characteristics, like the existence of a miserable condition from which will arise our felicity. The condensation of both the deontological and ontological orders is achieved through the fictional effects of the locution "*It is necessary that*." For instance, a witness is all the more credible in religion as his miserable condition is salient. The listener is all more justified to believe a testimony as innocence and poverty are its stressed features. The duplication of truth maintains the fiction of a middle with its uncertainties

(or probable certainties) as it is and is not removed, as in Descartes' justification for the *res cogitans*. The Pascalian building of probable worlds eschews the difficulties of self-dissolution and gives rise to discernment in the mind between contradictory principles which have to be articulated and not opposed. Cléro believes that in biblical discourse fiction refers to the conceptual when the latter is no longer able to sustain intelligibility. Reality is more comprehensible through images. Therefore, fictions, like religious figures, are not so much extinguishable tools for the understanding of a concept but replace it to tell more about the real human condition.

In the ethical relation to fiction, Cléro would examine the ethics of care especially. After recalling that ethics suffers from a lack of conceptualization and thus requires the use of fictions, Cléro warns that, in ethics, there is a profusion of multiple and entangled principles. This led to the establishment of a poor distinction between some values based on the autonomy of the subject and others ascribed to a heteronomic pole. Care would require the use of predominant heteronomic values. The heteronomic pole lay in the shadow of the autonomy of the will (creating the great political and juridical values) and the philosophy of care, despite its new attempts, seems to follow the same path, at least on the level of political claims. Cléro begins an analysis of the notion of person on which most moral values are centered, in such a way that the Other is inevitably introduced, as in Sartre, by positing the Other before the "I." Such a focus will put an individual before other individuals, making of the person the target of multiple rights. In the ethics of care, a person will inevitably be split between an empirical self and a transcendental "I" obliging the person to act according to what one owes to oneself. The defense of the person against the individual would, in Kantian terms, justify the death penalty. The person is preserved in a fictional indictment aimed at protecting a community through the punishment of a mere individual. The notion of person is very useful to build fictional *scenari* for prospective deliberations on a body already ailing and without consciousness. Cléro asks if the fiction of person indeed masks the real truths that we can extract from an ethical problem. The use of fiction to create a deliberating mind out of a truly ailing patient also serves for implementing personal values against individual interests. Cléro asks if the Kantian unconditional duty to help the Other, based on the autonomy of the will could be reversed to the heteronomic pole, especially in

the ethics of care where the Other is likewise unconditionally called to receive attention and care by the physician. There could even be a political principle in so doing, which would escape a contractualist explanation. The foundation of society and politics is linked to the prior appearance of heteronomic care before the creation of laws. The society of reciprocal care takes precedence over the contractualist one, although, remarks Cléro, individuals are believed to have first developed interdependent and asymmetrical relations. In Worms' *Moment of Care*, care creates the subject before it is vested with a juridical garment, and equality results from the interplay of caring attitudes. In the philosophy of care, values do not originate in the autonomy of the subject but from the heteronomic pole, made of efficient cultural gestures which give rise to feelings. Care is not the expression of feelings, but they appear culturally to release a symbolic subjectivity. Cléro asks if such gestures would be more incidental than mere speech in the manner of democracy. They presuppose the absence of explanation of what is public, which democracy would not accept. The attempt to root politics in asymmetrical care seems perilous for the families in need of external development and societal concretization. Worms would reduce the essence of politics to parental care, a state of family dependency questioning the autonomy of will in politics.

Cléro also asserts that in the ethics of care, dozens of intertwined principles can be recovered, like, for instance, the donation of organs. Which ones would be more relevant? According to which principle of hierarchical organization? Is the principle of individual freedom the most important one? But any classification is bound to reflect a prior selection based on age, critical medical state, essentially based on intuition. The fiction of a human nature capable of intuiting an order in the principles used seems ridiculous for Cléro. Now, Rawls' society itself would provide for the hierarchy of principles without any justification other than its being liberal. Lastly, deliberation would be used to justify a given order of principles, but, still, who would have the right to discuss the principle of selection of principles? Principles must have some negativity within themselves to be able to be articulated with new ones. In Pierre Le Coz's article on the principle of precaution, we can find all these difficulties: for the protection of society, measures are taken to avoid risks but these actions also feed fear instead of alleviating the dangers of innovation. Collective fear is nurtured by exaggerating pre-

caution and protection. Paradoxically, the principle of precaution could hinder action. The detection of principles and their implementation require both a geometrical and refined mind, as Pascal maintained. In ethics, the refined mind based on intuition perfectly accords with the need for the search of principles directly inspired by reality. Then all kinds of logical deductions are possible.

In the definition of care, we find vulnerability and, in an oblique way, the need to recover pleasure. Care is often divided into two processes, one being curative and the other palliative. In the curative phase, the patient has to be active, while in the second phase, the sick person is simply accompanied until the end of life. Such a division is problematic and hinders the unity of care. Care should be an overall process even in the last moments of life. Is cure deliberately stopped in the last moments of palliative medication? Is suffering less obvious in the first phase of curative treatment? Therapeutic overmedication could be called palliative, a means of preventing suffering. Some aspects of the palliative, like sympathy, could be applied to the curative phase. To meet the need of a continuous process of cure, technology is used to compensate for the lack of staff. The patient is put in a discontinuous process of treatment in the curative phase, while, in the last moments of life, humanistic values take charge, establishing a kind of continuity. Cléro perceives in the curative and palliative phases the same continuity and discontinuity that characterizes the Pascalian tree of possible games. The rule can be interrupted at any time and instruct what the player must do in a given situation. The physician is put in the same place as the gambler in a discontinuous time of choices that are taken to represent continuous care. The fiction of continuous care, considered to be more ethical, should be thought in different terms, especially those of the individual's life project. Continuity stops being the contrary of discontinuity; it is interpreted as modality. In the example of a lady treated for cancer, and to whom two solutions are presented, one destined to sponsor research and society in general beyond her own treatment, the other to the benefit of the ill patient herself, Cléro explains how decision is often based on probable asymmetrical elements, namely, on the context of known things whose reality is historical. Ethics must consider the knowledge we have in a given time and context, and the use of fictions is necessary to facilitate the work of probability for the examination of future situations. Perhaps, it is through this interplay of fictitious situations that a

true subjective consciousness can arise in the individual without the burden of affectivity.

In the last chapter, Cléro attempts to survey the links between religion and fiction. Ethics seems to differ from morality and justice. An ethical situation does not involve moral responsibility, nor does it imply juridical condemnation. An ethical decision involves many different individuals in the construction of a symbolic solution, whereas morality would only call forth our innermost convictions. In ethics, rules are collective and do not necessarily refer to one's beliefs. Ethics requires a progressive construction based on a reshuffling of moral values which is not without affects. Cléro feels compelled to see in liberalism, through the works of John Stuart Mill, the artifact of a substantial self which is also very efficient in religious discourse. Liberalism did not agree with the idea of a solid self, instead proposing a compound of perceptions to account for it. It is a fiction made of myriads of other fictional elements aimed at producing social, juridical, economic effects. The person is created to feign autonomy, like the Kantian deontological subject, which has to obey a moral imperative of care deemed personal which only results from external factors. Cléro believes liberalism is clearly a fictional attempt to ascribe to one's own freedom of decision obligations that we would not have accepted in other conditions. Rules are not imposed from the outside but originate in our own power of approval. Mill, remarks Cléro, succeeds in promoting the idea of personal interests of the individual striving for life. The individual has therefore no substantial existence apart from the set of multiple relations constituting society. Hume would see in the symbolic concept of the subject a constellation of passions. Social organization is an expression of passions, like pride or humility whose expression in society enables members to imagine the subject who felt them. Values come from the external and collective manifestation of individual passions. An individual passion would inevitably end in a social expression, becoming a value, as authors like Mandeville and Adam Smith noted in their analyses of the complicity of values with vices. Passions can be twisted into the expression of simple social values. Bentham goes further into the transformations of passions, which, for him, are complete fictions. They are the products of language more than affects. With Hume, the apology of dialogue, however, seems to try to uncover in a very Socratic manner some transcendental values, where it is believed that values can only be constructed through dis-

course. Liberalism was able to set values without the additional need for belief. Values are fictions which can be useful, as, for instance, religious values which, in Hayek's opinion, despite his own agnosticism, have the beneficial effect of maintaining and protecting civilization. Cléro questions Hayek's rationalism with regard to religion, which for the latter is not true but necessary. Bentham held the same attitude and concluded that it was noxious. Religious discourse, Anglicanism, is a discourse of power for Bentham. In the Book of Common Prayer, language is a tool of power aimed to enslave the believers, especially at the level of the proposition. In his political interpretation of religion, Bentham casts light on the effects of power through biblical narrative. In *Not Paul but Jesus*, the return to a so-called primordial speech is considered fictional and subversive as it impedes a reappropriation of discourse, and a possible rationale of pleasures and pains. Paul's testimony differs from the tales of the apostles in that it is no longer visual but spiritual. Paul succeeded in regaining power and instilling it without having to resort to some demand for approval. He could speak in the place and time of Jesus Christ himself, a fiction which Cléro describes as more performative than Matthew's testimonial gospel. Cléro also concludes that symbolic discourse in religion seems to refer to another world, an effect of transcendence which is only feigned by the truths it apparently try to seize in the outside while they are just present in the reverse side of language. Hence, religion is not so much a question of background belief, just as it is not in science or physics.

Jean-Pierre Cléro's *Essai sur les fictions* is certainly a rare and precious exploration of the philosophical notion of fiction and will remain such for years and decades to come. It would be no exaggeration to claim that no one before him, for whatever historical, epistemological or ideological reasons, was able to deal with the tricky question of fiction with such depth of investigation. Cléro's achievement can be in part explained by his broad exemplary dealing with the problem, comprising extensive and expert study of literature, art (especially the perception of painting), theater, classical ethics, applied ethics, mathematics, physics, the philosophy of care and medical treatment, phenomenology, Cartesianism, and so on, from which he astonishingly recovered a variety of stable features convincing the reader of his view of the notion. First of all, Cléro demonstrates that it would be pointless to attempt primordially to draw a paradigmatic chart of fiction as the very nature of the notion

escapes any determined fixed identity. His methodological approach seems to avoid a kind of Aristotelian *Horismos*, engaging the reader in a sensitive perception of the notion in a large variety of given situations, originating from multiple fields of creation or from scientific disciplines. In the convergent reading of these situations, the reader is progressively brought into the realm of fiction without having to chart the essential features of the notion, as these are seen in different perspectives.

It is true that Bentham's fallacies appear in Cléro's query for a better understanding of fiction, but only for the purposes of raising questions which have a transdisciplinary impact. The relation to real entities seems important as it brings about all the necessary intricacies between an ontological existence of objects and their fictional existence in expectation of actualization. Secondly, Cléro articulates his investigations in a critique of the relation between truth and falsehood outside of the classical law of logical exclusion. He finally attempts to rehabilitate the symbolic functions of language in the design of fiction whatever its scientific or literary implementations. As a matter of fact, we could ascribe to fictions positive functions. First of all, they allow for the construction of worlds in literary or philosophical works whose plausible nature makes it possible to open the way for a new interrogation of the present confronted with the future. Secondly, fictions are able to capture or concretize (especially in the sciences) a state of ignorance or bewilderment as they can symbolically interpret a state of incompleteness without resorting to a truth/error parameter. Thirdly, fictions are prodigious tools for encircling reality as the latter is most of the time reluctant to reveal itself in plainly visible surfaces. Cléro also explains that man's intention is always implied in one way or another in the design of fictions. We will now insist on these three points to clarify the importance of Cléro's work.

In the relationship between reality and fiction, we are compelled to observe that the former does not compulsorily repel the latter. Cléro explains that a structure of perception is never quite transcendental, as in a pure phenomenological perspective, and can be explained by a dynamic approach, closer to our perceptual world, where reality does not *logically* exclude fiction. The notion of variance and modality seems crucial to understand this problematic relation, provided it is not understood in terms of a Husserlian eidetic research, but rather as a Kantian or Piagetian schematism. An interpretation of Cléro's investigation has led us

to believe that reality is set in a dynamic inclusion or exclusion movement with fiction, one being able to include the other and vice versa in infinite sets. Let us take an example from our everyday consumerist society. The development of technology moved us to search for better high-resolution images in view of the possibility of seeing the world in a more real or realistic way. The transformation of our screen-images from movie pictures of the 50s into UHD (ultra high-definition) images evokes the same pattern of inclusion and exclusion of reality. The image is pitched in a varying movement of concretization, which certainly does not function on the principle of the removal of fictitious or blurred features, as we have the impression that the more the image is made to match reality, the more pixels it has and the more surreal it becomes. The desire for plain reality is transformed in an impression of hyperreality, a pointillism which itself becomes disturbing and utterly fictional. It seems that the human mind is so made that it cannot bear a strong vision of real things. To a certain degree, the mind has to come back to its fictional or imaginative nature, being unable to support simple visible reality. Vico would not be surprised at such hyperreal fantastic images, as reality for him would inevitably be better expressed through imagination, a necessary return to the Fantastic Universals. Cléro's insightful considerations of fiction also describe this liminal aspect of the mind which tends to demonstrate that the need for a full actualization or the need for a comprehensive vision of reality is only claimed and not justified by a true psychological investigation of the human mind. A dynamic understanding of fiction entails a variation whereby hyperreality, a would-be anti-fictional process, thoroughly becomes the expression of hyper-fiction. Throughout his book, Cléro is intent to explain directly or indirectly such a dynamic movement observed in the relation between reality and fiction, discarding the idea of their mutual and logical exclusion. The dosage of these two substances must be carefully measured because sometimes, or so it seems, fiction is more able to produce effects of truth or reality than reality itself. And reality itself is more inclined at times to release effects of fiction. Cléro defines the elixir of fiction as a liminal situation where reality is balanced with unreality in a way that the equilibrium may be reversed, expressing a prominent reality or a salient fiction, but always on the basis of one another. Thus, an acceptable fiction would be one whose nature is to represent symbolically the real through the unreal, while never falling into a hyperreality.

The question of dosage is thus fundamental in striking a balance which, apart from casting light on a new anthropological conception of the mind, has to do with a certain vision of truth. Let us recall for the sake of greater clarity, that, in the Gospels, the resurrection of Lazarus by Jesus was an unacceptable truth because just a few days before, he was buried and his tomb was visible to a large crowd. The vision of a resuscitated body was unacceptable for the mind. Reality being unacceptable, only the fiction of resurrection understood as witchcraft could alleviate the crowd's bewilderment. Sometimes truth and reality seems to be unacceptable to the mind which by nature cannot support strong evidence.

Recalling Bentham, Cléro insists on the fact that truth itself could be a fictitious entity. The adequation of the mind to the things perceived is based on the fiction of a self-identical subject, as well as purporting the existence of a noumenal truth within the fiction of a self-existing thing. First of all, we realize that fictions should not be related or incorporate truth values, as they are themselves just instruments aimed at gaining partial and not complete truths. It would be incongruous to ask in the sciences, for instance, whether a fiction is intrinsically true or not since most of the time they are used to gain knowledge of remote areas outside their grasp. Cléro insists largely on the heuristic value of fictions and sometimes derides their underlying scientific gloss. But we should at least acknowledge that in front of man's desire to explain, if not the totality, at least a large amount of natural phenomena, fictions are necessary (beyond the already known hypotheses) to fill in the interval between the already known and the unknown. The intention to play with fictions is not bad since, *it is necessary that* (if the fiction is reasonably well balanced) it will retrieve some truth or error to change the state of a theory. If there are fictions aimed at inducing some badly intentioned behaviors, there are others which have a profound heuristic value, whether in partial error or truths, and nobody can deny the value of fictional thinking beyond the limits of hypotheses and experience. If, in literature, a fiction already holds some truths to be discovered by the reader in the background of a convergent reality, in science, on the other hand, fictions do not harbor truths within themselves. They are just nets thrown into the oceans of ignorance from which we expect some prodigious golden fish to emerge as a new object of knowledge. Here, Cléro is right, we have to distinguish between scholars who misuse fictions in order to justify a so-called theory and those scientists who recognize

their ignorance before a phenomenon and resort to fictions in a hopeless attempt to know more. If a writer already holds the truth he wants to deliver to the public, most of the time the scientist lacks the truth and has to await the time when it will appear as such for a large community of scientists. Cléro gave us lots of examples where intention is either bad or good, even in Descartes' metaphysics, where we could suppose that the French philosopher practices a bad intention in absolutely trying to convince us of the substantial existence of the *res cogitans* to a fictional evil genius. Still, in any scientific or literary case, fictions appear to be the result of a poesis, a construction of causes and effects to be felt in any compartment of the human mind, from the most fantastic operations to the most rational ones. It is up to the writer to choose from the blend of fictional and realistic signs, interconnecting, including or excluding each other, capsizing into one another, which will be in the end the most fundamental in delivering the final truth (or the one perceived as such). The practice of literary fiction hinges on the author's intention to promote a kind of truth out of the vast set of connotations and denotations he holds with the power of language. Still, his intention could be bad also, as he may use fantastic worlds, or possible ones, to derive ideas or thoughts that he perfectly knows would be unacceptable in the world of possible experiences, to recall Husserl's *Lebenswelt*. Cléro also showed that in the most scientific disciplines, whole theories were merely grasping a thin thread of fictional simplifications, which mathematicians, out of a bad intention, were not ready to discard. However, we should be careful not to misunderstand the adjective "bad." In such an attitude, the heuristic element is still present in the mind of the researcher but, whether out of pride or profound humility (Perelman's refusal of the Fields Medal is symptomatic of a certain atmosphere within the community of internationally renowned mathematicians), it is better to delay the acceptance (or better the acknowledgement) of ignorance in a kind of general consensus than express it publicly. The need for coherence or comprehensive explanation can be the product of a bad intention even if most of the time it is simply a conception of science based on a totalizing truth that explains such useful implementations of fictions to ensure the comprehensiveness of a theory. But, as Cléro remarkably explains, it is easy to build a fictional system of truths from already known, fragmentary but real elements, than to deconstruct it after some parts prove to be false. Hegel was able to depart from the poor state of a Conscious-

ness engaged in a battle with objectivity and construct a highly fictional Spirit deprived of intentional objectivity even in its self-knowledge, but never succeeded in seeing through reality, at least on the historical stage of his time. Perhaps it was high time for Marx to uncover the illusions of a fictional *Geist* and reverse the course of History on the premise, not of a *bad* consciousness, but a false one which could not see reality as dialectical materialism.

Between heuristic fictions and non-heuristic ones, the paradigm of intention seems to delimit a field of investigation that only language can capture. Cléro understands the profound nature of fiction and the features it shares with language. Even though signs are limited in a given language, their combination is unlimited, as is meaning. A fiction is a construction of meaning out of the substratum of language. A referent could be used as a signifier to point to another signified. This mirroring of signs through their Saussurian substructure is boundless and fits the nature of fiction understood as a possible world. Above all, the work of interpretation never ceases and is bound to supersede the diegetic intention of the author. A writer is considered to master his relation to the truth that his words convey. But whatever the prior intention of the writer, there is always this hermeneutic feature in language that may displace or remove such an intention in a tragic and sometimes completely alien way from the world the writer was trying to create. It is in the nature of language, despite being a closed system of signs, to open myriads of possible interpretations through the infinite network of signification. Even if the writer seems to control this network, it soon appears that his own intentions are transgressed or extended because he never quite knows where the process of signification stops. It could also be the intention of the writer to leave the reader in a state of limbo with the obligation to exercise his own powers of interpretation. Cléro explains, through Diderot's *The Nun*, how such problematic subjects as religious matters, most of the time embedded in an unresolved Manichean dilemma, are perceived differently within the substratum of language. Within the texture of language, religion becomes the object of multiple fictional and realistic upsurges of meaning which end in the neurotic psychological interpretation of the main character. Dogmatic truths melt into Suzanne's own psychological character and release other effects of reality through the letters she produces. Her letters are fictional, not in opposition to a real world, but because they manage to express indirectly

a state of affairs that a realistic style of writing would not have been able to do. Fictions can encircle reality and grasp unseen sides to reveal others. A talented writer of fictions would know how to proceed in the labyrinth of meaning and which way to follow, even very indirectly, in order to reach his final point. It is in the nature of a fiction to be revealed in a set of meaningful propositions (a Benthamite prerequisite) so as to express a cluster of notions and problems, or better, to capture a state of unclarity. It was also in the nature of the Pessoaan *fingimento* to circumvent the outburst of natural sensations in order to express in a stylized poetic manner his real feelings of pains. In the first verses of his famous *Autopsicografia*, Pessoa declared that it was almost impossible to be realistic in expressing one's profound pain except through simple feigning. His feigning or *fingimento* would not express a bad intention but the necessary extension of reality, to pastiche Clausewitz, by other means, namely, poetry. The poet would not understand his real pain or even feel it were it not by a poetical detour. The poetic and fictional use of language is necessary to enlighten a pain that becomes plainly visible only through poetic work. The incomplete reality is then subsumed under the spell of fiction, since only the latter can start the process of understanding and revealing the pain which reality, in its roughness, conceals. Pessoa's verses confirm Cléro's interpretation of fiction as the tension between reality and language. Poetic words are the necessary path to join real pain with the fictitious movement of pain. The completion of *fingimento* results in a true and realistic pain. It is extraordinary to see how both Cléro and Pessoa were able to express in different historical contexts the effective power of fiction on reality.