

Nr. 25/2020

HERMENEIA

Journal of Hermeneutics, Art Theory and Criticism

Topic:
Philosophical Research

Editura Fundației Academice AXIS
IAȘI, 2020

Advisory board

Ștefan AFLOROAEI, Prof. Dr., Al. I. Cuza University, Iasi, Romania
Sorin ALEXANDRESCU, Prof. Dr., University of Bucarest, Romania
Corneliu BILBA, Prof. Dr., Al. I. Cuza University, Iasi, Romania
Aurel CODOBAN, Prof. Dr., Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania
Denis CUNNINGHAM, General Secretary, Fédération Internationale des Professeurs de
Langues Vivantes (FIPLV)
Ioanna KUÇURADI, Prof. Dr., Maltepe University, Turkey
Roger POUIVET, Prof. Dr., Nancy 2 University, France
Constantin SĂLĂVĂSTRU, Prof. Dr., Al. I. Cuza University, Iasi, Romania
Jean-Jacques WUNENBURGER, Prof. Dr., Jean Moulin University, Lyon, France

Editor in Chief

Petru BEJAN, Prof. Dr., Al. I. Cuza University, Iasi, Romania

Editorial board

Antonela CORBAN, PhD., Al. I. Cuza University, Iasi, Romania
Florin CRÎȘMĂREANU, Researcher Dr., Al. I. Cuza University, Iasi, Romania
Florina-Rodica HARIGA, Researcher Dr., Al. I. Cuza University, Iasi, Romania
Bogdan GUGUIANU, PhD Candidate, Al. I. Cuza University, Iasi, Romania
Ciprian JELER, Researcher Dr., Al. I. Cuza University, Iasi, Romania
Cristian MOISUC, Associate Prof. Dr., Al. I. Cuza University, Iasi, Romania
Horia-Vincentiu PĂTRAȘCU, Lecturer, Polytechnic University, Bucarest, Romania
Dana ȚABREA, PhD., Al. I. Cuza University, Iasi, Romania (Deputy Editor)
Alexandru-Ioan TOFAN, Prof. Dr., Al. I. Cuza University, Iasi, Romania

Journal coverage

Hermeneia is indexed/abstracted in the following databases:

CLARIVATE ANALYTICS (Emerging Sources Citation Index)
ERIH PLUS (open access)
EBSCO (institutional access required)
PROQUEST (institutional access required)
DOAJ (open access)
GENAMICS (open access)
INDEX COPERNICUS (open access)

Journal's Address

Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, Romania
Department of Philosophy and Social-Political Sciences
Blvd. Carol I nr. 11, 700506, Iasi, Romania
Email: contact@hermeneia.ro Web: www.hermeneia.ro

Editor's Address

Axis Academic Foundation
Tel/Fax: 0232.201653
Email: faxis@uaic.ro

ISSN print: 1453-9047

ISSN online: 2069-8291

Summary

Luis Manuel A. V. BERNARDO

**Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro, un « Peintre de la modernité » au Portugal ?
Une lecture en dialogue avec Baudelaire.....**5

Cătălin Vasile BOBB

**The Place of *phronesis* in Philosophical Hermeneutics.
A Brief Overview and a Critical Question.....** 29

Jon MILLS

Toward a Theory of Myth..... 37

Nicu GAVRILUȚĂ

**The New Technologies and
Camouflaged Mythologies of Transhumanism.....** 54

Ramona ARDELEAN

**The Theoretical Legitimation of an Ethical Paradigm of Human
Consciousness Nonseparability starting from the Scientific Paradigm of
Quantum Theoretical Nonseparability.....** 60

Hanna YEMELIANENKO

**Berdyayev's Philosophy of Liberty:
Existential versus Existentialistic** 68

R.J. CARDULLO

Alexander Bakshy on Film.....78

INTERVIEW

**The Importance of Philosophy in our Days (*Dialogue between Tudor Petcu and Peter
Simons*).....** 87

BOOK REVIEW

Vlăduț-Ionuț GHIONOIU

***En quête de Dieu*.....** 93
(Jad Hatem, *La Théophanie de l'impossible*, Editions du Cygne, Paris, 2016)

Luis Manuel A. V. BERNARDO

Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro, un « Peintre de la modernité » au Portugal ? Une lecture en dialogue avec Baudelaire

Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro, a «Modernity Painter» in Portugal? A Reading in Dialogue with Baudelaire

Abstract: In this paper, we propose an interpretation of the work of the Portuguese 19th-century artist, Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro, using the essay by Charles Baudelaire, "Le peintre de la vie moderne". This reading follows a threefold purpose: to determine a set of correspondences between what the French author advocates and what Bordalo's works reveal; to reflect on their relationship to Modernity; to contribute to the ongoing discussion concerning the privileged place reserved to caricature in the modern ethos. This path leads us to introduce the idea that we believe to be innovative of a kind of laughter of reassurance, alongside the already conventional laughter of exclusion and laughter of hospitality.

Keywords: Portuguese Studies; Modernity; Philosophy of Culture; Charles Baudelaire; Humour

« (...) il a rempli volontairement une fonction que d'autres artistes dédaignent et qu'il appartenait surtout à un homme du monde de remplir. Il a cherché partout la beauté passagère, fugace, de la vie présente, le caractère de ce que le lecteur nous a permis d'appeler la *modernité*. Souvent bizarre, violent, excessif, mais toujours poétique, il a su concentrer dans ses dessins la saveur amère ou capiteuse du vin de la Vie. » (Baudelaire 1992, 384)

Dans ce qui est devenu un essai de référence pour penser l'esthétique de la modernité, « Le peintre de la vie moderne »¹, Charles Baudelaire introduit

* CHAM – Center for the Humanities / Département de philosophie de la Faculté des sciences sociales et humaines de l'Université nouvelle de Lisbonne; email: lm.bernardo@fcsb.unl.pt. Référence ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3587-7799>

**Une version en portugais de l'essentiel de ce texte a été publiée en ligne dans le dernier volume de *Revista XIX - Artes e Técnicas em Transformação*, laquelle a entretemps cessé ses activités. Nous l'avons remanié sur plusieurs points importants, notamment en ce qui concerne l'expression proposée pour rendre compte d'un troisième type de rire. Nous tenons à remercier vivement le [Museu Bordalo Pinheiro](#) d'avoir fourni les images qui illustrent l'article. Les crédits se distribuent entre le Musée pour les photos de l'auteur et des objets et la [Hemeroteca Digital de Lisboa](#) pour celles des journaux.

*** This paper had the support of CHAM (NOVA FCSH / UAc), through the strategic project sponsored by FCT (UIDB/04666/2020).

le paradoxe de cette nouvelle figure mettant en évidence les défis de sa relation artistique avec l'actualité d'un temps qui se comprend lui-même comme moderne : « Le génie de l'artiste peintre des mœurs est un génie d'une nature mixte, c'est-à-dire où il entre une bonne partie d'esprit littéraire. Observateur, flâneur, philosophe, appelez-le comme vous voudrez ; mais vous serez certainement amené, pour caractériser cet artiste, à le gratifier d'une épithète que vous ne sauriez appliquer au peintre des choses éternelles, ou du moins plus durables, des choses héroïques ou religieuses. Quelques fois il est poète ; plus souvent il se rapproche du romancier ou du moraliste ; il est le peintre de la circonstance et de tout ce qu'elle suggère d'éternel » (Baudelaire 1992, 347).

Même si Baudelaire essaye de trouver ce caractère particulier chez l'illustrateur et aquarelliste Ernest Adolphe Hyacinthe Constantin de Guys (1802-1892) dont l'œuvre est désormais passée au second plan, il voit en lui avant tout un cas exemplaire d'une nouvelle figure artistique qui est destinée à aller à l'encontre du « plaisir que nous retirons de la représentation du présent (...), non seulement à la beauté dont il peut être revêtu, mais aussi à sa qualité essentielle de présent » (Baudelaire 1992, 344). Il conclut ainsi : « Chaque pays, pour son plaisir et pour sa gloire, a possédé quelques-uns de ces hommes-là » (Baudelaire 1992, 347).

En reconnaissant que le travail du caricaturiste se manifestait de plus en plus comme un des versants de cette peinture de la modernité, Baudelaire lui dédie à plusieurs reprises sa critique d'art, que ce soit au « Salon caricatural de 1846 », dans un essai de fond sur le comique, intitulé « De l'essence du rire et généralement du comique dans les arts plastiques », publié dans *Le portefeuille* du 8 juillet 1855, ou dans le diptyque constitué par « Quelques caricaturistes français » et « Quelques caricaturistes étrangers » publié dans *Le présent*, des 1er et 15 octobre 1857 (Baudelaire, 1992). Ce dernier écrit fait référence à l'Angleterre, l'Italie, les Flandres, la Hollande et finalement l'Espagne, où « un homme singulier a ouvert dans le comique de nouveaux horizons » (Baudelaire 1992, 227). Il s'agit de Goya auquel il attribue le mérite suprême d'avoir créé « le monstrueux vraisemblable » (Baudelaire 1992, 229-230). Ainsi Baudelaire établit non seulement une relation privilégiée entre ce type d'expression artistique et le paradigme esthétique de la modernité tout comme il suppose explicitement sa dissémination autant par un effet de contagion - comme il pense la trouver en négatif entre « cette prodigieuse floraison de monstruosité » dans l'œuvre de Brueghel et sa « fameuse et historique épidémie des sorciers » (Baudelaire 1992, 234) -, que par une correspondance positive entre certains traits de la modernité et les caractéristiques spécifiques de la caricature prise dans son sens large.

En suivant cette réflexion, il nous semble légitime de soulever l'hypothèse que le Portugal a dû avoir également ses peintres de la vie

moderne et qu'il ne serait pas surprenant que l'un d'eux ait assumé les traits privilégiés du caricaturiste. L'exercice de style que nous proposons part de cette considération pour établir qu'il revient au Lisbonnais Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro (1846-1905) (fig. 1) d'être l'incarnation par excellence de cette figure, ce qui finira par expliquer un des paradoxes majeurs de son œuvre : qu'en étant totalement impliquée dans les aspects circonstanciels de son époque, elle n'a rien perdu de sa jovialité et elle garde la même éloquence critique et suscite le même rire sonore, anticipant notre présent de plus d'un siècle. José-Augusto França va même plus loin en écrivant : « Les protagonistes de la vie politique de ce début du XXIe siècle, un par un, âgés et jeunes, celui-ci, celui-là ou un autre quelconque, ont déjà été dépeints par Rafael Bordalo » (França 2005, 48).

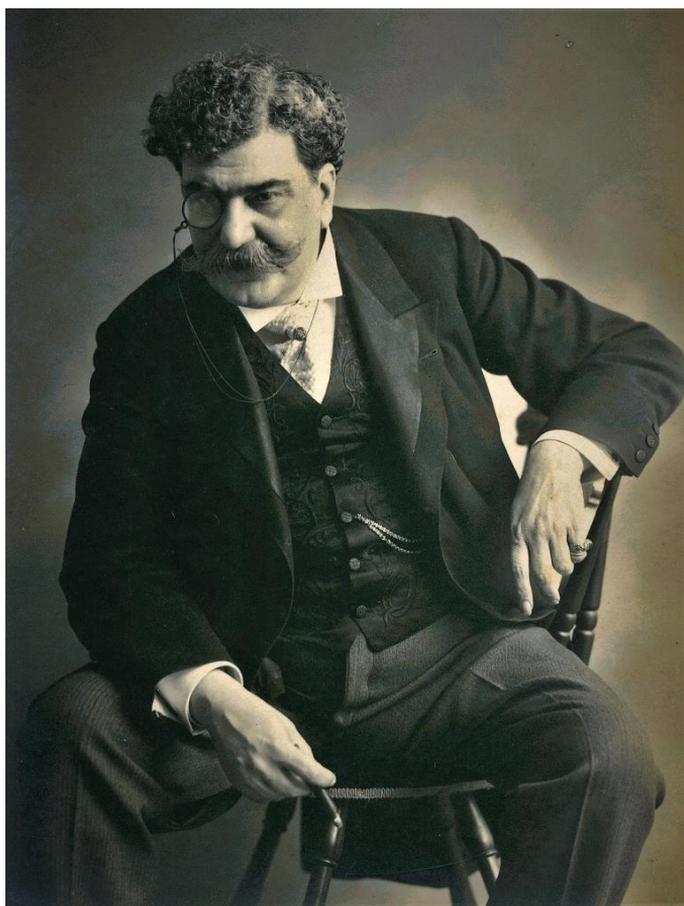


Fig. 1 - Retrato
[Voir en haute résolution \(lien\)](#)

Avec une formation dans plusieurs disciplines du dessin et quelques incursions au théâtre, Bordalo Pinheiro a été l'homme de tous les métiers, autant au Portugal, comme pendant les deux périodes où il a vécu au Brésil (1875-1879 et 1899). À la fois illustrateur, céramiste à la fabrique de faïences de Caldas da Rainha qu'il dirige artistiquement à partir de 1884², éditeur de plusieurs périodiques et albums de caricatures dans lesquels il publie l'essentiel de sa production³ et surtout caricaturiste à partir de 1870, une activité transversale à toutes les autres. Il se révèle excellent dans ses activités et obtient à chaque fois une reconnaissance méritée, de la part même de l'État français à l'occasion de l'Exposition Universelle de Paris (1889) qui lui concède le grade de chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur et lui rend hommage dans le fameux cabaret *Le chat noir*.



Fig.2 - *Gato bizantino, em forma de escarrador*
[Voir en haute résolution \(lien\)](#)

Étant l'expression même de la façon d'être artiste au XIX^{ème} siècle, il nous est décrit par son contemporain Júlio César Machado (1835-1890) avec des traits qui semblent reprendre le profil tracé par Baudelaire, dans

l'extrait qui sert d'épigraphe à cet article, oscillant entre l'agitation émotionnelle, l'urgence du métier et la qualité poétique de la pratique : « Parce que Raphael Bordallo a une imagination qui tire parti de tout, ne plaisantant pas comme on pourrait le croire, mais sérieux, extrêmement sérieux, avec l'enthousiasme d'un tempérament où les tristesses, les joies et les exaltations sont toujours subites, imprévisibles, ardentes, fébriles... » (Pinheiro 1876, 16-17).

Cette fidélité à l'art a été à l'origine de la liberté avec laquelle il a vécu ses convictions républicaines, libertaires et anticléricales, en prenant « la défense de la République même s'il n'était pas toujours du côté des républicains et admirant aussi certains monarchistes mais sans adhérer à leur cause » (Cotrim 2005, 86). En contraste avec l'universalité du geste poétique, il développe « son discours graphique sur l'idée glissante et impalpable de la portugalité, avec des tons manuélins dans les décorations et le décorativisme » (Cotrim 2005, 86) tout en gardant « une générosité certaine et loyale envers ses adversaires et une indépendance absolue face aux gouvernements qu'il a vu se succéder et en les critiquant et les ridiculisant ouvertement » (França 1976, 10). Le paradoxe était en soi tout un programme de critique, donc, comme il l'attestait dans *O António Maria*, sa revue de plus grande envergure⁴, en marquant « une opposition déclarée et franche face aux gouvernements et une opposition ouverte et systématique aux oppositions » (Pinheiro, 1879, 1).

À son tour, l'engagement obsessionnel par l'humour le rendait méticuleux dans sa volonté de montrer tous les types, « et avec la même force. Et avec la même intention (...) de vulgariser, de corriger sans offenser, de châtier sans méchanceté » (Pinheiro 1870, 1). Mais aussi de « présenter (...) à l'hilarité publique » tous les événements, « du dernier discours proféré au sein du parlement au dernier coup de couteau dans les entrailles d'Alfama », un vieux quartier populaire de Lisbonne. La seule condition étant qu'il s'agisse « de l'événement capital de la journée » et mette en évidence le « monotone concert politique, social et religieux qu'un orchestre de cinq millions d'habitants, assis en bord de mer, exécute depuis quelques siècles la même musique patriotique » (Pinheiro 1879, 2). Sans éloigner, bien sûr, le contexte international et la façon comme celui-ci affectait le pouvoir local. Il n'omettait de caricaturer personne, « hommes d'état, poètes, journalistes, dramaturges, acteurs, hommes politiques, peintres, médecins, industriels, types des salons, types des rues, institutions, etc. », longue file mise en avant dans l'*Álbum das Glórias*. Avec ce genre d'exercice pléthorique, il réalisait son ambition de contribuer de façon notable à tracer « en prose et en vers, à la plume et au fusain, la silhouette de la société portugaise dans le dernier quart du XIX^e siècle » (Pinheiro, 1879, 1), ainsi accomplissant le dessein qu'il jugeait appartenir à l'élite culturelle.

Par suite de ce portrait, l'attribution d'épithète de peintre de la vie moderne, une fois énoncée, semble frôler l'évidence : n'est-il pas manifeste que l'auteur qui « définit la caricature politique, ou l'humorisme politique au Portugal » (França 1976, 12), attentif aux événements de son époque les plus importants comme les plus infimes, soit cet artiste de la vie moderne, dessinant avec une acuité inusitée ses figurines, ses idiosyncrasies, ses contradictions ? La perception de ses contemporains semble aussi le confirmer. Ils lui reconnaissent son engagement comme caricaturiste national afin que le pays ne détonne pas des principales nations européennes et ils se revoient avec plaisir sur cette scène spirituelle qu'il dressait en permanence, en lui déclarant avec emphase combien ils acceptaient d'être représentés « *sub specie theatri* » (Bergson 2007, 81).

Mais si l'on ne peut contester cette fonction spéculaire de la société portugaise du XIXe siècle, notamment de cette période que l'historiographie appelle *Regeneração*⁵, elle demeure générique par rapport au sens que Baudelaire a donné à l'épithète. Notre hypothèse est donc que Bordalo Pinheiro ne s'est pas limité à capter les caractéristiques particulières du contexte de l'époque dans laquelle il vivait et qui était confrontée aux conflits inhérents à l'effort de modernisation dans un pays traditionaliste ayant tendance à regarder de façon messianique les grandeurs d'un passé impérialiste. Il l'a fait dans une perspective qui correspond pour l'essentiel à celle attribuée par l'auteur français au peintre de la vie moderne en fonction de l'idée même de la modernité. Nous pensons ainsi pouvoir éclairer l'un ou l'autre aspect de l'intentionnalité qui accompagne ses ouvrages, moins visible lorsque l'analyse reste circonscrite au rapport direct avec l'éventualité factuelle, et par là même réfléchir à certaines conditions constitutives de ce « projet inachevé de la modernité » (Habermas, 1981) qui continue de nous interpeller. Si Bordalo Pinheiro a eu connaissance de l'ouvrage de Baudelaire, nous n'avons pas d'éléments suffisants pour l'attester même si, en considérant les dates, rien ne l'interdit. Pourtant, ce facteur, certainement relevant pour une autre recherche, n'est pas décisif pour celle-ci vu qu'il ne s'agit ici que d'une interprétation du sens général de son œuvre à partir d'un cadre conceptuel particulier, celui qui correspond à la figuration de l'artiste suggérée par l'essai du Français.

Une compréhension adéquate de l'horizon interprétatif que nous voulons suggérer requiert de ne concevoir le travail d'une telle figure que comme une discipline artistique. Il faut lui attribuer aussi la propriété de l'activité du critique, de celui qui est capable de capter et en même temps de restituer ce qui est effectivement en cause lors d'un événement déterminé, du point de vue de sa signification anthropologique, c'est-à-dire, selon les termes d'un jugement de valeur sur le sens du devenir historique.

La critique s'occupe ainsi du réel comme d'un objet à mi-chemin entre l'esthétique et la morale, que le critique-peintre se doit de représenter parce

que, pour lui, la réalité n'est pas autre chose qu'un ensemble de valorisations en rapport avec son interprétation particulière. Le peintre de la vie moderne devra donc travailler avec des valeurs plutôt qu'avec des attributs ontiques. Ce qui suppose que ce peintre puisse être philosophe ou romancier, tout comme on lui reconnaît la viabilité d'être critique alors qu'il pratique la peinture ou la musique. Le caricaturiste, en donnant une figure matérielle à un système axiologique (Benjamin 1974), lequel est désormais en butte à cet « avènement du neuf » (Baudelaire 1992, 67) dont la célébration soutient la parodie, détient un rôle privilégié dans cette constellation où la neutralité ne peut plus être invoquée.

C'est cette façon de se situer face au réel qui unit les différents peintres de la modernité, Constantin Guys et Bordalo Pinheiro, même si du point de vue strictement artistique comme cela a déjà été amplement noté, ce serait Honoré Daumier, « homme généreux et artiste talentueux que nous devrions évoquer pour comprendre l'œuvre du Portugais » (Silva 2005, 47). Une certaine prise de position, une façon de mettre en perspective les relie donc, destinée à reprendre à chaque fois la question sur le sens d'un monde qui l'a en soi-même perdu, ce monde qui peut être qualifié de moderne parce que toute la structure qui soutenait la confiance dans une entité unique est entrée dans un processus de dissolution consciente. C'est un regard fait d'une trame de tensions entre esthétique et morale qui est lancé sur les hommes, l'histoire et même la nature, afin de racheter l'effervescence superficielle de la condamnation à l'insignifiant. La critique assume alors une fonction génésique et chaque éclat de rire est un tribut pour la vie possible : l'humour devient un état de grâce requis dans un univers abandonné par la grâce divine.

C'est ce que suggère précisément le dessin qu'il a intitulé « A Graça ! » (en portugais, le mot signifiant la grâce divine, la gracieuseté et le comique), un autoportrait qui témoigne de l'alacrité de celui qui se donne avec confiance à la risibilité universelle, où l'éclat de rire vaut une rédemption de ce qu'il y a de tragico-comique dans toute la vacuité mondaine qui persiste à perpétuer un sérieux métaphysique, devenu obsolète avec le cours de l'histoire (fig. 3).

Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro, simultanément caricaturiste et caricaturé dans maints autoportraits, met ainsi en évidence l'ubiquité de cette pondération critique, dans l'essence même de la caricature, en remettant en scène le geste de mise-en-abîme que Michel Foucault trouve annonciateur de la modernité chez Velázquez (Foucault 1966, 30-31), et en niant par anticipation l'idée défendue par Bergson à la recherche de la mécanique générale du rire que le comique se ridiculise rarement lui-même (Bergson 2007, 129).

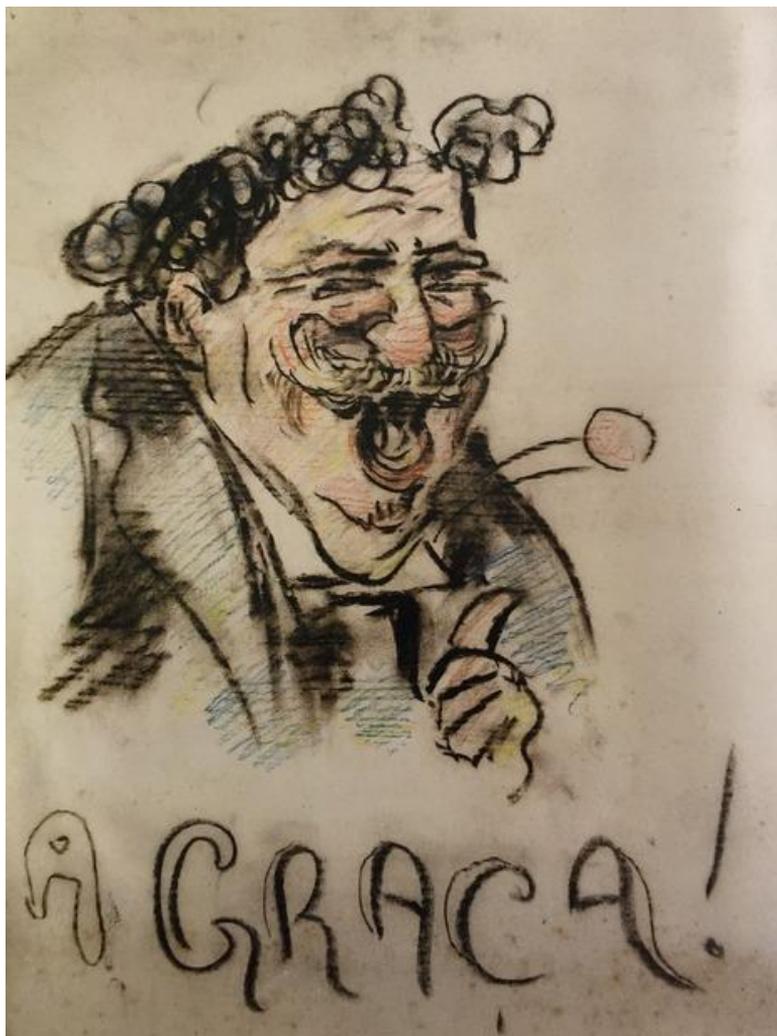


Fig. 3 *A Graça*

[Voir en haute résolution \(lien\)](#)

Encore faut-il aussi distinguer la modernité de la vie moderne, que l'œuvre de son peintre est censée exprimer, et la période spécifique qu'il est tenu de représenter. Celle-ci est particulièrement nécessaire dans le cas de la caricature, dans la mesure où une grande partie de son efficacité vient de la relation qu'elle établit non seulement avec les circonstances de son contexte de production mais aussi avec la façon comment ces situations sont vécues et interprétées dans le temps. Exercice permanent de complicité avec l'actualité dans ses manifestations les plus diverses, qui deviennent comme l'a si bien vu Baudelaire des modes, à la recherche de ce qui serait un consensus critique, une espèce de divination du modèle d'évaluation pour

que l'éclat de rire moralisateur puisse devenir épidémique. La tâche du caricaturiste ne saurait ni ne voudrait d'ailleurs éviter ce rapport avec le transitoire dans ce qu'il a de plus éphémère, ce présent dont l'humoriste poursuit la contingence. Celle-là s'offre surtout comme une attitude, un ethos qui se définit par son rapport à la valeur de l'actualité et se présente comme une tâche infinie selon la suggestion de Foucault dans son texte sur les Lumières (Foucault 1984, 562-578).

L'adoption du regard du peintre de la vie moderne introduit alors une perspective complémentaire dans ce rapport événementiel, un trait de durée, en convertissant la liaison avec l'actualité dans une espèce de concret universel, toujours à reprendre lorsqu'il faut faire face aux multiples facettes de la crise qui est consécutive au paradigme de la modernité. Comme Baudelaire le synthétise : « Il s'agit, pour lui, de dégager de la mode ce qu'elle peut contenir de poétique dans l'historique, de tirer l'éternel du transitoire » (Baudelaire 1992, 354). Travail donc de fixation d'un type qui va s'affirmer entre la multiplicité des aspects contingents, en fonction de la répétition de gestes, d'attitudes, de figures, de situations, dans le cas du risible, que Bergson désigne comme l'effet de fantoche (Bergson, 2007, 27), distinct de la détermination traditionnelle des traits permanents d'un caractère. Pourtant, le rapport à la modernité suppose également que cette situation se réalise dans un régime d'immanence, dans une complicité cultivée avec le devenir, dans une perspective du présent et non du pérenne comme proposaient les versions métaphysiques de l'art. Celle-ci ne débouche pas sur le tracé d'un comportement totalement fixe ni sur la version cristallisée d'un modèle d'immoralité mais favorise plutôt la dialectique entre l'incarnation du type et les singularités qui diffèrent cette reprise.

Ce qui est en cause est le tracé d'un schéma d'action en rapport avec un système complexe de valeurs, souvent contradictoires, mettant en avant une régularité qui joue le rôle d'éternité et s'offre susceptible d'une appropriation subjective. Pour cela, le cas représenté est simultanément un des représentants de cette façon d'agir, de cette ritualisation d'une possibilité dans l'ordre mouvant des possibles. Il constitue ainsi la confirmation d'une formule destinée à l'itération et une version parodique d'un tel diagramme. Une des relations profondes de la satire caricaturale avec la modernité découle précisément de la façon comment celle-là met en œuvre de manière ostensive cet élément de parodie dont dépend la viabilité de conjuguer la règle avec le singulier, le commun avec le subjectif, le structurel avec la liberté. Elle le fait en associant la préfiguration de ce que les autres vont faire (Eco 1997, 5), comme l'énonce Eco sur ses propres parodies, la façon comment ils le font, et un regard mélangé de surprise et de critique sur le fait que cette articulation se vérifie à chaque fois. Si l'on prend en compte qu'un des scandales de la Modernité vient de cette dimension parodique, qui

lui appartient en propre, on comprend alors que la caricature puisse se présenter autant comme un symbole par excellence de cet état des choses que comme un processus idéal d'auto-analyse. Tout ce qui s'étale comme moderne peut passer au crible de la caricature, parce que tout est susceptible d'être caricaturé, dans la mesure où s'y manifeste l'ironie d'une existence sans substance, d'un déterminisme casuistique, d'un règne de la parodie dessinée à l'aune de la réalité, raison pour laquelle le caricaturiste a tendance à être le peintre privilégié de la modernité.

L'œuvre de Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro révèle précisément une telle consistance dans sa façon de comment il met en scène en permanence ce dispositif parodique. Ce que Júlio César Machado suppose constituer une limitation, à savoir qu'il « est difficile qu'il se moque sans que son crayon n'indique tout de suite sur le dessin, au lieu d'une physionomie générale, une certaine figure connue qui correspondait au ridiculisé, reconnaissable à ses petits défauts mais sans réaliser parfois le type absolu, l'idéal de cette caricature » (Pinheiro 1876, 29), nous témoigne, en retour, de cette recherche de l'équilibre entre le présent et le durable que nous venons de caractériser.

D'un côté, son œuvre dénote une aptitude notable, presque photographique, d'être au cœur de l'événement, en saisissant son contour avec une lucidité rare. Et l'on peut supposer qu'une bonne partie de sa vitalité provient de ce que, dans cette exposition du quotidien, il arrive à introduire une autre ligne temporelle qui, en passant outre son époque, rencontre aussi la nôtre. Ce rire que l'on ne peut éviter éclate probablement du partage secret et infantile d'une même impudeur. Celle-ci est devenue désormais admissible autant par le flou dans la frontière entre le public et le privé, que la modernité a introduit, que par l'autonomisation relative de l'esthétique, que l'intervention du comique dans toutes les circonstances a permis, faisant ainsi de l'irresponsabilité de l'art l'arme par excellence de la critique.

D'un autre côté, il nous fait signe avec l'idéation du type, sous la forme que nous avons décrite, c'est-à-dire, comme l'émergence d'un principe d'action projetable au-delà des conditions particulières où la figure est représentée à partir de ses idiosyncrasies. C'est ainsi que, par exemple, la satire de l'*Ultimatum* (fig. 4), par le dessin de la carte du nouveau jeu des forces politiques, offre en même temps la ridiculisation de cet événement historique et la prévision d'un fond prédateur du cynisme proverbial de la diplomatie, susceptible de se reproduire pour l'essentiel dans tous les traités internationaux, même s'il se trouve parodié de façon spécifique dans chacun d'eux. Si notre rire traduit une certaine surprise par le fonctionnement régulier de cette mécanique, ce sentiment que finalement rien n'a changé, il permet également d'exprimer une certaine nervosité avec l'inventivité

parodique par la prise de conscience que la distanciation ironique favorise autant la critique que l'accommodement.

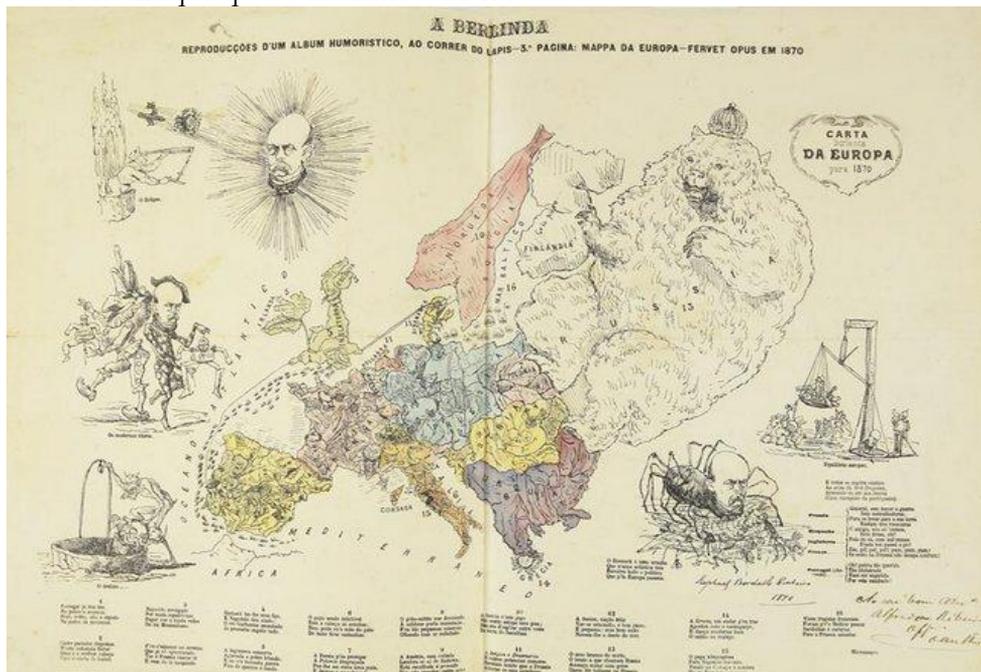


Fig. 4 – *Mapa*
[Voir en haute résolution \(lien\)](#)

La typification du chaos potentiel du monde moderne, en fonction d'une logique du comique, apparaît donc comme une façon de rendre la Modernité habitable par la réduction du mal-être civilisationnel qui lui est intrinsèque. Ayant accès au manuel des modes d'agir modernes, la tâche de la critique, aussi sérieuse qu'elle s'avère, se voit accompagner d'un rire moqueur qui devient thérapeutique. Dans ce sens, il y a une dimension profonde de ministère de la caricature, entre soulèvement et réconciliation, dont il s'aperçoit, en revenant du Brésil, et transforme en bannière dans la « Dédicace » de l'album *No Lazareto de Lisboa* : « être utile tout en s'amusant » (Pinheiro 1881). Continuité d'une pratique dont l'efficacité dépend de la commensurabilité des contextes qui se trouve assurée parce que nous tous sommes sous l'effet de cette interrogation partagée sur le sens et la valeur de la modernité.

Enfin, Bordalo incite à une certaine façon de percevoir. Celle-ci est totalement associée à la compréhension de ce qui constitue le moderne de la modernité. Il l'accomplit par deux gestes. D'un côté, il récré un univers complet, ni réel ni fictionnel parce qu'il est en même temps réel et fictionnel, que nous devons assumer comme nôtre. D'un autre côté, il

procède à la saturation axiologique des personnages, des gestes, des décors, des événements, qui force l'exercice critique en vertu de l'impossibilité d'une attitude neutre ou d'un jugement rapide. Effet paradoxal que celui de susciter une certaine rigueur du regard par le biais de la suggestion d'une liberté illimitée d'opinion. Faut-il donc penser que nous rions spontanément même lorsque les personnages et les événements sont déjà remisés au musée de l'histoire et qu'ils nous obligent au sérieux d'une recherche érudite pour les éclairer car nous sommes complices d'un même type de regard sur le réel ? Un regard fait du mélange de celui propre à l'enfant et au convalescent, innocent et plein d'espoir, que Baudelaire attribue au peintre de la vie moderne (Baudelaire 1992, 351), avec un autre, diabolique, de folie et de démesure, que l'auteur renvoyait à l'origine de la comédie (Baudelaire 1992, 192) (combinaison qui semblait toute faite pour caractériser directement Bordalo !). S'y mêle aussi, à part entière, une attitude qui traduit le collage inéluctable au présent, cette espèce de pêché de la modernité – et donc mal vue en dehors de l'*ethos* moderne –, la curiosité que Baudelaire place à la base du génie de Guys et qui, chez lui, deviendra « une passion fatale, irrésistible » (Baudelaire 1992, 350). Un état d'esprit, par conséquent, entre la critique et l'aliénation, la censure et la complicité, l'étonnement et la compassion, qui transforme chacun de nous en co-peintres de la Modernité.

Baudelaire appelait cette qualité plus générale du peintre de la vie moderne, la mondanité, en la distinguant de la simple technicité artistique. C'est ainsi qu'en rapportant sa rencontre avec Guys, il écrivait : « Lorsqu'enfin je le trouvai, je vis tout d'abord que je n'avais pas affaire précisément à un *artiste*, mais plutôt à un *homme du monde*. Entendez ici, je vous prie, le mot *artiste* dans un sens très restreint, et le mot *homme du monde* dans un sens très étendu. *Homme du monde*, c'est-à-dire homme du monde entier, homme qui comprend le monde et les raisons mystérieuses et légitimes de tous ses usages ; *artiste*, c'est-à-dire spécialiste, homme attaché à sa palette comme le serf à la glèbe » (Baudelaire 1992, 349).

On peut remarquer que la contradiction n'apparaît pas par la négation de la dimension artistique de cet homme appelé à plonger dans la mondanité pour en faire le portrait, bien au contraire, car seul un véritable artiste, en accord avec la nouvelle esthétique, réussira à être à la hauteur de la tâche de peindre la modernité. Elle advient avec l'opposition entre liberté et servilité, c'est-à-dire entre la puissance caméléonienne de pouvoir être tout, de sentir tout, pour pouvoir comprendre à chaque instant un principe inusité de signification, et la sujétion à un canon spécifique avec les limites qu'il impose. Plongé dans le monde qu'il veut traduire artistiquement par de nouvelles formes d'art, par une déambulation empathique dans les méandres existentiels de l'espace urbain, destiné à remplacer progressivement et inexorablement la Nature, le peintre de la vie moderne se révèle, sous cet aspect, par trois caractéristiques fondamentales.

En premier, il manifeste une compréhension claire du phénomène moderne de la massification, qui affecte la totalité des relations qui constituent la vie moderne elle-même, et c'est donc dans la foule et non dans l'individualité nobiliaire qu'il trouve son véritable aliment pour son intervention. Baudelaire décrivait cet effet de la façon suivante : « Ainsi l'amoureux de la vie universelle entre dans la foule comme dans un immense réservoir d'électricité. On peut aussi le comparer, lui, à un miroir aussi immense que cette foule ; à un Kaléidoscope doué de conscience (...). C'est un *moi* insatiable du *non-moi*, qui, à chaque instante le rend et l'exprime en images plus vivantes que la vie elle-même, toujours instable et fugitive » (Baudelaire 1992, 352).

Alors comment ne pas voir dans la pléthore de personnages, de types, de situations, dessinés par Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro, une manifestation claire de cet effet rendu possible de façon délibérée par l'entretien de la même vie sociale de cette Bourgeoisie, qu'il critique autant qu'il en fait partie ? Mais aussi, comment ne pas le retrouver dans la pratique de ce que Herbert Spencer, dans l'essai intitulé «The Physiology of Laughter», désigne comme l'« incongruité descendante », cette aptitude qui force le rire « alors que la conscience est transférée de façon inattendue des grandes choses vers de petites choses » (Spencer 1966, 307), c'est-à-dire, vers toute cette panoplie de caprices individuels ou collectifs, avec lesquels Bordalo représente un monde dominé par la médiocrité, et dans cette mesure, ouvert à la démocratisation de la raillerie ? Ou dans l'application du principe exprimé par Bergson que le rire doit rester dans « une moyenne de l'humanité » (Bergson 2007, 130) ? La figure iconoclaste de *Zé-povinho*, le Souverain de ce royaume de la médiocrité en serait alors ce symbole d'une tension constitutive de la modernité (fig. 5).

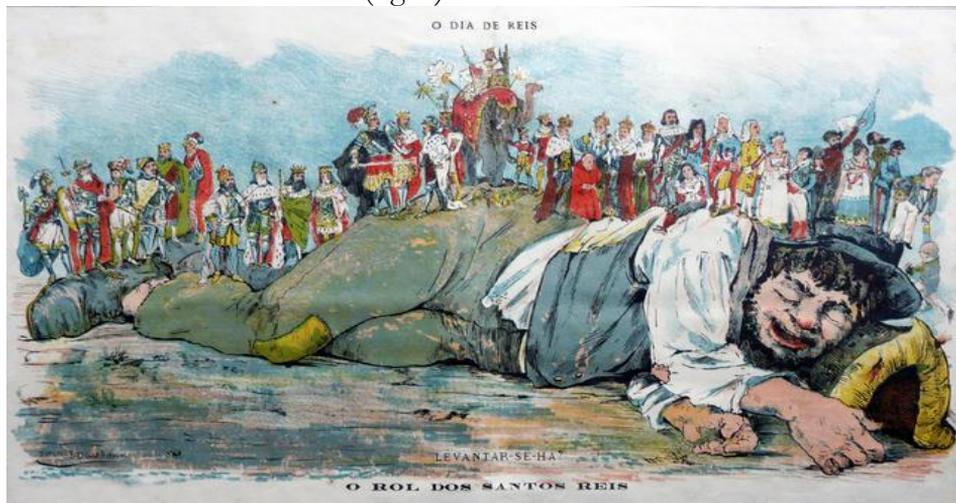
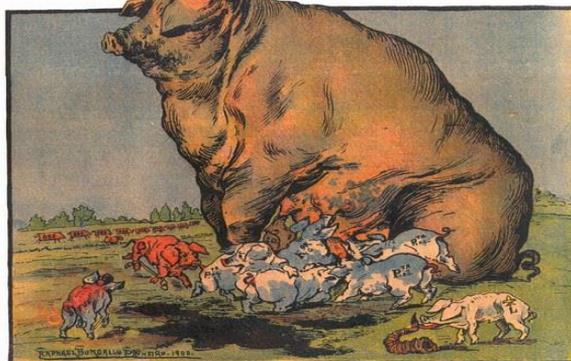


Fig. 5 - *O Rol dos Santos Reis*
[Voir en haute résolution \(lien\)](#)

D'une part, tension entre l'authenticité du bon sauvage (qui, dans le personnage lui-même y est déjà mise en question, autant par des traits moraux douteux que par son appartenance à l'univers cosmopolite auquel il s'oppose) et la dégradation de l'humain dans le mouvement du progrès urbain (compensée cependant par la myriade de plaisirs qu'il rend disponible). D'autre part, tension entre tradition foncière et modernité espérée, en référence précisément à l'idéalisation de l'être moderne qui, créée par un peintre de la modernité, serait destinée à nous interpeller sur le sens des idiosyncrasies nationales.

La deuxième manifestation du peintre de la vie moderne, traduisant le phénomène de dissémination de l'esthétique dans la modernité, consiste dans la pratique des processus artistiques les plus variés. En pensant à Guys, Baudelaire lui prêtait « la peur de n'aller pas assez vite, de laisser échapper le fantôme avant que la synthèse n'en soit extraite et saisie » (Baudelaire 1992, 359). Nous pouvons d'abord la supposer chez Bordalo Pinheiro comme le fruit d'une exubérance non retenue, d'une urgence de tout essayer, au service de la dignification de la vie domestique par la voie de l'humour, dernier refuge de l'homme moderne, relégué dans les petits plaisirs des *buis clos* bourgeois après un désenchantement pour les grands récits de la politique et de la religion. Dans cette démultiplication des genres, dans laquelle il garde de façon cohérente un *parti pris* pour ceux que la convention a rendus mineurs dans chaque domaine – la caricature, la littérature de *cordel*, la bande dessinée, l'illustration, la gravure, la céramique -, nous ne pouvons pas voir qu'une envie d'une dénonciation de la « Grande Cochonne » (fig. 6), la politique où se groinfrent les politiciens, ou du « Grand Chien », le royaume de l'avarice insatiable de la finance, bestiaire publié dans *A Paródia*. Il nous faut aussi y reconnaître cette liturgie d'une certaine folie dans le quotidien, une aliénation minimale partagée par toutes les couches sociales qui nous permet de les supporter, même avec leur mesquinerie.



I—A Política: a Grande Porca

Fig. 6 - *A Grande Porca*

[Voir en haute résolution \(lien\)](#)

Un tel déplacement garde toute sa pertinence pour nous, en bons modernes que nous semblons encore être, forcés de rechercher dans les affinités électives qui se constituent localement, et dans les objets utilitaires qui nous entourent, le sens de l'existence que les grandes causes insistent à nous cacher. Et si nous avons acquis une résistance à l'effet de *shock*, dont Baudelaire attendait tant et que plusieurs productions de Bordalo Pinheiro ne cessent de provoquer, nous sentons toujours un optimisme renouvelé avec la possibilité de posséder, sortis de l'usine de céramique de Caldas da Rainha, une nature morte dans un plat (fig. 7), de se réchauffer l'âme avec un thé servi directement de la tête d'un policier anglais ou bu dans les feuilles d'un chou ou d'avoir sous la main le bras d'honneur que, dans notre intimité, nous faisons constamment.



Fig. 7 – *Cerâmica*
[Voir en haute résolution \(lien\)](#)

Finalement - le troisième aspect -, l'immédiation de ce processus d'immersion dans le quotidien commun et de l'osmose avec les rythmes de son pouls est compensée par l'interposition de la mémoire, récepteur vorace des impressions, pour devenir la source de toute l'expression qui va suivre. Baudelaire considérait que le travail du peintre de la vie moderne avait comme base non pas une prise sur le naturel, typique du paradigme imitatif, mais un jeu productif mené à terme dans et par la mémoire qui, en bonne analyse, est la condition minimale pour que le moi fasse valoir le poids de sa subjectivité dans la traduction esthétique du vécu. En outre : « Il s'établit alors un duel entre la volonté de tout voir, de ne rien oublier, et la faculté de la mémoire qui a pris l'habitude d'absorber vivement la couleur générale et la silhouette, l'arabesque du contour » (Baudelaire 1992, 358). Deux conséquences majeures résultent de cette position : toute expression artistique moderne est signée et une telle signature reflète l'appartenance du peintre à la modernité qu'il veut comprendre car de cet être moderne fait

partie cette marque du moi qui est collée à tout ce qui fait l'homme. Le peintre de la vie moderne se trouve libéré de la grille millénaire de la mimesis reposant sur la représentation perceptive vu que la réalité qui lui revient de restituer n'a pas la consistance d'un être substantif mais la complexité d'une partition dont la création lui revient aussi. Ainsi, son travail réside dans un effort de description, un trait pouvant retenir toute une section du monde, une simple allusion devant contenir un cumul d'informations à décoder.

Ces deux caractéristiques se retrouvent clairement présentes dans l'œuvre de Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro. Dès lors, parce qu'elle ne peut être que de lui, saturée de cette subjectivité autant par la façon particulière de voir les choses que par la quantité d'effets que signalent l'omniprésence du moi. Aussi, pour mettre en évidence l'excellente pratique de cet art du schéma, à laquelle nous avons déjà fait allusion à propos de la typification, qui différencie si bien la caricature moderne des précédentes, en réussissant le maximum d'impact avec le minimum de moyens. L'« ivresse du rire » provoquée par ce « vertige de l'hyperbole » (Baudelaire 1992, 199), qui accompagne tout caricaturiste dans la mesure où celui-ci aspire à être un peintre de la modernité, devient une force d'économie des ressources, une espèce d'ascèse de l'expressivité, qui se rapproche du stoïcisme austère du *dandy*, ce « dernier éclat d'héroïsme dans les décadences » (Baudelaire 1992, 371), et essaie d'empêcher, *in extremis*, la décadence de l'art lui-même. João Cotrim nous rapporte le témoignage de cet exercice de la part de Bordalo publié par José Ramalho Ortigão (1836-1915), son collaborateur à plusieurs reprises: « Ainsi, mentalement conçu, le portrait était dans sa mémoire une espèce d'acquisition fœtale, un embryon indestructible, un être auquel, à la première évocation de sa volonté, il donnait la vie par la pointe d'un crayon ou d'une plume sur une feuille de papier. La créature apparaissait au hasard de la naissance, debout, de dos, de profil » (Cotrim 2005, 83-84)⁶. Il faut donc reconnaître que, dans l'excellence avec laquelle il a géré l'indéfinition propre de ce schématisme tout en admettant son comblement par les délires les plus divers, Bordalo Pinheiro aurait laissé un espace ouvert pour que nous puissions aussi y laisser figurer les nôtres.

Mais il y a une autre déduction de ce *tirer par la mémoire*, que Bordalo explore jusqu'à l'extrême : la production d'un imaginaire particulier. Ces figures si souvent confinées à un rôle mineur dans la réalité locale où elles apparaissent, en sortant de la mémoire, ces situations en vérité liées à des facteurs circonstanciels, en étant remémorées, portent déjà en elles le trait de l'imagination qui en fait des icônes d'un imaginaire collectif. C'est que cette mémoire productive possède une rhétorique appropriée pour transfigurer le réel, sans cesser de le figurer, qui le qualifie par l'introduction d'une propriété, physique ou morale, qui le détache et le magnifie. Hyperbole, amplification, personnification, métabole, allégorie, analogie,

volonté d'être moderne et un sentiment d'incapacité à l'être véritablement. C'est par ce biais de tensions qu'il choque nos grandeurs et nos misères.

Dans son essai *De l'essence du rire*, Baudelaire insiste sur la dépendance du rire à un sentiment de supériorité de celui qui rit de l'objet risible (Baudelaire 1992, 190). Il écrit : « C'est là le point de départ : *moi* je ne tombe pas; *moi*, je marche droit; *moi*, mon pied est ferme et assuré » (Baudelaire 1992, 191). Dans cette psychologie individuelle, il trouve également la base d'une suggestion d'une espèce de loi de l'histoire selon laquelle il y aurait une corrélation directe entre le progrès de la modernité et l'augmentation des motifs pour rire (Baudelaire 1992, 193). Idée qui est vérifiable dans l'essentiel bien qu'elle soit entourée par un système de raisons esthétiques, sociales, ethniques, difficilement acceptable, ce qui expliquerait que cet aspect de distinction morale et sociale du rire finisse par l'emporter sur la critique même lorsque celle-ci essaye de contrebalancer son unilatéralité. C'est ainsi, par exemple, pour Eugène Dupréel dans un fameux article sur la dimension sociologique du rire dans lequel il propose qu'à côté du rire d'exclusion, pour lequel « tantôt un groupe tient à l'écart un individu sans plus, tantôt c'est un autre groupe comme tel, dont le groupe se moque par son rire d'exclusion ou dont il s'isole lui-même » (Dupréel 1949, 49), on reconnaisse le rire d'accueil, compris comme « la manifestation d'une communion dans un groupe » (Dupréel 1949, 45). En vérité, l'introduction de ce binôme suppose l'identification entre le rire et la joie, que Baudelaire tient vraiment à différencier, en opposant la simplicité du premier à la duplicité de la deuxième (Baudelaire 1992, 194). Pourtant le poids que le rire d'exclusion détient dans le texte de Dupréel, lequel est d'ailleurs obligé de concéder que « le rire caractéristique, complet, ne va pas, semble-t-il, sans cet élément de joie maligne » (Dupréel 1949, 46), finit d'une certaine façon par donner raison à Baudelaire.

Dans l'œuvre de Bordalo Pinheiro, les mécanismes de ce rire d'exclusion sont bien patents, par exemple, dans l'opposition constante de groupes à l'intérieur d'une même classe - intellectuels, artistes et politiciens qui assument des positions antagoniques dans le même espace public -, ou de classes différentes, comme dans le cas du rejet mutuel du peuple par le dédain oppresseur de la bourgeoisie et de celle-ci par la méfiance insolente de celui-là. De même, la supériorité du point de vue moral qui assiste à la dénonciation railleuse paraît inégalable, recherchant à son tour à produire la réprobation de la part de ses spectateurs ou de ses lecteurs. De façon constante, Bordalo Pinheiro pratique, une fois encore avec notoriété, ce que Dupréel va théoriser avec le dispositif privilégié du rire : « *La chose qui fait rire*, c'est ce qui rend sensible l'exclusion relative de l'individu dont on rit et par là même laisse à chacun le sentiment que le groupe se reforme sur cette exclusion » (Dupréel 1992, 46). La variété de processus, de profils visés, de

perspectives, favorise sans aucun doute la reproduction de cet effet qui reste à la base, faut-il le rappeler, de notre humour.

Cependant, un troisième agencement est à l'œuvre chez Bordalo qui s'avère une condition tout aussi décisive pour que nous continuions à nous revoir dans son univers, au-delà de cette pratique habile du dispositif de la satire. Dès lors, en consonance avec le sens de la modernité, il déplace la moralité vers l'espace public, cet espace éminemment social et politique, « ces longues galeries du *high life* et du *low life* » (Baudelaire 1992, 382), et laisse à l'abri les questions privées et les vices les plus intimes. La Préface d'*O António Maria* déclare cette réserve pudique de façon spirituelle sous la forme d'une instruction pour d'éventuels collaborateurs : « Je ne leur impose que la seule condition de se donner le travail d'être comme on doit l'être devant une dame et, surtout – c'est-ce qu'António, *le juste*, et Maria, *l'immaculée*, leur recommandent – qu'ils aient un peu d'humour » (Pinheiro 1879, 1). Ce qui en émerge est la centralité de l'opinion publique, véritable chef d'orchestre de la tragicomédie contemporaine, pour juger les actions, non à une condamnation bigote de l'être intime des acteurs, mais en définissant une nouvelle relation de pure extériorité entre des expressions et des convictions. Celles-ci deviennent en conséquence comme des symboles d'une substantialité évanescence et peuvent fonctionner en régime d'alternance, le critiqué d'aujourd'hui pouvant se convertir en critique de demain. D'un autre côté, il faut reconnaître que cet univers, profondément marqué par les structures modernes de la distinction basées sur la dialectique entre le matériel et le symbolique, est également traversé par le sentiment d'une espèce d'universalité du ridicule et du grotesque, une forme de bêtise généralisée, que les bals et pièces de théâtre successifs représentés par Bordalo figurent, tels les bals de fous des asiles (Quétel 2012, 339), et qui, tôt ou tard, convertit le rieur en risible.

Or, cette mise-en-scène, constamment présente dans la production de Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro, présuppose une forme de rire que nous sommes portés à désigner comme un rire de réconfort. Il ne s'agit pas de récupérer d'une autre façon le rire d'accueil lequel, comme celui d'exclusion, dépend encore du processus général de la distinction et de la reproduction sociales, et s'inscrit dans une logique plutôt centripète de frontières, mais de concevoir une espèce de risibilité, tendancielle universelle, une démocratie du comique qui n'a donc pas un objectif défini, car il est présent chez chacun de nous et parce qu'il intervient sur un plan existentiel qui est au-delà du bien et du mal, des différences sociales et des errements politiques. Ce que le rire de réconfort indique est une relation privilégiée à cet univers qui est celui de la modernité, où, comme nous l'avons défendu, l'humour ne constitue pas une possibilité mais une nécessité. Une telle pratique autour de l'insoutenable légèreté de l'être moderne en conflit permanent avec les idiosyncrasies locales finit alors par s'avérer dans sa

singularité artistique une façon par excellence d'achever le dessein du peintre de la vie moderne.

Cette finalité constructive sinon vraiment pédagogique, porteuse d'utopie, est d'ailleurs doublement recherchée autant par l'attitude critique, du moment où celle-ci constitue la seule qui a une densité suffisante pour fonctionner avec un type d'expérience dont la signification s'offre dans la seule immanence, que par l'*ethos* moderne qui trouve dans le rire une des facettes de sa tragédie, celle d'exister sans d'autres dieux que ceux produits par l'humanité elle-même. Ainsi Bordalo Pinheiro aura été conscient que la responsabilité qui revient au caricaturiste moderne, si celui-ci tient à résister à l'érosion du temps, ne s'épuise pas dans la ridiculisation ou dans l'exagération d'un tic ou d'un cliché à la mode mais suppose également qu'il doive rendre visible ce qui pousse au rire dans le risible, décrivant ainsi la qualité d'un monde où le rire est la meilleure attitude, la seule qui soit cohérente face à l'absence de sagesse des humains. Faudrait-il donc reconnaître ce rire de réconfort, qui parvient jusqu'à nous, comme un trait universel de notre propre modernité, un des secrets de la longévité de son art ? Ce dispositif principal qui nous force à continuer à rire avec lui, même lorsque les motifs pour le rire d'exclusion ou d'accueil à l'origine de la moquerie sont déjà devenus opaques ou anachroniques ?

Or, c'est exactement pour cet effet que l'artiste doit dépasser la simple représentation du réel qui l'entoure, selon un ordre taxinomique déterminé par la spatialité, reposant sur la rigidité de types prédéfinis, pour devenir l'expression vive de la temporalité, mettant en scène une grande comédie des temps modernes qui est la modernité elle-même. En ce sens, Baudelaire suggère avec justesse que « la pantomime est l'épuration de la comédie ; c'en est l'essence ; c'est l'élément pur, dégagé et concentré » (Baudelaire 1992, 200). Et c'est cette dramaturgie d'une gestualité expressive, dynamique, rapide, vorace, inconséquente, qui apparaît clairement dans l'œuvre de Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro, favorisée, parmi tant d'autres procédés, par le recours à la succession caractéristique du feuilleton ou de la bande dessinée, dont il a été le précurseur au Portugal⁷. C'est par ce moyen qu'il satirise le voyage que Pierre II, dernier empereur du Brésil, venait de faire l'année précédente (fig. 9). Dans ce récit visuel se succèdent les interactions entre cet oxymore vivant, la figure de l'Empereur futile et bavard, déguisé en démocrate, qui part à la recherche de nouveaux auditoires, et les différentes instances qui représentent les locaux là où il passe, toujours prêts à l'accueillir avec pompe et circonstance. Dans l'accomplissement d'une telle farce les Portugais se montrent insurpassables. Leur enthousiasme se révèle au fur et à mesure de l'hypocrisie d'une nation traumatisée par l'indépendance de l'ex-colonie. Ici aussi, on sent l'incrustation de la contradiction de fond du régime démocratique en bâtisse, symbolisé par le type des périples politiques, menés par ces grandes figures qui acquièrent

rapidement une patine d'attitude démocratique pour consolider leur pouvoir, et finissent par être reçus comme les représentants véritables des peuples. Phénomène qui s'avère intarissable, comme l'actuelle progression des populismes nous le montre.

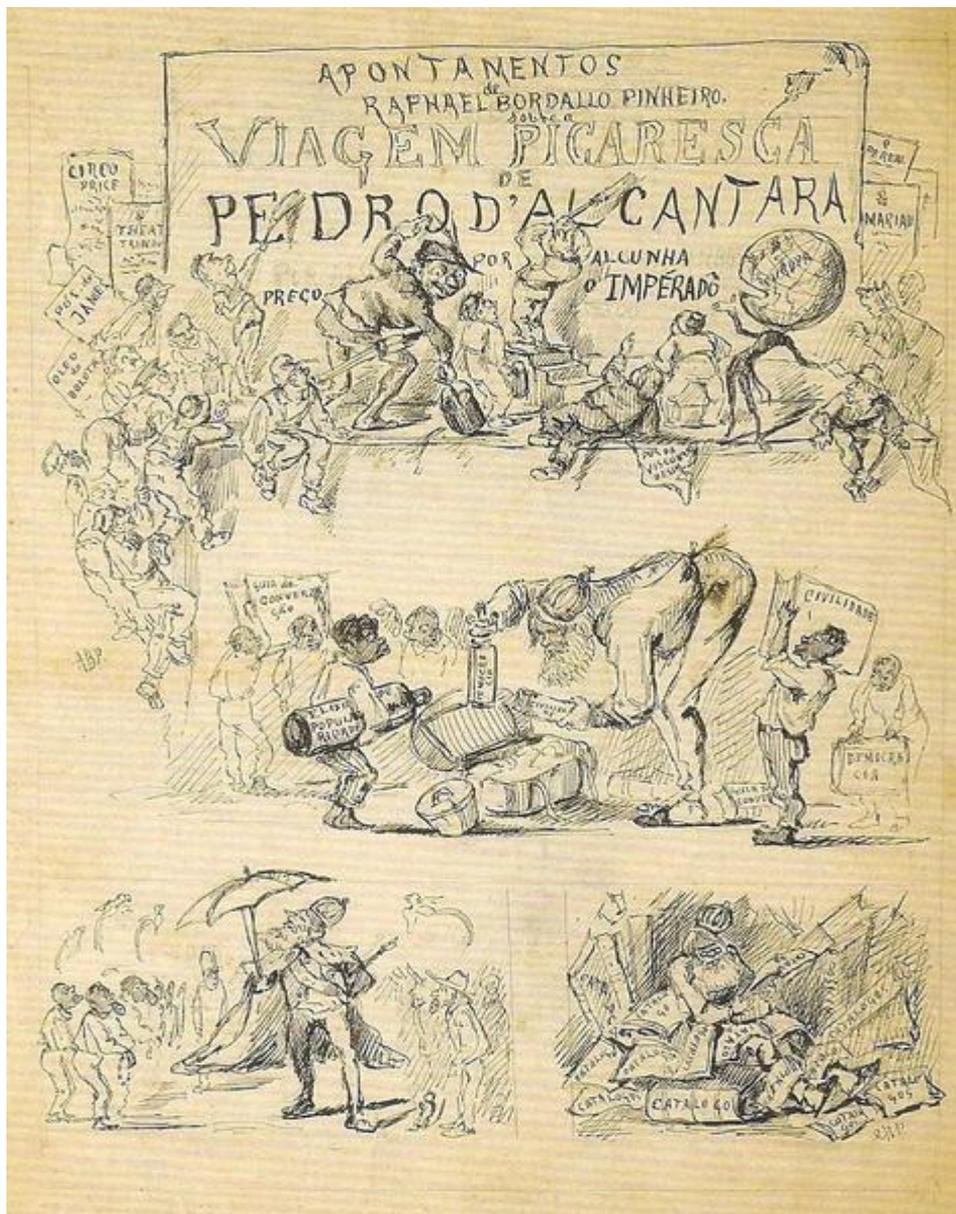


Fig. 9 - *Viagem Picaesca*
[Voir en haute résolution \(lien\)](#)

La vie moderne comme nous, Portugais, nous pouvons la vivre, avec le mode d'emploi pour rire de nous-mêmes, est certainement des grands legs de Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro. Mais, il nous semble qu'il n'aurait pas réussi à nous le transmettre s'il n'avait pas cherché à devenir le peintre de la vie moderne, comme nous l'avons soutenu dans cet essai. C'est grâce à une telle condition, par laquelle il dépasse le rapport direct au local et au circonstanciel, qu'il a fini par sauter de la reproduction à la création en contribuant de façon inventive à la construction de l'imaginaire qu'il représentait et en traçant, dans toute leur théâtralité, les modalités de cette volonté d'être moderne avec laquelle nous nous débattons encore. Nous continuons donc à partager la même actualité et il reste par là même notre contemporain.



Fig. 10 – Bras d'honneur
[Voir en haute resolution \(lien\)](#)

Notes

¹ Ce texte a été publié en trois fascicules dans le *Figaro* des 26 et 29 novembre et du 3 décembre 1863.

² Fabrication qui a reçu quatre médailles d'or internationales à l'Exposition Universelle de Paris (1889) où il a été chargé de la décoration du Pavillon du Portugal, une médaille d'argent à l'Exposition de Faïences de l'Exposition colombienne de Madrid où il a aussi

collaboré à la décoration du Pavillon du Portugal, à l'Exposition Universelle d'Anvers (1894) et l'Exposition Universelle de St Louis aux États-Unis (1904).

³ *O Calcanhar de Achilles – Álbum de Caricaturas, O Binóculo* (1870), *A Berlinda* (1870-71), *A Lanterna Mágica* (1875), *O Mosquito* (1876-1877), *Psit* (1877), *O Besouro* (1878-1879 (fruit de son séjour de quatre ans à Rio de Janeiro), *O António Maria* (1879-1885, 1891-1898), *O Álbum de Glórias* (1880-1902), *Pontos nos ii* (1885-1891), *A Paródia* (1900-1902).

⁴ Une revue de grand succès dont le titre fait allusion au Président du Conseil des Ministres, António Maria Fontes Pereira de Melo (1819-1887), figure dominante du panorama politique de la seconde moitié du siècle.

⁵ La *Régénération* est une période de stabilité politique qui débute en 1851 et qui dure jusqu'en 1868, pendant laquelle sont mises en place plusieurs actions importantes visant la modernisation sociale, culturelle et économique du Portugal en accord avec l'image que l'on se faisait du développement des pays les plus industrialisés, notamment la France et l'Angleterre. Ce fut cependant un temps de contrastes dans tous les domaines. L'investissement dans les travaux publics, les nouvelles technologies, l'enseignement et la recherche a produit des résultats mitigés, que l'apparition d'une classe moyenne, l'essor des activités artistiques et la constitution d'une opinion publique plus intervenante ont momentanément doré. Le jeu des contradictions internes de cette société dont les élites bourgeoises rêvent d'anoblissement, les gestes d'apparat sont pris pour des mesures effectives et les asymétries entre couches et régions ne cessent d'augmenter - faut-il le dire ? -, « se prête extraordinairement au rire » (Silva 2205, 43).

⁶ José Duarte Ramalho Ortigão, “Os retratos de Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro, Carta a seu filho Manuel Gustavo”, *A Paródia*, n.º 107, 10 février 1905, *apud* João Cotrim, *art. cit.*, p. 83-84.

⁷ Il s'agit de la bande dessinée portant le titre de *Apontamentos de Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro sobre a Picaresca Viagem do Imperador do Brasil [anagramme de Brasil] pela Europa*, 16 pages, publiées à Lisbonne en 1872.

References

- Baudelaire, Charles. 1992. *Critique d'art suivi de Critique musicale*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Benjamin, Walter. 1974. *Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd.1, Teil 2. Frankfurt-am-Main: Suhrkamp.
- Bergson, Henri. 2007. *Le rire, Essai sur la signification du comique*. Paris: Puf.
- Cotrim, João. 2005. «Espinho Cravado» In *Guia do Museu Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro*, 63-91. Lisboa: Câmara Municipal de Lisboa.
- Dupréel, Eugène, 1949. « Le problème sociologique du rire » In *Essais pluralistes*, 27-69. Paris : Puf.
- Eco, Umberto. 1997. *Comment voyager avec un saumon*. Paris : Le Livre de poche.
- Foucault, Michel. 1966. *Les mots et les choses*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Foucault, Michel. 1984. « Qu'est-ce que les Lumières ? » In *Dits et écrits IV*, 562-578. Paris: Gallimard.
- França, José-Augusto. 1976. *Raphael Bordalo Pinheiro, Caricaturista Político*. Lisboa: Terra Livre.
- França, José-Augusto. 2005. «O Zé Povinho, Sempre o Mesmo». In *Guia do Museu Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro*, 120-149. Lisboa: Câmara Municipal de Lisboa.
- Habermas, Jürgen. 1981. « La modernité: un projet inachevé » In *Critique*, n.º 413, oct. 1981, 950-967. Paris: Minuit.
- Pinheiro, Rafael Bordalo. 1870. *O Binóculo: Hebdomadário de caricaturas, Espectáculos e Litteraturas*. Lisboa: Typographia Portugueza.
- Pinheiro, Rafael Bordalo. 1876. *Album de Caricaturas, Phrases e Anexins da Lingua Portuguesa*. Lisboa: Livraria Editora de Mattos Moreira.
- Pinheiro, Rafael Bordalo. 1879. *O António Maria*, vol. 1. Lisboa: Typographia A Editora.

Pinheiro, Rafael Bordalo. 1881. *No Lazareto de Lisboa*. Lisboa: Empreza Litteraria Luso-Brazileira – Editora.

Quétel, Claude. 2012. *Histoire de la Folie de l'Antiquité à nos jours*. Paris : Tallandier.

Silva, Raquel Henriques. 2005. «Desenhar para Rir: a Burguesia ao Espelho» In *Guia do Museu Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro*, 26-53. Lisboa: Câmara Municipal de Lisboa.

Spencer, Herbert. 1966. *Essays on Education and Kindred Subjects*. London : Dent & Sons.

Cătălin Vasile BOBB *

The Place of *phronesis* in Philosophical Hermeneutics. A Brief Overview and a Critical Question

Abstract: It seems that *phronesis* has everything to do with hermeneutics. A kind of knowledge, be that hermeneutical or practical, is at work each time we interpret or act. In a way, interpreting or knowing what to do in a certain situation are similar acts. But, in the end, the main thesis of contemporary hermeneutics, at least in Gadamer's hermeneutics, is that *phronesis* is central to the very act of understanding as such. Although departing from such a strong thesis, Ricoeur as well holds that *phronesis* is central to hermeneutics. Thus, in the present article I attempt to provide a short overview of the place of *phronesis* in hermeneutics adding a critical question: are we entitled to hold that hermeneutics is practical philosophy?

Keywords: hermeneutics, practical philosophy, application, *phronesis*, Gadamer, Ricoeur

Introduction

Let us repeat, from the very beginning, a *koinoi topoi*: “neither science nor philosophy is needed in order to know what one must do to be honest and good, and even wise and virtuous” (Kant 1994, 16). Thus, perhaps, it is not inappropriate to assert, following Kant beyond his intentions, that neither science nor philosophy is needed in order to understand a situation, a context, a claim or (here, let us be a little bit pretentious or philosophers) a fact of life. Ultimately, we can assert, in the same logic, that *phronesis* or, in Kantian words, practical reasoning is similar, up to identity, to the very act of understanding. Of course, in this manner we blend the act of understanding, to a point of nondifferentiation, with *phronesis*. And, in a way, as we are going to see, we are entitled to do that, but a critical question still stands: what Gadamer calls hermeneutic experience is indeed identical to *phronesis*? Or, to put it differently, is hermeneutics identical to practical philosophy?

Peter Singer is right to assert that everyone who thinks of doing or not doing something is, consciously or not, implied in ethics (Singer 2008,

* Lecturer, PhD, Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, The North University Centre of Baia Mare, Department of Socio-Human Sciences, Theology, Arts, Faculty of Letters, Romania; e-mail : vasile.catalin.bobb@cunbm.utcluj.ro

v). And if one strives to define ethics may appeal to Jose Ortega y Gasset: “*Grace* we should name what mistakenly we name *Ethics*. Graceful is that man who doesn’t do or doesn’t say something, but does what is to be done and says what is to be said (my translation)” (Gasset 2004, 8). On the other hand, if one strives to understand what good is, may appeal to G.E. Moore’s definition: “if I am asked what is good, my answer will be what is good is good and here ends our discussion” (Bauman, 1993). Of course, all the above definitions are, intentionally or not, missing an accurate description. But from all these elusive definitions we can draw a general conclusion: ethics is something that everyone has in the back of his/her mind when thinking of doing or not doing something, and does what is to be done and says what is to be said, understanding that good is good without any future references. Nevertheless, to be more accurate we may use an intricate concept - *phronesis* i.e., practical wisdom; that is because we are all immersed in practical wisdom when thinking of doing or not doing something, furthermore, practical wisdom knows, gracefully, what is to be said and what is to be done, and finally, practical wisdom seems to know what good is.

Nonetheless, a new question may appear: what is practical wisdom? Certainly, we know from Aristotle that “practical wisdom, then, must be a reasoned and true state of capacity to act with regard to human goods” (Aristotle 1962, Book VI, 1140b20-1140b30) but a particular twofold answer (from the multitude of answers that the history of philosophy registers), which pertains to philosophical hermeneutics, will make the object of the present text.

In *Oneself as another* Ricoeur constructs an ethical theory based on interpretation where practical wisdom is the highpoint. For his part, Gadamer asserts in many articles that, *per se*, hermeneutics is practical wisdom. Thus, *phronesis*, as the center of Aristotle’s ethics, becomes the center of both Gadamer’s and Ricoeur’s *late* thoughts. Nevertheless, if it is right to assume that Ricoeur’s ethics is epistemological (if, we can use such a word in ethics) above Gadamer’s ethics, Gadamer’s ethics is, up to a point, more ontological than that of Ricoeur’s. Gadamer sets *phronesis* in the center of hermeneutical experience (Gadamer 2004, 305) where for Ricoeur, *phronesis*, being as it is, something we cannot elude, still needs *phronimos* – that is the path that the man of *phronesis* follows to guide his life (Ricoeur 1992, 174).

Now, it seems that we must ask, to answer our initial question (what is practical wisdom?), firstly, what is hermeneutical experience, and secondly, what is the right path that man must follow? What we have here are two attempts, differently constructed, onto ethics (or, more correctly, on practical wisdom) but starting from hermeneutics. If Ricoeur assumes that ethics, as a movement towards the “good life” is something that requires

interpretation, Gadamer assumes, at least Gadamer from *Truth and Method*, that ethics pertains to understanding *per se*. Thus, if for Ricoeur, ethics is something that *ought to be* or ethics is something that we construct permanently (on path) when we interpret our life, or, to be more accurate, ethics can be understood as a “hermeneutical circle,..., by virtue of the back-and-forth motion between the idea of the “good life” and the most important decisions of our existence” (Ricoeur, 1992, 179), for Gadamer ethics is a hermeneutical experience *per se*. Choosing between an epistemological or an ontological ethics, to remain here in the spirit of truth and method, is not in question here, quite the opposite. A simple fact seems to appear: through Ricoeur and Gadamer, we can take a new look at an old concept changing the questions and using a current conceptual framework.

Thus, what is hermeneutical experience and what is the right path that man must follow to guide his life, are, in our hermeneutical approach, the key questions to be answered, but only to answer to our main question i.e., how contemporary hermeneutics thinks practical wisdom?

Hermeneutic experience and *phronesis*

Hermeneutical experience as the core of Gadamer hermeneutics asserts that in the very act of understanding application emerges (Gadamer 2004, xxix). Application is nothing more than *phronesis* where we always apply, instantaneous, some general rules on particular situations. Gerald L. Bruns asserts that Gadamer “thinks of understanding on the model of Aristotle’s concept of *phronesis*, or practical wisdom, which is a ground-level or dialectical mode of thinking different both from theoretical consciousness (*episteme*), or knowing what things are, and from technical know-how (*techné*), or knowing how things are made or how they work. *Phronesis* involves responsiveness to what particular situations call for in the way of action, where knowing how to act cannot be determined in advance by an appeal to rules, principles, or general theories” (Bruns 2004, 34). Thus, *understanding* as such acts as *phronesis*. However, a new question appears: establishing that understanding acts as *phronesis* we still need to know how practical wisdom manages to accomplish its main aim, i.e., “to act with regard to human goods.” (Aristotle 1962, 1140b20-1140b30).

Admitting together with Nicholas Davey that “hermeneutic experience is inseparable from an ethical recognition of the other and otherness” (Davey 2006, 9) we may still enquire to what extent does hermeneutic experience may have an ethical aim? Some authors like James Risser (Risser 1997, 110) assert that we should understand Gadamer’s hermeneutics not so much as a theory of a technique, but as a practice that requires moral wisdom. Richard J. Bernstein (Bernstein 1983, 145) goes even further in stipulating that for Gadamer understanding is a form of a

phronesis. Rober R Sullivan asserts “is also worthwhile to recall that the main theme of Gadamer's writings is not so much language as it is ethics” (Sullivan, 1989, 119), or even Günter Figal who considers that “philosophical hermeneutics is subordinate to historical consciousness, just as practical philosophy is subordinate to action and to the ‘practical knowledge’ that leads it” (Figal 2002, 103). To sum up all these ideas we may use P. Christopher Smith ideas that the core of Gadamer’s hermeneutics lies in Aristotle’s ethics (Smith 2003, 218).

Now it seems that philosophical hermeneutics has everything to do with ethics. Be that as it may, i.e., Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics relates with Aristotle’s ethics in more than one way, a critical question may appear: if understanding as such or hermeneutic experience relates to *phronesis* up to the point of identification how can we deconstruct hermeneutic experience to reach at phronesis end, i.e., human goods? In fact, Gadamer does not hold such a strong position. And if we are to relate his hermeneutics with phronesis a long detour is needed; detour which will have to consider his emphasis, from *Truth and Method* (1960), on tradition, belonging and dialogue. However, it is true that in a large number of late articles (*On the Possibility of a Philosophical Ethics* (1963), *The Ethics of Value and Practical Philosophy* (1982), *Friendship and Self-Knowledge: Reflections on the Role of Friendship in Greek Ethics* (1985), *Aristotle and Imperative Ethics* (1989)) Gadamer theoretical interest moves towards Aristotle’s ethics. But, except from one phrase, Gadamer does not merge his hermeneutics with *phronesis*. Let us see the paragraph in question: “moral knowledge does not climax in courage, justice, and so on, but rather in the concrete application that determines in the light of such knowledge what should be done here and now” (Gadamer 1999, 30). Here, moral knowledge (*phronesis*) as hermeneutic experience may be inquired. Up to a point our endeavor can be explicitly related to a research that tries to see how we can hit, in a moral decision, upon the *mean* of a concrete situation. To use here Gadamer’s insights:

“this means, however, that philosophical ethics finds itself in the same situation as everyone else. That which we consider right, which we affirm or reject, follows from our general ideas about what is good and right. It achieves its real determinacy, nevertheless, only from the concrete reality of the case. This is not a case of applying a universal rule. Just the opposite: it is the real thing we are concerned with, and for this the generic forms of the virtues and the structure of the “mean” that Aristotle points out in them offer only a vague schema. Thus it is *phronesis* — the virtue enabling one to hit upon the *mean* and achieve the concretization — which shows that something can

be done (...), not some faculty special to philosophers. On the contrary, those who deliberate on what is good and right in general see themselves as referring to this practical logos just like everyone else who has to put their ideas of what is good and right into action. Aristotle explicitly refers to the mistake of people who resort to theorizing and, instead of doing what is right, just philosophize about it.” (Gadamer 1999, 30)

Now, let us understand exactly what Gadamer is saying: *phronesis* is the virtue enabling one to *hit* upon the *mean* and achieve the concretization. A concretization - let us repeat Aristotle’s words “regarding to human goods.” Perhaps it is not useless to see here that Gadamer is using a peculiar verb – *to hit*. Thus, what *phronesis* does is that it enables one to hit the adequate thing to do in a certain situation. But is all this similar in the act of understanding as such?

Maybe what we are lacking is a clear definition of hermeneutics in order not to confuse it with *phronesis*: „Hermeneutics is primarily a practice, the art of understanding and of making something understood to someone else. It is the heart of all education¹ that wants to teach how to philosophize. *In it, what one has to exercise above all is the ear, the sensitivity for perceiving prior determinations, anticipations, and imprints that reside in concepts.* (my underlying)” (Gadamer 2007, 21)

The road of *phronesis*

Let us now turn our attention to Ricoeur. His philosophical anthropology, as some authors may call his entire work, is concerned with four major questions: Who speaks? Who acts? Who recounts his life? Who is the moral subject of imputation? And to some authors *Oneself as another* seems to be his major work. But, for our purposes, it is enough to emphasize that in *Oneself as another* we have some indications on “the right path that the man of *phronesis* follows to guide his life”. The French philosopher constructs his *little ethics* in three stages: “(1) the primacy of ethics over morality; (2) the necessity for the ethical aim to pass through the sieve of the norm; and (3) the legitimacy of recourse by the norm to the aim whenever the norm leads to impasses in practice” (Ricoeur 1992, 170), but were practical wisdom although “still looks like an appendix, (...) it should become the crucial chapter” (Ricoeur, 2002, 288.) But why should practical wisdom have such a major role? And if it does, we may assert that his ethics are based on practical wisdom? And, if that is the case, what is practical wisdom as Ricoeur thinks it? The intricate answer is “the practical wisdom we are seeking aims at reconciling Aristotle's *phronesis*, by way of Kant's

Moralität, with Hegel's *Sittlichkeit*. (Ricoeur 1992, 290).” With this answer Ricoeur manages to merge the *self*, *morality* and *ethical order* under a single concept – practical wisdom. Be that as it may, the question still stands: what is practical wisdom?

The critical literature on this specific question offers us some insights: John Wall in an interesting article shows that Ricoeur “develops a novel theory of moral phronesis” understood as “poetic creativity” which drives its necessity from Greek tragedy (Wall 2003). Although we may agree that Greek tragedy has, for Ricoeur, a fundamental value (see the *Interlude* in *Oneself as another*) is quite difficult to see how our moral decisions pertains to poetics. If our reading of Ricoeur is correct, Greek tragedy has a significant role only because it explains something that philosophy cannot, or, to use Ricoeur’s words “tragedy says something unique about the unavoidable nature of conflict in moral life and, in addition, outlines a wisdom (...) capable of directing us in conflicts” (Ricoeur 1992, 243.)

A more conceivable answer will have to consider, as Peter Kemp dose, the narrative theory developed by Ricoeur. Thus, practical wisdom will stand on “narrative condition of the ethical” i.e., life stories constructed in different traditions. Peter Kemp even stipulates that non-narrative condition of the ethical (i.e., laws, norms etc.) cannot exist *per se*, if they not pertain to a certain tradition (Kemp 1989). But the very fact that practical wisdom is caught between narrative condition and non-narrative condition of the ethical tells us nothing about the practice as such of practical wisdom. It is true, however, that Peter Kemp, following Ricoeur, introduces the concept of “summon self” as the upper limit on which we can envisage practical wisdom. But the *summon self* is, in fact, something that we cannot conceive on a philosophical debate.

Conclusion

Are we entitled to hold that hermeneutics is practical philosophy? The answer is, I think, twofold. The central role of *application* in every act of understanding or in any hermeneutical experience is up to a point of nondifferentiation identical to the one played in *phronesis*. Understanding adequately, if I can put it like this, what is to understand is identical to doing the right thing at the right moment; even if for the most parts of our lives we do not understand properly, and we do not do the right thing. But, if in the first case *application* is still present, even if we are not aware of it, in the second case, as Kant says, we know that we are not doing the right thing. Thus, hermeneutic experience differs radically from practical philosophy i.e., the role of application is altered by our one intention to altered it. In this case, perhaps we need, as Gadamer says, *hermeneutic virtue*—“that is, if we do not realize that it is essential first of all to understand the other

person if we are ever to see whether in the end perhaps something like the solidarity of humanity as a whole may be possible, especially in relation to our living together and surviving together—if we do not do this, then we will never be able to accomplish the essential tasks of humanity, whether on a small scale or large” (Gadamer 2007, 119).

Nevertheless², if it is safe to say that for Gadamer *phronesis* is embodied³ in his hermeneutical construction, this is not the case with Ricoeur. For Ricoeur *practical wisdom* stands only as the “crucial chapter” for his “little ethics”.

Notes

¹ For the role of education in *phronesis* see Shaun Gallagher 1993. „The Place of *Phronesis* in Postmodern Hermeneutics”. *Philosophy Today* 37: 298-305

² I tried to show, in another text, how such concept as *Bildung (culture)*, *Sensus Communis*, *Judgment and Taste* as central concepts of the humanist tradition for the human science (see part PART 1. *The question of truth as it emerges in the experience of art from Truth and Method*, Gadamer 2004) are as well central concepts inside practical philosophy. See Vasile Cătălin Bobb, *To what Extent Is and to What Extent It Is Not Hermeneutic Philosophy a Practical Philosophy* în *Studia UBB, Philosophia*, Vol.58(2013), No.3, pp.191-203.

³ Perhaps, in this context, to use *embodied phronesis* is an overstatement. Nevertheless, I think, I am not too far from the endeavor of Richard Kearney which develops, in his carnal hermeneutics, such a strong concept as *incarnate phronesis*. See Richard Kearney, *What is Carnal Hermeneutics?* *New Literary History*, 2015, 46: 99–124

References

- Aristotle.1962. *Nicomachean Ethics*. translated by M. Ostwald. New York: Macmillan
- Bauman, Zygmunt. 1993. *Postmodern Ethics*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Bernstein, Richard J. 1983. *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism. Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Davey, Nicholas. 2006. *Unique Understanding: Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Figal, Gunter. 2002. *The Doing of The Thing Itself*. in *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, edited by Robert J. Dostal. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg. 1999. *Hermeneutics, Religion and Ethics*. translation by Joel Weinsheimer. Yale: Yale University Press.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg. 2007. *The Gadamer Reader: A Bouquet of the Later Writings*. Edited by Richard E. Palmer. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.
- Gadamer, Hans-George. 2004. *Truth and Method*. translation by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. London, New York: Continuum.
- Gerald L Bruns. 2004. *On the Coherence of Hermeneutics and Ethics. An Essay on Gadamer and Levinas*. in Krajewski, Bruce (ed.). *Gadamer's Repercussions. Reconsidering philosophical hermeneutics*. Berkley: University of California Press.
- Kant, Immanuel. 1994. *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals*. translation by James W. Ellington. Hackett: Indianapolis.

- Kemp, T.P. 1989. Toward a Narrative Ethics: A Bridge Between Ethics and the Narrative Reflection of Ricoeur. T.P. Kemp, and D. Rasmussen (eds.). *The Narrative Path: The Later Works of Paul Ricoeur*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Ortega y Gasset, Jose. 2004. *Originea și epilogul filozofiei și alte eseuri filosofice*. traducerea de Sorin Mărculescu. București: Humanitas.
- Ricoeur, Paul. 1992. *Onself as Another*. translation by Kathleen Blamey. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Ricoeur, Paul. 2002. *Ethics and Human Capability: A Response*. in J. Wall, W. Schweiker, and D. Hall (eds.), *Paul Ricoeur and Contemporary Moral Thought*. New York: Routledge.
- Risser, James. 1997. *Hermeneutics and the Voice of the Other. Re-reading Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Singer, Peter (ed.). 1991. *A Companion to Ethics*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Smith, P. Christopher . 2003. *Phronēsis, the Individual, and the Community: Divergent Appropriations of Aristotle's Ethical Discernment in Heidegger's and Gadamer's Hermeneutics*. in M. Hoffer. *Gadamer Verstehen/Understanding Gadamer*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
- Sullivan, Rober R. 1989. *Political Hermeneutics: The Early Thinking of Hans Georg Gadamer*. Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Wall, John. 2003. Phronesis, Poetics, and Moral Creativity. *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 6(3):317-341.

Jon MILLS*

Toward a Theory of Myth

Abstract: Myth has a convoluted etymological history in terms of its origins, meanings, and functions. Throughout this essay I explore the signification, structure, and essence of myth in terms of its source, force, form, object, and teleology derived from archaic ontology. Here I offer a theoretic typology of myth by engaging the work of contemporary scholar, Robert A. Segal, who places fine distinctions on criteria of explanation versus interpretation when theorizing about myth historically derived from methodologies employed in analytic philosophy and the philosophy of science. Through my analysis of an *explanandum* and an *explanans*, I argue that both interpretation and explanation are acts of explication that signify the ontological significance, truth, and psychic reality of myth in both individuals and social collectives. I conclude that, in essence, myth is a form of inner sense.

Keywords: myth, truth, sign, meaning, creativity

The term “myth” is derived from the Greek *muthos* (μῦθος), meaning *word, speech*.¹ The term was used frequently by Homer (see *Odyssey* II.561; *Iliad* 9.443; 19.242) and other ancient poets, especially referring to the *mere word*. It is also referred to as *public speech* (*Odyssey*, I.358) as well as *conversation*. When combined with the word *logos* (λόγος), such as in the compound *muthologia* (μυθολογία), myth becomes a discourse on narrative. Myth as word, speech, discourse generically refers to the *thing said*, as *fact*, or *matter at hand*, as well as the *thing thought*, the *unspoken word*, revealing its *purpose* or *design*. This may be why the migration of the term was closely associated with the process of thinking itself: i.e., in Old Slavic, *myste* is equated with thought, as is *smūainim* in Old Irish, hence *I think*, perhaps derived from the Indo-European *mudh-*, to think, to *imagine*.

When Heidegger (1927) discusses the concept of logos and truth (ἀλήθεια), he tells us that “discourse” as logos “lets something be seen” by making it manifest and accessible to another party (§ 7, B). Like muthos, logos is a convoluted concept that has acquired many different meanings throughout the history of philosophy. Λόγος is customarily translated as “reason,” “meaning,” “judgment,” “intelligence,” “concept,” “word,” “definition,” “assertion,” “ground,” and “relationship,” which means it always succumbs to interpretation. Heidegger argues that its original, basic

* Emeritus Professor of Psychology & Psychoanalysis at the Adler Graduate Professional School in Toronto; email: millspsychologyikm@outlook.com

signification is “discourse.” In fact, Heidegger specifically refers to the logos that transpires in the speech act between interlocutors as the space where signification is acquired “in its relation to something in its ‘relatedness’” (p. 58). Here “interpretation” unfolds within a “relationship” where potential multiple meanings surface from a clearing based on a certain setting forth, exhibiting, laying out, recounting, and so forth, which transparently applies to any discourse on myth.

On the Signification of Myth

The transliteration of *muthos* as myth has acquired various significations, many of which have centered around a story, tale (see *Odyssey* 3.94; 4.324), saying, legend, or proverb. But unlike in Homer, where there is no distinction of true or false narratives (*Odyssey* II.492), modern and contemporary references to myth have acquired a pejorative meaning that stand in relation to derived etymologies from antiquity where discourse on myth began to be viewed as fiction and fable (Plato, *Phaedo*, 61b; *Republic*, 377a; Aristotle, *Meteorology*, 356b1). Like logos, *muthos* implies no reference to the truth or falsity of a narrative,² it is merely the reason, the ground of discourse, as matter of fact. Perhaps this is why when Robert Segal (2004) defines myth as “a story” (p. 4), he refrains from passing judgment on the truth or falsity of its claims (p. 6).

Given that words, hence myths, stand in relation to a string of signifiers where meaning is always descended from and connected to other signifiers in an ontic chain of relations to various experiential things that are signified in thought, myth will always retain a mercurial sense of undecidability. It is only when we assign a circumscribed determinate meaning that is conventionally adopted as a linguistic signifier or semiotic operative within a particular discourse, culture, or socio-symbolic structure that such undecidability is occluded. But this is merely a formal imposition of grammar that does not erase the *aporia* or uncertainty of the term itself and its chthonic ambiguity of meanings left open to interpretation, impasse, and deferral to a web of unconscious relations where semiotic properties are virtually infinite and indeterminate. It is for this reason that we prescribe social conventions of meaning and construct operational definitions in order to provide a structural template of fixed determinations of the signification of certain words, while all along ignoring the relativity and fluidity of discourse. Here *muthos* is just as much an affront on truth as is any other mode of discourse, including science, with the exception that some discourses are more persuasive than others.

If we accept the premise that any discourse by definition imports an overdetermination of meaning, where undecidability, relativity, and an

infinite chain of semiotic deferrals leave an etymological uncertainty, or have undergone historical transmutations and variations when applied to other languages and cultures that efface the true question of origins, then the most we can hope for in detecting any original meaning is the derivative, the trace. This leads us to ask, What is the essence of myth? Can it be deconstructed, so to speak, or analyzed in a manner that can advance our ways in which we theorize about the theory of myth?

Toward a Theoretic Typology of Myth

What I am particularly interested in addressing are not specific theories of myth, or specific myths themselves, but rather what constitutes a good theory. As Segal (1999, p. 1) points out, myth is an applied subject that always appeals to broader categories that are then in turn applied to the case of myth. As a result, comparative and discipline-specific analyses of myth tend to be dubious due to the arbitrary and turbid nature of the way in which they vary in their approach to investigating myth. Furthermore, a particular approach to theorizing already imports certain epistemological assumptions about the very nature of the subject matter, such as what the theory is supposed to do or be used for, or what it is about, or accounts for, or signifies, what it is supposed to describe, and so on. For this reason, many of the leading modern theorists of myth introduce explicit presuppositions about the way things are in their very approach to myth, such as myth is a subset of religion, accompanies ritual, serves a practical function, is the primitive counterpart to science, or is a proto-logical view of describing and explaining the physical world, the cosmos, gods, society, the mind and human relations, the process of civilization, cultural artifacts and values, and so forth. Here Segal (1999, p. 2) argues that comparative theories of myth often engage answers to fundamental questions such as, What is the (a) origin, (b) function, (c) subject matter or referent, and (d) meaning of myth?

Let us attempt to expound upon this typology or principle of categorization. First, *What is myth about?* Any reference to subject matter already presupposes various ontological assertions, so let us begin with *origin*. Origin is about foundations, archaic ground, hence history and genesis. So whatever myth refers to, it must engage a point of origination, which signifies both meaning and function, and is therefore overdetermined in surplus and value on any discourse we adopt on myth. If we begin with history and archaic ontology, where myth emerged, then we are by definition adopting a discourse about *being human* even if we are attempting to define a particular feature, function, and/or reason for positing myth. If myth is always *about* something, then it imports ontology, namely, the material world, culture, anthropology, cosmogony, the supernatural, and so

on despite the sociological and psychological functions they serve. So first of all, myth is about ontology—what is purportedly real—even if only symbolic or bears out to be a false claim.

The *function* of myth is varied, sociologically diverse, and ultimately idiosyncratic to individual persons despite participating in common collective beliefs and practices. Functions of myth may be designed to bind social collectives, such as in religion, facilitate roles and rituals, or have applied personal purposes and delineations, but they often serve a job or pragmatic task, such as a utilitarian description, interpretation, observation, deliberation, way of being, explanation, and/or expression of human phenomena, even when the subject matter is not about the human being. In this way, myth is about utility, service, helpfulness, and efficacy.

The *meaning* of myth can be (a) literal, (b) figurative, (c) metaphorical, (d) symbolic, (e) semiotically circumscribed, such as in a creed, doctrine, or ideology, and (f) imaginative, as suggested by its etymology, which is always open to hermeneutics and fantasy. In this way, myth can be personal and collective, hence universal regardless of its form and content, and open to an infinite chain of significations, meaning relations, and referents without being predetermined or confined in its ostensive definition or purpose. In this way, both function and meaning may be interdependent within a rubric of irreducibility. Although function and meaning may operate outside of the ontic conditions of archaic ground, they are not ontologically independent from origin. Following the principle of sufficient reason, every event must stand in relation to an archaic object that is derived from its origins, in this case, the phenomena of myth.

Critique of theory is often not discussed in the humanities: theory is merely presumed according to discipline-specific norms. The same applies to studies of myth, and theories about theoretics that are taken at face value rather than critiqued for their disposition, structure, methodology, epistemological verity, and viability as an explanatory model of knowledge. This becomes even more nebulous if we concede that theory itself is a limited medium to access the meaning of myth. Rather than critique the value and limits of studies in mythology, we may see how sound theory is a necessary requirement that guides research methodology. In general, theory of myth should be:

1. descriptive,
2. coherent,
3. expository,
4. generalizable,
5. meaningful, and
6. pragmatic; namely, useful.

To what degree is theory and method arbitrary, contextual, contingent, relative, personalized, exploratory—hence experimental, and non-conclusive? Does theory only provide parameters for explanation and meaning, or does it guide method? If so, are theory and method virtually the same thing, or merely closely related even though they are subject to categorical distinctions? If one is the framework in which meaning is created and the other its application, then identity and similarity must be differentiated by their modes of instantiation. When a method or application is followed and posited to derive from and/or engender theory, then the dialectical ontic nature of theory and method become more difficult to differentiate as they are mutually implicative, and hence interrelated. And if this is the case, how do they stand in relation to individual and cultural differences, social and anthropological discrepancies, historical and gender variances? And can a methodological approach to myth, in theory, transpire without relying on theory? In other words, can a methodology actually be executed devoid of any theoretic directing the method or procedural actions themselves?

Every discipline has a set of theoretical orienting principles guiding inquiry, research, and methodological process, whether presumptive or not. Is this notion of criteria any different for the humanities versus the empirical researcher? Perhaps this binary is unnecessary to evoke, for we may make empirical observations on the social objectivity of the existence of myth, but not necessarily on its cultural meanings, although we can generally agree that the study of myth reflects the human, semiotic, and hermeneutical sciences without devolving into the discourse of natural science.

It was Dilthey (1883) who proposed the distinction between the human sciences based upon investigating and understanding the motivations and meanings inherent to the experiential subject or human being versus that of the natural sciences, which is concerned with the impersonal forces and organizations of nature. Whereas the *Geisteswissenschaften* focus on the science of mental processes and social systems within a class of human events, the *Naturwissenschaften* focus on the domain of the natural world. Therefore, the bifurcation that is often forged between the human and natural sciences takes as its premise that nature and human experience are mutually exclusive categories. However, the distinction lies in the methodology and discourse each discipline employs. What was crucial for Dilthey in positing distinctions between the natural and human sciences is the pivotal concept of “lived experience” (*Erlebnis*), the irreducibility of subjectivity that prereflectively (unconsciously) encounters the immediate presence of reality, that which is present “to me” as an internal sense, not as a given external object or datum of consciousness, but as an immediate internal mediacy. Here the subject-

object distinction is obscured, if not sutured: Psyche is the lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*).

Although this nature *vs.* human science differentiation was met with criticism due to the fact that human subjectivity and sociality are part of the natural world, and that critics (from neo-Kantians such as Wilhelm Windelband and Heinrich Rickert, as well as Freud) would claim are equally open to scientific scrutiny and can, in principle, find simpatico, this categorical distinction has nevertheless often been employed to distinguish the humanities from the physical sciences. But regardless of which approach we adopt, we cannot evade making ontological assertions. To say that a linguistic, semiotic, or scientific paradigm describes or explains a phenomenon, even if mired in uncertainty and impasse, is to evoke a referent that it is still *about* something. The mode of discourse does not displace the signified object(s) in question. We cannot elude the question of truth and realism no matter what discourse we adopt. Metaphysics always has a way of coming back to bite our back.

The subject matter within a human science model is that of the experiential person and collective social life contextualized within a genus of human events; and impersonal aspects of the natural world are not typically part of its scope or locus. But myth has very often been historically offered as statements of explanation about the natural world. Yet, because human sciences are interpretive and target the meaning of experience, by definition they become hermeneutic. Because myth is necessarily predicated on human speech and language, and involves the pursuit of understanding human motivation and constructing meaning through interpretive intersubjective exchange, it may be considered a hermeneutic science.

For Dilthey and others, interpretation, understanding (*Verstehen*), or comprehension becomes a method for investigating the human sciences in relation to life-contexts, while the natural sciences are confined to sensory observation, description, testing, and explanation of causality and their effects. However, this distinction is not devoid of certain problems especially when rules or criteria for understanding may become opaque or overlap, as they do in the social sciences where methods of comprehensibility straddle the two methodological domains. Here it can be argued that hermeneutics never fully escapes the charge of slipping into relativism or recalcitrant subjectivism, given that, following certain rules of discourse versus what someone “really meant,” can easily be two different things. The same applies to the scientific method where testability, verification, and falsifiability are subject to epistemic interpretation rather than pristine explanatory objectivity. Likewise, exegetical interpretation of a text or deconstructive praxis, and the application of that interpretation, may readily transform or alter it from its original meaning or purpose, even if we presuppose a hermeneutic circle. In other words, the very act of translation

itself institutes reinterpretations of interpretations that can potentially spin on in circularity or regress to a point that meaning is foreclosed from its original signification.

Segal on Myth

Robert A. Segal is arguably one of the most accomplished contemporary scholars of myth. Throughout his vast writings on the topic, Segal's stylistic approach to theorizing about myth is to assume and exegetically articulate the positions of various theorists on myth, particularly those after the rise of modernity, only to add his own critique. He generally shies away from taking a stance on the truth or falsity of myth, instead focusing on its origin and function, but there is a tension in his thinking influenced by his affinity for exactitude and science. Segal has largely adopted methodologies derived from Anglo-American analytic philosophy, logical positivism, and the philosophy of science with particular historical resonances to Russell, A.J. Ayer, Quine, Kuhn, Popper, and Grünbaum, which he has applied to his studies on myth, anthropology, and religion. He particularly focuses on distinctions between explanation and interpretation championed by R.G. Collingwood (1946), William Dray, Peter Winch, and Gilbert Ryle (1971) as they are related to natural, social, and human science categories.

Although Segal generally analyzes why myths arise and examines the purpose they serve, he also becomes preoccupied with how theorists offer either interpretations or explanations about the structure and verity of myth. For example, the views of Tylor and Frazer who claim that myth is the primitive counterpart to modern science make myth incompatible with science, which is assumed to be true, and so hence makes myth false, despite the fact that they both serve different functions. Myth here is taken literally. By contrast, the view of myth as anything but archaic or prescientific either sidesteps the question or else makes myth true, but only true symbolically or psychologically. In other words, this form of truth only applies to human nature or society, but not the physical world. Eliade, Malinowski, Bultmann, Jonas, Freud, and Jung would mainly fall into this camp. So here myths are not about material reality, only psychic reality; whether individual or collective is a matter of emotional identification with the subject matter mediated through imagination.

Regardless of the historical origins and functions of myth, much of Segal's analyses revolve around myth as an explanation of the world, whether antiquated, incorrect, or simply a false claim in relation to science is moot. But why does myth have to meet the challenge of science? Science merely explains while myth may serve many functions science cannot. But this all depends upon what we mean by science, hence to *know* (< Lat.

scientia, from *scire*, to understand). In the social sciences—psychoanalysis for instance, to offer a theory that explains psychological conditions and states of mind within social collectives, myth attempts to present the complexity of intrapsychic, intersubjective, and communal arrangements within a given culture, an unconscious manifestation of the need to make the unconscious conscious. For psychoanalysis, myth reveals in disguised forms all of humanity’s desires, conflicts, defences, emotions, traits, dispositions, longings, and complexes that expose the personal and collective plight of humankind. Here myth has psychological significance for masses and functions in psychic economy unconsciously. Myth serves to symbolize culture and the symbolic value inherent in culture. In this way, myth as functionalism serves the overdetermined systems of society, and provides regulation to constant change, such that there is order, purpose, and structure to sociocultural networks via the narrative. A narrative in turn provides meaning, which is at once open to interpretation, even when attempts at explanation fail. Yet the notion of explanation is itself controversial.

For Segal (2014a), “Explanation provides causes. Interpretation provides meanings” (p. 25). In comparing Max Weber, Clifford Geertz, and Paul Ricoeur, he notes an “ontological” difference between explanation and interpretation: causality is physical, while meaning is mental or psychical. Although Weber (1968, v1, pp. 4-5; 21-21) collapses the distinction and makes mentation a causal process in its own right, akin to psychoanalysis, whereas psychic meaning is determinative, Geertz maintains a division on their incompatible ways in which they account for intentional behavior and their consequential effects. For Geertz (1973, p. 43), interpretation applies to a particular, while explanation applies to a universal or generality. Ricoeur (1981, pp. 155, 158, 161), on the other hand, wants to maintain the reconcilable compatibility or consilience between explanatory and interpretive methodologies because they harmonize one another and provide answers to different questions, at once explanatory as well as interpretive (Segal, 2014a, p. 29). In the end, Segal believes that Ricoeur’s conciliatory attempt fails because he fails to keep the distinctions apart: reconciling meanings with causes becomes our task at hand, and Segal (2014a, p. 33) seems to be more comfortable with reducing meaning to cause.

According to Segal (2014b), “Any explanation starts with the effect and works backwards to the cause” (p. 93). But why should explanation predicate causality? For Segal (2009, pp. 69-72), if I read him correctly, an explanation is a reference to “proof” and “causality,” which requires “testing,” hence a privileging of empiricism, objectivity, and the scientific method, while other theories of explanation may rest on metaphysical foundational principles wedded to logic, non-contradiction, and internally

coherent argumentation. Sometimes theories of explanation clash with one another, especially when they do not conform to the tenets of scientific experimentation, testability, verification, falsifiability, validity, replication, and reliability of measures. But this privileging of one method over another may simply be begging the question of a master discourse on method, especially when science reiterates its own ideologies when it fails to explain phenomena outside of its narrow scope of empirical observation, description, and experimentation that cannot control for variables, environments, and measurements that fall outside of the laboratory (Mills, 2015). That is why myth is part of the humanities and not the natural sciences.

As the gadfly of the Jungian world, Segal has offered a sustained critique of Jung. Recently he has applied his scheme of scientific critique using the categories of explanation versus interpretation to interrogate Jung's theory of myth, but it is the scheme that I wish to examine here rather than Jungian theory, as I find it applicable to any critique of myth. Segal (2014b, pp. 82-84) believes that any good theory that is scientific must be testable, and that we simply cannot assume tenets or propositions without arguing for them. Nothing serious or worthy of merit is to be presupposed. Nor are they applicable (hence generalizable) without solid grounds for accepting them. And they must be predictive, not post hoc or ex post facto constructions. At the very least, an *internal criteria* must be met that satisfies the framework of a good theory, and this is what I would impart to internal consistency that is coherent and non-contradictory, which conforms to the parameters of what I would consider to be a sound theory of myth. But a certain degree of *external criteria* must also be met, according to Segal, to make it generalizable, hence valid. Not only is a good theory applicable and subject to the probabilistic laws of predictability, any test would have to address the viability of the theory: here testability automatically assumes the theory will be subject to scrutiny. Will it pass muster? Segal is also demanding evidence. No proposition is proof of itself. Nothing can be predicated into existence, let alone assume others will buy its applicability, meaningfulness, or pragmatic value. Evidence is inexorable. It is an essential requirement, a necessary condition for any theory to be true. But is it a sufficient condition? And what about predictability? Should this be a defining theory of myth like it is of science? Is this not a category mistake?

Segal (2014b) makes an important claim: "an interpretation must be supported by an explanation" (p. 83). But we may ask, Why? And if so, is there any real difference between the two? Segal singles out the criterion of "persuasiveness" as a central feature in how a theory is applied. It seems to me that both an interpretation and an explanation must satisfy the criterion of persuasiveness if a theory is to have any merit. For Segal (1992), as for

the hermeneuticists, an interpretation applies to meaning, while an explanation applies to the question of origin—why a myth was created and lasts. But a meaningful interpretation may also apply to an explication of the accounts of origin. They need not be binary categories or antinomies. They may be mutually implicative and ontically interdependent, what Segal calls “interlocking.” There is no need to cleave them off from each other as they are both operative within any meta-representational framework that addresses the meaning, origin, and function of theory.

When Segal (2014b) defines the meaning of “explanation,” he is referring to “the account—of mind, the world, culture, or society—that is presupposed by the interpretation” (p. 83). So here explanation and interpretation are not bifurcated even though we could argue that an interpretation is an attempt to provide a meaningful explication of events or a state of affairs, while an explanation is a cryptic form of interpretation disguised as certitude. In the end, Segal insists that a good theory of myth be justified, is generalizable, and predictive, not simply the ability to interpret a story.

From Explanandum to Explanans

An *explanandum* describes a phenomenon to be explained, not the phenomenon itself, while an *explanans* seeks to adduce an answer or explanation to account for the phenomenon—its reason(s), purpose, origins, and so forth. While the *explicandum* is that which gets explicated, the *explicans* is that which gives the explication. Although an explanation attempts to account for the coming into being of a phenomenon, it is more than that. It always implies, if not literally evokes, the question of causality by attempting to explain the ground or preconditions that bring something about, such as certain antecedent events or the necessary conditions (not sufficient ones) that are temporally and materially a priori. So contrary to predicate or propositional logic, which is merely concerned with the meaning of words or expressions and their formal systemic relations and operations, or statements that make something comprehensible, an *explanans* is much more far-reaching—it is about ontology.

On the one hand, an interpretation is an attempt to describe a phenomenon, on the other, an explanation attempts to offer more, that is, how and why a phenomenon occurs. But so does an interpretation—each are about explication. So how does an interpretation differ from an explanation? When applied to the question of myth, I argue that both interpretive and explanatory models are equally making ontological claims, even if they are tarrying in epistemic uncertainty when it comes to the question of causality. Recall that for the ancients, a cause (*aitia*) was the

reason or explanation for something happening, which is always overdetermined.

If myth is a declarative attempt to make phenomena comprehensible, then we must contend that it is offering an explanation of phenomena, even if contestable, or it would not have any currency to grant meaning to the human mind. Whether it is true or false is another issue, one we should adjourn for now. The prowess of myth over the eons seems to coalesce into many different meaning structures that wed interpretation, explanation, emotion, feeling, aesthetics, parable, morality, spirituality, and higher rational insights into a psychic medium that is historically and culturally enshrined within the development of human civilization. To say that myth is merely about one thing, or serves merely functions—psychological, sociological, anthropological, and so on—is to miss the point that myth is ultimately about ontology, about what it signifies, that which is ultimately real, even if presented as fiction or fantasy. In other words, the imaginary is real. And anytime we evoke the notion of what is really real, we cannot bracket or suspend the question of determinism. But why should we grant the narrative—the “story”—the status of offering a theory of causality? Why should we assume an *explanans* has anymore epistemological weight or verity to phenomenal description—to the *explanandum*? Does not an explanation have multiple threads, multiple significations, hence an overdetermination and surplus of meaning and value, not to mention causal-semiotic strands of deferral to an infinite chain of associations and signifiers? This logically implies that no single explanation is ever complete or unequivocally valid, rather only a partial attempt at conceptualizing and describing phenomena.

The Truth of Myth and the Myth of Truth

Eliade (1963) adopts a particular view held by archaic societies that myth means a “true” story, whether literally or a narrative believed to be true by relevant social collectives, which holds sacred socioreligious significance of transcendental spiritual value explicating “beginnings” or the coming into existence of reality itself by supernatural provenance. Since the Western epistemological turn in modernity, and the hermeneutical narrative turn in more contemporary postmodern times, we may concede that our understanding and consensus of the meaning of “truth” remains hotly contested. Whether we adopt Eliade’s affinities for supernaturalism or not, his position that myth narrates sacred history is itself an explanation, for it attempts to delineate a causal factor in positing an account of “creation”—the ground of archaic ontology from which myth arises. Here Eliade may be accused of obfuscating truth with reality.³ One person’s truth may be their

psychic reality subject to relativism, illusion, projection, and fantasy, if not delusion, hence their phenomenal experience of the world, while another demands that reality must conform to the stronghold of objective (demonstrated and proven) empirical and material facts in order to be flown under the banner of truth, a debate we do not have to continue at length here.

If interpretive and explanatory models are used to describe and lend understanding to phenomena, which always evoke the question of ontology, as I argue, then they inevitably engage the questions of truth and epistemology, even if unintended or silent on the matter. What does this imply? This would suggest that any discourse on myth simultaneously speaks about epistemic verity and/or the truth or falsity of its predications or claims. But what do we mean by truth? If mythos and logos cannot elude the question of truth, then would not any discourse on truth equally imply that a certain mythology is at play? The myth that there is Truth, as if it were a single, unified condition, entity, or unquestionable empirical state of affairs that transcends all phenomenal realities and fulfills every epistemic criterion imaginable is simply a fantasy. If this were otherwise, then no one would be debating the question, scope, and meaning of truth. It would simply be accepted as *given*, as part of our natural thrownness. As I have critiqued elsewhere (Mills, 2014), discourse on truth is not about “correctness” or so-called empirical facts, rather it is about what phenomenally *appears* in the real world of ontic relations. Both the methods of interpretation and explanation are making propositional assertions about truth-claims, and truth-claims stand in relation to what they ultimately signify or represent, namely, onto-phenomenal conditions.

Truth may be better understood by revisiting the ancient notion of *aletheia* (ἀλήθεια), where truth is defined as a process of disclosedness or unconcealedness. Truth appears as the manifestation of particularized expressions of the psyche-in-society that have their source in an unconscious ontology teleologically motivated to disclose itself. This applies to myth, or humanity would never have invented such discourse to begin with, for it *speaks* to a collective need to understand and recapitulate archetypal experience of-and-in the world. Here the very conditions for truth to be disclosed must be conditioned on unconscious experience. Myth as disclosure through discourse reveals the unconcealed longings of the human race to describe, interpret, and explain human experience that could not be articulated otherwise before the age of reason and science. But even today, such mythic language can never be replaced by the antiseptic discourse of science, for staid or stolid approaches to explicating lived experience never live up to the psychological needs for satisfaction,

emotionality, and enjoyment. It is a primal phenomenon arising from the pulsional desire to interpret, expatiate, and know the world.

The truth of myth is both a universal and particularized form of disclosedness—an appearance of a much more complex process that may only reveal itself a bit at a time as partial unconcealment—as event, a moment, an instance. We must graft more meaning structures onto our interpretations to expand and complicate them, where there are richer and more robust and variegated theories that fall under the categorical rubric of what we call explanation. For example, the theory of evolution is an interpretation of human origin, but is it not an unqualified explanation, albeit plausible and scientifically probable. It is very much a scheme or set of hypotheses that have explanatory power. Evolutionary biology may very well be a necessary condition but not a sufficient one to explain human origins. The same equally applies to myth. Myth, like religion, attempts to answer to origins—to ontology—as does physics and evolution, only on the condition that it is a narrative *about* origins, hence an interpretation of human experience and valuation—itsself a phenomenon or appearance of our psychic expressions signifying something that is purportedly attempting to transcend human subjectivity, namely, archaic ontology. But given that myth is universal to humanity, only the particularities vary, any theory of myth must concede that it is merely a partial *explanans* of the *explanandum*.

Can a myth be true, or is it by definition false? Notice the binary logic involved in the question, presuming that the predicate “true” is valued over that which is “false.” This question always stands in relation to epistemology and the discursive or procedural methods we adopt, as well as the definitions we attribute to the signifier “truth.” Is truth merely about correctness, internal consistency, logical form? If so, this conforms to a theory of discourse we as collectives or cultures define through semantic or linguistic convention. Or is it about fact? But how do we determine fact and evidence independent of human consensus? Even scientific models of metaphysical realism that profess to “discover” truth and “natural laws” cannot escape from our human subjectivity in offering interpretations of those laws, even when submitted to rigorous testing exposing the problems of verification, falsification, replication, reliability, validity, observation selection effects, anthropic bias, and refutation of conjectures. All constants evolve, change, mutate, and rematerialize in other forms—the transmogrification of reality. From physics to myth, humanity cannot help but invent and reinvent its own so-called truths. Explanation is as much a myth at explicating causality as is science; yet the matter becomes not truth, but rather plausibility based on statistical probabilities and predictive validity, the gambling intellect that places value in attempting to predict possible future conditions and events. Science predicts as it explains, while myth is an explanation of interpretation, itself predictable.

The Essence of Myth

A proper theory of myth must have several components. We have identified four thus far: (1) referent, (2) origin, (3) meaning, and (4) function. Setting aside the subject matter, let us start with origin, and I will compare this to archaic ontology appropriating Aristotle's categorization of causality as our guide. I wish to avoid the, at times, simplistic (parsimonious) models of science, but they are subsumed in a more comprehensive explication of determinism, or more appropriately, overdetermination (Mills, 2013), so I will include them here without succumbing to reductionism.

A myth must have a (1) source, (2) force, (3) form, (4) object, and (5) goal. Because mythology is archetypal, that is, it is rooted in the archaic development of civilization and language, it is by definition a human invention, hence a cultural phenomenon that makes attempts to explain via consciousness (interpretation) origins, that is, the cosmos, gods, Being, and so forth. Although the *source* is, strictly speaking, mediated through human cognition, it attempts to answer to the question of fundamental ontology. The *force* or essence of myth is process, or the revealed organizing principles behind the narrative. The *form* is the organizational style, typology, categorization, formula, patterning, and/or genre of the story, often poetical, metaphorical, aesthetic, moralistic, and brimming with latent meanings, usually revolving around the development of characters and plot within metanarratives and meta-representations. As human linguistic inventions, they are psychologically mediated through imagination, so imaginal properties suffuse mythic structure. The *object* of myth refers to contents, properties, place, context, contingencies, and fantasies, as by contemporary definition myth is a fictional or illusory product of the imagination, although it can be taken as real, literate, material, signficatory, and/or suggestive of a greater transcendental object or reality. But to a minor degree, the object of myth (the overarching narrative or meta-structure) is intimately linked with its *goal*, namely, its purpose. The purpose or aim is both to interpret and explain—hence to assign meaning and value to—the narrative.

Myth furthermore discloses an intent or *telos*, even if supple, hence revealing the agency behind the story. Here the meaning of myth reveals the emotional mind, and often has aesthetic and ethical dimensions and utilities in conveying a message(s) that reverberates in the psyche and in social collectives through identificatory unconscious resonances. Hence a myth conveys or expresses the human soul. It is only the human being who can generate and understand myth, even if professed to be about genesis or come from an original cause outside the human mind.

As human creation, myth may be said to be socially constructed as the ethos and expression of culture, or it can be solely individualistic, subjective, and private. Although it is unconsciously motivated, and displaces the vast array of human affects, conflicts, desires, defenses, fantasies, and their compromises, it ultimately has a telos, purpose, or objective, the goal of which is to communicate internal experience, discharge pulsions, contain anxiety, and engender meaning that usually transcends mere conscious intent. Here myth is overdetermined, that is, it provides meta-meaning and has multiple functions that resonate on many parallel processes of mentation.

With stipulations, it may also be argued that meaning and function are equiprimordial, but without equating the two or collapsing them into the same category: while all functions convey meaning they may not be meaningful. They may be understood, have a practical structure, reason, and so forth, but they may offer little or no psychological solace. Functions may serve a purpose or have practicalities but may be devoid of value to the psyche. Myths logically must transcend mere function, or they would cease to lose all value, unless we were to concede that masses remain largely unconscious of their need for myths and simply are conditioned sheep in the meadow. But even if we were to yield this hypothesis, the sociological organizations that promulgate and keep mythic discourse alive speak to greater communal narratives of how myth serves both utility and meaning in collectives, or it would have disappeared from socialization practices altogether. The prime example is religion. Religion will never disappear because it serves equiprimordial needs and meaning for humanity.

Myth is an inherent and indispensable aspect of human civilization that disperses its particularities into the social fabric of every culture, which has its own regional contents, contexts, and intent, yet it cannot stand outside of its own origins, namely, human consciousness, even when its subject matter is about cosmos, theos, and prebeginnings. Yet given that consciousness is conditioned by unconscious process, following Freud and Jung, we may conclude that myth is a collective unconscious projection of its own mythical character. Because myth is the exteriorization of interiority, myth becomes the realization of archaic unconscious ontology. As the self-externalization of its own internal lived-value, conscious identification with myth both validates and fulfills the felt-qualia of one's living interior or feeling soul.

Hence *qua* myth annuls any claim to pure epistemology and objectivity, even in science, because models of human knowledge by necessity contain their own mythic structure. Here the meaning-making powers of myth find their way into every conceivable venue in which we construct, explain, and experience the world. Because myth is always the expression of human imagination, and specifically unconscious fantasy, we

may conceive of myth, like the dream, as a symptom of humanity. Myth communicates something to us and for us, hence it has a sense. Not only does it have a function, meaning, and purpose, it makes sense. In its essence, myth is a form of inner sense.

Notes

¹ Initiated in the 19th Century, and now in its 9th revised edition, Liddell and Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon* is generally considered among classicists to be the finest compilation to date of the classical works of antiquity where the etymological sources of ancient words derive and correspond to contemporary linguistics and modes of discourse. All references to μῦθος begin on p. 1151, Vol. 2.

² See Anderson (2004, p. 61) for a discussion.

³ Eliade (1963) asserts that "the myth is regarded as a sacred story, and hence a 'true history,' because it always deals with *realities*. The cosmogonic myth is 'true' because the existence of the World is there to prove it; the myth of the origin of death is equally true because man's mortality proves it" (p. 6). Here we may say that Eliade is conflating myth with an actual portrayal of history and that such a portrayal conveys actual realities, which needs defined and demonstrated, hence proved. A myth may be true insofar as it is an artifact of culture, but it does not mean that it signifies a true reality apart from the experience of the subject or social collective. And just because the world exists does not make the myth real or true apart from the believer. The existence of the world does not remotely prove the reality of the myth other than it is an anthropological occasion or psychological projection. Projections do not necessarily correspond to objective reality. And just because we are mortal and die, does not mean that a myth of the origins of death proves it any more than the biological fact that we cease to be, as any anatomist or mortician will tell you.

References

- Anderson, Albert A. (2004). Mythos, Logos, and Telos: How to Regain the Love of Wisdom. In A.A., Anderson, S.V. Hicks, & L. Witkowski (Eds.), *Mythos and Logos: How to Regain the Love of Wisdom*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Aristotle. *Meteorology*. In J. Barnes (Ed.). *The Complete Works of Aristotle. 2 Vols.* (The revised Oxford trans.). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984, pp. 555-625.
- Collingwood, R.G. (1946). *The Idea of History*. T.M. Knox (Ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Dilthey, W. (1883/1923). *Introduction to the Human Sciences*. R.J. Betanzos, Trans. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979.
- Eliade, Mircea (1963). *Myth and Reality*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Geertz, Clifford (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- Heidegger, M. (1927). *Being and Time*. J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson (Trans.). San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1962.
- Homer. (800 B.C.E.). *The Odyssey*. Samuel Butler (Trans). <http://classics.mit.edu/Homer/odyssey.html>
- *The Iliad*. Samuel Butler (Trans). <http://classics.mit.edu/Homer/iliad.html>
- Liddell, H.G. & Scott, R. (1843). *A Greek-English Lexicon*. 2 Vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

- Mills, Jon. (2015). Psychoanalysis and the Ideologies of Science. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, 35:24–44.
- _____. (2014). Truth. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 62(2), 267-293.
- _____. (2013). Freedom and Determinism. *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 41(2), 101-118.
- _____. Plato. *Phaedo*. In *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, eds. E. Hamilton & H. Cairns. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961, pp. 40-98.
- _____. *Republic*. In *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, eds. E. Hamilton & H. Cairns. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961, pp. 575-844.
- _____. Ricoeur, Paul (1981). *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*. Trans. & Ed., J.B. Thompson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ryle, Gilbert (1971). *Collected Papers*. 2 Vols. London: Hutchinson.
- Segal, Robert A. (2014a). Weber, Geertz, and Ricoeur on Explanation and Interpretation. *Bulletin for the Study of Religion*, 43(1), 25-33.
- _____. (2014b). Explanation and Interpretation. In R.A. Jones (Ed.), *Jung and the Question of Science*, pp. 82-97. London: Routledge.
- _____. (2009). Religion as Ritual: Roy Rappaport's Changing Views from Pigs of the Ancestors (1968) to Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity (1999). In M. Stausberg (Ed.), *Contemporary Theories of Religion: A Critical Companion*, pp. 66-82. London: Routledge.
- _____. (2004). *Myth: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- _____. (1999). *Theorizing About Myth*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
- _____. (1992). *Explaining and Interpreting Religion*. New York: Lang.
- Weber, Max (1968). *Economy and Society, Vol. 1*. Trans., E. Fischhoff; Eds., G. Roth & C. Wittich. New York: Bedminster Press.

Nicu GAVRILUȚĂ *

The New Technologies and Camouflaged Mythologies of Transhumanism

Abstract: The present crisis caused by the Covid 19 virus brings about worldwide debates about the taming of human nature in the sense of improving our biological and genetic endowment. The new technologies, with all their promises, upsides and hazards, play an important part in this. These debates continue older ones about improving the human species and gradually transforming it into a posthuman, technologically augmented entity. The philosophical movement that holds these ideas is called *transhumanism*. Our thesis is that transhumanism – a stage in the evolution of the human species towards posthumanity – is saturated with the camouflaged presence of very old myths (the myth of human invincibility, the myth of eternal youth, the myth of immortality, the myth of human ubiquity, the myth of *homo deus*, the myth of *deus otiosus*). These myths are consubstantial with the human being, and therefore they will survive even in a possibly trans/posthumanist future.

Keywords: human nature, new technologies, magic, myths, transhumanism, posthumanism, extropianism.

1. What is transhumanism?

Invoking the German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk, George Bondor reminds us of the almost agonistic dispute between two drives characteristic of human nature: the one towards cruel *barbarism*, on one hand, and the one towards a stabilizing process of *taming* human nature, on the other. As a matter of fact, the two human drives coexist. However, one of them prevails at a given time. The present situation, caused by the evil unleashed by Covid 19, enables us to argue that the drive towards the *taming* of our human nature in its biological version is having the upper hand. There are also extreme forms of this drive. One of them is *genetic manipulation*. "Is there the danger of unrestrained use of genetic interventions with a view to a better conservation of the human being, to defending and saving the species? For instance, by the genetic selection of births, so that the new individual should be endowed with a higher biological resilience and even a higher degree of intelligence?" (Bondor, 2020, pp. 92-93). Indeed, there is. This tendency to better the human nature with the aid of genetic and technical tools is called *transhumanism*.

The issue of transhumanism continues to stir contentious reactions worldwide. Western literature is engaged in polemics about transhumanism. Its governing

* Professor, PhD, Department of Sociology and Social Work, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iasi, Romania; email: nicolas@uaic.ro

ideas were clearly expressed in a “transhumanist manifesto” in 2002, its main authors being two remarkable philosophers: Max More (a British-born American) and Nick Bostrom (A Swedish-born professor at Oxford). The latter also wrote an informative history of transhumanist thinking, accessible at <http://www.nickbostrom.com/papers/history.pdf> (Mărgineanu, 2017, p. 110). In its essence, the transhumanist perspective is “the result of a technocultural reality which excels in cross-breeding species and taxa, the biological and the artificial, or the human and the nonhuman” (Petroșel, 2018, p. 9). All these would ultimately lead to a new human model, one generically called *posthumanism*.

Nowadays, there are enthusiastic authors like Michio Kaku who predict a promising future of transhumanism and a ubiquitous social presence. One of them is Ray Kurzweil. This famous person set up a series of successful firms in order to trade his inventions in fields such as the optical character recognition, computer generated speech and music synthesizers. He was awarded 20 honorific PhD diplomas as well as the National Medal of Technology, and he was immortalized in the Hall of Fame US Patent Office. The *Inc. Magazine* once called him “the rightful inheritor of Thomas Edison” (Ford, 2019, pp. 309-310). However, his ideas are not unanimously accepted. On the contrary, they continue to stir stupefaction, mistrust or enthusiasm. Those who accept his nonconformist views believe in the future of transhumanism and of posthumanist society. “Transhumanism, instead of being a branch of science fiction or a frontier movement, might become an essential part of our very existence” (Kaku, 2018, p. 339).

In its essence, transhumanism would be a step towards something *other* than humanism. To be more specific, it would mean a step towards our fusion with the new technologies. These would result in the posthuman entities of the “centaur teams” which means a blend of human features and technology in equal measure (Y. Harari). Another means of achieving the transhumanist dream would be the *biogenetic* one, which entails the cleansing of our genetic heritage from all impurities and keeping only those elements which stimulate the development of the human individuals and their transformation into *super human beings*.

An ultimate form of posthumanism would be *extropianism*, which pushes posthumanism towards its limit. Max More initiated it, and his interpretation of transhumanism fetishizes the importance of technology in human evolution. More specifically, “extropianism is the philosophical trend that explicitly highlights the expansion of the human potential and the individual transformation through technology from the perspective of a dynamic optimism” (Pușcaș, 2016, p. 79).

Beyond all these reasons, the ultimate goal of transhumanism is the leap of evolution towards “completely anorganic forms of intelligence” (Rees, 2019, p. 172). These fantastic entities will have long-dreamed-of powers, which are now to be seen only in science fiction movies. So far, the evolution of the human being has been the result of biological, natural and social factors working in tandem. We have now reached the turning point when we need to accelerate and control the human evolution with the aid of the new technologies. Why is that so? Because human beings are imperfect and finite. The science of the future will make them perfect and infinite, i.e. virtually immortal. This new and at the same old figment of

the human imagination, a hybrid of flesh and blood and silicone will be able to survive the challenges of the future. This dehumanized creature might virtually colonize yet other planets in the universe. This is finally the great future dreamed of by today's transhumanists for the homo-transsapiens or posthuman entities of tomorrow. The transhumanists are convinced that this dream will become reality through the magic power of the new technologies.

2. The Promises of the New Technologies

The new technologies continue to stir polemics in the western and non-western world. These polemics are exacerbated by the present crisis caused by the Covid 19 virus. Some authors declare that they are definitely against these new technologies, while others worship them. The latter also point out the upsides of these new and challenging technologies. Here are a few significant examples.

The first example refers to the paralyzed human *body* set in motion by the power of the mind, with the aid of the new technologies, of course. At the Football World Championship in Brazil, "a man kicked a ball, thus giving a start to the competition, an event watched by a billion people" (Kaku, 2018, p. 340). Apparently, there is nothing spectacular about this. In fact, the man who kicked the ball was completely paralyzed. However, he had a chip in his brain, which was connected to a laptop. This helped him to move his paralyzed leg, using the power of his own mind.

The next example also refers to the desire to overcome *paralysis*. Many people have suffered serious damages of the spine. Their paralysis was caused by war fighting or road accidents. At last, with the aid of the new technologies, they will be able to use their arms and legs again.

Another dream of the transhumanists is the activation of our *telepathic* and *telekinetic* capacities, Michio Kaku argues. This could become reality due to a chip that would detect and decipher our cerebral waves, transmitting the information on the internet. Stephen Hawking is a famous example in this sense. Hawking suffered from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. His entire body was paralyzed. However, he managed to press a switch to select phrases, words or letters by using a small computer attached to his wheelchair. How was he able to do it? Due to an infrared switch mounted on his spectacles. The switch, detecting Hawking's cerebral waves, was an interface with the computer. So this can be done...

In these situations, the switch or the chip is the new *magic* instrument which turns the unusual powers of our mind into the reality of our world. The old initiation scenario is now performed by the new technologies. The specialists of the old cultures and religions who looked into sacred matters have been superseded by the tech-savvy transhumanists. The results of such experiments could be absolutely stunning, and the expectations of the fans of transhumanism are a perfect match to the possibilities offered by the trend. "It's easy to imagine that, in the future, telepathy and telekinesis will become the norm, and that we will mentally interact with the machines. Our mind will be able to switch on the light, to access the internet, to dictate letters, to play video games, to communicate with friends, to order a cab, to shop or to play movies of its choice – all this through

thinking only” (Kaku, 2018, p. 346). This is the transhumanists’ beautiful and appealing dream, yet just a dream.

Another fabulous transhumanist promise is to make the spiritual reality of *communion* possible. The miracle would also be based on the power of the new technologies. The clear reference is the evolution of the internet. The next stage in the process of its development would be the creation of a *cerebral network*. What will be its role? “Instead of transmitting information bits, the cerebral network will transmit emotions, feelings, sensations and memories” (Kaku, 2018, p. 348). Thus, all of us could have a more thorough approach to the classical process of communication. We would go beyond the mere exchange of information to reach the *communion* in pain or in joy. Beyond the contemporary individual’s inherent limits, the future has in store a *super human being* capable of empathy for all the others. The transhumanist’s final goal is the creation of the *posthuman*, an entity that would transcend humanity. The challenge is that transcending the human will be doubled by an involution of the natural. For the transhumanists, this is not a problem for the simple reason that what we deem to be *natural* today is in fact a cultural convention.

3. The Camouflaged Mythology of Transhumanism

As I argued in my book *The New Secular Religions* (Gavriluță, 2018), transhumanism is, in its essence, a new secular religion. It is obviously a religion turned on its head, fake and inauthentic. Nonetheless, the faith in the soteriological power of the new technologies works like religion in the lives of certain people. This thesis has also been held by other authors (Lilley, 2013; Fuller and Lipinska, 2014; Hauskeller, 2016). Although Ray Kurzweil vehemently denies any connection between his research and religion, the professor of religious studies Robert Geraci of Manhattan College argues that a “Kurzweil’s cult” is likely to appear. All these new beliefs are a new “religion” based on *reliberium*, a sort of one’s own religion which worships the idea of personal freedom. Max More’s *reliberium* would allegedly be the peak of human evolution. It contains, in equal measure, humanism, transhumanism, posthumanism and extropianism.

From the perspective of the history and sociology of religions, the really interesting aspect is that transhumanism is saturated with the presence of certain classical myths of humankind, which survive, more or less camouflaged, in the scientific and cultural scenarios of transhumanism. In my book *The New Secular Religions* I argued the camouflaged presence of certain myths in transhumanist thinking. To be more specific, I mean *the myth of human invincibility* and that of *eternal youth*; the *myth of immortality* and of *human ubiquity*; the myth of *homo deus* and that of *deus otiosus* (Gavriluță, 2018, pp. 167-180).

As a matter of fact, references to the old mythology can be found in the texts written by the theorists of transhumanism. Nick Bostrom, for instance, in his book *A History of Transhumanist Thought*, frequently refers us to the restoration of the importance of mythology in people’s lives to be found in the Greek mythology. In the first place, he refers to Prometheus, the hero who disobeys Zeus’s command

and steals the fire in order to help people. Another reference is to Daedalus, the one who dreams of overcoming the human condition by flying.

Another great myth of humankind is *immortality*. One of the leaders of transhumanism, Ray Kurzweil, revisits in a completely secular and futuristic formula the classical myth of immortality. In collaboration with eccentric researchers and generous sponsors, Kurzweil wishes to resurrect his father by “collecting the DNA left in the grave and regenerating his body by using futuristic nanotechnology” (Ford, 2019, p.310). The “singularians” in Kurzweil’s team created their own (unaccredited, of course) university in Silicon Valley, with the help of generous and famous sponsors (Google, Genentech, Cisco, Autodesk). The transhumanists dream of immortality by avoiding death. In what ways? By substantially enriching the performances of the physical body and augmenting their mind with new technologies. They are convinced that there will be hybrid entities of the human-machine, human-robot or human-computer type.

4. Conclusions

The general tendency of transhumanism is that of making possible the overcoming of our present human condition. We are all aware of the limits of our body and our life. Therefore, we dream of becoming better, healthier and more efficient. Transhumanism works with this human nostalgia and tries to fulfill it with the aid of nanotechnologies and AI. The stake is an innovative biological, mental and social transformation of *homo sapiens* into a posthuman technology-augmented entity.

Obviously, such an attempt at metamorphosing human nature runs big risks, some of which as big as the promises formulated by the fans of transhumanism. There are many experts in human and social sciences (and other sciences, too) who discuss the risks of assuming transhumanism in our lives nowadays. Francis Fukuyama, for instance, wrote (Fukuyama, 2004) about the virtual danger of manipulating the human genetic code. This manipulation would have direct consequences upon the dissolution of the norms of civilized behaviour, the radicalisation of social gaps and the undermining of the values of democracy.

In the global crisis caused by the Covid virus 19, the major risks of the new technologies have also included the consequences of social manipulation with the help of the fifth generation (5S) wireless technology. This would be now “the main stake of the commercial war and the fight for world hegemony between the United States and China” (Lee, Anderson-Lee, 2020, p. 61). The 5S technology would have caused “the oxidation of chains of important hereditary proteins of the inherited immunity system of Wuhan’s population” (Lee, Anderson-Lee, 2020, p. 62). From China, the lethal biological weapon manipulated in a cynical way with the help of 5G technology would have caused the global disasters. In the transhumanists’ view, this compels us to speed up the undertakings of the genetic and mental improvement of the *homo sapiens*.

However, Michio Kaku is convinced that, since the fundamental human needs have remained unchanged, we will continue to wish to look good in the eyes of the others. Therefore, there will be limits and difficulties in the technological and

genetic updating of the contemporary individual. Maybe in a more remote future a *beyond the human being* will be possible, but the human being will always be the essential benchmark of existence.

The camouflaged survival of the old myths in the futuristic scenarios of the enthusiastic advocates of transhumanism are solid arguments in favor of our conviction that the human being will always be visited by the *nostalgia of the absolute* (Mircea Eliade) and by the desire to live a better life in time and history.

References

- Bondor, George. 2020. „Noul infinit al vieții. Dileme biopolitice în postumanism”. În *Covid colivia noastră*, Iași: Institutul European.
- Ford, Martin. 2019. *Ascensiunea roboților. Tehnologia și viitorul fără joburi*. București: Corint.
- Fukuyama, Francis. 2004. *Viitorul nostru postuman. Consecințele revoluției biotehnologice*. București: Humanitas.
- Fuller, Stive and Lipinska, Veronika. 2014. *The Proactionary Imperative. A Foundation for Transumanism*. Palgrave: Macmillan.
- Gavriluță, Nicu. 2018. *Noile religii seculare. Corectitudinea politică, tehnologiile viitorului și transumanismul*. Iai: Polirom.
- Hauskeller, Michael. 2016. *Mythologies of Transumanism*. Palgrave: Macmillan.
- Kaku, Michio. 2018. *Viitorul omenirii*. București: Trei.
- Lee, Bernd and Anderson-Lee, Jo-Anne. 2020. *Coronavirusul între adevăr științific și teorii ale conspirației*. București: Integral.
- Lilley, Stephen. 2013. *Transhumanism and Society. The Social Debate over Human Enhancement*. Springer.
- Mărgineanu, Doru. 2017. „Dincolo de umanism...încotro?”. *Cultura*, Seria a-III-a, Nr. 11/16 martie: pp. 10-11.
- Petroșel, Daniela. 2018. „Fețele postumanismului, suprafețele teoriei”. *Meridian critic*, nr. 2. Vol. 31, pp. 9-11.
- Pușcaș, Marius. 2016. „Transumanism, extropianism, cyberpunk”. *Steaua*, nr. 11-12: pp. 78-80.
- Rees, Martin. 2019. *Despre viitor. Perspectivele umanității*, Iași: Polirom.

Ramona ARDELEAN

The Theoretical Legitimation of an Ethical Paradigm of Human Consciousness Nonseparability starting from the Scientific Paradigm of Quantum Theoretical Nonseparability

Abstract: The present paper, extremely significant from the perspective of scientific and philosophical actuality, is an attempt to legitimize an *ethical* paradigm of human consciousness nonseparability, starting from the scientific model of quantum theoretical nonseparability. It has a double stake. 1) *Theoretical/scientific* stake, given by the „cognitive revolution” of quantum theory, which consisted of replacing the classic principle of separability with the principle of nonseparability or global intercorrelation. 2) *Ethical/philosophical* stake, representing the very hypothesis of my research, given by the profoundly ethical implications of the principle of quantum nonseparability upon human consciousness, fact which raises the question whether the human consciousness could suffer, on the basis of nonseparability or global intercorrelation of reality, a profound ethical „revolution”, analogue to the „cognitive revolution” in physics, which would put an end to the fragmentary vision of the I, revealing the profoundly ethical awareness of the fact that the individual fundamentally represents the entire humanity, being responsible for its destiny.

Keywords: consciousness, the separatist-conflictual structure of the I, paradigm of consciousness separability, paradigm of consciousness nonseparability, corpuscular-wave complementarity model of consciousness, paradigm of quantum theoretical nonseparability, „cognitive revolution”, ethical paradigm of human consciousness nonseparability, ethical revolution.

1. Conceptual delimitations between Consciousness and “I” based on their difference of ethical and ontological basis

If the whole European philosophy consists, as Whitehead said, “in a series of footnotes to Plato” (Whitehead, 1985, 39), then one of the founding distinctions on which the edifice of the philosophy and European knowledge are based, gravitates around the cardinal distinction, of Platonic origin, between “shadow” (appearance, opinion or *doxa*), as a lower level of

* Lecturer PhD, Department of Social-Sciences, University Politehnica of Bucharest, Romania; e-mail: ramona.ardelean.m@gmail.com

knowledge and “being ” (reality, truth or *episteme*), as a higher level of knowledge.

The whole history of the European /Western philosophy and knowledge can be seen as a “footnote” to this aspiration from the ontologically *unfounded* condition of the “shadow” to the ontologically *founded* condition of the “being”, whether it is the aspiration to lift from “sensitive” to “intelligible”, from “illusion” to “reality”, from “error” to “truth” or from “multiplicity”/fragmentation to “unity” (Ardelean, 2019, 18).

The present paper is included in the same sort of aspiration, with the difference that this aspiration will gravitate around two notions of different ethical and ontological nature, the “I” and the Consciousness, the ethical stake, and implicitly the ontological one, consist here in lifting from the ethically unfounded condition of the “I” to the ethically founded condition of consciousness, this ethical mutation involves, as there will be seen, an ontological mutation.

Given that in the current opinion, the “I” and the consciousness are often confused, we must make the delimitation between them, stating that the “I” is neither the consciousness nor the consciousness is the “I”. The two notions, the “I” and the consciousness, so similar in appearance, but so different in essence, must not be confused because “the difference between them is as great as that between the *geocentric* movement and the *heliocentric* movement” (Ardelean, 2019, 11).

Thus, while the geocentric movement of the “I” is a closed and egocentric movement, the “I” placing himself at the center of the universe and considering that the whole world must gravitate around him, analogous to the false geocentric conception that the sun gravitates around the earth, the heliocentric movement of consciousness is an open one, oriented to the other, to the likeness, to the world, analogous to the true heliocentric conception that the earth gravitates around the sun (Ardelean, 2019, 12).

This geocentric movement of the “I” who sees no further from himself and his own interest will be the root of the fragmentation and conflict, where each “I” struggles with another “I”, prefiguring the picture of life as a prey. Therefore, the geocentrism of the “I”, based on fragmentation, should not be confused with the heliocentrism of the consciousness, based on integration, the two notions, movements and attitudes being not only different, but contrary. In this radical difference consists their great ethical and ontological difference.

This ethical and ontological difference between consciousness and “I”, in order to have a legitimate basis, will also be related to an *episteme* but to a new *episteme*, given today by the new scientific *paradigm of quantum theory*, whose ontological and epistemological assumptions, circumscribed to the

new principle of nonseparability or global intercorrelation, have led to a “cognitive revolution” with profound *ethical implications* for human consciousness, as well as for the legitimizing the difference between consciousness and “I”, respectively between the vision based on integration, specific to the consciousness, and the vision based on fragmentation, specific to the “I”.

2. The paradigm of consciousness separability in subject and object

The problem from which I start, representing a constant of personal reflections, is the problem of *fragmentation of human consciousness*, given by the *separatist-conflictual structure of the “I”*. This fragmented consciousness, which is the “I”, by virtue of it being fragmented and separated from the whole, implies a series of destructive consequences on a psychological, social and spiritual level, that is, at the level of the whole field of human consciousness, generating, in the intra and intersubjective space, endless conflicts, reason for which it can be considered the “gordian knot” of all the problems and conflicts of life.

My hypothesis is that this fragmented consciousness, which is the I, is part of the *paradigm of consciousness separability* in subject and object. David Bohm, one of the most remarkable representatives of quantum theory, considers that “this kind of thought that treats things as inherently divided, disconnected, and <<broken up>> into yet smaller constituent parts” (Bohm, 2002, XII) is tributary to the classical model of analysis, according to which the *subject*, the one who thinks considers him/her self “completely separate and independent from the reality/*object*” Bohm, 2002, XI) upon which he/she thinks. This way of thinking reality will institute, according to my hypothesis, the great *ontological* separation between subject and object, which will be the basis of the *psychological* fragmentation, as well as the basis of the *social* fragmentation. The movement of fragmentation of the I “encompasses the entire human consciousness, fragmented at all its levels: ontological, psychological and social” (Ardelean, 2019, 103). This fragmented consciousness, which is the I, will, in other words, create a reality, a world or a society just as fragmented, it becoming the source of all life’s conflicts, generating, in the intra and intersubjective space, endless spiritual, psychological, social, political, economic, ecological and cultural crises, thus making all of our energies be wasted in opposite and contradictory actions. “The inner fragmentation of man mirrors his view of the world <<outside>> which is seen as a multitude of separate objects and events [...] The fragmented view is further extended to society [...] The belief that all these fragments – in ourselves, in our environment and in our

society – are really separate can be seen as the essential reason for the present series of social, ecological and cultural crises. It has alienated us from nature and from our fellow human being. It has brought a grossly unjust distribution of natural resources creating economic, political disorder, and an ugly, polluted environment in which life has often become psychically and mentally unhealthy.”(Capra, 1975, 23)

Therefore, I consider that because of its destructive consequences, *the awareness* of this problem of the fragmentation of the human consciousness becomes urgently necessary. It reveals the danger of continuing with this fragmentary way of thinking, conflict-generating in the intra and intersubjective space.

3. The paradigm of consciousness nonseparability or subject-object nonseparability

As a result, the attempt to legitimize an *ethical paradigm of consciousness*, based on another way of thinking reality, a *nonfragmentary* one, which would put an end to the fragmented-separatist vision of the I, becomes all the more actual and vital for the future or destiny of mankind, as this way of thinking is legitimized by the very new scientific paradigm of quantum theory. It being that this nonfragmentary way of thinking of quantum theory recovers the great ontological separation between subject and object, thus recovering all classical distinctions, tributary to the paradigm of separability, such as: part-whole, observer-observed, consciousness-matter, individual-society it can be considered as institutive of the *paradigm of nonseparability*. Quantum theory thus reveals an essential “interconnectedness of the universe and forces us to see the universe not as a collection of physical objects, but rather as a complicate web of relations between the various parts of an unified whole”(Capra, 1975, 138).

Starting from this paradigm of nonseparability, I will show that it is extremely significant from the point of view of *scientific and philosophical/ethical actuality*, it having a *double stake*: 1) *theoretical/scientific*, given by the revolutionary vision of the world of quantum theory and 2) *ethical/philosophical*, given by the implications of this revolutionary vision of the world on human consciousness.

The theoretical stake is aimed at the most significant scientific paradigm of the twentieth century, respectively quantum theory, whose “cognitive revolution” consisted of replacing the classic principle of separability with the principle of nonseparability or global intercorrelation. According to this, the world no longer appears as being formed from separate parts, as classical, atomist-Newtonian physics states, but seems to be made of a “weaving” or a global network of events and interactions, in which every part is globally connected with the entire universe, so that an

action upon a part is reflecting over the entire universe, and vice versa, the part suffering the influence of all the events in the whole. It follows that the fundament of the world is no longer the part, but the whole, considered logically and ontologically prior to the part. David Bohm confirms this fact most eloquently: “One is led to a new notion of unbroken wholeness which denies the classical idea of analyzability of the world into separately and independently existing parts...We have reversed the usual classical notion that the independent <<elementary parts>> of the world are the fundamental reality, and that the various systems are merely particular contingent forms and arrangements of these parts. Rather, we say that inseparable quantum interconnectedness of the whole universe is the fundamental reality” (Bohm, 1975, 102). The principle of quantum nonseparability thus infirms the separability of the world in favor of its unity or nonseparability, affirming that “the world appears as a complicated tissue of events, in which connections of different kinds alternate or overlap or combine and thereby determine the texture of the whole” (Heisenberg, 1963, 96).

4. From the principle of quantum nonseparability to the principle of ethical nonseparability

The ethical stake, representing the very hypothesis of my research, targets, on the basis of law of symmetry and nonseparability between microcosmos and macrocosmos, subject and object, observer and observed, part and whole, consciousness and matter, individual and society, which is to say on the basis of the self-consistency² of the whole, moving from the paradigm of quantum nonseparability to the paradigm of ethical nonseparability of human consciousness. Over all, it is about the awareness of the profound ethical implications of the vision of quantum nonseparability on human consciousness, which raises the question: Is it possible that human consciousness to suffer, given the nonseparability or global intercorrelation of reality, a profound ethical “revolution”, analogue with the “cognitive revolution” in physics, which would end the fragmentation, given by the separatist-conflictual structure of the “I”?

I consider in this sense, that the most challenging implication of quantum nonseparability is of ethical nature, it targets the human consciousness, respectively the fact that the I can no longer be perceived as a separate consciousness from the consciousness of the world, the human consciousness being seen in the sense of the nonseparability between the “I” (part) and the world (whole), respectively as an ethical nonseparability. The principle of ethical nonseparability becomes thus the principle of the new ethical paradigm of consciousness, based on the profoundly ethical understanding of the fact that the individual

fundamentally represents the entire humanity, being responsible for its future or destiny.

5. The new ethical responsibility – the global mechanism of the part-whole connection

The specificity of this principle of ethical nonseparability will be given by the specificity of a *responsibility*, circumscribed not to a *local* mechanism, but to a *global* one, in which an action upon a part is reflecting simultaneously over the whole, and vice versa, by virtue of the fact that every part has a global connection with the whole. Also, the specificity of this responsibility will primarily be given by *choice*, as determinant factor of thought and reality. Descartes's famous *cogito, ergo sum* has to be replaced by "*opto, ergo sum: <<I choose, therefore I am>>*" (Goswami, 1993, 107) thus revealing the ethical implication between choice, creation or determination of reality and responsibility.

Given the fact that the great epistemological turn of quantum mechanics consisted of including the consciousness of the observer in the observed phenomenon, through which the observer can influence, determine and create reality³, I will show that the model of *corpuscular – wave complementarity* from quantum theory can be interpreted as a *complementarity model of consciousness* in its double hypostasis: corpuscular (spatial-temporally determined) and undulating (spatial-temporally undetermined). Because from a quantum point of view there are waves which can exist in multiple dimensions simultaneously (Goswami, 1993, 4), not being spatial-temporally determined, but only being in the state of possibility, then through the act of observation as act of choice, known under the name of "the collapse of wave function", the consciousness organizes, focuses and materializes these waves (Goswami, 1993, 60), transforming them into observable reality.

Therefore, the act of observation, as act of choice of the consciousness, become *crucial*, it being the condition of possibility for moving from possibility to actuality, which is from the property of the wave, spatial-temporally undetermined, to the property of the corpuscular, spatial-temporally determined. It is in this moving from undetermined to determined, through which the consciousness "chooses", creates and determines reality, on the basis of its double hypostasis of corpuscular-wave, that the crucial responsibility of the *consciousness* resides, simultaneously at a level of part/individual and whole/humanity, as well as simultaneously at a level of possibility-actuality.

6. Conclusions - for an integrative ethics of the consciousness

The assumption that leads to the “cognitive revolution” of the quantum theory is that the world cannot be analyzed in terms of separable entities, but in terms of non-separable entities of an entire cosmic, inseparable and indivisible, whose fundamental property is the nonseparability or global intercorrelation. I consider that from this principle of quantum theory derives the most significant philosophical and ethical implications for human consciousness, which could legitimate/found a new ethics, respectively a new *integrative ethics of the consciousness*.

Implications such as: unity, subject-object nonseparability, global intercorelation or mutual self-consistency which explain, based on the two top theories, Geoffrey Chew's *bootstrap* theory and David Bohm's theory of the *implicate order*, the identity/unity of the part-whole, leads, according to global intercorrelation, to the identity/unity “I” - “world”.

The awareness of this unity, leads to the discovery of the fact that the “I” can no longer be perceived as a separate consciousness from the consciousness of the world, the human consciousness being seen in the sense of the nonseparability between the “I” (part) and the world (whole), respectively as an ethical nonseparability. The principle of ethical nonseparability becomes thus the principle of the new ethical paradigm of consciousness, based on the profoundly ethical understanding of the fact that the *individual* fundamentally represents *the entire humanity*, being responsible for its destiny.

If the Romanian philosopher, Lucian Blaga, perceived in the future the occurrence of some problems “whose solution would make us wonder more than putting of these problems” (Blaga, 1977, 199), then the “solutions” proposed by the new paradigm of quantum theory can surprise us because it is closer than ever to an integrative way of understanding.

I therefore consider that this integrative/nonfragmentary way of understanding will have to be taken into consideration in the future ethical research, taking into account the criterion of general self-consistency or the criterion of harmony with the wholeness (Bohm, 2002, 270) of life, stated by David Bohm. “This is to say, one will require of them a general self-consistency as well as consistency in what flows from them in life as a whole” (Bohm, 2002, 270). The survival of our whole civilization may depend on whether “we can bring about such a change. It will depend, ultimately, on our ability to experience the wholeness of nature and the art of living with it in harmony” (Capra, 1975, 307).

This integrative criterion of self-consistency or harmonization with the whole might lead, on the basis of law of symmetry, nonseparability, and global intercorelation between microcosmos and macrocosmos, subject and object, observer and observed, part and whole, consciousness and

matter, individual and society, which is to say on the basis of the self-consistency of the whole, to a profound ethical revolution of the human consciousness which would end to the fragmentation, given by the separatist-conflictual structure of the I, thus leading to the recovery of the ontological separation.

Notes

¹ The widest formulation of the relationship between *doxa* and *episteme* appear in *The Republic of Plato* (470 A-480 A), as well as in the *Allegory of the Cave* (514 A-521 B).

² This notion is similar to Leibniz's idea of *monads*, each of which "mirrors" the whole in its own way, some in great detail and others rather vaguely. "Thus, although each created Monad represents the whole universe, it represents more distinctly the body which specially pertains to it, and of which it is the entelechy; and as this body expresses the whole universe through the connexion of all matter in the plenum, the soul also represents the whole universe in representing this body, which belongs to it in a special way" (Leiniz, *The Monadology*, translated by Robert Latta, Web edition published by eBooks@Adelaide, The University of Adelaide Library, 2014, 8). The difference is that Leibniz's monads had a permanent existence, whereas basic elements from quantum mechanics are only "moments" or "actual occasions", according to Whitehead, and are thus no permanent.

³ Nothing is more important about the quantum principle than this, that it destroys the concept of the world as "sitting out there", with the observer safely separated from it. In the words of Heisenberg, "what we observe is not nature itself, but nature exposed to our method of questioning" (Heisenberg, 1963, 57). The observer decides how he is going "to set up the measurement and this arrangement will determine, to some extent, the properties of the observed object" (Capra, 1975,140).

References

- Ardelean, Ramona. 2019. *Eul și fragmentarea conștiinței umane. O explorare din perspectiva fizicii cuantice, filosofiei, teologiei și psihanalizei*. Iași: Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”.
- Blaga, Lucian. 1977. *Elanul insulei*. Cluj Napoca: Editura Dacia.
- Bohm, David. 2002. *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*. London and New York: Routledge Classics.
- Bohm, David & Hiley, B.J. 1975. "On the Intuitive Understanding of Non-Locality as Implied by Quantum Theory," in *Foundations of Physics* 5.
- Capra, Fritjof. 1975. *The Tao of Physics. An Exploration of the Parallels Between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism*. Colorado: Shambhala Publications.
- Goswami, Amit. 1993. *The Self-Aware Universe: how consciousness creates the material world*. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Putnam Book.
- Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm. 2014. *The Monadology*, translated by Robert Latta, Web edition published by eBooks@Adelaide, The University of Adelaide Library.
- Heisenberg, Werner. 1963. *Physics and Philosophy*. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Whitehead, Alfred North. 1985. *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*. New York: Free Press.

Hanna YEMELIANENKO *

Berdyaev's Philosophy of Liberty: Existential *versus* Existentialistic

Abstract: The purpose of the study is to examine the worldviews and methodological foundations of Berdyaev's philosophy of liberty and concrete personalism in the context of his fundamental separation between existential philosophy and existentialism. The methodology of the study is to apply methods of analysis, synthesis, comparison, generalization, as well as the combination of cultural, religious and historical-philosophical approaches, which have made it possible to analyze the creative work by Berdyaev within the non-classical type of philosophizing. The scientific novelty attests to Berdyaev's worldview distance from the philosophy of classical existentialism and his affiliation with "non-academic" thinkers. For Berdyaev, human liberty and creativity are the basis for renewing the neglected spirituality of mankind and transforming the foundations of traditional Christianity. The conclusions emphasize that the most characteristic feature of Berdyaev's philosophical and religious ontological conception was the a priori of his entire categorical system of the phenomenon of liberty and its equation with the phenomenon of God. The spirit is associated by Berdyaev not with being, but with liberty, a creative act that takes place in the depths of human existence.

Keywords: existential philosophy, existentialism, personalism, liberty, creativity, Christianity.

1. Introduction

The relevance of the study. In the 20th century, Nikolai Berdyaev turned into "Kierkegaard for Orthodoxy" when he began to develop and apply existential dialectics as a method of reinterpreting the basic tenets of Christianity. Berdyaev is proclaimed one of the founders of existentialism, though he himself never called himself and did not qualify as a representative of this philosophy. Berdyaev distinguished the concept of existential philosophy and existentialism. In the context of the development of the tendency towards spiritual degradation of humanity and rethinking the significance of the phenomenon of "religiosity", the significance of

* PhD., Dr.Sc. in religious studies, Professor of the Department of Philosophy, Socio-Political and Legal Disciplines SHEI "Donbas State Pedagogical University", Ukraine; email: Kerol-Anna@bigmir.net

Berdyayev's views only increases. At the same time, the relevance of his views to the present lies in their interdisciplinary nature, where the integration of religion, philosophy, culture serves as a worldview and methodological background for rethinking the foundations of traditional Christianity, which is the moral, ethical and value foundation of the modern Western world. The importance of Berdyayev's ideas for the resuscitation of the devastated spirituality of modern man cannot be properly re-thought and interpreted without a clear understanding of the features and specifics of his "non-academic" style of thinking.

The state of the scientific development of the problem. Generally, Berdyayev's creative work is defined as "personalism" or "religious existentialism". During the last decades, both Ukrainian and foreign researchers have turned to the analysis of M. Berdyayev's works, in particular, Bychko (2003), Volohin (2003), Horban (2014), Linde (2010), Liamtsev (2007), Myslyvchenko (2003), Ovsiannikov (2008), Slaatte (1997), Tytarenko (2006), Fedotov (1991) and others. Myslyvchenko, to the question, "Was Berdyayev an existentialist?" replies "it would rather be called an existentially thinking philosopher rather than just a faithful follower of the philosophy of existentialism as a fixed current with its terminology" (Myslyvchenko, 2003, 130). In his own manner Fedotov defines the philosophy by Berdyayev, "Berdyayev speaks of the Kingdom of God as the ultimate ideal, but the Kingdom is built not only by God, but also by the efforts of man. So Berdyayev's religious philosophy becomes not so much the doctrine of God as the doctrine of man: anthropology in the theological sense" (Fedotov, 1991, 397). "Berdyayev's philosophy is a phenomenon of the time when the tenet was perceived not as an object of irrational attitude – belief, but as an object of intellectual comprehension", Volohin also states, noting that Berdyayev's philosophy "is a model of the non-dogmatic perception of Christianity by an emancipated personality" (Volohin, 2003, 89). Tytarenko in the work "Specificity of Religious Philosophy by N. A. Berdyayev" as summing up Berdyayev's studies discourse in the perspective of our research states, "If to conditionally divide all the philosophers into two categories – essentialists and existentialists, one can say with certainty that in the historical-philosophical study, the first category identifies the communicative orientation of the text and its task is of peripheral character, and for the second, it is of central significance. Since Berdyayev can be unequivocally classified into the second category, the issue of clarifying the given specificity of his work is an urgent task of modern Berdyayev's studies. Despite the fact that many studies have expressed very valuable ideas that clarify the specifics of the creative work of the Russian philosopher as a whole, the conceptual understanding of this problem has not yet been reached" (Tytarenko, 2006, 50). There are extremely fruitful observations and conclusions drawn about the ideological heritage of Berdyayev by

Bychko, who notes that “the main content of anthropologism of Berdyaev is inextricably linked to the problems of creativity and liberty, which are extremely far from Orthodox dogma...” (Bychko, 2003, 202 – 203).

2. Dialectics of freedom: logical thinking vs intuitive and synthetic thinking

To some extent, the above mentioned is true. After all, the phenomenon of liberty in Berdyaev's philosophy was laid as a priori throughout his system of understanding the world. A priori was the beginning of his thinking, and to which the whole logic of the development of his thinking was directed. “I am called a philosopher of liberty,” wrote Berdyaev in “Self-Cognition”. Some Black-Hundred hierarch told me that I was a “prisoner of liberty”. And I have really loved liberty the most. I came from liberty; she is my mother. Liberty is more important to me than being. The peculiarity of my philosophical type is first of all that I have laid the foundation of philosophy, not being, but liberty. In such a radical form, no philosopher seems to have done it” (Berdyaev, 1991, 25).

At the same time, the very path to this act and its motivation for the authors' deep conviction were hidden, first of all, in the peculiarities of the process of intellectual and psychological formation of the personality of the thinker. “I have been a rebel all my life. I was also a rebel when I made my best efforts to reconcile”, recalled Berdyaev. “I have been a rebel, not only in accordance with the direction of my thoughts in a particular period of my life, but in my own self. I am extremely prone to rebellion. Injustice, violence against human dignity and liberty cause angry protest within me. In my early teens, I was even presented with a book entitled “Dear Insurrectionist”” (Berdyaev, 1991, 29).

In various periods of his life, as recalled by Berdyaev, he criticized much different kinds of ideas and thoughts. But in essence he always sympathized with all the great revolts and rebels in history – the revolt by Luther, the revolt of the mind of education against authority, the rebellion of “nature” of Rousseau, the revolt of the French Revolution, the rebellion of idealism against the power of the object, the rebellion of Marx against capitalism, the rebellion of Belinski against the world spirit and world harmony, Bakunin's anarchic rebellion, Tolstoy's rebellion against history and civilization, Nietzsche's rebellion against reason and morality, Ibsen's rebellion against society, and he also “understood” Christianity “as a rebellion against the world and its law” (Berdyaev, 1991, 29).

And this is the personal psychological and psycho-emotional, and later the intellectual setting (which, incidentally, later, and not without the influence of Berdyaev's ideas, was embossed in the well-known existentialistic “rebellion philosophy” by Albert Camus), and which formed

Berdyayev's striving for liberty and the role of the latter in his worldview, outlook and world-realizing, in the authors' opinion, significantly influenced the decision of the thinker to make liberty the cornerstone of his philosophical and religious concept. "My main belief," Berdyayev wrote, "is that God is only present in liberty and acts only through liberty... The secret of the world is hidden in liberty. God wanted liberty, and this is where the tragedy of the world happened, liberty at the beginning and freedom at the end. In essence, I have been writing the philosophy of liberty all my life, trying to perfect and supplement it" (Berdyayev, 1991, 25).

Thus, one can see the primacy and obviousness of the existential (psycho-emotional) roots in philosophical and religious thinking and the formation of Berdyayev's teaching, which during the whole period of his activity was in no way "burdened", neither "obscured", nor altered by logic and logic thinking. "The peculiarity of religious philosophy," as Serbinenko notes, "Berdyayev saw in that it does not come down to a system of concepts and is not so much "knowledge-discourse" as "knowledge-contemplation", which speaks the language of symbols and myths. From the symbols of his own philosophy, the key role belonged to liberty and creativity, with which all other ideas-symbols are ultimately connected: the spirit whose "kingdom" ontologically resists the "kingdom of nature", objectification – a world of rigid need that causes drama of the fate of a person who is able to go beyond the "realm of nature" on the routes of history and culture, transcendence – a creative breakthrough, overcoming, at least for a moment, the shackles of natural-historical being, existential time – a spiritual experience of personal and historical-social life, which has met historical, absolute sense and defines the meaning of the "kingdom" of the spirit, resists the "kingdom" of objectification" (Serbinenko, 2010, 240 – 241).

In view of the negation of the need to prioritize logical thinking in cognition and theoretical systematization of philosophical knowledge, in view of his attitude to systematic ("academic") philosophy, Berdyayev, using Nietzsche's terminology, called himself a "robber" of philosophy and determined his thinking not as logical, but as thinking intuitive, synthetic. "I have tried many times to understand and comprehend the process of my thinking and cognition, although I do not belong to people of reflection over themselves. I have always been aware of the weaknesses of my thinking. I have little ability to analyze and to discursively develop my thoughts", said Berdyayev. "My thought did not proceed as a distraction from a specific one and did not obey the laws of discourse. I have not sought to achieve the universal in its meaning, but to immerse myself in the concrete, to the maturation of the meaning and versatility in it. This means that my thought is intuitive and synthetic. In private and in particular, I have seen the universal. I have done it in my daily life. For me, in fact, there are

no separate issues in philosophical cognition. There is only one question and one area of cognition. In all the detailed, private, separate I see the whole, the whole meaning of the universe. By talking or arguing over any issue, I tend to see the solution to the fate of the universe and my own destiny” (Berdyayev, 1991, 45). Subsequently, recognizing Scientism as a false and limited philosophy, and arguing that philosophy should be guided not only by scientific knowledge but, above all, by religious experience, Berdyayev writes that the philosophy he would like to express is a dramatic philosophy of fate, existing in the time that passes into eternity, the time that is directed toward the end, which is not death but transformation. “Existential philosophy is the very expression (expressionism) of my personal destiny, but my destiny must express the fate of the world and man. This is not a transition from the individual to the general, but an intuitive revelation of the universal in the individual. Philosophy, metaphysics is not a reflection of objective realities, but a change within human existence, revealing the meaning of existence” (Berdyayev, 1991, 45).

3. “Existential” as a psycho-emotional, psychological and spiritual activity

Thus, the “robber Berdyayev” also denied the expediency of abstraction as a necessary element in his thinking, going towards “immersion” rather than analysis of the concrete, neglecting generalizations in favor of “synthesis” ... Such a characteristic of the author of his own thinking is really striking ... In addition, Berdyayev argued that he did not believe even in the phenomenological method, which, in his opinion, “can be fruitful in psychology, can only help cognizing the metaphysical and meta-historical”, and believes only in “the method of existential-anthropocentric and spiritual and religious, if, however, it can be called a method” (Berdyayev, 1993, 254). If the “existential” is understood as psycho-emotional and psychological, which attests to the existence of acts of spiritual activity (Raida, 1998, 129 – 141), it can be argued that the understanding of the processes of cognition, epistemology, and, ultimately, the processes of cognition in Berdyayev were of exclusively or dominantly existential character. They were existential typologically.

Touching on the characteristics of the process of cognition in his teaching, the thinker testified that many of his readers and interlocutors were sometimes struck by the fact that he sometimes attached great importance to minor things. And he explained it with his desire to see the whole meaning of the object or phenomenon under study. “Sometimes of great importance to my process of cognition,” wrote Berdyayev, “was a small, seemingly factual conversation, a film in which nothing philosophical was present... The whole plan of one of my books came to my mind as I

sat in the cinema. From the outside, I only got aroused by the jolts, but everything was revealed from within the infinity within me. This is reminiscent of the doctrine of remembering Plato and Leibniz's doctrine of the monad as a microcosm. Except any philosophical theory, any epistemology, I have always been aware that I know not by one intellect, not by my mind subject to my own laws, but by a set of spiritual powers, also by my will to the triumph of sense, by my intense emotion. The impartiality in cognition recommended by Spinoza has always seemed to me an artificial fabrication... Philosophy is the love of wisdom, love is an emotional and passionate state. The source of philosophical cognition is a holistic life of the spirit, some spiritual experience. Everything else is just minor help. Suffering, joy, tragic conflict is the source of cognition" (Berdyayev, 1991, 45).

Putting existential (psycho-emotional and psychological) not only in the basis of knowledge, but also turning it into the main element and condition of this process, Berdyayev, of course, in a certain sense went against the history of the development of European philosophy, which with all its strength grew the elements of scientific approach to understanding the world. Therefore, it is clear that the thinker asserts that his philosophy is not a scientific philosophy, but a profane and eschatological in its direction. Philosophy of the scientific type, in particular, and modern philosophy for him, as the thinker noted, as a result of neglect of spiritual culture and cultivation of rationalism found itself in a state of severe crisis, philosophical thought went to a deadlock, for it epigonism and decline began. Berdyayev proclaimed that "after all the trials, all the wanderings in the deserts of abstract thinking and rational experience, after heavy police service", declared Berdyayev, "philosophy must still "return to the temple, to its sacred functions, and to find lost realism there, to regain the initiation there in the mystery of life" (Berdyayev, 1997, 20).

Berdyayev was absolutely convinced that the whole new philosophy, beginning with Descartes and ending with the Neo-Kantians, "denied the need for consecration and attraction for the possession of knowledge, gnosis", and therefore the mysteries of being and the mysteries of life began to close for it. "Philosophy ceased to be sacramental, as it was in the Antiquity and in the Middle Ages; it was exposed to everyday life and turned into a policeman's philosophy, not a full of divine grace" (Berdyayev, 1997, 19). An example of such philosophy, he considered, for example, the philosophy by Kant, whose philosophy, in his words, from the holy Gnosis has become a "police order of abstract thought", to protection, to the process of urban governance, where philosophy is sometimes resorted to and to permission to arrange one thought and cognition or others.

The severity of the problem facing the philosophical community, Berdyayev saw not in the fact that philosophy should not be autonomous

and free, but in the fact that it should be aware of the need for a religious basis in the entirety of the spiritual and, in particular, religious experience. Religion, in his opinion, is quite capable of managing without philosophy, since its sources are absolute and self-sufficient, but philosophy, on the contrary, cannot manage without religion, since “religion needs it as food, as a source of living water. Religion is the vital basis of philosophy, religion nourishes philosophy with real being” (Berdyaeu, 1997, 20).

Berdyaeu was absolutely convinced that only Christian metaphysics affirms the reality of being and the reality of the ways to being, that only it “grasps the great mystery of freedom, that which is not decomposed, and that it can be reduced to nothing”, that only it recognizes substance of a particular person, enshrined in eternity. “Only in the mystical Gnosis of Christianity”, he wrote in the “Philosophy of Liberty”, “all this is given and nowhere else. Only the Christian gnosis leads to transcendental realism, to concrete personalism, and to the philosophy of liberty. The latter, and above all, is the “soul of Christian philosophy”, and the fact that “it is not given to any other, abstract and rationalist philosophy” (Berdyaeu, 1997, 22).

Putting religion at the heart of any truly human philosophy, and man himself and his liberty at the heart of this philosophy, Berdyaeu made a desperate attempt to point people to the major mistake they had been making in the historical process of European civilization, the mistake that, in his opinion, had led to the fact that “glorified scientific conscientiousness, scientific modesty, scientific self-restraint of our age is often only a cover for weakness, indecision, lack of faith in belief, love, indecision of choice. Too many secular decencies and conventions cover up the inner emptiness. There is no such thing as the essence of life, and therefore it is considered worth speaking only about something; it is admitted only the obligatory science of something in the realm of the weak-willed, unloving skepticism, in the realm of relaxed disbelief” (Berdyaeu, 1997, 15).

Therefore, he counted himself “to the kind of philosophy that is now called “existential” (Berdyaeu, 1991, 47). Claiming that he always belonged to philosophers of existential type, M. Berdyaeu saw its beginnings in the distant historical past of European philosophy. The subject of existential philosophy is not new at all, he claims in his writings. There have always been philosophers who have invested themselves in their philosophy. The same, in his view, both Blessed Augustine and Pascal did, and in part Maine de Biran, and Schopenhauer, and many other thinkers. This element, in his view, was present in “all true philosophers”, even Spinoza and Hegel. But it is precisely these modern philosophers from whom existential philosophy in the 20th century originated, Heidegger and Jaspers, to Berdyaeu they appeared to be the least existentialists.

“Having received “existentiality” from “Kirchehardt” (Berdyayev spelled his name as “Kirchehardt”, the insert is ours. – *Hanna Yemelianenko*), Heidegger wanted to express existential problems in the categories of academic rationalist philosophy”, noted Berdyayev. Heidegger began to impose rationalist categories on existential experience to which they could not be applied, and created “unbearable terminology” that, in the end, proved even more original than his thinking itself. Heidegger, as noted by the Russian thinker, certainly possesses an undeniable philosophical talent, and he has a great deal of intensity and concentration of thought. Jaspers is a man struck by the experience of Nietzsche and Kirchehardt. But, according to his own distinction between the types of philosophy of prophetism and science, he belongs rather to the type of the philosophy of science. “I greatly appreciated Jaspers”, wrote Berdyayev in “Self-Cognition”, “but I did not consider him an existential philosopher in that sense in which existential philosophers Nietzsche and Kirchehardt were. I do not consider the French, who are enrolled in the type of existential philosophy, their real representatives. Existential philosophy is primarily determined by the existentiality of the subject which cognize. The philosopher of the existentialist type does not object in the process of cognition what the object does not oppose to the subject. His philosophy is the expressiveness of the subject himself, immersed in the mystery of existence. I call the existential philosophers those”, continued Berdyayev, “whose thought means the identity of personal destiny and world destiny” (Berdyayev, 1991, 135). And such an identity meant for Berdyayev to overcome objectification. As Berdyayev noted, “I was never interested in the existence of people as an object of cognition, I was interested in the fate of man, the fate of the subject in which the “universe is shaking”, the meaning of its existence, etc.” Therefore, the conclusion in the recognition of the Russian thinker there became the words in which he noted that “neither Kirhegardt, whom I read late and the manner of writing which annoys me, nor Heidegger and Jaspers had any special influence on my philosophical opinion. My spires are of the other origin” (Berdyayev, 1991, 81). Berdyayev is most skeptical of the work of one of the founders of French existentialism, “The modern-day philosopher Sartre, talented and very characteristic of the day, is essentially a slave to objectivity, a world of things, a world of phenomena, he has no reality within himself. A deep truth as well as reality depends on human creative activity. But Sartre wants to think that after what appeared, there is nothing, no secret” (Berdyayev, 1993, 355).

Such a position by M. Berdyayev may be viewed differently. In this case one can say that he never understood, and could not understand the essence of the philosophy of classical existentialism, its principles and the ideas of its main founders. There is another point of view that continues J. Maritain’s position on the division of classical existentialism into

“existentialism primary” (“existential” in Raida’s (2009) terminology) and “existentialism academic” (“existentialistic”), and, accordingly, the merits by M. Berdyayev in isolation in existentialism of two planes: the plane of cultivation of spirituality, spiritual experience, and the plane of existential analysis of being (Heidegger’s analytics of being) as an inversion of classical philosophy, adapted to the specific reproduction of the problems of existence of people in the 20th century.

4. Conclusions

Berdyayev’s interpretation of human cognition and belief as a dynamic form of the human being, as a particular orientation of the human spirit, brings together, on the one hand, his views not only with Kierkegaard’s ideas but also with Tillich’s systematic theology. However, on the other hand, from Berdyayev’s position and recognition analyzed above, it follows that the relationship between the philosophy by Berdyayev and Kierkegaard did not appear to have arisen through ideological or methodological adoption, as it was in the case of a similar relationship between the ideas of Kierkegaard and Bart. Berdyayev, as evidenced by his “theoretical confession” from “Self-Cognition”, went to existential type of thinking in his own, personal way, qualitatively different from the way of thinking by Jaspers, Heidegger, Sartre and other representatives of “classical existentialism”. And the similarity of thinking, outlook and methodology by Kierkegaard and by Berdyayev arose, most likely, due to the similarity of the outlook of both thinkers, the similarity in their understanding and attitude to the relevant concepts of ontology, epistemology and logical thinking in their philosophical-religious systems.

References

- Berdyayev, Nikolai. 1991. *Self-cognition (Experience of philosophical autobiography)*. Moscow: Book [in Russian]
- Berdyayev, Nikolai. 1993. “Existential dialectic of the divine and human”. In Berdyayev, Nikolai. *On the appointment of man*. Moscow: Republic: 254-357 [in Russian]
- Berdyayev, Nikolai. 1997. *Philosophy of Liberty. The origins and meaning of Russian communism*, ed. Arsenii Gulyga. Moscow: Svarog and K” [in Russian]
- Bychko, Bogdan. 2003. “Existential-personalist tendencies of Berdyayev’s religious anthropologism”. In *Metamorphoses of liberty: Berdyayev’s heritage in contemporary discourse (to the 125th anniversary of Berdyayev’s birth): Ukrainian periodical of Russian philosophy. Bulletin of the Society of Russian Philosophy at the Ukrainian Philosophical Foundation*. Kyiv: PARAPAN: Vol. 1: 200-205 [in Ukrainian]
- Vologin, Yevgenii. 2003. *Berdyayev’s existential-humanistic anthropology* [Candidate’s thesis]. Moscow: Moscow State University [in Russian]
- Horban, Richard. 2014. “Berdyayev’s interpretation of main questions of Christian eschatology”. *Ukrainian Religious Studies*, 69: 94-103[in Ukrainian]

- Lyamtsev, Yevgenii. 2007. *Berdyaev's existential personalism in the context of domestic and Western philosophical thought* [Candidate's thesis]. Moscow [in Russian]
- Myslvchenko, Alexander. 2003. Was Berdyaev an existentialist? In *Metamorphoses of liberty: Berdyaev's heritage in contemporary discourse (to the 125th anniversary of Berdyaev's birth): Ukrainian periodical of Russian philosophy. Bulletin of the Society of Russian Philosophy at the Ukrainian Philosophical Foundation*. Kyiv: PARAPAN: Vol. 1: 127-130 [in Russian]
- Ovsyannikov, Andrei. 2008. *Existence status of the human self in religious existentialism of Berdyaev and Sbestov* [Candidate's thesis]. Orel: Orel State University [in Russian].
- Raida, Constantine. 1998. *Historical and philosophical research of postexistential thinking*. Kyiv: Ukrainian Center for Spiritual Culture [in Ukrainian]
- Raida, Constantine. 2009. *Existential philosophy. Tradition and Prospects*. Kyiv: PARAPAN [in Ukrainian].
- Serbinenko, Vyacheslav. 2010. "Berdyaev". In *New Philosophical Encyclopedia: in 4 vols*, ed. Vyacheslav Stepin. V. 1. Moscow: Mind [in Russian]
- Titarenko, Serhii. 2006. *Specificity of Berdyaev's religious philosophy*. Rostov-on-Don: Publishing House of Rostov University [in Russian]
- Fedotov, George. 1991. "Berdyaev-thinker". In Berdyaev, Nikolai. *Self-Cognition (Experience of philosophical autobiography)*. Moscow: Book: 395-408 [in Russian]
- Linde, Fabian. 2010. *The Spirit of Revolt: Nikolai Berdiaev's Existential Gnosticism*. Stockholm: Stockholm University (Stockholm Slavic Studies, 39)
- Slaatte, Howard Alexander. 1997. *Personality, spirit, and ethics: The ethics of Nicholas Berdyaev*. New York: P. Lang [in English]

R. J. CARDULLO *

Alexander Bakshy on Film

Abstract: A Russian émigré who spent most of his life in Britain and America, Alexander Bakshy (1885-1949) began writing on film in English in 1913 and was the first movie critic for the *Nation* (1927-33). He was known during his lifetime for his prescience as, in 1929, he stood up for the future of sound cinema. Bakshy, then, was one of the more progressive cultural critics of the years between the world wars, who did his part in easing the movies toward acceptance as an art form. He was also an innovative theorist who applied to cinema the discourse of self-reflexive modernism. In sum, Bakshy's work deserves far more attention that it has received—attention hitherto reserved for the work of another significant early American critic, James Agee, who himself began writing movie reviews for the *Nation* in 1942.

Keywords: Alexander Bakshy; American cinema; European cinema; film theory and criticism; modernism.

Alexander Bakshy (1885-1949) wrestled with major problems of the drama and the motion picture at significant moments of their evolutions, and he had a sound understanding of general aesthetics as well. Very little is known about him as a personality—the prominent New York drama critic Joseph Wood Krutch (who reviewed theater for the *Nation* from 1924 to 1952) remembered him only as a name. Born in Kerch on the Black Sea, he immigrated to England sometime before 1912 and subsequently became the corresponding London art critic for several Russian periodicals. Bakshy's confessed lack of scholarly credentials or practical knowledge of the stage did not prevent him from writing perceptive essays on the drama, in addition to the cinema; they are collected in his two major books, both published in London: *The Path of the Modern Russian Stage* (1916) and *The Theatre Unbound* (1923). Between these two volumes, in 1919, he tried unsuccessfully to establish a journal in English for the serious study of the theater, but, as he lamented, his tiny craft titled *Proscenium* “foundered immediately it came out into the open sea” (*Theatre Unbound*, 9).

Applications on file in the U.S. Copyright Office indicate that Bakshy was an American citizen as early as April 7, 1938 (having come to the United States sometime between 1923 and 1927), and as late as February 25, 1949, and that he maintained a New York City address. But even before this, he contributed seventy-nine articles as movie critic for the

* PhD, University of Kurdistan-Hewler, Iraq; e-mail: robertjcardullo@gmail.com,

Nation from 1927 to 1933, in addition to writing theoretical essays for the film page of the *New York Sun* (collected in Herman G. Weinberg's *Scrapbook*, Volumes I-III, which is housed in the Weinberg Collection at the New York Public Library). From 1913 to 1945 he also free-lanced on the subjects of cinema, drama, painting, even history and ballet, in such publications as *American Mercury*, *Current History*, *The Dial*, *The Drama*, *English Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Saturday Review*, *Theatre Arts Monthly*, *The Burlington Magazine*, and *The New York Times*. At the same time, Bakshy was translating work by Russians like Bunin, Erenburg, Gogol, Gorky, Kuprin, Lopatin, Soloviev, and Meyerhold .

When he wrote about film, Bakshy lent a voice of maturity to the current of enthusiasm for the new art among the intelligentsia. In his first American essay, for example, written for *Theatre Arts Monthly* in April 1927, he cautioned the youthful enthusiasts against too readily shouting "masterpiece!" Only in the past few years, he maintained, had the moving picture realized its potential as an art form. Bakshy spoke from experience. His essay "The Cinematograph as Art," written in England in 1913 (and first published in the United States in 1916 in *The Drama*), was one of the earliest perceptive critical pieces written on the nature of cinema. In this essay Bakshy called for an end to vulgar realism, to the mechanical reproduction on screen of the stage play. The motion picture must overcome the grotesque gestures and facial distortions of the filmed stage play. To assume a more graceful naturalness was the responsibility of a different corps of actors; the cinema must replace the stilted performers from the traditional drama with harlequins, mimes, and ballet dancers who made a living as "students of motion" (Jacobs, 63).

Writing in 1928, in a prefatory note to the reprinting of "The Artistic Possibilities of the Cinema," Bakshy expressed embarrassment at the immaturity of some of his earlier remarks, for the film medium had evolved far beyond pantomime as the sole method of cinematic acting (3). In spite of his altered view of pantomime, Bakshy's critical theory remained distinctly opposed to the moving picture viewed as a realistic art. He inveighed against the obsession with realism, against those who imagined the cinema as a conglomeration of irrelevant, pedestrian details without emphasis or unity ("Road to Art," 457-458). For Bakshy, the essentials of aesthetic appreciation would always remain the same:

The work of art is something that is endowed with a peculiar life of its own, and that asserts its identity against our effort to grasp and absorb it into the complex whole which constitutes our own identity. This life is a form of functioning of the material in which the work of art finds its expression, and the keener our appreciation is of the nature of the material, the more attuned we are to

its inner resonance—the more profound and exhilarating is the aesthetic thrill we experience in the presence of genuine works of art. (“New Art,” 279).

If the moving picture had progressed beyond the natural gracefulness of pantomime, what was the unique nature of the film medium? For Bakshy, the cinema might be classified into three distinct types of drama. First, there was the “realist drama,” which ignored the necessity of form and which proceeded without spectator involvement, limiting the audience to the role of observer. Second, the “semi-independent drama,” which remained unrelated to the medium’s dynamics, but did appeal to the spectator’s imagination by selection and style within the individual frame. Third, there existed the “dependent drama,” which daringly neglected to disguise the nature of the medium, placing complete emphasis on the presence of the audience (“Road to Art,” 455).

Alone among the important contributors to early American film criticism, Bakshy most consistently advocated, in “dependent drama,” direct contact with the audience. While other critics discussed the art of masking art, Bakshy described an aesthetic future where the visible mechanics of the motion picture would provide sensual thrills. In his more theoretical pieces, he objected that the screen itself had not been utilized as an arena of dramatic—nay, *visual*—movement (“Future of the Movies,” 362). He imagined a vast screen where images might “leap” from one corner of the theater to another, “flitting” laterally before the viewer (“New Dimensions in the Talkies,” 703), or where separate pictures might be flashed onto the screen to reveal a simultaneous number of subjects (“Road to Art,” 460). In other words, the cinema might exhibit the thrill of “personality” once thought to be the province of the vaudeville stage. Only in this instance the personality would derive, not from the delightful antics of an individual actor, but rather from the continuous play of dynamically related images (“Movie Scene,” 102).

Bakshy’s remarks provide the most radical statement of an assumption underlying much of the theoretical writing on film in the late 1920s: that technique, based upon a sophisticated knowledge of the medium, might provide aesthetic pleasure divorced from any considerations of theme or subject matter. And cinematic technique, for him, included acting—specifically, presentational acting, which acknowledges the audience, whether directly by addressing them or indirectly through the use of words, looks, gestures, or other signs that indicate that the character/actor is aware of the audience’s presence. When Bakshy began seriously to examine the cinema, he was in a state of excitement about a possible presentational revival for all of the arts, not just for the theater,

which for centuries (until the advent of realism in the nineteenth century) had been the natural home of presentationalism.

Because he was bruited the virtues of presentationalism, Bakshy considered the silent film (which he thought of as presentational) more promising than the early “talkies” (which appeared to him ludicrous attempts to imitate stage representationalism). Indeed, for a number of years sound appeared to be merely a gratuitous intrusion on the purely visual experimentation of the silent picture, as evidenced by such techniques as double exposure (to round out the presentation of character more imaginatively than flashback) and the split screen (to present simultaneous actions), to mention only two of the formal innovations that Bakshy encouraged during his tenure as movie critic for the *Nation*. From his point of view, representational films and realistic theatrical productions were thus two heads of the same ogre, which only popular audiences could keep alive in their unthinking obeisance to Hollywood and Broadway.

Representational films appeared less menacing to Bakshy, however, when photographic and sound technology improved. He then conceded that, if the controlling producers and directors allow, sound cinema could develop its own potentialities as a representational medium distinct from silent pictures—which could then be given more freedom to explore presentational expressiveness—and also distinct from its counterpart of representational drama, since the “material of the screen [unlike the kind found in the theater] consists not of actual objects but images fixed on the film,” and the very fact that they have their being on film “endows these images with properties that are never found in actual objects” (“Talkies,” 238). If these differences of form are observed, representational sound pictures would have the capacity of dealing more directly with the real world, provided they became as truly representational in sound as they could be in visual imagery. Moreover, the images that penetrate into the visual substance of the human world can attain greater realism through natural colors and stereoscopic effects (“Talkies and Dummies,” 562-563). Such a cinema would outdo and even instruct the drama in representational possibilities, since movies have “greater technical resources for creating that very illusion of life existing outside the theater” (“Future of the Movies,” 360).

Bakshy’s tendency to think of talkies as representational and silent films as presentational disappeared when he began to see presentational possibilities in the use of sound, such as auditory fade-outs and “separating the voice from the image of its owner” (“Year of Talkies,” 773). Speech, sound, and image, he then suggested, could be inflected in an infinite number of ways, and film form might combine presentational with

representational devices, even if (as he suspected) representationalism was going to predominate in the new industry. That Bakshy's optimism about the movies waned, however, becomes increasingly clear in his reviews for the *Nation*. His last one was a virulent attack against Hollywood for its failure to develop either presentational *or* representational cinema effectively ("More Celluloid," 76).

But before he became disillusioned with traditional moviemaking, Bakshy intelligently probed the evolving techniques of the new medium. For him the most distinctive attribute of the camera, the most formative component, is its freedom of movement in time and space, since these dimensions are relative in cinema and not absolute, as they tend to be in the theater. Motion pictures can mold time by "rearranging its natural sequences, compressing it into a single moment, or expanding it into an infinity" ("New Art," 280). Some of the possibilities of emancipated spatial movement, in Bakshy's loving elaboration, are: movement in the position of photographed objects, through a change in the position of the camera (as in close-ups or high-angle shots), or movement in perception of these objects through a change in their lighting and coloring; movement of images through acceleration or retardation; and movement through "the joint functioning of the projector and the screen—the movement of a small picture growing large, or of a picture traversing the screen from one end to another" ("New Art," 281). It is the responsibility of the director, according to Bakshy, to integrate all movement and all sound into a single dramatic pattern whose rhythm creates "an independent ideal world, entirely self-sustained and coherently compact, which has its own life and its own emotional logic" ("Miracle of *Arsenal*," 640).

That the screen (as well as the camera) is a mechanical device does not preclude its development for artistic expression, since, as Bakshy writes, "all mechanisms must be controlled by human power at one moment or another" ("Cinematograph as Art," 272). The screen, if used representationally, "is merely an inert surface playing no part in molding the form of the picture" ("New Dimensions in the Talkies," 703). But a presentational cinema could have the performance emanate from the godlike presence of the screen, which "must become a physical reality in the eyes of the audience, a part of the theater building that provides the graphic frame of reference for the very being of characters in space, as well as for the form in which they are presented to view" ("Screen Musical Comedy," 160). The presentational screen of the future, therefore, should "be the most important part of the building. It will occupy the largest area architecturally possible in the theater, and it will be used for the effects of movement obtained by changing the position of the picture, by changing its size, and, finally, by employing simultaneously a number of separate [visual]

subjects that are organized to form a single dramatically dynamic pattern” (“Future of the Movies,” 362). It is then that a “direct physical contact” of screen with spectator could be established (“Movie Scene,” 107).

Bakshy’s changing ideas about the film actor show his attempts to adjust his thinking about the cinema in general as it evolved. At first, in silent movies, the actor was an image *presented* through moving form and color (if only the colors black and white)—and because of this presentational status, Bakshy considered it “irrelevant whether the acting . . . is performed by living persons, by dolls, or by cinematographic shadows” (“Cinematograph as Art,” 275). The genius of Charlie Chaplin, for example, lay in his ability to adjust what he had learned from the presentational art of vaudeville to the nature of cinematic art—hence his ability to convey an emotion by “a movement of the body, a twist of the head, or a doll-like fixedness of expression” (“Knight-Errant,” 413; “Charlie Chaplin,” 247-248). Chaplin’s genius also lay in his sense of dramatic composition through “the use of emphasis in a portrait-like portrayal, the appreciation of rhythmic pattern, the knowledge of the exact location for the dramatic accent” (“Knight-Errant,” 413; “Charlie Chaplin,” 247-248).

But with the coming of sound and the introduction of dialogue, the actor ceased to be a shadow and became a person. As a result, the movie spectator’s aesthetic distance became more difficult to maintain than was the case during the showing of silent pictures, let alone the performance of “straight” plays in a theater auditorium; the inevitable intimacy and realism of the human voice at close range induce the film audience to see the actor as a character. And as the actor becomes character, character becomes bound to a setting of natural surroundings, thus making representationalism an important mode for the cinema. Representational dialogue, however, is different in the cinema from what it is in the drama, where dialogue must perform a duty “for a great deal of human conduct that is essentially wordless” and that in a movie can simply be conveyed visually, photographically (“Hollywood Tries ‘Ideas,’” 708). For this reason, “unlike the stage actor, the film actor appears best when he acts least. All he needs is personality, character, for this is enough to make his acting both natural and convincing” (“The Shrinking of Personality,” 590).

In spite of his recognition of how congenial the cinema is to representational acting, Bakshy occasionally ventured the hope (before giving up on Hollywood) that presentational acting and non-realistic speech could be employed in motion pictures. Yet he knew that the film actor in either mode—representational or presentational—would never be the active agent he is in the drama (“Talkies and Dummies,” 562-563), in part because of the reduced role of the spectator. That is to say, though the presence of a spectator is assumed in the cinema in order to justify the joint efforts of

actor, screen, and camera, his role is less indispensable than it is in the theater because of the ultimate impersonality of the newer medium. No frankly or self-consciously acknowledged screen in a presentational picture could create the intimacy of a presentational actor playing to his viewers in the theater; and no representational picture could evidence an awareness of an audience as does the theater performer as he paces his lines, in a representational drama, in response to audience response—particularly laughter. Nonetheless, Bakshy once suggested that the movie spectator, in surrendering himself to the rhythmic pattern of a film and its impact upon his emotional sensibility, would not only experience the freedom of transcending worldly time and space but could also undergo a sort of Aristotelian catharsis (“Future of the Movies,” 360).

Because of the commonalities between the stage and screen—one of them being that, as discussed, both feature people acting (whether presentationally or representationally) a story within a frame before your eyes—most early movie critics made little distinction between the two art forms. Not Bakshy, however. “Analogies between the stage and the screen assume that they deal with the same material. But they don’t,” he wrote in the *Nation* in 1929:

For instance, on the stage the actor moves in real space and time. He cannot even cross the room without performing a definite number of movements. On the screen an action may be shown only in terminal points with all its intervening moments left out. In watching a performance on the stage, the spectator [like the theater actor] is governed by the actual conditions of space and time. Not so in the case of the movie spectator. Thanks to the moving camera he is able to view the scene from all kinds of angles, leaping from a long-distance view to a close-range inspection of every detail. It is obvious that with this extraordinary power of handling space and time—by elimination and emphasis, according to its dramatic needs—the motion picture can never be content with modeling itself after the stage. (“Talkies,” 238)

Bakshy’s importance as a critic wasn’t lost on Harry Alan Potamkin, another early film critic. Pointing to Bakshy’s early writings about movie pantomime as a kind of cinematic rhythm and the medium’s use of color *tones* before the appearance of flashy color processes, Potamkin declared the following in 1927: “No American has captured in the written word the qualities of cinema so well as has Alexander Bakshy” (Potamkin, 4). As one of the more progressive cultural critics of the years between the world wars, Bakshy did his part, then, in easing the movies toward acceptance as an art form. In his application to cinema of the discourse of self-reflexive modernism (prizing anti-illusionist medium-awareness)—a discourse that

had emerged in theater criticism in the early 1900s—he was also an innovative theorist.

Nonetheless, Alexander Bakshy quit film criticism in 1933, fed up with the low quality of the movies. As he wrote in his final column for the *Nation*:

Not only are there woefully few [movies] that are worthy of serious consideration, but if you happen to be a film critic you are obliged to stop and analyze the incessant flow of bilge issuing from the film factories of Hollywood and elsewhere as if it were really to be measured by the standards of intellectual and artistic achievement. The whole procedure becomes unspeakably grotesque, resembling in a way what the Russians describe as shooting sparrows with cannon balls. Worse still, it becomes wearisomely repetitious, for in the films originality is found in virtues, not, as in real life, in sins. (“More Celluloid,” 76).

Bakshy managed to deal with the bilge by approaching each piece of film criticism as the occasion for some larger essayistic rumination, say, on the topic of theater vs. cinema. In addition to the reviews of bilge, one gets from Bakshy’s film writings thoughtful commentary on such important motion pictures as Chaplin’s *City Lights*, Eisenstein’s *Ten Days That Shook the World*, Dreyer’s *Passion of Joan of Arc*, Clair’s *Under the Roofs of Paris*, Pabst’s *Comradeship*, Kinugasa’s *Slums of Tokyo*, Lubitsch’s *Trouble in Paradise*, Dovzhenko’s *Earth*, and Milestone’s *All Quiet on the Western Front*. One also is the beneficiary of penetrating insight into such important directors as Alfred Hitchcock, Frank Capra, Jean Renoir, F. W. Murnau, George Cukor, Vsevolod Pudovkin, and Howard Hawks. Moreover, the reader treated to evidence of Bakshy’s penchant for “theoretizing” in essays on such subjects as film acting, experimental or art-house movie theaters, and sound vs. silent cinema.

In sum, not only was Bakshy one of America’s first full-time professional film critics (and perhaps the best of this incipient lot), he was in addition one of the nation’s first film theorists, even being hailed, in his own lifetime, as “the father of film aesthetics” (Stern, 19). His work richly deserves to receive some of the attention heretofore reserved for the work of other significant early American film critics such as James Agee, who himself began writing movie reviews for the *Nation* in 1942; Otis Ferguson, the critic of the *New Republic* during the mid-1930s and early 1940s; Robert Warshaw, who wrote about cinema for the *Partisan Review* and *Commentary* in the late 1940s and early 1950s; and Bakshy’s admirer Harry Alan Potamkin, the film critic of the *New Masses* during the same years Bakshy was writing for the *Nation*: 1927 to 1933. Gentlemen, move over.

References

- Bakshy, Alexander. "The Cinematograph as Art." *The Drama*, 6, no. 22 (May 1916): pp. 267-284. Reprinted in Jacobs, Lewis, ed. *The Art of the Movies: An Anthology of Ideas on the Nature of Movie Art*. New York: Noonday Press, 1960. pp. 57-70.
- . *The Theatre Unbound*. London: Cecil Palmer, 1923.
- . "The New Art of the Moving Picture." *Theatre Arts Monthly*, 11, no. 4 (April 1927): pp. 277-282.
- . "The Road to Art in the Motion Picture." *Theatre Arts Monthly*, 11, no. 6 (June 1927): pp. 455-462.
- . "Charlie Chaplin." *The Nation*, February 29, 1928, pp. 247-248.
- . "A Knight-Errant." *The Dial*, 84, no. 5 (May 1928): pp. 413-414.
- . "The Future of the Movies." *The Nation*, October 10, 1928, pp. 360, 362, 364.
- . "The Artistic Possibilities of the Cinema." Originally published in *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly* (1913). Reprinted in *National Board of Review Magazine*, 3, no. 11 (November 1928): pp. 3-5.
- . "The Movie Scene: Notes on Sound and Silence." *Theatre Arts Monthly*, 13, no. 2 (February 1929): pp. 97-107.
- . "The 'Talkies.'" *The Nation*, February 20, 1929, pp. 236, 238.
- . "A Year of Talkies." *The Nation*, June 26, 1929, pp. 772-773.
- . "Talkies and Dummies." *The Nation*, November 13, 1929, pp. 562-563.
- . "The Miracle of Arsenal." *The Nation*, November 27, 1929, p. 640.
- . "Screen Musical Comedy." *The Nation*, February 5, 1930, pp. 159-160.
- . "New Dimensions in the Talkies." *The Nation*, December 24, 1930, pp. 702-703.
- . "The Shrinking of Personality." *The Nation*, May 27, 1931, p. 590.
- . "More Celluloid." *The Nation*, January 18, 1933, p. 76.
- Jacobs, Lewis, ed. *The Art of the Movies: An Anthology of Ideas on the Nature of Movie Art*. New York: Noonday Press, 1960.
- Potamkin, Harry Alan. "Alexander Bakshy." *National Board of Review Magazine*, 11, no. 9 (September 1927): pp. 4, 6.
- Stern, Seymour. "Principles of the New World-Cinema, Part I." *Experimental Cinema*, 1, no. 1 (February 1930), pp. 15-24.

The Importance of Philosophy in our Days

*Dialogue between Tudor Petcu and Peter Simons**

1.) First of all, I think we should focus on the general idea of *philosophy*, so that we can talk about the significance of philosophy in the contemporary society. We know very well that there are a lot of philosophical disciplines, a lot of perspectives, but how should we understand, from your point of view, the philosophy itself as a discipline?

Philosophy is and remains what it always has been since its origins in Ancient Greece and elsewhere: the attempt to formulate, understand, explain and apply the first principles and fundamental concepts embodied in our knowledge and action. The difference between contemporary philosophy and philosophy in earlier times lies in good part in its institutionalization in Philosophy Departments in universities, and the concomitant professionalization of the discipline, which have increased the rigour of the subject but also distorted its relationship to society and other disciplines by rendering it increasingly esoteric. As a result of the post-war explosion in tertiary education, there are more philosophers than ever before: I once calculated that of all the people calling themselves philosophers that have ever existed in the world to date, more than half are alive now. That gives rise to an increasingly inward-looking community where success and failure is independent of engagement with wider scientific and societal issues. That is not a good thing.

In part as a result of this relative lack of engagement, some authoritative people, such as the physicist Stephen Hawking, claim that philosophy is dead and that we should look to natural science instead as our source of new knowledge and insight. Of course philosophy no longer pretends to be a science in the same way as physics or zoology, but Hawking is wrong. Great scientists such as Newton, Darwin, Mach, Einstein and Schrödinger straddled the boundaries to philosophy, and experience tells us that where philosophers don't look critically at foundational issues, others step in and do it for them, generally without the same precision and caution. I am thinking of retired scientists and business people, and other amateur enthusiasts who wrongly think that philosophy has no standards and no consensus, so anything goes. No it doesn't. Philosophy may not be a source of positive knowledge, but it still requires

* Professor, Trinity College Dublin Ireland; email: psimons@tcd.ie.

discipline and training if it is to be done well, and it still retains its critical and constructive role, even if many professionals distractedly forget this.

2.) Philosophy had in its entire history a huge importance in determining social, ethical and political changes, so we can say that philosophy has been a necessity for the society. On the other hand, now we are living in a society based on a lot of principles and values considered by some theorists as being pragmatic. I'm not sure if this term "pragmatic society" is apt, but I would be tempted to discuss it. So, how would you characterize, how would you describe the so called "pragmatic society" and which could be the main role of philosophy in such a society?

I have not come across the term 'pragmatic society' but I have a rough idea of what is meant. It is I suppose a society where theory and ideology play a diminished role in the life of individuals and communities in comparison to matters of individual wellbeing. In the past, the existential uncertainties of life and death, poverty, famine, war and illness loomed larger than they do today, thanks to medical, economic and technological advance. The great ideological divides of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are either behind us or so muted as to be insignificant. Nationalism bred war; the communist experiment was a failure. In the West at least, there is a broad consensus that society should be based on market capitalism and liberal democracy. Political parties differ in emphasis rather than fundamental ideology. Modern Western society is largely secular and areligious. Even the more extreme forms of religious fundamentalism are symptoms of the wider erosion of conviction based on supernatural authority.

As to the role of philosophy in such a society, it *should* be enhanced by comparison with earlier, because the old sources of authority—religion and tradition—are no longer credible, and again the philosopher by training is best suited to play a critical and constructive part in informing and shaping the way such a society should be and should develop. Philosophy however cannot and should not undertake to replace old certainties with new ones. It should be more modest, honest and credible than that. Bertrand Russell wrote in *The History of Western Philosophy*, "To teach how to live without certainty, and yet without being paralysed by hesitation, is perhaps the chief thing that philosophy, in our age, can do for those who study it." As a motto for today's use of philosophy, that cannot be improved upon. Consider ethics, investigating the principles, concepts and applications of the notion of right and wrong action. In the past this was largely handed down by whatever religion was dominant in a society, and in some parts of the world, from Tehran to Texas, this still holds. So one

might expect philosophy to step into the breach. But even the most superficial examination of contemporary philosophical writing shows a disconcerting lack of consensus: utilitarians, Kantians, Aristotelian virtue-ethicists, Stoics and others vie for position in explaining the basis of ethics. So far, so uncertain. Yet when it comes to the application to real questions such as war, euthanasia, poverty, abortion, capital punishment and so on, an equally stunning convergence can be found. It is not complete, but it is reassuring. Does that mean philosophical reflection on morality is useless or out of date? By no means. It simply means that more work is required, more input from scientific psychology, more understanding of the sources of value, and—though it is hard for a professional to say this—less careerist concern to rush into print with what strikes its author as “The One True Theory”.

3.) In my first question I have made reference to the fact that there are a lot of philosophical disciplines and one of the most important disciplines is called “metaphysics”. From this point of view I would like to put you the following question: would metaphysics be necessary for a right-minded philosophical understanding of the contemporary society, characterized by a lot of technological revolutions?

I like this question because I regard myself as first and foremost a metaphysician and feel directly addressed by it. I may say I am also pleased that metaphysics is described as “one of the most important disciplines”, and indeed I consider it to be the single most important subdiscipline of philosophy. Metaphysics applies the basic tasks of philosophy to the ontological question of what exists in the world, and as such provides the framework for everything else in science and in philosophy, or at least tries to do so. Metaphysics has frequently and erroneously been pronounced dead, but its current astonishing revival carries dangers too, leading me to worry that incautious enthusiasts will cause it to reacquire the bad reputation for *a priori*, unscientific abstraction and *Weltabgewandtheit* that it often richly deserved. Attention to contemporary science, common sense, the need for application, and the usual caution about pronouncing final solutions, are all required, and the esoteric culture of the discipline mentioned above is not helping.

However, to return to your question, the answer is an unequivocal “Yes”. Metaphysics can be useful in understanding our contemporary technological society. Modern technology has impinged on our modes of living in ways which we are struggling to assimilate and understand. The use of computers, the internet, mobile devices, cheap long-distance travel, social media and so on are changing human societies and interactions in ways we

have yet fully to fathom. The boundary between oneself and the environing world is less obvious than before. Smartphones supplement our memories and senses, they remind us of appointments, inform us when transport is late, advise on stock-market trends, allow us to move money, book flights, and talk to others from mountain-tops or the stratosphere as well as from home and on the street, host our reading matter, bank balance and medical data. Our nearest and dearest are no longer in the same house or city, but across the world and yet in instant contact. People talk and text on the street to others half a world away and are no longer thought odd to be talking out loud in public to no one visible. Social media, blogs and chatrooms give people “friends” they have never met and never will, one’s closest colleagues are scattered across the globe. Social proximity is no longer geographically dictated.

Yet in all this, what has changed? The “new media” are different in immediacy and reach, but not in kind from letters, telegrams and telephones, and indeed mimic these in their operation. Online encyclopedias resemble print encyclopedias, books and music are downloaded rather than bought in shops, but the principles and the end-users and producers remain the same. Air travel is quicker than sea or land travel, but the starting points and destinations are as before. Philosophers can bring a sense of proportion and historical depth to this, under the motto of Douglas Adams: “Don’t panic!” This is not to say that even more astonishing changes will take place, but it cautions against either undue pessimism or uncritical “gee-whiz” enthusiasm. Keep calm and carry on innovating.

4.) Many thinkers have spoken about the differences between science and philosophy, but if we want to talk about such a subject, I think we shouldn’t forget a very important aspect: science is evolving on and on without reexamining its own history (maybe that’s why there is such a moral crisis), but philosophy has the tendency to revalue its own history. Do you agree with this perspective, do you think is this the difference between science and philosophy? And if philosophy is reevaluating its history, its ideas, can we say that by doing this philosophy is able to eliminate the moral crisis? And I wouldn’t take into account only the moral crisis, but also the crisis of ideas.

I agree that science doesn’t dwell on its history as philosophy does, and there are reasons for this. Progress in science is more nearly monotonic and cumulative than in philosophy. We rightly no longer believe in the fixity of species, the geocentric universe, or the four humours. Old theories do get revived and revamped from time to time: the atomic theory and the corpuscular theory of light are two examples, but, as in fashion, the old is

never exactly replicated. Science however absorbs and incorporates its successful past history, so it is not without historical depth. As an undergraduate mathematician, I was told in the first lecture my degree study would take me from the seventeenth century to the twentieth, and that was right. We still used the ideas Newton, Euler, Hamilton, Galois and Lebesgue, and mentioned them by name, but did not examine their ideas in their original and largely inaccessible original context. Likewise in science it is modern textbooks that replace the greats of the past for the new generation of students.

In philosophy, the past holds lessons for us now because there is less evidence of progress and improvement. When genuine progress begins to take place, it generally hives off and becomes a new science, such as psychology, linguistics or cognitive science. In part that is because the problems philosophy faces are less obvious and more intractable than those of science. Nevertheless, though falsification in philosophy is slow, indirect and hard, there is some progress in philosophy. The tools of modern logic, wrought in the attempt to grasp the (philosophical!) foundations of mathematics, have given philosophers much greater scope for addressing difficult conceptual problems. Attention to linguistic subtleties, provided it is not made an end in itself, enhances conceptual clarity in addressing difficult questions. Some positions, such as Parmenidean monism, epistemological idealism, and radical scepticism, are clearly of the past and behind us, even if a few contemporary representatives can be found battling against the tide and the evidence. Philosophy, most especially that deriving from what is called the analytic tradition, does have standards of intellectual rigour, clarity and integrity. In this it contrasts prominently with trendy pseudoscientific charlatans who proffer cute wordplay and deep-sounding nonsense in place of reason and argument, and who excite feuilleton readers and artists more than do the sane and mundane considerations of less pretentious philosophers.

On whether philosophy can and should help to offer a way out of the crises of morals and ideas, my answer is a qualified “Yes”. On moral matters, I already gave an answer in response to question 2. I do not think philosophy is uniquely or predominantly capable of eliminating the uncertainty about morality. Long historical experience tells us that dramatic events like wars, famines and other catastrophes have a far greater purchase on the human imagination than the calm pronouncements of reasonable philosophers. It was after all the philosopher David Hume who taught us, long before Freud, that people are moved by passion, not by reason. So I am cautious to pessimistic about the prospects of philosophy as a force for change.

As to a “crisis in ideas”, I am unsure what this means. The term ‘crisis’ reminds me that in the 1930s the leading German philosopher

Edmund Husserl wrote a book on what he called “the crisis of the European sciences”. Husserl was just plain wrong that there was such a crisis. European science was doing just fine on many counts, and that included European philosophy. What European crisis there was was economic and political: depression, fascism and bolshevism, racism versus humanism, nationalism versus cosmopolitanism, the weakness of European democracy. Husserl’s solution was tellingly not political but philosophical: it was to recognise his own philosophy, transcendental phenomenology, as the answer. I think his was the wrong answer too: idealism is no remedy for problems whether of science or of society; only a more discerning realism will serve. Nor do I think contemporary science is in crisis, though there are unsolved problems, such as how to reconcile quantum theory with relativity theory. That is a task for trained scientists: most philosophers can at best look on and shout encouragement from the sidelines.

There are practical and maybe even existential crises facing humanity: overpopulation, climate change and the rise in religious intolerance. They should not be underestimated, but philosophers can play only a minor role in keeping people aware and honest in facing them, for example in exposing the fallacies in arguments of climate change deniers, or the perils of basing morality on the supernatural.

Perhaps after all the deepest remaining crisis of ideas is that of seeing our way clear to a moral and political theory that is fit for our time, given the demise of the old authorities. It cannot be said philosophers have been slow to respond. From as early as the seventeenth century, philosophers like Locke, Hume, and Kant and their many later successors have grappled with the question of how a just and moral society can be based on sensible, rational, secular principles. The distance we perceive to their Enlightenment perspective is one not of lack of sympathy for their aims, but our cold recognition of the feebleness of reason in the face of passion and tradition. As philosophers, we have to accept this and consider together how to overcome it.

Vlăduț-Ionuț GHIONOIU *

En quête de Dieu

(Jad Hatem, *La Théophanie de l'impossible*, Editions du Cygne, Paris, 2016, 117 pp.)

Le livre qui fait l'objet de ce compte-rendu s'intitule *La Théophanie de l'impossible*, est écrit par le philosophe libanais Jad Hatem. Sa démarche philosophique est une analyse herméneutique d'une philosophie ouverte, en marge „d'une fécondité de l'impossible” (p. 4), dans le sens d'une *potentielle* sortie de l'impossible.

L'auteur est bien connu en tant que philosophe et poète francophone d'origine libanaise, étant le titulaire de la Chaire de *Littérature et Sciences religieuses* de l'Université *Saint-Joseph* de Beyrouth depuis 1976. Il dirige actuellement les revues scientifiques *Extasis*, *L'Orient des dieux*, *La Splendeur du Carmel*, *Annales de philosophie* de l'Université de Beyrouth. C'est un écrivain prolifique, étant connu pour les publications ayant une influence nationale (sur le plan religieux, spirituel, philosophiques et littéraire). Ses sources d'inspiration sont Friedrich Wilhelm Schelling et Michel Henry.

L'écrit *La Théophanie de l'impossible* a été rédigée directement en français. Les intentions philosophiques se révèlent suite à une analyse des arguments formulés et par l'identification des références philosophiques et scientifiques prises en charge. L'auteur n'hésite pas à y inscrire, dans une série de quatre chapitres et un appendice, sa propre vision philosophique, en mettant ensemble des éléments de théologie chrétienne, de philosophie médiévale et de la pensée islamique.

Le premier chapitre s'intitule *Le paradigme de la théophanie de l'impossible*, le deuxième chapitre - *La théophanie du néant*; le troisième chapitre - *Narcissisme et création*, le quatrième chapitre - *La distance phénoménologique*; il y a encore : *Appendice: notules, auto-révélation de l'écrivain dans l'élément étranger et la spontanéité du poème*.

1. Dans *Le paradigme de la théophanie de l'impossible*, la prémisse de Hatem est la suivante: *ce qu'est impossible pour l'homme requiert une théophanie*. Etant donné que Dieu ne peut pas être connu dans Son essence (*quidditas*) et qu'une connaissance plénière existe uniquement en Lui, il résulte que l'homme ne connaît pas suffisamment la divinité. L'homme a besoin d'une théophanie dans *quelque chose* de concret (matériel: le nuage, la montagne, l'humanité). L'Incarnation christique est la forme suprême de la théophanie. Le paradigme théophanique souligne „l'absence de l'auto-intuition divine,

* PhD Candidate, L'Université „Alexandru-Ioan Cuza”, Faculté de Philosophie et Sciences et Sciences Social-Politiques, Iasi; email: ghionoiu_vladut_ionut@yahoo.com

totale ou partielle” (p. 10) ; il est donc nécessaire d’avoir une perspective *inversée* de la connaissance de “l’épectase” où Dieu se manifeste en Lui-même. Cette connaissance est différente de la connaissance par la création ou par la contemplation. En Dieu il manque le „quelque chose” à définir, absolument différent du „quoi” (*quid sit*) plotinien. La théophanie a donc lieu *dans le monde*. Puisque „rien n’est impossible à Dieu” (Lc 1, 37), Dieu déclenche la théophanie en tant qu’acte de mouvement et progrès entre α (une carence caractérisée par l’ignorance) et ω (un accomplissement de l’ignorance dans un sens phénoménologique). La Révélation de Dieu est un processus „d’auto-révélation” en tant que représentation *ad extra* ou en tant qu’acquis de la conscience par la manifestation de l’amour et par une sortie de la léthargie et de l’auto-suffisance de soi-même.

Dieu théophanique est un Dieu souverain et glorieux qui pendule entre un *oui* et un *non* de l’impossible dans la perspective „d’une tension théophanique et anti-théophanique” (p. 26). La théophanie de l’impossible représente „cette conjonction d’impossibilité en Dieu d’une révélation immanente et immédiatement unie avec l’exigence d’une expression de soi dans l’élément de l’extériorité” (p. 28). D’une part, dans le christianisme, la divinité se révèle en Soi-même (nous sous-entendons la distinction entre *ad intra*, qui est la connaissance de Soi-même, et *ad extra*, à savoir la création); d’autre part, dans l’islamisme, le nom caché de la divinité (*al-Isim al-bâtin*) se ne révèle jamais. „La logique théophanique” (p. 39) est fondée sur la possibilité de l’essence divine de *se manifester dans l’existence*, dans la perspective d’une auto-connaissance, car Dieu n’est pas ni à l’origine du mal, ni ne peut rien faire contre Sa propre volonté. 4

2. *La théophanie du néant* : le néant est la modalité par laquelle la divinité se manifeste dans sa plénitude. Le moyen par lequel cet acte se réalise est *la descente dans la nature humaine* (p. 67). Ainsi donc, il intervient au niveau de la gloire divine „une rupture”/ „un divorce”/ „une privation” en Dieu Lui-même. Le signe distinct de la théophanie divine auto-manifestée dans la création est l’amour en tant que relation paternelle entre Dieu-Père et Dieu-Fils.

3. *Narcissisme et création* : dans le processus de la création il existe une triade de distinctions entre le monde, l’homme et le poème. Le monde est la réflexion de l’amour de Dieu, l’homme est la réflexion de l’âme et le poème est la réflexion du langage. Le Créateur se caractérise par un narcissisme, suite à la création d’une altérité nommée *creatio ex nihilo*. Si la création de quelqu’un d’autre est différente du Créateur, alors la création est uniquement une fraction du Créateur.

Le Créateur Tout-Puissant crée continuellement les étants de néant (p. 72) et la création est l'œuvre de l'acte de l'auto-révélation immanente de la Trinité, exprimée le plus profondément par la relation d'entre le Père et le Fils. L'étant est conçu au niveau de microcosme par „l'héritage caché” de l'essence divine. La Théophanie immanente se reprend sur celle transcendante justement après la création de monde. Or, *la théologie de narcissisme physique créateur* se manifeste dans la création de l'homme, tandis que *la philosophie de narcissisme physique créateur* (inspirée de la tradition orphique et de Plotin) montre le rôle de l'âme dans la création de l'âme (dans la tradition platonicienne, dans une perspective fataliste, l'âme descendra dans la chaire sous forme d'une prison, afin d'y être libérée). La création est l'effet de narcissisme et le narcissisme est également l'effet de la création.

4. *La distance phénoménologique* : si dans le langage hégélien Dieu manifesté (théophanique) est une „altérité” (p. 100), dans la conception de Jacob Böhme, la théophanie est „une distanciation de soi” (p. 99). D'autant plus, chez Michel Henry Dieu théophanique manifeste „un monisme ontologique” (p. 99) par lequel Dieu prend contour sous forme d'une puissance d'existentialité. L'apôtre Paul approprie la théophanie dans l'hypostase de Fils Incarné, „l'image du Dieu invisible” (Col 1, 15). Le plan de l'existentialité est représenté à la fois de monisme et/ou de dualisme. *Le monisme ontologique* est toujours caractérisé en contraste avec le *dualisme ontologique*, sous l'égide de l'essence qui ne pourrait être „phénoménalisée” indépendamment de l'intelligibilité du monde ou d'une sensibilité. Par contre, le dualisme ne se phénoménalise pas en soi-même.

Dans l'*Appendice*, Jad Hatem attribue à la théophanie de l'impossible une série d'attributs, afin d'approfondir de mieux en mieux la compréhension philosophique: *exister* (ἔκστασις) comme ce qui est tenu hors de soi par la vérité de l'être, *l'auto-intuition*, *la perfection*, *l'auto-limitation*, *l'irruption*. L'homme anticipe par sa dimension finie *la dernière réalité*, le jour de jugement dernier, y compris sémiologiquement en tant que *le signe de dernier souffle*.

En guise de conclusion, je considère que l'écrit de Jad Hatem est une œuvre authentique et actuelle. Elle ne trace pas de conclusions apodictiques et en plus, elle donne la liberté d'interpréter philosophiquement et de les assumer humainement (les conclusions). Dans le christianisme, la théophanie de l'impossible est bien comprise en tant que jonction entre la mort et le néant, en gardant l'être sans *la néantisation* irréversible de l'homme. La néantisation propre à Dieu est l'Incarnation dans laquelle l'existence ontique est bien gardée. C'est pourquoi, l'image qui apparaît sur le livre de Jad Hatem montre un manuscrit du XIIème siècle appartenant au Bernard de Clairvaux dans lequel le créé et l'incrée révèle le deux visage de visible et de l'invisible. Personnellement, je considère Jad Hatem un ami des roumains

par la citation de plusieurs auteurs tel que V. Voiculescu (p. 93, note 3), M. Caragial (p. 95), A. Blandiana (p. 97), T. Arghezi (p. 98), L. Blaga (p. 98), D. Turcea (p. 99) etc. Après avoir lu ce livre, la richesse accumulée est doublement gagnante: a) l'enrichissement de connaissance et l'approfondissement de la compréhension de *la théophanie* et de *l'impossible* dans un rapport dialogique de trinôme philosophie-christianisme-islamisme; b) l'établissement d'une herméneutique par l'intégration des éléments philosophiques et théologiques dans la découverte de la signification *de la théophanie de l'impossible*.