PHILOSOPHICAL READINGS

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PHILOSOPHICAL READINGS
ONLINE JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

Rediscovering Wittgenstein's Ideas on the Nature of Mental Phenomena

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to investigate the nature of mental phenomena with special reference to Wittgenstein's philosophy of mind. Wittgenstein's main concern is not with the construction of any philosophical theory about these mental phenomena. He is concerned with the dissolution of puzzles that arise because of the linguistic misunderstandings about the nature of mental phenomena. Mental phenomena are generally very complex. The words that try to capture mental phenomena do not have clear grammar. Hence, statements describing mental phenomena mislead us. Therefore, linguistic misconceptions or misunderstandings are the main sources of any philosophical problem on the human mind.

Keywords: Wittgenstein; Mental phenomena; Mental contents; Self-knowledge; Problem of other minds; Forms of life.

1. Introduction

We face both the difficulties: the difficulty of complexity and the difficulty of understanding what is at the surface level and what is at the depth level in the case of mental phenomena. For example, 'I have headache' is complex because it could have several reasons, say, lack of rest, fever, migraine, etc. and it has the superstructure of ordinary language, claiming the possession of pain, though one does not possess a pain which can be brought out by analyzing the word 'have' at the level of depth grammar. The contents of the mental occurrences look complex because of the confusion that the propositions describing mental occurrences have a grammar which is hidden by our ordinary language. The grammar seems to be the main culprit even though there is the contribution of the complexity of mental predicates. This is because grammar is closely related to the language, and language is closely related to our forms of life. We may fail to notice certain grammatical fiction in our language because of which we confuse with the various uses of the words of our mental phenomena. According to Wittgenstein, these confusions or linguistic misconceptions can be set right once we clarify the grammar of the language that describes the mental phenomena. The language that describes the mental phenomena can be called 'the language of mental phenomena'[1] analogous to the expression 'language of sense experience.' We could speak of the language of mental phenomena, and like any other language, this language is founded on convention and can understand this language like any other language.

While investigating the nature of mental phenomena,

Wittgenstein is mainly concerned with the grammar of those words which describes various mental activities like, seeing, hearing, feeling, imagining, thinking, willing, and so on. We could not get the grammar of these words by asking the questions like what is seeing or what is hearing, etc., rather it is possible only through the investigation of the concept of seeing or hearing. This investigation is mainly devoted to finding out the conceptual connections involved in our language among various mental activities. These mental activities are all related to each other, but each mental activity has a special kind of function(s) in our language. For example, thinking and remembering are closely related to each other, and each has a special kind of function(s) in the language. By understanding the grammar of a word used for mental activity, we can express our mental activities to others and also ascribe them to others. In this chapter, an attempt will be made to delve upon three related linguistic misconceptions concerning the nature of mental phenomena viz., the paradox of immediate experience of complex contents, the problem of self-knowledge and the problem of other minds[2].

2. The Paradox of Immediate Experience of Complex Contents

Let us first consider what immediate experience is. According to Hicks, the concept of 'immediate experience' is not to be used in the sense of any kind of immediate apprehension or intuition. By 'immediate experience,' one understands the kind of experience he has, for the moment, assuming we have of mental states or processes as they are occurring. Here, we can directly apprehend or cognize our own mental states or processes in the same way as it has been thought we directly apprehend or cognize our sense datum and self-evident truths. But when we apprehend, for example, the red colour we do not apprehend our act of seeing the colour. Nevertheless, in such case, undoubtedly a kind of mental process is occurring, and in some way, the mental process is not experienced even though that experience is not of the nature of apprehending or cognizing. This kind of experience is the immediate experience and it is used to denote the special kind of experience we each of us have of the occurrences that are phrases of our own mental states.[3]

While describing the experience, we tend to describe the objects of experience and the ways they are when we are experiencing them. In contrast, according to Wittgenstein, when we are describing the immediate experience,

we do not need to decide "about the presence or absence of an object."[4] If we try to decide whether what we see as a physical object, we make the mistake of applying "our physical mode of expression to sense data."[5] Wittgenstein goes on to write further "'Objects,' i.e., things, bodies in the space of a room – and 'objects' in one's visual field; the shadow of a body on the wall as an object!"[6] Here, he distinguishes physical objects from objects in one's visual field. His account of sense perception that distinguishes physical objects from sense data follows a principle which Howard Robinson calls the phenomenal principle. Describing the phenomenal principle, Robinson writes "If there sensibly appears to a subject to be something which possesses a particular sensible quality then there is something of which the subject is aware which does possess that sensible quality."[7] Thus, what sensibly appears to the subject to be something like red that means to say 'redness' is phenomenally present in the object. Hence, according to the phenomenal principle, there is something that must be red so that the subject is aware of the existence of the red object in the phenomenal world. Therefore, in order one's experience of red to be the way it is, redness has to be there, and he should be aware of the presence of the red object. If there is nothing bearing this property of redness, then our experience could not be as it is. Therefore, we should not be confused with the distinction between sense-data and physical objects. The objects or the contents of a personal experience or an immediate experience are so complex that we cannot express them in the way we express our physical objects. Thus, it is a kind of paradox we find about an immediate experience that we are so familiar with the immediate experience, but we cannot express the objects of that experience. This kind of paradox is called by Severin as 'the paradox of immediate experience of complex contents.'[8]

Defining immediate experience, Wittgenstein writes, "I mean by immediate experience –sometimes with a 'yes' and sometimes with a 'no' (here 'yes' and 'no' only express confirmation and lack of confirmation, to be sure), and that one can give expression to this affirmation and denial."[9] Wittgenstein shows the inclination to agree with someone who insists that we know our own intention directly since there is no medium involved. He remarks by saying, "Only you can know if you had that intention" (*PI*§247)[10] that there is no scope for skepticism. Wittgenstein also tends to claim in this quotation that the word 'know' is not appropriately used here; he tends to disagree in calling mental experience as knowledge.

According to Severin, the meaning of the phrase 'immediate experience' itself is paradoxical. By 'paradox' we usually mean a self-contradictory statement and the underlying meaning of that statement is revealed only by careful scrutiny.[11] In his words,

The paradox of immediate experience of complex contents is: "Understanding, intention, expectation, remembering, and other such mental occurrences can have remarkably rich and complex contents. It may take a very long time to spell out completely what exactly someone understood, intended, expected, or remembered on a given occasion. Yes, it appears that the understanding, intending, expecting, or remember can occur instantaneously: in a flash. How is it possible for some incredibly complex contents to be experienced in one moment?"[12]

What is paradoxical is that complex mental phenomena appear to be simple when we experience them. In the above passage, Severin claims that at a particular point one utters the expressions like 'Now I understand,' 'I understood,' 'I remembered,' 'I expected,' 'Now I know how to go on' etc., and from these expressions, we infer various complex mental phenomena. But the person having these mental phenomena may not be aware of all the details about the contents of those mental phenomena. Further, the contents of the mental occurrences are complex but appear to be simple because we take depth grammar to be the surface grammar of our ordinary language.

Wittgenstein once made the distinction between two languages like ordinary physical language and the language he employed for the description of immediate experience. According to him, philosophical problems arise when we apply our ordinary physical language in describing an immediate experience. In this context, Wittgenstein writes,

The worst philosophical errors always arise when we try to apply our ordinary – physical – language in the area of the immediately given. If for instance, you ask, 'Does the box still exist when I am not looking at it?', the only right answer would be 'Of course, unless someone has taken it away or destroyed it.' Naturally, a philosopher would be dissatisfied with this answer, but it would quite rightly reduce his way of formulating the question *ad absurdum.* All our forms of speech are taken from ordinary physical language and cannot be used in epistemology or phenomenology without casting a distorting light on their objects. (*PR*§57&88)[13]

In this passage, Wittgenstein employs a distinction between the ordinary language that we use to talk about physical objects and the language which employed for the description of immediate experience. Kiverstein calls the language that used for the description of immediate experience as 'the phenomenological language'[14] By raising the question 'Does the box still exist when I am not looking at it?', Wittgenstein points out that this type of questions is asked in our ordinary physical language. We cannot answer them from the epistemological or phenomenological points of view. If we try to answer them from the phenomenological or epistemological perspective, then we will create a philosophical problem. Thus, according to Wittgenstein, the skeptical problem regarding the existence of unperceived things is the result of one's confusion of the phenomenological language with the ordinary physical language.

Giving a response to Wittgenstein, Kiverstein writes,

We can give Wittgenstein's disarming response that of course, the box exists unless someone has removed or destroyed it. True, the box as-it-is-perceived-by-us doesn't continue to exist unperceived but, as Wittgenstein notes, it is not this box whose existence the skeptic is questioning. The box the skeptic is interested in is the box we talk about using what Wittgenstein calls physical language. The skeptical problem is only pressing because we confuse these two languages.[15]

Agreeing with Kiverstein, we claim that Wittgenstein at this stage in his writings employed the possibility of constructing the phenomenological language distinct from ordinary physical language. Wittgenstein has addressed the above issue on the skeptic's doubt regarding the existence

of an unperceived object and tried to disarm the skeptic by employing the distinction between two types of language. His employment of the phenomenological language for the description of immediate experience remains unclear, and also he concludes that the skeptic's problem is not a problem at all. It arises because of confusing physical language to be phenomenological.

In the opening section of *Philosophical Remarks*, Wittgenstein says that he no longer gives primacy to phenomenological language and further holds that such a language is necessary. Therefore, for him, to give up the goal of the phenomenological language means to give up the task of constructing a notation to describe an immediate experience (See *PR*§1). Thus, according to Wittgenstein, to think of the propositions describing immediate experience have a logical structure or grammar that is hidden by phenomenological language is a mistake. One can describe his or her immediate experience(s) through our ordinary language that we use to say about the physical objects. It is true that one might be confused with the grammar of the propositions describing an immediate experience with that of the propositions saying about our physical objects. This confusion can be removed by understanding the rules of the grammar of the language. The rules of the propositions describing an immediate experience are completely different from the rules of the propositions describing a physical object. Just like the rules of the game, chess is completely different from the rules of any other game like cricket game, ball games, or any other games. If we apply the rules of chess while playing any other games, then the philosophical problem will arise, but it is not the case that the rules of chess are hidden by our ordinary language.

Similarly, Wittgenstein takes an example that "A writes series of numbers down, B watches him and tries to find a law for the sequence of numbers. If he succeeds he exclaims: Now I can go on (*PI*§151)." It shows that B understood the series of numbers that A had written down. This understanding is something that appears in a moment, but it is so complex. While A was writing the series of numbers, B might try various algebraic formulas on the numbers. When one of the formulas confirmed a particular number that is the suitable number for the series, B might realize that he can go on. This is not a simple activity that happens in a moment. It seems understanding is an immediate experience that occurs in a moment; really, it does not happen in a moment. In this context, Wittgenstein writes, "If someone tells me something and I understand it, then this is as much something that happens to me as is hearing what he says. And here understanding is the phenomenon that occurs when I hear an English sentence, and that distinguishes this type of hearing from hearing a sentence in a foreign language."[16] Now the general questions arise like, what is understanding? Is it a mental state or process?

Before investigating whether understanding is a mental state or process, let us make the distinction between a mental state and a mental process. Wittgenstein makes the distinction between mental states and mental processes, based on the distinction between 'something that can be described' and 'something that can be expressed.' Accordingly, he holds the view that a mental state can be described, but a mental process can only be expressed. When we describe a physical state like my room, we describe our state of mind. But the word 'describe' would not apply to

sensations when one says that we describe our pain. As Wittgenstein writes, "I say 'I describe my state of mind' and 'I describe my room.' You need to call to mind the differences between the language-games" (*PI*§290). Therefore, we need to know the differences between both the uses of the word 'describe.'

The above distinction between mental states and mental processes entails us that a mental state is describable and accordingly, expectation, being of opinion, hoping for something, knowing something, and being able to do something, are mental states (*PI*§572). On the other hand, believing, thinking, expecting, hoping, etc., are mental processes. These mental processes are expressed in one's behaviors or through linguistic expressions. If we compare these two categories of mental phenomena, we find that mental processes are nothing but the expressions of corresponding mental states. For example, believing is the expression of the mental state 'belief'. Thus, we could not reject mental processes as the part of our language; and mental states are not only describable, and they can also be expressed through our language and behaviors. A proposition can be the expression of belief, hope, expectation, etc., (*PI*§574). Therefore, there is no mental state that cannot be expressed in language.

Moreover, it is a general temptation to take 'understanding' as a mental state. Therefore, we say one has understood the series 1, 4, 9, 16, 25 because he has a certain mental state. We may also say writing down the next two numbers of the series correctly or uttering the formula for the series are only manifestations of this mental state. If understanding is a mental state, according to the above criterion of a mental state, it must be expressible. Let us compare the uses of a mental state with that of understanding in our day to day life, and from that comparison, we could investigate whether understanding is a mental state or not a mental state. We can describe the state of pain, but we could not describe that of understanding. We do not say of understanding as we would say of pain or depression that it has been continuous for a few days. But understanding is determined by a particular circumstance that in each case, it justifies us in saying we understand.

However, in *PI*, Wittgenstein tries to show that 'understanding' is not a form of mental state. For example, while uttering or hearing the word 'triangle' we may have the mental image of a triangle in our mind, but we could not say that is what understanding or meaning of the word consists in. Because one can understand the word 'triangle' without having any mental image of the triangle, and it is also the case that no mental images guaranty any understanding. In this sense, understanding is much like reading than pain or depression. In *PI*§156-178, Wittgenstein discusses how we normally try to formulate the various definitions of 'reading' and differentiate the activity of reading from that of non-reading. Hence, he considers three general definitions of the activity of reading and argues against the views regarding the specific features to define reading. It is the general definition that reading is accompanied by a set of sensations different from those of pretending to read or not to read. Secondly, the activity of reading entails that reading is a matter of deriving sounds from the rule provided by the alphabets. Thirdly, sounds come to one when one looks at words in a particular way.

Again, Wittgenstein also argues against the view that understanding is a mental process. According to him, "Try not to think of understanding as 'a mental process' at all. For *that* is the expression which confuses you."[17] We could sometimes say, pain is growing more and more and also sometimes less but in the case of understanding that kind of criterion is not applicable. Understanding is not going through any mental processes. Thus for Wittgenstein, understanding is not a mental state or process; it is the ability to apply or use any rule correctly. Hence, understanding a mathematical formula means to have the ability to apply it. Similarly, understanding a word is to be able to use it correctly. When one says that 'I understand,' it does not mean that the person is reporting a mental phenomena, rather he is acknowledging an ability to do something. Therefore, the criterion for saying that someone understands means the person demonstrates the ability.

Similarly, Wittgenstein argues against the view that the word 'meaning' is understood as a mental process. He begins *PI* with an attack on the theory of meaning that words get their meaning from the names of ideas in mind, and accordingly, the meaning is dependent upon the individual thinkers. And words stand for ideas in the mind of the person who uses words. Therefore, the idea that gives meaning to a word is private to each language user and also mental. Wittgenstein argues against this theory of meaning that the meaning of a word is not only required individual users and their ideas but also it required the institution of language. For him, the meaning of a word does not mean its accompaniment with any mental image in mind. Rather, it is given by the explanation of the use of that word. And if one wants to know the meaning of a word, he must look at how the word is used. In this context, Wittgenstein writes, "When someone says the word 'cube' to me, for example, I know what it means. But can the whole *use* of the word come before my mind, when I understand it this way?"[18]. The answer is, 'No.' We could not have a clear view of all the uses of the word 'cube.' As Wittgenstein writes, "A main source of our failure to understand is that we do not command a clear view of the use of our words."[19] In this way, Wittgenstein held the view that a word gains its meaning from how it is used for a particular purpose and the grammar of our language governs the use of any word in our language.

It is worth noting that the main linguistic moves which are governed by the grammar of a language-game and whose success or failure is adjudicated using a standard are what Wittgenstein describes as 'empirical' or 'factual' propositions. These propositions are either true or false. He likens these propositions to the waters of a river, and for him, grammar is the river-bed or channel of the river. Thus, Wittgenstein claims that it may shift with time so that principles on one side of the line cross over to the other; but he nonetheless insists that there is such a division to be made (*OC*§97).[20] It is true that Wittgenstein makes a distinction between empirical propositions and the grammatical rules, but this division between the two is not a sharp one. An empirical proposition can be converted as a grammatical proposition in our language. For example, the empirical proposition 'this is a rose' can be grammatically used in our language like 'any flower like this is a rose.' Now the general question is: What sort of rules does Wittgenstein recognize as the rules of grammar that govern for the linguistic moves of empirical propositions?

Wittgenstein believes that all principles those have the character of necessity or more than causal necessity are grammatical rules. Thus, the non-causal necessity is not only a sufficient condition but also a necessary condition of grammatical rules. Therefore, ostensive definitions like, 'this colour is red' also belong to grammar for Wittgenstein. As he writes, "The interpretation of written and spoken signs by ostensive definitions is not an *application* of language, but part of the grammar" (*PG-I*§45).[21] Similarly, while ascribing a mental state, one has to give the grammatical explanation about that mental state. In this context, Wittgenstein states: "To explain my criterion for another person's having toothache is to give a grammatical explanation about the word 'toothache' and, in this sense, an explanation concerning the meaning of the word 'toothache'" (*BB*, p. 24).[22]

However, by 'the rule' we could mean "…The hypothesis that satisfactorily describes his use of words, which we observe; or the rule which he looks up when he uses signs; or the one which he gives us in reply if we ask him what his rule is" (*BB*, p. 82)? Here, Wittgenstein tries to show that a rule can be used explicitly or implicitly. When 'the rule' means 'the hypothesis that satisfactorily describes his (one's) use of words' the person has used the rule implicitly that he is not so familiar with the rule to justify or explain the use of a word. For example, a child while using language by and large follows some rules, but the child would not be able to clarify the use of a rule.

In contrast, when the rule is used explicitly, it means the rule which he (the person) looks up when he uses signs or the one which he gives us in reply if we ask him what his rule is. Thus, when 'the rule' is used explicitly, the person is familiar with the rules. He is not only familiar with the use of a rule but also with the formulation of the rule or at least he would be able to explain or justify his use of the rule. Let us take the example of a teacher or a competent chess player. A teacher while writing a sequence of series, he knows the rule to proceed with the series. Similarly, the competent chess player is so familiar with the rules that he could cite a rule for the movement of any pieces of playing chess.

Even if the chess player somehow could cite rules of the moment of pieces of chess, still the player is not a competent player; he may not play the game well. That is to say, the disposition or the ability of the player gained through long experience is very relevant to the game. Thus, one cannot meaningfully speak of the uses of language without bringing in the concept of the language user. Therefore, our attention needs to be given to the knowledge of oneself. Let us now turn to the issue of self-knowledge.

3. The Problem of Self-knowledge

The term 'self-knowledge' refers to the knowledge about one's own mental states and processes. The most important issue regarding self-knowledge is, whether self-knowledge is real knowledge? According to Wittgenstein, the word 'know' applies to the things that belong to the world. Thus, the word 'know' can be used in the context of the factual world. One's own mental states and processes are not part

of the factual world and hence the word 'know' is strictly not applicable to them. As Wittgenstein writes, "I would like to reserve the expression 'I know' for the cases in which it is used in normal linguistic exchange" (*OC*§260). Here, Wittgenstein makes the distinction between the linguistic question and factual question. And he claims that the use of the word 'know' is only confined to the factual world; it cannot be used where the question is concerned with the linguistic question only. Let us take the example of the conversation between a doctor and a patient. When a patient visits the doctor, the doctor asks a question like 'what is wrong?' Or 'what is the problem with you?' These questions are not related to our factual world; these are limited to their (doctor-patient) conversation. The patient might answer to the doctor like 'I have toothache' or 'I have a headache' or 'I have stomach pain.' The doctor might ask again: how do you know that you have toothache or headache or stomach pain?

Both the expressions 'I have' and 'I know' are used differently when we speak about mental states or processes in comparison to physical objects and events. 'I have' in the context of mental state or process does not behave like possessive, but in the physical world, 'I have' can be possessive. For example, 'I have a car' here the expression 'I have' is used as possessive. Similarly, we use the expression 'I know' in both contexts: mental and physical. Wittgenstein wants to reserve this expression for the physical, and he would not like to use this expression for the mental. In the context of mental, he would say, 'I know that I have pain' could only mean that to doubt whether I have pain would make no sense. Thus, in the context of mental states or processes, doubting is not possible in one's own case, but this does not apply to the mental states or processes to other persons.

Following Wittgenstein, Hester says that "The word 'know' when used in a linguistic context (that is, in a context where the question is whether someone correctly understands the meaning of a word) has meaning only when there are criteria to settle the question. In other words, the word 'know' in a linguistic context presupposes the existence of relevant criteria by which correctness or incorrectness could be determined."[23] Thus, in the linguistic context while using the word 'know' is meaningful in the context of 'I know I am in pain' in the sense of our understanding only. Hence, Wittgenstein attacks the solipsist who reserves the word 'know' for his own case. And according to him, there are no relevant criteria in the case of saying, 'I know I am in pain.' No criteria determine one's saying that 'I am in pain.' In this context, we want to discuss Wittgenstein's views regarding the propositions like 'I know that I am in pain' or 'I know that I am thinking' or 'I know that I am afraid' and how his views help us to bring out some important features of self-knowledge. Here, we would like to bring some interpretations of Wittgenstein's views regarding 'the impossibility of self-knowledge.'

It is a philosophical claim regarding self-knowledge that "…only I can know whether I am really in pain; another person can only surmise it" (*PI*§246). This claim is a conjunction of two propositions, namely, (a) I can know that I am in pain and (b) other people cannot know that I am in pain. Now, the question is why people claim that a person cannot know if someone else is in pain. One possible reason could be that one is not sure whether one is really in pain or pretending. Generalizing from this, one might make a general claim that one cannot know whether another is in pain or not. Another possible reason could be that one cannot have the experience of others, and hence, one cannot have the feeling of others. Thus, pain being an experience one cannot have the pain of others. If I know my pain from my experience, I cannot know the pain of others since I cannot have their experience.

Nevertheless, Wittgenstein insists that it is not the case that an individual has pain and he alone is aware of it, but others too can know that he is in pain. He writes "If we are using the word 'to know' as it is normally used (and how else are we to use it?), then other people very often know when I am in pain." (*PI*§246) Thus, it is simply false that only the person who experiences pain knows that he is in pain. Only after a person knows that someone is in pain can he sympathize with him, care for him, etc.

Moreover, the statement 'I know I am in pain' has no significance because it has no use. There is no occasion except in a philosophical class where one has to say, 'I know I am in pain.' Hence this sentence has no application or utility. Given this, Wittgenstein calls such a claim nonsensical. Thus, 'only I know that I am in pain' is on the one hand false and on the other nonsensical.

Following this, Kenny says that "On the other hand, if we take the term 'know' to mean know in such a way that doubt is logically exclude than the thesis (other people cannot know that I am in pain) is senseless, for there can be knowledge only where doubt is possible."[24] Therefore, others can know that I am in pain because they can doubt whether I am in pain or not. We might say that wherever there is no possibility of doubt, there is no possibility of knowledge. The terms 'doubt' and 'knowledge' are a pair of opposite words they cannot be learned as separate words; they need to be learned together. They are used as opposite terms, use of one without the conception of the other is not possible.

In this context, let us take Wittgenstein's views like "'I know …' may mean 'I do not doubt…' but does not mean that the words 'I doubt…' are senseless, that doubt is logically excluded" (*PI*, p. 221). Here, Wittgenstein shows that I cannot doubt whether I am in pain or not in pain; thus, in this case, there is no possibility of knowledge. But, it is not the case that 'I doubt…' is always senseless. In the case of whether another person is in pain or not in pain, 'I doubt…' is not senseless. Because there is the possibility of knowledge in the case of other individual is in pain or not in pain. Hence, to claim other individuals cannot know that I am in pain is false. As Wittgenstein says, "I can know what someone else thinking, not what I am thinking. It is correct to say 'I know what you are thinking,' and wrong to say 'I know what I am thinking'"[25] (*PI*, p. 222). Here, Wittgenstein's rejection of the notion of privacy entails his remarks in *Philosophical Investigations* "It can't be said of me at all …that I *know* I am in pain" (*PI*§246). Wittgenstein's rejection of the use of the word 'know' in the case of one's own mental states and processes has led many philosophers to conclude that self-knowledge is impossible.

Two famous Wittgensteinian scholars P.M.S. Hacker and Anthony Kenny attributed to Wittgenstein the view of 'the impossibility of self-knowledge.' Hacker attributed the view of the impossibility of self-knowledge based on two arguments, namely, the expressive thesis and the

argument from epistemic operators.[26] According to the expressive thesis, the first person utterances (avowals) like 'I am in pain' are not statements but expressions.[27] 'I am in pain' is like a groan or cry, and it has no truth-value. Again, if 'I am in pain' does not have truth-value, then 'I am not in pain' should not have. But, it is so problematic to use 'I am not in pain' to be the expression of not being in pain. Because in the case of 'he is in pain,' one can attribute truth value to 'he is in pain.' Now the question is how is it possible to attribute the truth value to 'he is in pain' not to 'I am in pain'? One may answer this question by saying that 'he is in pain' is a statement and not an avowal.

Let us now through the textual evidence judge whether Wittgenstein held the expressive thesis regarding the impossibility of self-knowledge or not. In *Philosophical Investigations,* we find a passage in which Wittgenstein writes, "A child has hurt himself and he cries; and then adults talk to him and teach him exclamations and, later, sentences. They teach the child new pain-behaviour" (*PI*§244). Here, Wittgenstein suggests that in one way, a child may learn the connection between the word 'pain' and the sensation of pain through natural pain behaviour. Therefore, 'I am in pain' can be replaced by natural pain behaviour like cry or groan.

Clearly, in the above remarks, Wittgenstein claims that avowals could be replaced by sentences of the type which are exclamations and not statements, and hence, they do not have truth-value. We can claim that Wittgenstein takes avowals to have only one function of expressing something. For example, in the case of 'I am in pain,' we can claim that for Wittgenstein, 'I am in pain' is the expression of the sensation of pain. About this, he writes, "When someone says 'I hope he'll come' – is this a *report* about his state of mind, or a *manifestation* of his hope? – I can, for example, say it to myself. And surely I am not giving myself a report. It may be a sight; but it need not. If I tell someone 'I can't keep my mind on my work today; I keep on thinking of his coming' – *this* will be called a description of my state of mind" (*PI*§585). Here, Wittgenstein explains how hopes and other mental activities cannot be taken as statements but expressions of their mental states. Since they are not statements, the question of their having truth value does not arise.

Again, Wittgenstein also writes, "I say I am afraid; someone else asks me: 'What was that? A cry of fear; or do you want to tell me how you feel; or it a reflection on your present state?' – Could I always give him a clear answer? Could I never give him one" (*PI*, p. 187)? Here, Wittgenstein gives a general view regarding the avowals. He affirms that one can tell his/ her state of mind or feelings. And from the above discussion, we find that Wittgenstein advances the expressive thesis about the first person utterances that Hacker attributes to him.

Let us come to the second argument that is the argument from epistemic operators based on which the thesis of the impossibility of self-knowledge has been attributed by Hacker to Wittgenstein. Let us first make ourselves clear what is an operator. According to Dretske, "An operator is something that when affixed to a statement operates on it to result in other statements. Examples of some operators include 'it is true that,' 'it is weird that,' 'knows that' and 'explains that.' To take a simple example of how an operator operates on a statement, we consider the statement 'the garage is empty.' Using the operator, 'it is true that,' on this statement, we get 'it is true that the garage is empty.'"[28] From the example of some operators given by Dretske, 'knows that' is an epistemic operator. In relation to the use of the epistemic operators, Hacker says "If we reflect on how the use of this epistemic operator might be learnt, it is evident that it cannot be learnt as a partial substitute for natural expressive behavior in the manner in which the use of 'It hurts' or 'I want' are grafted on to natural pain- or conative-behaviour respectively."[29] Thus, according to Hacker's argument, one cannot learn the use of the word 'know' by using it in conjunction with expressive words. By implication, he claims that one can learn the use of this epistemic operator only from such sentences like 'I know that this is a tree' or 'I know that this is a book', etc. Thus, in the sentence 'I know that I am in pain' even if the word 'know' figures, it is not a statement.

According to the argument of epistemic operators of Hacker, a sentence of the form 'I know that p' makes sense only when a sentence of the form 'I doubt that p' makes sense. But in the case of avowals, the sentences of the form 'I doubt that p' do not make sense. Thus, it makes no sense to say 'I know that p' where p is an avowal[30]. Agreeing with Hacker, Temkin says that "If we are to attribute the non-cognitive thesis of avowals to Wittgenstein at all, then the only plausible ground lies in his employment of what Hacker has called the 'argument from epistemic operators.'[31] He also remarks that the argument from epistemic operators is in the heart of Wittgenstein's rejection of epistemic privacy.

While saying 'only I can know that I am in pain' is nonsense, Wittgenstein gives the reason that 'It makes sense to say of other people that they doubt whether I am in pain; but not to say it about myself' (*PI*§246). Based on this remark of Wittgenstein, Hacker and also Aune have attributed the argument from epistemic operators. From the use of the epistemic operator 'I know' upon the third-person, present tense, psychological propositions like 'He is in pain to the first-person case like 'I am in pain', we wrongly conclude that 'I know I am in pain' adds something more than emphasis to 'I am in pain'. In this context, Wittgenstein claims that in some special cases like when I want to inform another person about my personal experiences saying 'I know that I am in pain' has sense. Rather, when we say, 'I know that I am in pain,' we normally do not mean much more than 'I am certain that I am in pain' (*OC*§8).

However, in support of the first thesis that I can know that I am in pain, philosophers argue that if one cannot know his own sensations or if one cannot know what he is thinking then how he can know anything else. On the strength of the statement "… nothing to doubt whether I am in pain" (*PI*§288), the view attributed to Wittgenstein by Kenny is that "One cannot doubt that one is in pain."[32] Therefore, there is no possibility of knowledge in the case of 'I am in pain,' and it does not make much sense to say 'I know I am in pain.' Again, Kenny attributes to Wittgenstein "Where it is senseless to say 'I doubt whether…' it is not always true to say 'I know that …'".[33] Furthermore, Wittgenstein admits the possibility of doubting the competence of a person to use the word 'pain' appropriately. He

denies the possibility of doubting his pain if he is suffering from it. There he denies that particular expression of doubt has no place in the language-game of pain and the doubt is not about the meaning or use of 'pain' but about "whether *this,* that I have now, is pain" (*PI*§288).

Moreover, Wittgenstein writes, "'I know what I want, wish, believe, feel …' (and so on through all the psychological verbs) is either philosopher's nonsense, or at any rate not a judgment a priori" (*PI*§221). Here, Wittgenstein does not mean that 'I know what I want, wish, believe, feel…' means 'I do not doubt what I want, wish, believe, feel…' The above statement implies that Wittgenstein targets the utterances like 'I know what I want, wish, believe, feel…' as nonsense or having no significance. Therefore, for Wittgenstein, a philosophical claim, 'I know that I am in pain' or 'I know that I am thinking' has no place in language. But, the utterance 'I know I am in pain' as an expression of pain is not nonsense. "It does not follow that utterances like 'I know that I am in pain' or 'I know that I am thinking' must be incorrect, or to put it in another way, that I cannot achieve self-knowledge of the relevant sort."[34]

Wittgenstein rejects the thesis that I know that I am in pain. For him, if it is the case that each person knows what pain is from his own case, then the learning of the meaning of the word 'pain' will be impossible. Therefore, it is impossible to generalize the meaning of the word 'pain' in the same sense as in the case of other people. In this context, Wittgenstein gives 'the beetle in the boxes example' (*PI*§293). Here, Wittgenstein is trying to point out that the beetle is very much like 'pain.' Just like no one looks into someone's box what contains in it.

Similarly, no one can exactly know what 'pain' is like to be an experienced thing from another's perspective. But, we assume that like a beetle, the word 'pain' means the same for all people. Wittgenstein argues that it does not matter what is in the box, or whether everyone has a beetle or not a beetle since there is no way of checking or comparing it. There is also no way of asserting or denying whether a beetle is really in each box or not in the box, but still, we have to assume that 'beetle in each box.' Similarly, we cannot assert or deny what an inner state contains but when we talk of having an inner state we are using the term 'inner' that we have learnt through conversation and public discourse. In a sense, the word 'beetle,' if it is to have any sense or meaning that simply means 'what is in the box. From this point of view, the 'pain' is simply 'what is in the box' – or rather 'what is in your head' or 'what is in the body.' Therefore, we could not check or compare what an inner state contains and that is indescribable. One could only ascribe any inner state to oneself and also to others. We can merely ascribe sensations, thoughts, feelings, etc., or justify something based on expressions. The expressions are not only linguistic; they might be bodily behavior as well. For example, 'crying' is one of the physical or behavioral expressions of pain, and the statement 'I am in pain' is the linguistic expression.

Moreover for Wittgenstein, self-ascriptions of mental phenomena like 'I have a toothache,' 'I believe that my friend will come,' 'I intend to go to movie tomorrow' are prima facie immediate or direct. Though they are not based on observation, and not needing any justification, they can nonetheless express some knowledge. On the other hand, in the first person and present tense, any mental phenomenon is authoritative to the person who has the experience of that mental occurrence. This peculiarly authoritative self-knowledge is explained as a feature of intrinsic knowledge to having mental states. The person is certain about his own mental states or processes and it is private to the person. For example, we take 'emotion' as a feeling and it is private to the person who has the experience of that feeling. So, it is subjective to the person, who knows his/her emotional experiences through introspection or a kind of internal observation. This relies on the confusion about the meaning of the language that we use to talk about mental occurrences. Hence, what is taken for granted is that mental states or processes or occurrences present as a person's entities. The meaning of sentences about mental states consists in expressing them.

4. The Problem of Other Minds

The problem of other minds deals with the question: How do we know that others have minds? This question presupposes the possibility of knowing other minds. If we admit that there is a possibility of knowing other minds, the natural question is: What are the means of acquiring that knowledge? In a very special and technical sense, Wittgenstein uses 'criteria' as the means of acquiring our knowledge of other minds. For him, criteria are the rules within the framework of language-games and our forms of life. In response to the skeptic, Wittgenstein argues that there is no valid way to answer the skeptic and the skeptic's claim that knowledge of other minds is impossible is not tenable. For him, a skeptic misunderstands the meaning and usage of the word 'know' in our language-games.

As we know, that skeptic doubts the possibility of knowledge of other minds. A skeptic claims that we do not know other minds. For him, what is necessary for claiming something as knowledge is that it must be justified the true belief that is indubitable. And if this is so, we have no possibility of having beliefs about the knowledge of other minds. Consequently, if this is the case, then each person is limited to knowledge of himself, his own present sensations, and thoughts. This is the same as solipsism, which claims that only 'I' and 'my' own thoughts and sensations or mental states exist.

Can one know the pain of others on the analogy of one's own? If this could be done, then knowledge of other minds would be very easy since I have familiarity with my thoughts, feelings, and other mental states and processes. All that I need is to understand the other minds on the analogy of my own. There is an assumption that once I know from my own case that what pain, tickling, or consciousness is, then I can transfer the idea of these things to objects outside myself. Wittgenstein attacks the above assumption and for him, one learns what pain is only when one feels it. Therefore, if my conception of pain is obtained from the pain that I experience, then it will be a part of my conception of pain that I alone can experience it. Nobody else has the experience of my pain what I feel. Wittgenstein writes, "If one has to imagine someone else's pain on the model of one's own, this is none too easy a thing to do: for I have to imagine pain which I *do not* feel on the model of pain which I *do* feel. That is, what I have to do is not simply to

make a transition in imagination from one place of pain to another."[35]

According to Wittgenstein, it is doubtful that we could have any belief about other minds and their sensations that ought to be justified. Therefore, imagining the pain of others on the model of one's own is not an easy task. As Wittgenstein writes, "But if suppose that someone has pain, then I am simply supposing that he has just the same as I have so often had."[36] By attacking the concept of *sameness* or *identity*, Wittgenstein gives an example of the use of '*It is 5 o'clock here*'. He states,

It is as if I were to say: You surely know what 'It is 5 o'clock here' means; so you also know what 'It's 5 o'clock on the sun' means. It means simply that it is just the same time there as it is here when it is 5 o'clock. The explanation using *identity* does not work here. For I know well enough that one can call 5 o'clock here and 5 o'clock there 'the same time,' but what I do not know is in what cases one is to speak of its being the same time here and there. In the same way, it is no explanation to say: the supposition that he has a pain is simply the supposition that he has the same as I. For *that* part of the grammar is quite clear to me: that is, that one will say that the stove has the same experience as I, *if* one says: it is in pain and I am in pain. (*PI*§350)

In this passage, 'the 5 o'clock on the sun' illustrated how the concept of mental states could not be extended from oneself to others. Here, 'it[stove] is in pain' on the analogy of 'I am in pain' gives the absurd conclusion that even material objects have minds and sensations. Thus, the question that arises here is: What is the criterion of attributing mental states or sensations to others?

It is important to point out that for Wittgenstein, the problem of other minds is not like how one can know about other minds? But it is like, "Given that 'mind,' for me, is this private inner realm, how can it even make sense to form the notion of 'other minds' in the first place?"[37] The 'pain' that I feel is one of my personal experiences, and other people know when I am in pain. Wittgenstein points out that I would never have learned the meaning of the word 'pain' without the aid of other people, none of whom has access to the supposed private sensations of pain that I feel. The meaning of the word 'pain' presupposes some sort of external verification and its application needs a set of criteria. We can say that observation of writhing and groaning are 'criteria' for our belief that someone is in pain.

In *BB,* Wittgenstein said, "'the man who says only my pain is real' that he was rebelling against the common criteria and thereby 'objecting to a conventions'" (*BB*, p. 57). And to speak of practice as a convention is to imply that it is a matter of choice. This choice may be restricted by criteria that are not subject to choice. Criteria are used as conventions in a language-game. And "We fix criteria by laying down grammatical rules."[38] Again, having raised the question why we suppose that toothache correlated to holding one's tooth, he concluded that "here we strike rock bottom, that is, we have come down to conventions."[39] In *PI,* criteria also play a fundamental role in Wittgenstein's philosophy of mind. As he writes, "An 'inner process' stands in need of outward criteria" (*PI*§580). Therefore, Wittgenstein's dissolution to the problem of other minds provides both conditions under which we are justified in attributing mental concepts to others and an account of the utility of language-game in our lives. In this context, we shall discuss Wittgenstein's three key concepts, namely, criterion, agreement, and form of life.

4.1 Criterion

The concept of the criterion is an important concept in Wittgenstein's later philosophy of mind. The word 'criterion' is always used as a criterion of something. What is this something for Wittgenstein? In his *The Blue and Brown Books* and *Philosophical Investigations* we find that in various places Wittgenstein writes criterion is a criterion for an expression, or the use of an expression, or for something be the case or for a states of affairs (See *BB*, pp. 24-25 and *PI*§149, 182, 238 & 269). However, all these ways of saying that the criterion is the same. Let us take an example, which Wittgenstein discusses that 'he has angina,' for it is the case that he has angina, saying he has angina or for simply angina that are various forms of expressions saying about the same thing 'angina.' Therefore, we might describe this criterion of something for a criterion of a linguistic expression fitting its object. To describe something means to specify what it is like and what it is not like.

In Wittgenstein's work, criteria are contrasted with symptoms. For him, symptoms are taken to be outward manifestations of something, while criteria point to the thing itself. However, criteria are observable features that are directly connected to an expression by its meaning. Rather, symptoms are features that are indirectly connected to the expression by being associated with the criteria in our experience. To make the distinction between 'criteria' and 'symptoms' and to avoid the confusions, Wittgenstein writes,

Let us introduce two antithetical terms to avoid certain elementary confusions: To the question 'How do you know that so-and-so is the case?' We sometimes answer by giving 'criteria' and sometimes by giving 'symptoms.' If medical science calls angina an inflammation caused by a particular bacillus, and we ask in a particular case 'why do you say this man has got angina?' Then the answer 'I have found the bacillus so-and-so in his blood' gives us the criterion, or what we may call the defining criterion of angina. If on the other hand, the answer was, 'His throat is inflamed,' this might give us a symptom of angina. I call 'symptom' a phenomenon of which experience has taught us that it coincided, in some way or other, with the phenomenon which is our defining criterion. Then to say 'A man has angina if this bacillus is found in him' is a tautology or it is a loose way of stating the definition of *angina*. But to say, 'A man has angina whenever he has an inflamed throat' is to make a hypothesis. (*BB*, pp. 24-25)

From the above passage, we find that Wittgenstein takes criteria are primarily the criteria that men accept, introduce, and use or apply in connection to their use of certain expressions. If something is the criterion of 'X', then that is a logically sufficient condition of 'X.' Therefore, the criterion of angina in Wittgenstein's example is what medical science calls angina and we may say that it is the defining criterion of angina. However, the criteria are not factual tools for avoiding the confusions in philosophy. They are grammatical tools for Wittgenstein. They do not help us to settle the matters of facts such as, 'Is he in pain?' Rather they help us in clarifying the grammatical matters. Hence,

Wittgenstein does not use the concept of criteria to distinguish someone who is in pain from someone who is pretending to be in pain. Rather, he uses it to determine that pain only, whether it is real or feigned. In my own case, there are no criteria at all. There are no questions of knowledge, doubt, investigation, and so on, which I cannot raise regarding my own pain. Thus, Wittgenstein is not opposing the idea that first-person pain ascriptions exist, but he is opposing the idea that these ascriptions can then be treated as objects of knowledge. Nevertheless, in the case of others, the criteria for determining whether someone is in pain are the same for determining whether the pain is real or feigned.

Wittgenstein rejects the use of 'know' in the case of avowals and thus, it is meaningless to say 'I know I am in pain.' For him, if it will be the case that each person knows what pain is from his own case, then the learning of the word 'pain' will be impossible. Therefore, it will be impossible to generalize the meaning of the word 'pain' in the same sense as in the case of other people. The same kind of argument we shall find in Wittgenstein's beetles in the boxes example. In this case, Wittgenstein is trying to point out that the beetle is very much like pain. Just like no one looks into someone's box what exactly it contains. Similarly, no one can exactly know what pain is like to be an experienced thing from another's perspective. But, we assume that like a beetle, the word pain means the same for all human beings.

Wittgenstein argues that it does not matter what is in the box, or whether everyone has a beetle or not a beetle since there is no way of checking or comparing it. There is also no way of asserting or denying whether a beetle is really in each box or not in the box, but still, we have to assume that beetle in each box. Similarly, we cannot assert or deny what a mental state contains but when we talk of having a mental state (or a beetle) we are using a term 'mental' that we have learnt through conversation and public discourse. In a sense, the word 'beetle,' if it is to have any sense or meaning, it simply means what is in the box. From this point of view, the pain is simply 'what is in the box' or rather 'what is in your head' or 'what is in the body.' Therefore, we could not check or compare what a mental state contains and that is indescribable. We cannot describe the use of words like emotion, thinking, and imagining, etc., because the definition of these terms is not possible. "A description of the use of a word is given when we define it.-When we show the sample (e.g. of colour)" (*WLPP*, p. 7).[40] Hence, one could ascribe any mental state to oneself and also to others based on expressions.

4.2 Agreement

The concept of agreement is another important concept in language. We human beings communicate with each other through language. Communication is possible by using social practices of following the rules of language. Any social practice needs human agreement. Based on the agreement we decide whether someone is right or wrong, which statement is appropriate or inappropriate. For example, if a person is asked to compute 2+3, if the answer is given is 5, and not 4 or 6, then we call his response as right. If someone asks: Why not 4 or 6? We answer this question in terms

of the social agreement on the rule of addition. Therefore, if there is no general agreement on the rule of addition in the community, one may not be able to claim that someone is adding or not based on the behavior of a person. Similarly, when someone describes a plant or mentions the name of that plant, there ought to be a convention of calling that plant with that name. If such a convention does not exist in that society, the description of the plant by that name cannot be said to be true or false. Wittgenstein states, "So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false?"[41]

As we know that we human beings are linguistic animal and through language, we communicate with each other. An agreement is necessary for any kind of communication. Wittgenstein states that "… in order to communicate, people must agree with one another about the meanings of words. But the criterion for this agreement is not just agreement with reference to definitions, e.g., ostensive definitions - but also an agreement in judgements. It is essential for communication that we agree in a large number of judgements" (*RFM-VI*§40).[42] Following Wittgenstein, Hacker and Baker, also interpret the requirement of agreement in communication, and according to them, "If two people disagreed about how to explain the words they use, then what the one meant by an utterance would not be what the other understood by it."[43] Here, this does not mean that the speaker and hearer have to use the same words or the same language. Then, the question is, what they have to agree? It is nothing but the definition of the words uttered by the speaker. In addition to this, the agreement in judgment is necessary for communication. By agreement in judgment, Hacker and Baker interpret as, "interpersonal consensus about the truth and falsity of empirical propositions."[44] Here, they explain the agreement using the concept of rules, and rules for the use of words.

However, the understanding of a rule and consequently, agreement about which a rule applies is manifested in two ways, namely, "in formulating or paraphrasing it and in applying or following it in practice."[45] For Wittgenstein, both kinds of agreements are necessary for communication and both are criteria for agreement on meaning. Therefore, "We follow rules of grammar in making judgements, and the correct application of these rules is the criterion of understanding them."[46] Moreover, the meanings of our words are dependent upon our practices and social agreements. For example, a criterion of an order is that it is expected to be obeyed. When we offer this criterion, we are not claiming that all orders are always obeyed. It is also the case that orders are that sorts of things that it may be obeyed or may not be obeyed and the speaker expects the person ordered to obey. If all orders were always disobeyed, the word 'order' would not have made any sense. Thus the notion of an order presupposes the human freedom to obey or disobey. If we say that if an order is always obeyed or never obeyed, it will strip the very meaning of the word 'order.' This reminds us of Wittgenstein's emphasis on use, conventions, and agreement in sharing the forms of life.

4.3 Form of Life

The concept 'form of life' is closely related to the concept of agreement. Our form of life indicates a particular pattern

of life and it is closely related to our activities. We agree with many human responses and the way they interweave with our activities is our form of life. Our form of life is completely different from other animals' forms of life. Since our form of life is completely different from them, the communication between them is impossible. In our day-to-day life, we find that to some extent, some birds or animals give some responses towards our action. That does not mean that they can communicate with human beings. It is due to the lack of agreement, communication is impossible. In this context, Wittgenstein said, "If a lion could talk, we could not understand him" (*PI*, p. 223). Here, Wittgenstein shows that since our form of life is different from a lion, communication between a lion and a human being is impossible. Therefore, a form of life is common to human beings, the common behaviour of mankind that is "the system of reference using which we interpret an unknown language" (*PI*§206). This indicates that the use of language makes possible by the human form of life, and only human beings are linguistic animals.

The most fundamental aspect of language is that we learn how to use it in our social contexts. We understand each other not because of the relationship between language and reality, but because we are social beings sharing common platforms such as language. Wittgenstein denies the possibility of private language and according to him, one might invent a language for his/her private use to describe his/her sensations. In this type of language, there would be no criteria to decide whether a word is used correctly or incorrectly. For him, this type of language would have no meaning. In this context, we will take a statement 'I know I am in pain' that makes no sense. If we claim to know something, we can also doubt it and we must also have criteria for establishing knowledge about it. However, when we are dealing with one's own sensations, one will never doubt, and he /she also have no criteria for establishing knowledge about his/her sensation. He/she has the feeling of that sensation only. Therefore, we should not say, 'I know that I am in pain' instead of 'I am in pain.' We, humans, are interacting with each other through linguistic expressions, bodily expressions, or behavioral expressions. Without the context of interaction, we cannot react to others. As Wittgenstein writes, "My relation to the appearances is here part of my concept" (*Z*§543).[47] According to Wittgenstein's discussion of the meaning of words for mental concepts, an expression gets meaning only in virtue of its employment in a language-game. To speak a language is to participate in a particular form of life. Our forms of life are defined through our interactions with the world and other minds.

In his *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology (Vol. II)*, Wittgenstein writes,

'Can one know what goes on in someone else in the same way he knows it?' Well, how does he know it? He can express his experience. No doubt within him whether he is having this experience – analogous to the doubt whether he has this or that disease – comes into play; and therefore it is wrong to say that he knows what he is experiencing. But, someone else can very well doubt whether that person has this experience. Thus doubt does come into play, but precisely for that reason, it is also possible that there is complete certainty. *LWPP-II*, p. 92)[48]

In the above passage, Wittgenstein argues for the question concerning our knowledge of other minds and seeks to establish how the problem of other minds is the reversal of the problem of our own minds. Again, he attempts to show that talking about the other minds is possible only within a linguistic framework. Within the framework of language-games, he draws a line between 'our knowledge of our own minds' and 'our knowledge of other minds.'

So far as our knowledge of our own minds is concerned, we would like to raise a question like, how do I know what is going on in my mind while I am feeling a pain? Or how do I know that I am in pain? In a Wittgensteinian way, the sensation 'pain' is identical with 'I am in pain' or 'my pain.' Therefore, 'I am in pain' means 'the sensation pain.' Traditionally, the difference between 'I am in pain' and 'he is in pain' explained by reference to the one who possesses pain. This means, 'pain' in both cases refers to the same sensation, and this sensation attributed to different persons.

Nevertheless, Wittgenstein rejects the view that in the above sentences, 'pain' is the same as sensation. According to him, 'pain' in both the statements does not refer to different sensations; if this were the case, then one has to be in a position to perceive the pain of others. The question is: what is the meaning of 'pain' in both the statements? In the first statement, the meaning of the term 'pain' is given by acquaintance with some sensation, but the meaning of the term 'pain' in 'he is in pain' is not at all given by sensation but, here the meaning is exhausted by the observation of the behavior of the other person or his statement.

In *PI,* Wittgenstein writes, "other people cannot be said to learn of my sensations only from my own behaviour, for I cannot be said to learn of them. I have them" (*PI*§246). Other people can doubt whether I am in pain or not in pain, but I cannot doubt myself because I feel that I have pain. Therefore, Wittgenstein rejects the symmetrical construction of the use of mental concepts to oneself and others. For him, the ways we ascribe any mental phenomenon to ourselves and others are very different. For example, I perceive a rabbit in the bush. Here, what I perceive is my evidence for the fact that there is a rabbit in the bush. I know that there is a rabbit in the bush because I perceive it. One knows that another person is thinking, perceiving, feeling pain, etc. not by perceiving his thinking, perceiving, feeling pain, but by perceiving what he does or what he says. What he does or what he says is the evidence for us to know whether he is feeling pain, perceiving, thinking, etc.

However, what I perceive is not the fact that I perceive, even it is because I know that I perceive. Therefore, for one's own case, his perception does not provide him with the knowledge that he perceives. In this sense, we can say that no evidence one needs for his own perception, feeling, thinking, etc. In one's own case, one does not doubt whether I am in pain or not. But, in the case of other's mind, one can doubt whether others are in pain or not. Thus in the case of other's mind, there is the possibility of knowledge and evidence is always necessary in order to establish our knowledge about other's mind. Based on that evidence, we have to believe that others are feeling pain. In this context, Wittgenstein writes, "I am told: 'If you pity someone for having pains, surely you must at least *believe* that he has pains'" (*BB*, p. 46).

Wittgenstein uses the word 'doubt' against the skeptical or Cartesian form of doubt. He denies their universal doubt and uses genuine or philosophical doubt. The philosophical doubt makes the difference between our practices and beliefs. It also prompts us to inquiry about something. According to him, a doubt occurs only within a language-game and outside a language-game; it is not possible to doubt everything. Therefore, this act of doubting presupposes our ability in engaging the language-game and "what we do in our language-game always rests on a tacit presupposition" (*PI*, p. 179). 'I know I am in pain' presupposes the statement that 'I am in pain.' When I am in pain, other people can also know that I am in pain. There is an agreement in our form of life, and in that, we use language as our means of communication.

We human beings are linguistic animals. Within the linguistic framework, we can understand the concept of mind. Language reflects the deep structures of our thoughts and experiences. It does not mean that we can express other sensations in our ordinary language. The confusion will arise while we attempt to express others sensations, emotions, feelings, etc. in our language and we try to use one word or statement of one language-game in the way it uses in another language-game. This confusion will be removed if we understand the grammar of that word.

The concept of grammar is closely related to the concept of the form of life. Now the question is: what is the grammar of language? For Wittgenstein, 'how is a word used?' and 'what is the grammar of a word?' are the same question. We can explain the grammar of language by words, phrases, or linguistic expressions in the language. The grammar of 'I have toothache' is different from that of 'Rama has a toothache.' Here, the use of the word 'toothache' when I have a toothache and when someone else has it belongs to different language-games. 'I have toothache' and 'Rama has toothache' are different since their justifications are different. I might doubt whether Rama has a toothache or not but I cannot doubt that I have pain. Because the question does not arise in the case of 'I have toothache' but in the case of 'Rama has toothache' the question might arise. I have the feeling of my toothache but I cannot have the feeling of others' toothache. My toothache is not the same as his/ Rama's toothache, but we both may have a similar toothache. In Wittgenstein's words, "The question whether someone else has what I have when I have toothache may be meaningless, though in an ordinary situation it might be a question of fact and the answer, 'He has not,' a statement of fact. But, the philosopher who says of someone else, 'He has not got what I have' is not stating a fact" (*WL*, p. 18). Here, the problem lies in the grammar of 'having a toothache,' and the problem will arise if we try to express in a proposition, which belongs to the grammar of our language. Therefore, I cannot feel Rama's toothache means I cannot try to know Rama's toothache.

Another way of distinguishing the grammars of 'I have toothache' and 'Rama has toothache' is that it does not make sense to say that I seem to have a toothache, but it is sensible to say that Rama seems to have a toothache. In the case of 'I have a toothache,' there is no need for verification and there is no question like whether I have a toothache or not. The answer to the question how do you know you have a toothache? –might be like, I know that I have a

toothache because I feel it and 'How do you know?' is sensible in the case of 'Rama / he has a toothache,' but it becomes nonsense in case of 'I have a toothache.' Therefore, asking the question how do I know? –is not sensible in one's own case and the answer to the above question is I have a toothache because I feel it.

The notion of justification has to be understood in much detail. When it is one's own mental state, there is no need for justification claims Wittgenstein. But when it is the matter of perceiving external objects, the justification would be in terms of perceptual criteria. If someone asks me why I claim a car is a vehicle, I can demonstrate how one can travel from one place to another. Similarly, if someone asks me why I call a patch of colour 'red,' I can draw his attention to perceptual criteria and the social convention. If I am asked to justify my claim that why I consider a patient is in pain, I cannot be sure of his being in pain so easily. The first person reporting is not possible since someone else has the pain. It is not an observable phenomenon and hence, I cannot offer an ostensive definition or perceptual criteria. All that I can do is to bank on my knowledge of linguistic criteria. If our language permits calling a person having pain based on his expression of avowal or groaning, his restlessness or on his statement, then I can ascribe pain to him. That is to say; we have outward criteria to ascribe inward experience. This theory of ascription is upheld by Wittgenstein because verification principle cannot work when it is the case of the mental phenomena of others.

5. Ascription of Mental Phenomena

While ascribing any mental phenomenon to oneself or others, we find that the way we ascribe a mental phenomenon to ourselves is not the same as the way we ascribe to others. Therefore, there are two ways of ascribing mental phenomena, such as the first person ascriptions and the third person ascriptions. We ascribe a mental phenomenon to ourselves based on our awareness of mental states and we ascribe them to others on the strength of their outer manifestations like behaviors and linguistic expressions. These two kinds of ascriptions puzzle us about the unitary nature of various mental phenomena. Explaining the unique nature of mental phenomena, Pradhan says that "The mental phenomena such as willing, desiring, thinking, feeling, etc., are very much a part of the fabric of the human life and are decidedly attributed to human beings or creatures very much alike to the humans."[49] Thus, we cannot ascribe any mental phenomenon to those which are material in nature. We can attribute mind to human beings or the creatures which are very much alike the humans. This nature of mind is different from those which are material in nature[50].

Explaining the mind-matter distinction, Wittgenstein says, "… can one say of the stone that it has a soul and *that* is what has pain? What has a soul, or pain, to do with a stone? Can of what behaves like a human being can one say that it has pains. For one has to say it of a body, or, if you like of a soul which some body *has.* And how can a body *have* a soul" (*PI*§283)? Thus, we cannot ascribe a mental phenomenon to stones or those which are material in nature. It shows that human beings to whom we ascribe mental phenomena are different from stones, and

according to Wittgenstein, human beings can be said to have souls and stones do not have.

We can ascribe pain to human beings and while explaining the ascription of pain, Wittgenstein says that "Look at a stone and imagine it having sensations. – One says to oneself: How could one so much as get the idea of ascribing a *sensation* to a *thing*? One might as well ascribe it to a number! And look at a wriggling fly and at once these difficulties vanish and pain seems able to get a foothold here, where before everything was, so to speak, too much smooth for it" (*PI*§284). Here, Wittgenstein shows the necessity of a subject which is conscious. There cannot be any ascription of mental phenomena to stone and even to a dead body. We cannot attribute consciousness to a stone or a dead body. In this context, let us read what Wittgenstein says about the distinction between living and dead. As he says, "Our attitude to the living is not the same as to the dead. All our reactions are different" (*PI*§284). Thus, livings and dead belong to two different categories. We can ascribe a mental phenomenon to a living and not to a dead body.

It is important to note here that the idea of an inner process gives us the wrong idea that a mental process is an invisible and inscrutable private entity. This idea underlies with the wrong use of mental words. According to Pradhan, this metaphysical picture is a grammatical fiction created by the wrong use of mental words.[51] But Wittgenstein's concern with the nature of mind is not related to any metaphysical picture of the mind. Making this point clear, Wittgenstein says, "Are you really a behaviourist in disguise? Aren't you at bottom really saying that everything except human behaviour is a fiction?' – If I do speak of a fiction, then it is of a *grammatical* fiction" (*PI*§307). This grammatical fiction does not help us in knowing and understanding the various uses of mental words. Rather what is important for our understanding about the mental words is to see how our mental words are used in our everyday life. These words are used in various language-games and in order to learn the use of these mental words, one has to know the possibility of confusion regarding the grammatical fictions found in the language-games. And the appropriate grammatical act is to learn the uses of various mental words as ascribing a metal predicates to oneself or others. The tendency to claim that I describe my mental states and processes have to be curbed and all that we can do is to ascribe mental states and processes to oneself and others. This is what one calls knowing one's mind and mental processes, and this is what is called knowing the mental processes and mental states of others.

Now the general question is: Which perspective to a mental phenomenon is better for our understanding of the mental phenomena? If we accept the first person perspective as the better in revealing the true nature of a mental phenomenon, then there will be two difficulties concerning the application of various mental phenomena to others. Firstly, there is no ground for ascribing a mental concept to others because one can never observe another's mental states; one could only observe other's outward expressions, like behaviors and linguistic expressions. Secondly, the problem is concerning how such outward expressions will get their meanings from what I experience in my own case because what I experience in my own case will not apply

to others. Therefore, Wittgenstein opposes the line of thinking that experiences like emotional experiences are private to the person who is experiencing and according to him, one can 'know' other's emotional experiences, and the emotional expressions play a vital role in knowing other's emotions or emotional experiences[52].

However, emotional experience is not something that is hidden within the person who has that emotional experience. It might be the case that one can keep his or her emotional experiences hidden for a short period, but not permanently. For Wittgenstein, emotional words do not refer to private events that they are cut off from the others. It might be the case that one looks within herself or himself. This does not mean that he / she gets the meaning of these emotional words from looking within him or herself. The emotional expressions are used in our language as the public manifestations of the emotional experiences and we use emotional words as the public criteria to read into other's emotional experiences.

Again, if we favor the third person perspective, then we will face the problem to register the first person ascriptions. For example, we see a heavy iron ball fall on the feet of a child and the child is crying. Here, the child is feeling pain, and we could ascribe pain to the child on the basis of its expression. The child could ascribe sensation to itself but we could only say that the child is in pain. Hence, we could say that when one ascribes any mental phenomenon to oneself, he attributes an inner state but when one ascribes them to others, he attributes the concepts on the basis behaviors or linguistic expressions. However, Wittgenstein recognizes the distinction between the first person ascriptions and the third person ascriptions of mental concepts. As he writes, "The characteristic sign of the mental seems to be that one has to guess at it in someone else using external clues and is only acquainted with it from one's own case" (*LWPP-II*, pp. 61-62). Therefore, the knowledge of the mental concepts is constitutive of the nature of the mental that from one's own case, one is acquainted with one's own mental states and not in the case of others. Taking a clue from Wittgenstein, Gillett says,

To apply a predicate to oneself, as 'I am in pain' is to recognize that a certain condition is instanced by oneself, the condition that warrants the use of a given term – here 'pain.' Whether this condition is present may, on any particular occasion, be evident to the person in that condition and not to others, but the condition itself must typically, critically, or essentially be recognizable by others in order to give rise to convergent rule-governed judgements which avoid the traps of a private language.[53]

In similar way, Colin McGinn writes, "The special difficulty presented by these two modes of ascription is that it is clearly the same concepts that are ascribed in first- and third-person judgements, yet there is a strong and natural tendency to suppose that the content of mental concepts reflects their characteristic conditions of ascriptions."[54] However, the condition(s) that warrants the use of a word by oneself helps us to recognize the essential relation between the self-ascriptions and other-ascriptions of mental attributes.

When it is the matter of ascribing mental phenomenon to oneself, one seems to have a choice. I can know that I am in pain directly, or I can infer my pain from my

behavior. Normally one does not use the second alternative to ascribe oneself a pain state. However, one can imagine a situation where one might use the second alternative. For instance, I find myself an enigma, I do not know why I behave in a certain way in a certain type of contexts, following Freud, I might ascribe certain mental processes to myself following the outward criteria. When it is a matter of mental processes or states of others, we do not have this choice. All that we can do is to ascribe them to other minds on the basis of outward criteria. We have no direct knowledge of the mental process and states of others.

Notes

[1] In *Philosophical Investigations* (Part-I, Section 355), Wittgenstein discusses the language of sense-experience or sense impression. Analogically, we can use the language of mental phenomena through which we can express the various mental phenomena.

[2] Panda, M. M., Nath, R., "Experience and expression: The inner-outer conceptions of mental phenomena," *Indian Philosophical Quarterly*, 36 (1-4), 2015, pp. 77-112.

[3] Hicks, G. Dawes, Eddgell, Beatrice and Field, G. C. (reviewed works), *Immediate Experience*, Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes, Vol. 9, 1929, p.175..

[4] Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *The Big Typescript: Typescript 213, C.* G. Luckhardt and Maximilian A. E. Aue (eds. and trans.), Blackwell, Oxford, 2005, Section-94, p. 320e.

[5] *Ibid*., p. 320e.

[6] *Ibid*.

[7] Robinson, Howard, *Perception*, Routledge, London, 1994, p. 32.

[8] Schroeder, Severin, *Wittgenstein: The Way Out of the Fly-Bottle*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2006, p. 183.

[9] Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *The Big Typescript: Typescript 213*, Section- 32, p. 96e.

[10] Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Philosophical Investigations*, G.E.M. Anscombe (trans.), Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1958. Henceforth, we will write PI.

[11] http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/442540/paradox, (accessed on 20/11/2012).

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[13] Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Philosophical Remarks*, Rush Rhees (ed.), R. Hargreaves and R. White (trans.), Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1975. Henceforth, we will write PR.

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[15] *Ibid*., p. 11.

[16] Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *The Big Typescript: Typescript 213*, Section- 2, p. 6e.

[17] *Ibid*., remark No. 154.

[18] *Ibid*., remark No. 139.

[19] *Ibid*., remark No. 122.

[20] Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *On Certainty*, G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, (eds.), Denis Paul and G. E. M. Anscombe (trans.), Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1974. Henceforth, we will write OC.

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[24] Kenny, Anthony, *Wittgenstein*, Blackwell, Oxford, 2006, p. 147.

[25] *Ibid*., p. 222.

[26] Hacker, P.M.S., *Insight, and Illusion: Wittgenstein on Philosophy and the Metaphysics of Experience*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1972, pp. 256-264.

[27] Temkin, Jack, "Wittgenstein on Epistemic Privacy," *The Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 31, No. 123, Apr. 1981, p. 98.

[28] shawntoneil.com/data/texts/epistemology/dretske.pdf (Accessed on 25/08/2012), p.1.

[29] info.sjc.ox.ac.uk/scr/hacker/docs/Knowledge%20of%20Pain.pdf (Accessed on 03/11/2012), p. 4.

[30] Temkin, Jack, "Wittgenstein on Epistemic Privacy," p. 98.

[31] *Ibid*., p. 101.

[32] Kenny, Anthony, *Wittgenstein,* p. 147.

[33] *Ibid*., p. 148.

[34] Sankowski, Edward, "Wittgenstein on Self-Knowledge," *Mind*, Vol. 87, No. 346, Apr. 1978, p. 257.

[35] *Ibid*., p. 302.

[36] *Ibid*., p. 350.

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

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

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

[47] Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Zettel*, G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright (eds.), G. E. M. Anscombe (trans.), Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1967. Henceforth, we will write Z.

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[51] Pradhan, R. C., *Language, Reality, and Transcendence*, p. 157.

[52] Panda, M. M., Nath, R., "Wittgenstein on Public Language About Personal Experiences," *Philosophia*, vol. 48 (5), 2020, pp. 1939-1960.

[53] Gillett, Grant, "Wittgenstein on the Mind," *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy,* Vol. 37, n. 1, 1994, p.111.

[54] McGinn, Colin, *The Character of Mind*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1982, p. 6.

Il tempo che resta: paradigma d'attualità

Evelina Praino

Abstract: As is well known, Giorgio Agamben's reading of Saint Paul's *Letter to Romans* in *The Time that remains* is focused on the irruption of a messianic temporality in the secular time. Through the identification of this experience with a «time contraction», the final time, namely the time of the «now» is unavoidably connected with all variety of mundanity. From this perspective, in this paper I intend to shed light over some of the most complex arguments developed in *The Time that remains* by a comparison with the authors to whom Agamben implicitly refers to. Following Agamben's analysis, I argue that his narrative inspection of the Pauline notion of time is based upon the assumption of time as a metaphor of every lived-experience and the claim that the «time of the end» as an existential paradigm constitutes an important legacy for the actuality.

Keywords: messianic time; Pauline Letters; Agamben; Kafka; actuality.

1. Introduzione

Nel 1998 e nel 1999 Agamben presenta una serie di seminari in diverse università europee e statunitensi dedicati alla lettura della *Lettera* di San Paolo ai Romani. L'interesse dell'autore per questo testo neotestamentario deriva dalla convinzione che in esso sia contenuto un messaggio messianico fondamentale per l'Occidente; la sua potenza sarebbe – secondo l'autore – derivata dalla concezione aporetica del tempo che emerge dalla lettera, in cui memoria e speranza, passato e presente, origine e fine si sovrappongono in un'indiscernibile congiunzione,[1] contrazione a sua volta del tempo cronologicamente inteso. L'interesse per il messaggio messianico contenuto in questa lettera si amplifica se si tiene presente che l'uomo, indipendentemente dall'epoca in cui si colloca, non potendo giungere a una concezione del sé al di fuori dal tempo, intesse con esso un rapporto ermeneutico duplice: da un lato infatti l'individuo interpreta il tempo alla luce delle sue convinzioni filosofico-teologiche, dall'altro costituisce una rappresentazione di sé a partire dagli indicatori con cui circoscrive il tempo come fenomeno.

Alla luce della connessione che si accerta tra tempo e concezione dell'essere – rafforzata nel caso in cui l'adesione a una fede preveda la lettura, il commento o il riferimento ai testi sacri come pratica religiosa del credente – l'analisi del contenuto consegnatoci da Paolo in questa lettera ci aiuta a chiarire i presupposti a partire dai quali delineiamo la nostra individualità e ci definiamo membri di una specie. Il proposito agambeniano di una lettura filologicamente attenta e di un commento del primo versetto della *Lettera* consente all'autore, in vista della sua non comune erudizione, di elaborare una serie di riflessioni tematiche di ampia portata; lo statuto della *klēsis* messianica, il confronto tra il sistema giuridico ebraico e quello romano secondo il paradigma dell'eccezione, il valore performativo del messaggio di fede, la componente obbligazionista del dono, per citarne solo alcuni.

In accordo con la nostra premessa, questo intervento si propone di isolare – all'interno della varietà tematica di cui si compone *Il tempo che resta*[2] – alcuni dei nuclei che dispiegano il concetto di tempo e di metterli in comunicazione con altri passi testamentari o di pensatori vicini al pensiero ebraico-cristiano, in virtù della loro prossimità tematica. Il fine è quello di delineare le concezioni filosofico-teologiche che la nozione paolina del tempo implica e il legame che esse intessono con l'uomo contemporaneo; in altri termini, se – al termine della nostra indagine – riusciremo a identificare nella *Lettera ai Romani* un testo che, oltre a essere fondativo della cristianità che oggi conosciamo, è ancora in grado di interrogare la nostra percezione del quotidiano, potremo anche delineare i tratti di una relazione che, attraversando i secoli, rimane significativa per la nostra attualità.

A tal proposito, alcune precisazioni metodologiche sono necessarie. In primo luogo, proporre uno studio tematico della *Lettera ai Romani*, così come alcune riflessioni comparative tra diversi brani testamentari non implica ignorare le profonde differenze che intercorrono tra i libri della Bibbia, nonché tra antico e nuovo testamento; come sottolinea Perani,[3] la sola letteratura critica che si è dedicata all'analisi dell'antico testamento dimostra una tale pluralità di idee legate al tempo da rendere l'espressione «concezioni del tempo» più adeguata per riferire e circoscrivere il fenomeno indagato. Allo stesso modo, pur non ignorando le specificità dottrinali che distinguono l'ebraismo dal cristianesimo,[4] abbiamo scelto di confrontare brani sia dell'antico che del nuovo testamento, indipendentemente dalla sacralità che queste fedi attribuiscono loro; nel tentativo di mettere in luce la continuità della riflessione sul tempo, comune a entrambe le religioni e indipendente dalle declinazioni teoriche specifiche, ebraismo e cristianesimo saranno da intendersi quindi come categorie ontologiche, come forme possibili dell'esperienza umana piuttosto che come impianti sistemici storici o dottrinali.

In secondo luogo, il procedere tematico risponde a un'esigenza filosofica che, contrariamente a quanto avviene negli studi filologicamente rigorosi o di natura storica, può influenzare con la sua matrice l'interpretazione

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stessa del testo sacro. In questo senso, le indagini compiute sulla nozione di tempo all'interno della Bibbia rispecchiano le linee interpretative dominanti all'interno della storia della filosofia; distinguendo il tempo oggettivo da quello soggettivo, lo si determina come una caratteristica degli enti naturali (Aristotele, Galileo, Newton) o come una determinazione del soggetto (Agostino, Kant, Bergson, Husserl). Allo stesso modo, porre l'accento sul tema della salvezza[5] o, viceversa, sulla forte dimensione culturale[6] della fede ebraica ha condotto la riflessione teologica a contrapporre la nozione ebraica di tempo storico a quello cultuale, non cronologico, come se entrambe le temporalità non potessero coesistere. La valutazione del tempo ebraico-cristiano attraverso gli impianti teorici elaborati dai filosofi dell'antichità,[7] infine, non ha avvantaggiato il processo di emergenza dei suoi aspetti più propri e peculiari.

Ora, il nostro studio non potrà collocarsi totalmente al di fuori di una data ipotesi interpretativa; tuttavia, il fatto che il testo sacro – per sua natura – consenta a più piani di lettura e di interpretazione di intersecarsi senza contraddizione, ci permetterà non solo di considerare coesistenti temporalità diverse, ma anche di ipotizzare che all'interno dei testi paolini il tempo risponda a un'esigenza primariamente narrativa e che, di conseguenza, possa configurarsi come paradigmatico dell'esperienza umana. In questo senso, si prenderanno in considerazione tutte le porzioni di testo che anche indirettamente sono in grado di intessere una relazione con la dimensione del tempo.

2. Il presente apostolico

Il primo versetto della *Lettera ai Romani* recita «Paulos doulos christoú Iēsoú, klētós apóstolos aphōrisménos eis euaggélion theoú» e viene tradotto in latino da Girolamo come: «Paulus servus Jesu Christi, vocatus apostolus, segregatus in evangelium Dei».[8] Volendo concentrare la riflessione sul messianico come condizione che provoca un'inversione dell'ordinario – delle separazioni, delle condizioni giuridiche, del tempo – Agamben traduce: «Paolo servo di Gesù messia, chiamato apostolo, separato per il vangelo di Dio» (*Rm,* 1,1)[9] e sostiene la centralità del verbo *kaléō,* in quanto termine essenziale per la definizione della vita messianica; *klēsis* significa infatti «vocazione, chiamata».

Il termine *klētos,* posto al centro esatto del versetto, ci dà in realtà delle indicazioni sullo statuto temporale della vocazione messianica, in particolare grazie alla contrapposizione implicita con la figura del profeta, che si crea evocando quella dell'apostolo. Paolo si dichiara infatti «chiamato apostolo» o – secondo la traduzione CEI – «apostolo per chiamata» e l'apostolo è colui che è mandato per uno scopo determinato, ossia per comunicare – attraverso i mezzi che ritiene opportuni – un messaggio proveniente dal messia. In questo senso, la sua figura si allontana rispetto a quella del profeta, sia per lo statuto della sua parola, sia per la dimensione temporale che evoca; in un caso, il profeta è in contatto diretto con Jaweh, è partecipe del suo soffio e usufruisce di una parola che gli viene donata senza che gli appartenga, nell'altro, l'apostolo è testimone di un'esperienza di salvezza che

deve comunicare con parole proprie, nonché depositario di un contenuto da adeguare alla comunità a cui si rivolge. La figura del profeta si connette quindi sia al passato, in modo duplice, sia al futuro: al passato storicamente inteso, nella misura in cui rimanda a un tema centrale della tradizione rabbinica, al passato ideale, nella misura in cui la tradizione lo colloca in una fase precedente alla distruzione del Tempio del 587 a. c. e al futuro,[10] nella misura in cui annuncia la venuta del messia, evento mai presente e sempre dislocato in un tempo a venire. Contrariamente a quanto accade con il profeta, il tempo dell'apostolo è invece quello presente: la venuta di Cristo pone infatti fine alla tradizione profetica che, posta di fronte alla venuta del messia, si trova a tacere e designa il presente come unica dimensione d'appartenenza dell'apostolo. A conferma di ciò, leggiamo in *Romani*:

Dio non ha ripudiato il suo popolo, che egli ha scelto fin dal principio. Non sapete ciò che dice la Scrittura, nel passo in cui Elia ricorre a Dio contro Israele? Signore, *hanno ucciso i tuoi profeti, hanno rovesciato i tuoi altari, sono rimasto solo e ora vogliono la mia vita. Che cosa gli risponde però la voce divina? Mi sono riservato settemila uomini, che non hanno piegato il ginocchio davanti a Baal.* Così anche nel tempo presente vi è un resto, secondo una scelta fatta per grazia (*Rm* 11, 2-5).

Il passato è il tempo in cui si collocano i profeti, ora scomparsi; Paolo – con la sua lettera – si pone nell'«ora», poiché è solo nel presente che il messaggio di salvezza dell'apostolo può essere pienamente inteso; così Agamben traduce «tempo presente» con «tempo di ora» [*tō nyn kairó*] e ravvisa qui l'espressione tecnica d'eccellenza per il tempo messianico.[11] Ad affermare il presente come unica dimensione del messaggio paolino concorre poi un altro termine evocato nel primo versetto della *Lettera*, ossia *euaggélion*, vangelo. L'*euaggélion,* infatti – come aveva già osservato Origene – è un «discorso che annuncia che un bene atteso è presente»[12] e in cui dunque il contenuto del messaggio e l'atto di parola vengono a coincidere, in una sovrapposizione inusuale di discorso e voce. Contrariamente quindi alla profezia che si riferisce a un evento futuro, il vangelo annuncia un bene che si presentifica all'atto della pronuncia e che può essere propriamente colto solo nel tempo di ora.

Prima di tornare all'analisi della *klēsis* messianica, una riflessione si impone riguardo al termine «resto» che, nella sua enigmaticità, rivela la stessa inversione che il messianico compie sulla temporalità storica, così come sulle divisioni mondane; in coincidenza con l'evento messianico il tempo si contrae, le condizioni giuridiche sono revocate, lo stesso dispositivo dell'elezione è reso inoperoso. In questi versi, Paolo dapprima segnala la sua appartenenza al regno di Israele («Anch'io infatti sono Israelita, della discendenza di Abramo, della tribù di Beniamino», *Rm,* 11, 1), poi si richiama alla tradizione profetica che definisce il «resto» il referente per eccellenza dell'opera divina, il soggetto della salvezza messianica. Senza addentrarsi nelle specificità delle narrazioni di Isaia, Amos o Michea, è importante rilevare come per tutti i profeti, il «resto» non indichi un residuo numerico, né un Israele che rimarrà immutata alla distruzione finale dei popoli, bensì un Israele che non coinciderà né con il tutto, né con una sua parte, poiché in relazione all'elezione o all'evento mes-

sianico ogni popolo si pone al di là di ogni possibile frammentazione, mutandosi in un «resto», ossia un non-tutto.[13] Questa ripresa tematica, in Paolo, si qualifica sotto la spinta della nuova determinazione temporale del presente, del «tempo di ora»; l'evento messianico si serve infatti del resto come strumento tramite cui manifestare la non coincidenza delle parti e del tutto con se stesse e invera la salvezza nel presente – in un presente corrente, in ogni presente – disattivando e rendendo incomplete le partizioni e le separazioni tra uomini.

Il resto indica un residuo, un'eccedenza mai esauribile – per questo presente – che stabilisce una tensione tra parti (o tra parti e tutto). Con il solo mutare delle determinazioni numeriche, la stessa tensione, si riscontra significativamente nelle parole di Kafka, un altro autore ebreo che scrive – come Paolo – in una lingua d'adozione.[14] Un aforisma del 18 novembre 1917 recita: «I nascondigli sono innumerevoli, la salvezza è una sola, ma le possibilità di salvezza sono di nuovo numerose quanto i nascondigli».[15] L'avvenire messianico fa sì che il popolo di Israele – come ogni popolo – rimanga immutato, senza però poter coincidere pienamente con se stesso; il messianico designa quindi il popolo come un resto, come l'eccedenza che segna il non esaurirsi del tutto o della parte in sé. Allo stesso modo, è un «resto» ciò che si produce dalla non coincidenza esatta di salvezza e nascondimento: al momento della loro sovrapposizione rimane infatti un residuo possibile di non-salvezza, tramite cui la salvezza, messa in evidenza dalla contrapposizione linguistica delle misure «innumerevoli» e «una», è realizzata.

In linea con questa prospettiva, Agamben sostiene: «[…] nel tempo di ora, che è il solo tempo reale, non vi è che il resto. Esso […] appartiene quell'insalvabile nella cui percezione soltanto la salvezza si lascia raggiungere. L'aforisma kafkiano, secondo cui c'è salvezza, ma 'non per noi', trova qui il suo unico senso». Ciò a cui Agamben fa riferimento è – a ben vedere – una frase proferita da Kafka e riportata in *Der Dichter Franz Kafka*; interrogato da Max Brod sullo statuto del mondo, che egli intende come il peccato originale, come l'errore di un malvagio demiurgo, Kafka risponde: «'O nein,' meinte er, ,unsere Welt ist nur eine schlechte Laune Gottes, ein schlechter Tag.' — ,So gäbe es außerhalb dieser Erscheinungsform Welt, die wir kennen, Hoffnung?' — Er lächelte: ,Oh, Hoffnung genug, unendlich viel Hoffnung, — nur nicht für uns'».[16] Rifiutando l'idea che la realtà sia quanto di più vicino a un malumore divino, Kafka sostiene che ci sia ancora speranza, solo non diretta a noi; Agamben traduce così *Hoffnung* con «salvezza» e avvicina le parole del pensatore al tema dell'insalvabile.

La riflessione sulla nozione di «resto» ci permette di misurare l'eccezionalità dell'evento messianico che, facendo del presente l'unica dimensione possibile, muta l'ordine dei rapporti mondani, pur mantenendoli essenzialmente invariati. La natura di questo evento si specifica mettendolo in relazione con la nozione di «chiamata» che costituisce il fulcro del primo versetto della *Lettera ai Romani* e dimostra così la sua centralità all'interno del tema messianico. La chiamata messianica è l'evento determinante della storia individuale di Paolo, come dell'umanità tutta, per questo – sostiene Agamben – il termine appare in posizione privilegiata all'interno della

Lettera ai Romani e ricorre frequentemente nel suo lessico.[17] La radice *kāl-* – da cui *ekklēsíais,* «comunità® e *klētós,* «chiamato» – appare in una ventina di occorrenze nella *Lettera ai Romani* e 43 volte nella *Prima Lettera ai Corinzi*; la concentrazione specifica del termine nel passo seguente ci induce quindi a pensare che tra queste righe si trovi una determinazione della vocazione messianica:

Fuori di questi casi, ciascuno – come il Signore gli ha assegnato – continui a vivere come era quando Dio lo ha *chiamato*; così dispongo in tutte le *Chiese*. Qualcuno è stato *chiamato* quando era circonciso? Non lo nasconda! È stato *chiamato* quando non era circonciso? Non si faccia circoncidere! La circoncisione non conta nulla, e la non circoncisione non conta nulla; conta invece l'osservanza dei comandamenti di Dio. *Ciascuno rimanga nella condizione in cui era quando fu chiamato.* Sei stato *chiamato* da schiavo? Non ti preoccupare; anche se puoi diventare libero, approfitta piuttosto della tua condizione! Perché lo schiavo che è stato *chiamato* nel Signore è un uomo libero, a servizio del Signore! Allo stesso modo chi è stato *chiamato* da libero è schiavo di Cristo. Siete stati comprati a caro prezzo: non fatevi schiavi degli uomini! *Ciascuno, fratelli, rimanga davanti a Dio in quella condizione in cui era quando è stato chiamato* (1 Cor. 7, 17-24).[18]

In conformità con i caratteri dell'evento messianico emersi fino ad ora, il passo qui sembra suggerire la dimensione effimera di tutte le distinzioni mondane (siano sociali, siano giuridiche); la chiamata messianica annulla qualsiasi divisione, rendendo così indifferente al messia la condizione in cui ogni uomo si trova al momento del suo arrivo. In accordo con questa prospettiva, sembra collocarsi Weber che, allontanando la *klēsis,* la «vocazione», dalla *Beruf,* in quanto «professione mondana», sostiene che il passo paolino sia espressione di un atteggiamento di indifferenza escatologica rispetto alle condizioni mondane;[19] il versetto 20 recita infatti: «Ciascuno rimanga nella condizione in cui era quando fu chiamato». Secondo Agamben, invece, è proprio quel verso a dimostrare non l'indifferenza escatologica, quanto la mutazione di ogni condizione mondana in virtù del suo essere «chiamata»;[20] senza interferire a livello semantico infatti, la presenza del pronome anaforico *he* in riferimento al termine *klēsis* costituirebbe un circolo sintattico che evoca il ritorno della chiamata su se stessa [ἕκαστος ἐν τῇ κλήσει ᾗ ἐκλήθη ἐν ταύτῃ μενέτω]. In questi termini, il verso non si esprime riguardo ai caratteri assunti dalle condizioni mondane a contatto con la chiamata, ma indica il semplice ritorno della chiamata su se stessa, permettendole di configurarsi come una «chiamata della chiamata» che, priva di qualsiasi contenuto specifico, può aderire a qualsiasi condizione. La vocazione messianica, più propriamente, mette ogni condizione in tensione rispetto all'evento messianico, la mette radicalmente in questione, motivo per cui la sua natura originaria gli è del tutto indifferente. La suggestiva lettura del passo consente ad Agamben di interpretare la chiamata apostolica come un evento che «chiama a nulla e verso nessun luogo»[21] e che, modificando ogni condizione fattizia su cui opera in virtù della tensione che stabilisce con essa, giunge a definirsi come «la revocazione di ogni vocazione».[22]

In linea di continuità con la nostra ipotesi, secondo cui il tempo messianico delle lettere paoline viene descritto al fine di costituirsi parabola narrativa, il capitolo 7 della

Lettera ai Corinzi prosegue, determinandosi temporalmente secondo lo stesso schema di riferimenti indiretti che era emerso nella prima *Lettera ai Romani.* Ogni qualificazione temporale presente fornisce delle indicazioni minime, se non viene posta in connessione con altri termini messianici che ricoprono una funzione significativa all'interno della narrazione biblica; in questo senso, come nel primo versetto della *Lettera ai Romani* è il termine «apostolo» a definire il presente come dimensione messianica, nella *Lettera ai Corinzi* è l'*hōs mē,* il «come non» a giocare un ruolo centrale, delineando il significato di «tempo abbreviato» più di quanto faccia l'espressione stessa:

Questo vi dico, fratelli: il tempo si è fatto breve; d'ora innanzi, quelli che hanno moglie, vivano come se non l'avessero; quelli che piangono, come se non piangessero; quelli che gioiscono, come se non gioissero; quelli che comprano, come se non possedessero; quelli che usano i beni del mondo, come se non li usassero pienamente: passa infatti la figura di questo mondo! (*1 Cor.* 7, 29-31).[23]

Il versetto 29 [*ho kairós synestalménos estín*] indica, letteralmente, che il tempo «è abbreviato», dal momento che *synestalménos* deriva dal verbo *systéllō* che comunemente significa «serrare insieme, ridurre, restringere, abbreviare»[24] come il prefisso *syn-*, «assieme, con, unione», suggerisce. Agamben interpreta più suggestivamente l'abbreviazione in termini di contrazione, sostenendo che *systéllō* indichi «tanto l'azione di imbrigliare le vele che la contrazione di un animale prima di spiccare un salto».[25] Qualsiasi sia la tonalità assegnata alla lettura del verbo, è facile comprendere come sia impossibile giungere a una qualificazione del tempo messianico, se non riferendola al sistema di rimandi all'interno del quale è contenuta. In primo luogo, l'*hōs mē* paolino acquisisce significato dal momento in cui si richiama a una tradizione sinottica che introduce ogni comparazione messianica con lo stesso termine,[26] come si legge in *Mt.* 18, 2-3*:* «Allora chiamò a sé un bambino, lo pose in mezzo a loro e disse: 'In verità io vi dico: se non vi convertirete e non diventerete come i bambini, non entrerete nel regno dei cieli'». Come si riscontrava nel rapporto tra la figura dell'apostolo e la tradizione profetica, il primo riferimento all'*hos me* è quindi a un passato storicamente inteso. In secondo luogo, poiché la comparazione esprime un rapporto di tensione che muta i concetti che implica nella misura in cui li pone in relazione con altri, l'*hōs mē* paolino diventa un tensore particolare, poiché mette in relazione i termini con se stessi, senza declinarli verso un'altra dimensione semantica; il messianico stabilisce – in accordo con il carattere «vuoto» della *klēsis* – una tensione che non va in direzione di nessun luogo, per questo ogni verbo è posto in tensione con se stesso.[27] Non leggiamo quindi «quelli che piangono, come se gioissero», bensì «quelli che piangono, come se non piangessero» come a indicare che ogni relazione fattizia è messa in relazione con se stessa, alterandosi ontologicamente pur non modificandosi a livello formale; si legge infatti, al versetto 31: «passa infatti la figura di questo mondo».[28] In che modo però la tensione che ogni condizione mondana assume su di sé rende conto dell'abbreviazione del tempo?

Nell'*Apocalisse di Esdra*, testo apocrifo, composto originariamente in una lingua semitica e la cui traduzione greca è andata perduta, leggiamo:

Chi vende sia come colui che fugge; chi compera sia come colui che sta perdendo. Chi si dà al commercio sia come colui che non ne ricaverà guadagno; chi costruisce sia come colui che non vi abiterà. Chi semina sia come colui che non mieterà; chi pota la vite sia come colui che non vendemmierà. Quelli che si sposano siano come quelli che non avranno figli; quelli che non si sposano siano come se fossero vedovi. Pertanto quelli che si affaticano, si affaticano senza motivo.[29]

Come si evince dalla semplice lettura, il brano attribuito a Esdra riporta la stessa struttura comparativa che ritroviamo in Paolo. Contrariamente a quanto avviene nella *Lettera ai Corinzi,* Esdra pone in contrapposizione verbi che appartengono a differenti aree semantiche, spezzando così una tensione che – nel caso di Paolo – ricadeva sui termini stessi; l'andamento del passo è perciò, in questi termini, completamente rovesciato. In Esdra, la condizione fattizia in cui ognuno si trova è dislocata in un altrove – spaziale, temporale, ideale – differente rispetto a quello in corso, tanto che i tempi verbali in uso, nonostante la distinzione non permanga nella traduzione italiana, evocano due dimensioni che vengono tra loro contrapposte, quella del presente e quella del futuro;[30] ciò che non appartiene in alcun modo al presente, sopravvverrà in un secondo momento. In Paolo invece, l'omogeneità dei tempi verbali e la negazione dello stesso verbo evocano una sola dimensione temporale, quella del presente e la struttura del brano sembra suggerire la radicale immanenza di ogni condizione mondana che non viene però alterata dalla *klēsis* messianica. In questo senso, «il passaggio della figura di questo mondo» è propriamente il messianico che, mettendo ogni condizione umana in intima relazione con sé e con la sua fine, non la revoca, ma la consegna alla sua mondanità e la lascia – letteralmente – passare, come recita il versetto 31. Ponendo quindi la *klēsis* come revocazione di ogni vocazione e il presente come unica dimensione del messaggio apostolico, si comprende dunque perché il tempo si abbrevi; il tempo messianico corrisponde a ogni «ora» e, anziché decretare – in termini escatologici – la fine storica del tempo, rivela la tensione immanente di ogni presente verso se stesso, il rimando alla fine connaturata a ogni presente, motivo per cui Agamben può scrivere «Il messianico […] è il presente come esigenza di compimento».[31]

Per sottolineare la contrazione ideale del tempo negli scritti paolini, Agamben affianca la lettura dei versi sopracitati della *Lettera ai Corinzi* a quelli contenuti in *Qoèlet,* quarto dei *Libri sapienziali* dell'Antico Testamento e sostiene che Paolo specifichi la condizione messianica nei termini di una sovrapposizione, attraverso l'impiego dell'*hōs mē,* dei tempi che il *Qoèlet* divide:[32]

Tutto ha il suo momento, e ogni evento ha il suo tempo sotto il cielo. C'è un tempo per nascere e un tempo per morire, un tempo per piantare e un tempo per sradicare quel che si è piantato. Un tempo per uccidere e un tempo per curare, un tempo per demolire e un tempo per costruire. Un tempo per piangere e un tempo per ridere, un tempo per fare lutto e un tempo per danzare (*Qo,* 3, 1-5).

I tempi suddivisi dal *Qoèlet* risultano in Paolo effettivamente riuniti in un'unica dimensione e il confronto agambeniano non appare così peregrino, se si riflette sul fatto che questo scritto sapienziale deve il suo titolo allo pseudonimo del suo autore che deriva dall'ebraico *qahal*, ossia «convocare l'assemblea» e che il suo corrispettivo greco *Ecclesiaste,* «colui che parla nell'assemblea», presenta la stessa radice di *klēsis*; a proposito, Agamben definisce dunque l'*ekklēsía* come la comunità delle *klēsis* messianiche, cioè di coloro che vivono nella forma del *come non* paolino.[33]

Proseguendo lungo questa linea comparativa, è interessante notare come la contrazione paolina dei tempi in un'unica dimensione sia un artificio narrativo che si presenta in modo significativamente analogo all'interno del *Canone romano,* poi destinato all'oralità. Il «canone» – conosciuto in epoca recente anche come *Preghiera eucaristica,* dal momento che costituisce la preghiera centrale della liturgia cristiana – rimanda alla preghiera pronunciata da Gesù nell'ultima cena e trova testimonianza in tre *Vangeli sinottici* (*Mt*, 26, 26-29; *Mc*, 14, 22-25*; Lc,* 22, 15-20) e nella *Prima Lettera ai Corinzi* (*1 Cor* 11, 23-26). Confrontando la preghiera e assumendo come teoreticamente fondativi gli elementi che ricorrono in più autori, è possibile allineare alcuni nuclei tematici che rimandano, a loro volta, a specifiche realtà temporali. In una prima parte della preghiera, Gesù, spezzando il pane o prendendo il calice di vino, annuncia che non berrà più, fino a quando non verrà il regno di Dio («non berrò più del frutto della vite fino al giorno in cui lo berrò nuovo nel regno di Dio» *Mc,* 14, 25 e simile in *Mt* 26, 29; «da questo momento io non berrò più del frutto della vite, finché non venga il regno di Dio», *Lc,* 22, 18): le sue parole rimandano dunque allo stesso futuro che si era già evidenziato nelle narrazioni profetiche. Nella seconda parte della preghiera, Gesù invita i commensali a bere e mangiare (*Mt,* 26,26; *Mc;* 14, 22; *Lc*, 22, 17) in quel momento, ma anche a ripetere l'evento in sua memoria; in *Luca* 22, 19, si legge infatti: «fate questo in memoria di me» e, ancor più significativamente, in *I Cor. 11,* 25-26, si specifica la natura di questo atto commemorativo: «Fate questo, ogni volta che ne bevete, in memoria di me. Ogni volta che mangiate di questo pane e bevete di questo calice, voi annunziate la morte del Signore finché egli venga». Se nella prima fase della preghiera, le parole di Gesù richiamano la narrazione profetica, nella seconda, rimandano a una dimensione apostolica in cui commemorazione, testimonianza e annuncio si fondono senza contraddizione. È chiaro quindi come in questi pochi versi si assista a un collasso temporale che mira a far risaltare il presente come l'unica dimensione possibile del messaggio evangelico. Se l'evento della morte del figlio di Dio costituisce il segno storico del messaggio di salvezza fondativo del credo cristiano, in questa preghiera, che lo commemora e ne dà testimonianza, l'intreccio strutturale che contrae diverse temporalità in un unico presente è teso a presentificare l'evento. Con un meccanismo analogo a quello che si presentava nella *Lettera ai Romani* nel caso dell'*euaggélion*, la struttura narrativa della preghiera sovraccarica di significato il suo stesso contenuto, creando una sovrapposizione in cui la parola attualizza l'evento di salvezza, lo rende vicino a chiunque ascolti e si definisce, in ultima analisi, come *parousía,* ossia come presenza.[34]

3. Conclusione

Nelle sezioni precedenti, abbiamo proposto una rilettura di *Il tempo che resta* con l'intenzione di isolare e ricostruire parte dell'argomentazione che Agamben intese intorno al tema della temporalità in Paolo. Se inizialmente, la figura dell'apostolo e il contenuto del suo messaggio hanno permesso di definire il presente come la dimensione effettiva dell'istanza messianica e l'analisi del concetto di «resto» ha consentito di specificare il presente come «tempo di ora», l'analisi dell'*hōs mē* della *Lettera ai Corinzi* ha connaturato temporalmente il concetto di vocazione, avvicinando la *klēsis* al percorso mondano di ogni individuo. Il confronto della scrittura paolina con quella di altri autori – inseriti o meno nelle edizioni canoniche della Bibbia – ha infine fatto emergere la sottile trama strutturale che la rende specifica, in cui la comunicazione si distribuisce su più livelli; da un lato, infatti, i rimandi sintattici – quasi circolari – costituiscono una rappresentazione visiva della tensione e della circolarità che il messianico realizza sul mondano, dall'altro, forma e contenuto, parola e messaggio si uniscono a tal punto da rendere la riflessione temporale paradigmatica di ogni esperienza umana. In questa sezione, si tratta di raccogliere il lascito implicito di questi rimandi, dispiegarlo e metterlo a confronto con l'attualità dell'esperienza umana, per verificare se ogni presente, in quanto messianico, possa realmente configurarsi come il «tempo di ora».

Agamben definisce il messianico paolino come il luogo di un'esigenza che concerne la redenzione di ciò che è stato;[35] non il punto di vista da cui guardare al mondo come se la redenzione fosse compiuta, bensì il varco spazio-temporale in cui tutte le cose sono chiamate e insieme revocate, ossia esperite nella forma del *come non.* L'intera creazione, già assoggettata alla caducità, rimane quindi sospesa nella sua insalvabilità in attesa della redenzione, così come il soggetto, a contatto con la *klēsis*, si trova dislocato e nullificato. A tal proposito, Agamben sostiene che la vocazione messianica regoli una volta per tutti i conti con le pretese identitarie del soggetto e per chiarire questa paradossale condizione, rimanda al brano *Von den Gleichnissen* di Kafka.[36] In sintonia con il pensiero agambeniano e in contrapposizione alla lucidità della riflessione che contiene, i contorni di questo racconto sono indefiniti come i soggetti che parlano: alcuni infatti si interrogano sulla possibilità di applicare le parole dei sapienti, «sempre e soltanto similitudini»,[37] alla vita di ogni giorno – l'unica che gli uomini possegano – e, dal momento che le similitudini indicano che «l'Inconcepibile è inconcepibile»,[38] la narrazione sembra suggerire la loro radicale estraneità rispetto alle vicende umane. La conclusione però scompagina ogni previsione:

A questo punto uno disse: «Perché vi opponete? Se seguiste le similitudini, voi stessi diverreste similitudini, e quindi sareste liberi dal travaglio quotidiano». Un altro disse: «Scommetto che anche questa è una similitudine». Disse il primo: «Hai vinto». Disse il secondo: «Ma purtroppo soltanto nella similitudine».

Disse il primo: «No, nella realtà; nella similitudine hai perduto».[39]

Perché Agamben utilizza questo racconto per esemplificare l'idea della dissolvenza del soggetto identitario rispetto alla chiamata messianica? Nella sezione precedente, abbiamo definito l'*hōs mē* paolino come l'indicatore per eccellenza del tempo messianico, in quanto tensore speciale che consente l'alterazione ontologica – e non formale – di ogni termine implicato; se la *klēsis,* esemplificata tramite la formula linguistica del *come non,* chiama e insieme revoca ogni condizione si capisce perché il messianico coincida propriamente con il tempo «dell'abolizione e della realizzazione»[40] dell'*hōs mē.* In questo senso, in una coincidenza «sfasata» tra la similitudine del *come se* e la vita – la stessa che si avverte tra *hōs mē* e condizione mondana – il soggetto («il secondo») che vuole mantenersi nella dimensione della similitudine è il primo a perderla, poiché la coglie nella sua non-coincidenza con il reale, contrariamente a colui che, aderendo al gioco della similitudine, ne perde i confini, ottenendo la vittoria nella realtà. Trasponendo la dimensione del *come se* a quella messianica del *come non,* Agamben può affermare che colui che si tiene nella vocazione messianica è allora colui che non dispone più di similitudini e che, non affidandosi al *come se* della propria rovina, rimane in un tempo in cui il mondo salvato coincide irrimediabilmente con quello perduto.[41]

Sul rapporto che l'esigenza contenuta nell' «ora» messianico intesse con la redenzione, alcuni dettagli meritano chiarificazione; l'esperienza della *klēsis* è infatti complicata, ma non sembra esserlo meno il dimorarvi.[42] Procedendo analogicamente[43] e avvicinandoci dunque alla struttura narrativa paolina, come a quella kafkiana, siamo forse in grado di afferrare l'esperienza di colui che vive nella chiamata, pur annullandosi in essa. Il concetto di «resto» coincide con la rimanenza prodotta dalla non esatta identità di un popolo (di una parte o di un tutto) con se stesso; l'*hōs mē* corrisponde alla soglia d'indistinzione relazionale in cui una condizione giace revocandosi, senza aderire totalmente a sé, ma senza per questo potersi risolvere o dimenticarsi; la vittoria nel gioco in cui si trovano implicati, loro malgrado, i soggetti kafkiani manifesta lo scarto tra la realtà vissuta e quella parabolica. La condizione di chi, dimorando nella *klēsis,* osserva il mondo consapevole della sua insalvabilità sembra coincidere con la consapevolezza sempre presente di una differenza ontologica, in cui la possibilità di salvezza convive – non escludendo – la possibilità di non-salvezza o, meglio, coincide – anche se non esattamente – con la possibilità di non-salvezza. Nuovamente, le indicazioni temporali si prestano alla chiarificazione: il messianico, il cui effetto si manifesta nei termini appena enucleati, è – in quanto tempo operativo[44] – propriamente il tempo in cui registriamo la nostra sconnessione rispetto al tempo cronologico, è il tempo del ritardo della rappresentazione umana del tempo rispetto al suo scorrere,[45] ossia il tempo dello scarto ontologico. Sostituendo analogicamente la dimensione temporale con quella spaziale, capiamo dunque perché Agamben definisca il messianico come il «varco»[46] tramite cui si afferra il tempo e insieme lo sfasamento della rappresentazione umana rispetto a esso, costituito dal tempo che si impiega

per far finire la rappresentazione, per portarla a compimento. Il tempo messianico coincide con il tempo operativo e riflessivo che il tempo (cronologico) ci mette per finire e la sua condizione è la vissuta, continua e perenne esperienza di un tempo individuale che non può che pensarsi in connessione alla sua fine.

Testimone di questa non esatta coincidenza di tempi e realtà, il soggetto osserva quindi il tempo che volge al termine, la fine del tempo soggettivamente inteso; in altri termini, la contrazione del tempo. La contrazione escatologica è però, curiosamente, un'esperienza che accomuna tanto il tempo quanto il linguaggio; afferma infatti Agamben all'interno della sua autobiografia: «anche le parole emergono da un passato remoto e improvvisamente franano nel presente».[47] Se la parola di fede contenuta nel messaggio paolino ha effetto nel suo solo essere proferita[48] e la sua vicinanza non è solo spaziale, ma soprattutto temporale,[49] capiamo allora perché essa irrompa nel *qui e ora* profano, collocando il regno messianico non tra la *parousía* e la fine del tempo, bensì tra gli istanti cronologici che vengono così distesi nella *parousía,*[50] permettendo al soggetto di contemplare non il mondo già redento, bensì la salvezza, mentre si perde nell'insalvabile.[51]

Infine, è interessante notare come la parola di fede in Paolo sia operatrice di salvezza in virtù della corrispondenza che istituisce tra bocca e cuore e come questo dettaglio si riveli determinante per la lettura dell'attualità. La somiglianza del discorso che viene proferito con la bocca e quello che viene creduto nel cuore viene infatti resa dal termine *homologeín,* letteralmente «dire la stessa cosa», e rimanda all'aggettivo *hómoios,* ossia «uguale, identico, stesso»; allo stesso modo, ««simile, uguale» è il fondamento semantico che ritroviamo nel termine *gleich,* di cui si costituiscono le similitudini kafkiane. Se la vicinanza che si osserva tra bocca e cuore, per chi raccoglie il messaggio messianico, corrispondesse nella mondanità a un'adesione perfetta di vita e parabola, di realtà e similitudine, nessuno scarto sarebbe più percepibile e – nelle parole di Kafka – privati del tempo, il giudizio universale ci apparirebbe nella sua realtà: quella di un semplice giudizio statuario.[52]

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Note

[1] G. AGAMBEN, *Il tempo che resta. Un commento alla «Lettera ai Romani»,* Bollati Boringhieri, Torino 2000, 9.

[2] Ivi.

[3] M. PERANI, *La concezione del tempo nell'antico testamento* in "Sacra Doctrina", 87, 1978, 198.

[4] Sommariamente, si potrebbe definire l'ebraismo come la storia narrata di un'originaria e indissolubile alleanza tra Jaweh e il suo popolo e il cristianesimo come la partecipazione singolare e testimoniale all'evento salvifico. Vd. E. BACCARINI, *Eternità nella storia. Ebraismo e Cristianesimo nella «Stella della Redenzione» di Franz Rosenzweig,* in «Dialegesthai», 2000, disponibile all'indirizzo: https://mondodomani.org/dialegesthai/eb05.htm; consultato in data 4/3/2020.

[5] Vd. E. JENNI, *Das Wort 'olam im Alten Testament,* Töpelmann, Berlin 1953; W. EICHRODT, *Heiserfahrung und Zeitverständnis des Neuen Testament,* ThZ 12, 1956, 103-125.

[6] G. VON RAD, *Probleme Biblischer Theologie*, Festschnft, München 1971.

[7] H. W. ROBINSON, *Inspiration and revelation in the Old Testament,* Clerendon press, Oxford 1953. C. TRESMONTANT, *Études de métaphysique biblique,* Gabalda, Paris 1955; *Essai sur la connaissance de Dieu,* Les editions du cerf, Paris 1959. C. VON ORELLI, *Die hebräischen Synonyma der Zeit und Ewigkeit: Genetisch und sprachvergleichend dargestellt,* Nabu Press, Firenze 2011.

[8] G. AGAMBEN, *Il tempo che resta,* cit., 14.

[9] *Ibidem.* Agamben la definisce una «traduzione letterale italiana del tipo corrente»; per esattezza, riportiamo la versione presentata dalla CEI, lasciando al lettore il confronto: «Paolo, servo di Cristo Gesù, apostolo per chiamata, scelto per annunciare il vangelo di Dio». CEI, *La Sacra Bibbia,* 2008. Dove non altrimenti specificato, la traduzione italiana dei testi biblici fa riferimento a questa edizione.

[10] G. AGAMBEN, *Il tempo che resta,* cit., 61.

[11] Ivi, 55.

[12] ORIGENE, *Commentarii in epistulam ad Romanos,* Herder, Freiburg 1993, 75.

[13] G. AGAMBEN, *Il tempo che resta,* cit., 54 sgg.

[14] In Paolo si verifica una sovrapposizione linguistica simile a quella che osserviamo in Kafka: Paolo appartiene a una comunità ebraica della diaspora che pensa e scrive in greco, Kafka, pur avendo raggiunto le vette dell'espressività della lingua tedesca nei suoi scritti, rimane affettivamente radicato allo jiddish, alla lingua degli avi. Agamben, riprendendo l'idea di un'estraneità linguistica connaturata alla cultura ebraica sostenuta da Rosenzweig, afferma: «Non vi è nulla di più puramente ebraico che abitare una lingua di esilio e lavorarla dall'interno fino a confonderne l'identità e a farne altra cosa che una lingua grammaticale». Ivi, 12.

[15] F. KAFKA, *Lettera al padre. Gli otto quaderni in ottavo*, Mondadori, Milano 1972, 80.

[16] Di seguito, il passo completo: «Ich erinnere mich eines Gesprächs mit Kafka, das vom heutigen Europa und dem Verfall der Menschheit ausging. „Wir sind", so sagte er, „nihilistische Gedanken, Selbstmordgedanken, die in Gottes Kopf aufsteigen". Mich erinnerte das zuerst an das Weltbild der Gnosis: Gott als böser Demiurg, die Welt sein Sündenfall. „O nein," meinte er, „unsere Welt ist nur eine schlechte Laune Gottes, ein schlechter Tag." — „So gäbe es außerhalb dieser Erscheinungsform Welt, die wir kennen, Hoffnung?" — Er lächelte: „Oh, Hoffnung genug, unendlich viel Hoffnung, — nur nicht für uns."». Ossia, «Mi ricordo di una conversazione avuta con Kafka circa l'Europa contemporanea e il decadimento dell'umanità "Siamo" disse "pensieri nichilistici, pensieri suicidi che si levano dalla mente di Dio". Ciò mi ha ricordato subito la visione del mondo della gnosi: dio come malvagio demiurgo, il mondo il suo peccato originale. "Oh no" disse lui "il nostro mondo non è soltanto il cattivo umore di dio, una sua brutta giornata". "Quindi c'è speranza oltre questa forma di apparenza del mondo che conosciamo?" Lui rise: "Sufficiente speranza, infinitamente tanta speranza, solo non per noi"». M. BROD, *Der Dichter Franz Kafka,* in *Juden in der deutschen literatur; essays über zeitgenössische schriftsteller,* Welt Verlag, Berlin 1922, 58, [Trad. nostra].

[17] G. AGAMBEN, *Il tempo che resta,* cit., 20-21.

[18] Il corrispettivo greco recita: «17 Εἰ μὴ ἑκάστῳ ὡς ⌜ἐμέρισεν ὁ ⌜κύριος, ἕκαστον ὡς κέκληκεν ὁ ⌜θεός, οὕτως περιπατείτω· καὶ οὕτως ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις πάσαις διατάσσομαι. 18 περιτετμημένος τις ἐκλήθη; μὴ ἐπισπάσθω· ἐν ἀκροβυστίᾳ ⌜κέκληταί τις⌝; μὴ περιτεμνέσθω. 19 ἡ περιτομὴ οὐδέν ἐστιν, καὶ ἡ ἀκροβυστία οὐδέν ἐστιν, ἀλλὰ τήρησις ἐντολῶν θεοῦ. 20 ἕκαστος ἐν τῇ κλήσει ᾗ ἐκλήθη ἐν ταύτῃ μενέτω. 21 Δοῦλος ἐκλήθης; μή σοι μελέτω· ἀλλ᾽ εἰ καὶ δύνασαι ἐλεύθερος γενέσθαι, μᾶλλον χρῆσαι. 22 ὁ γὰρ ἐν κυρίῳ κληθεὶς δοῦλος ἀπελεύθερος κυρίου ἐστίν· ⌜ὁμοίως ὁ ἐλεύθερος κληθεὶς δοῦλός ἐστιν Χριστοῦ. 23 τιμῆς ἠγοράσθητε· μὴ γίνεσθε δοῦλοι ἀνθρώπων. 24 ἕκαστος ἐν ᾧ ἐκλήθη, ἀδελφοί, ἐν τούτῳ μενέτω παρὰ θεῷ». NESTLE-ALAND, *Novum Testamentum Graece,* Wuttembergische Bibelanstalt, Stuttgart, 1964. Dove non altrimenti specificato, la traduzione greca dei testi biblici fa riferimento a questa edizione.

[19] G. AGAMBEN, *Il tempo che resta,* cit., 27.

[20] Ivi, 28.

[21] Ivi, 29.

[22] *Ibidem.*

[23] Il corrispettivo greco recita: «29 τοῦτο δέ φημι, ἀδελφοί, ὁ καιρὸς συνεσταλμένος ⌜ἐστίν· τὸ λοιπὸν⌝ ἵνα καὶ οἱ ἔχοντες γυναῖκας ὡς μὴ ἔχοντες ὦσιν, 30 καὶ οἱ κλαίοντες ὡς μὴ κλαίοντες, καὶ οἱ χαίροντες ὡς μὴ χαίροντες, καὶ οἱ ἀγοράζοντες ὡς μὴ κατέχοντες, 31 καὶ οἱ χρώμενοι ⌜τὸν κόσμον⌝ ὡς μὴ καταχρώμενοι· παράγει γὰρ τὸ σχῆμα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου.

[24] F. MONTANARI, *Vocabolario della lingua greca,* Loescher, Torino 2004.

[25] G. AGAMBEN, *Il tempo che resta,* cit., 68.

[26] Ivi, 29.

[27] Ivi, 30.

[28] *Ibidem.* Agamben traduce qui *skēma* con «modo di essere».

[29] *Apocalisse di Esdra* (o *4 Esdra* secondo la dicitura cattolica post-tridentina), 16, 42-49. Il testo latino recita: «42 qui vendit, quasi qui fugiet; et qui emit, quasi qui perditurus; 43 qui mercatur, quasi qui fructum non capiat; et qui aedificat, quasi non habitaturus; 44 qui seminat, quasi qui non messem facturus; et qui putat, quasi non vindemiaturus; 45 qui nubunt, sic quasi filios non facturi; et qui non nubunt, sic quasi vidui. 46 propter quod qui laborant sine causa laborant». [Trad. nostra]. La versione presentata da Agamben differisce in modo minimo al versetto 44: «qui seminat, quasi qui non metet;et qui vineam putat, quasi qui non vindemiaturus». Purtroppo, l'edizione a cui l'autore fa riferimento non è specificata. G. AGAMBEN, *Il tempo che resta,* cit., 30.

[30] W. WOLBERT, *Ethische Argumentation und Paränese in I Kor 7,* Patmos Verlag, Düsseldorf, 122.

[31] G. AGAMBEN, *Il tempo che resta,* cit., 76.

[32] Ivi, 31-32.

[33] Ivi., 35.

[34] Agamben non definisce la *parousía* come la seconda venuta di Gesù, bensì semplicemente come «presenza»: «letteralmente: essere accanto; nel presente, l'essere sta, per così dire, accanto a se stesso.» G. AGAMBEN, *Il tempo che resta,* cit., 70. Il termine, a seguire, verrà inteso secondo la stessa accezione. Sul tema della *parousía,* cfr. *1 Cor.* 16, 22: «Se qualcuno non ama il Signore, sia anàtema! *Maràna tha* [lett.: «Vieni, o Signore»] e *Ap.* 22, 20: «Colui che attesta queste cose dice: 'Sì, vengo presto!'».

[35] G. AGAMBEN, *Il tempo che resta,* cit., 44.

[36] Ivi, 45. Letteralmente: *Delle similitudini.* Come specifica Rascente: «*Gleichnis* è stato tradotto e interpretato in vari modi. Può significare similitudine, figura, immagine, simbolo, metafora, parabola. Si usa quando l'immagine usata rimanda a qualcosa a cui è simile o uguale [*gleich*]». M. RASCENTE, *Metaphora absurda. Linguaggio e realtà in Paul Celan,* Franco Angeli, Milano 2011, 164-5.

[37] F. KAFKA, *Delle similitudini* in *Racconti,* Mondadori, Milano 1970, 508.

[38] *Ibidem.*

[39] *Ibidem.*

[40] G. AGAMBEN, *Il tempo che resta,* cit., 45.

[41] *Ibidem.*

[42] *Ibidem.*

[43] Sull'uso del paradigma e della funzione analogica come metodo d'indagine in Agamben, si veda: G. AGAMBEN, *Che cos'è un paradig-*

ma? in *Signatura rerum. Sul metodo,* Bollati Boringhieri, Torino 2008, 11-34.

[44] G. AGAMBEN, *Il tempo che resta,* cit., 67.

[45] Ivi, 96.

[46] *Ibidem.*

[47] G. AGAMBEN, *Autoritratto nello studio,* Nottetempo, Milano 2017, 41.

[48] G. AGAMBEN, *Il tempo che resta,* cit., 122

[49] Sul valore del termine *eggýs*, si veda G. AGAMBEN, *Il tempo che resta,* cit., 121 sgg. e *Rm,* 13, 11.

[50] Ivi, 72.

[51] Ivi, 45. Il passo benjaminiano a cui Agamben fa – presumibilmente – riferimento è: «Quella dialettica è un'immagine balenante. Così, come un'immagine che balena nell'istante della riconoscibilità, bisogna fissare quella di ciò che è stato, in questo caso quella di Baudelaire. La salvezza, che si raggiunge solo ed esclusivamente in questo modo, si conquista solo come percezione di ciò che si sta irrimediabilmente smarrendo». W. BENJAMIN, *Opere complete. Scritti 1938-1940,* VII, Einaudi, Torino 2006, 201.

[52] F. KAFKA*, Lettera al padre. Gli otto quaderni in ottavo*, cit. 85.

Plato's Philosophical Method: a Unified Interpretation of Dialectic in the *Phaedrus*

Jaime Alfaro Iglesias and Adriana Madriñán Molina

Abstract: What is Plato's view concerning philosophical method? Plato thought that we should philosophize by using dialectic. The "progressive" interpretation of Plato's dialectic holds that the word 'Dialectic' is an umbrella term to cover three distinct philosophical methods, namely, the method of *elenchus*, the method of hypothesis and the method of collection and division. Yet this interpretation leads to an unfruitful disagreement over Plato's view of dialectic that clouds our understanding of Plato's metaphilosophy. The goal of this paper is to outline a "unified" interpretation of Plato's dialectic by arguing that Plato was committed in the *Phaedrus* to the view that dialectic is the method of finding correct definitions of "controversial words", which articulates *elenchus*, hypothesis, and collection & division as dialectical procedures.

Keywords: metaphilosophy, Plato's dialectic, the *Phaedrus*, *elenchus*, hypothesis, collection & division.

1. Introduction

How should we do philosophy? According to Plato, we should philosophize by using dialectic. Yet most scholars disagree over Plato's view of dialectic. For example, Irwin holds that Plato's dialectic should be identified with the method of elenchus: "[i]n the Socratic dialogues the discussion often ends in puzzlement and apparent confusion. But in the *Protagoras* and *Gorgias*, and in many later dialogues, Plato does explicitly what he does implicitly in the earlier dialogues, using the Socratic method to argue for positive philosophical positions; he regards dialectic as the primary method of philosophical inquiry." (Irwin 1988, 7) By contrast, Benson holds that one should identify Plato's dialectic with the method of hypothesis: "we maintain that the method of hypothesis as it is described in the *Meno* and the *Phaedo* and applied in the *Meno*, *Phaedo*, and *Republic*, continues to be Plato's recommended method of philosophical inquiry and learning. Indeed, dialectic is the method of hypothesis, correctly employed." (Benson 2015, 238) What leads to this radical and unfruitful disagreement over Plato's view of dialectic?

The disagreement over Plato's view of dialectic is due to a widespread interpretation, which holds that Plato used 'dialectic' as an umbrella word to cover three distinct methods of philosophical inquiry as follows:

The method of elenchus (E): it is the method that examines the consistency of our doxastic commitments. It is displayed in the *Euthydemus*, *Lysis*, *Philebus* and *Charmides*.

The method of hypothesis (H): it is the method that examines a conjecture in relation to a non-hypothetical first principle. It is displayed in the *Meno*, *Phaedo*, *Republic* and *Theaetetus*.

The method of collection and division (C&D): it is the method that begins by gathering into one category a concept under inquiry; then, it examines whether this categorization is in accordance with reality establishing the definition of the concept. It is displayed in the *Phaedrus*, *Sophist* and *Statesman*.

The gist of this interpretation is that Plato changed his fundamental view about dialectic at one or more points of his work in order to overcome its weaknesses and shortcomings. As Robinson (1953:70) puts it "[t]he fact is that the word 'dialectic' had a strong tendency in Plato to mean 'the ideal method, whatever that may be'. In so far as it was thus merely an honorific title, Plato applied it at every stage of his life to whatever seemed to him at the moment the most hopeful procedure".

We shall call this interpretation the "progressive" interpretation of Plato's view of dialectic and we shall formulate it compactly as follows:

(PI) Plato used 'Dialectic' as an umbrella word to cover (E), (H) and (C&D), which are three distinct philosophical methods diachronically developed.

It now becomes clear in what sense Irwin and Benson disagree over Plato's dialectic: those assuming (PI) are committed to debate over whether Plato's dialectic should be identified with either (E), (H) or (C&D). Accordingly, (PI) poses a problem concerning our understanding of Plato's metaphilosophy.

The goal of this paper is to outline an alternative to (PI) by arguing that Plato's *Phaedrus* contains the raw materials for a single coherent view of dialectic. More precisely, based on our reading of the *Phaedrus*, we propose a "unified" interpretation of Plato's dialectic as the method of philosophical inquiry. We shall formulate it as follows:

(UI) Plato construed 'Dialectic' (*dialektikē technē*) in the *Phaedrus* as the method of finding correct definitions, which articulates (E), (H) and (C&D) as dialectical procedures.

We will proceed as follows. In section 2, we will argue that the *Phaedrus* (261a-266b) provides an account of dialectic as the method of finding the correct definitions of "controversial" words. Under this interpretation, dia-

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lectic is characterized by its goal. Plato's *Phaedrus* explicitly raises a question about definitions (i.e. "What is love?"). Given a certain word such as 'Love', a definition of 'Love' expresses what it is *Love* and, thus, allow us to clearly determine whether, say, 'Phaedrus loves Lysias' is either true or false. Hence, the goal of dialectic is to help us move from ignorance to knowledge by finding correct definitions of certain words such as 'Justice', 'Virtue', etc. Since neither (E), (H) or (C&D) can achieve this goal in isolation, it will become clear that none of them can be a proper method of philosophical inquiry. Yet they can be regarded as necessary dialectical procedures. Finally, in section 3, taking into account that from the fact that Plato did not *mention* (E), (H) in the *Phaedrus* it does not follow that he did not *use* them, we will make explicit how the *Phaedrus* (261a-266b) implicitly articulates (E), (H) and (C&D) as dialectical procedures.

2. Unifiying the Method

The goal of this section is to argue that the *Phaedrus* contains an account of dialectic as the method of finding correct definitions for certain words, namely, "controversial words". We begin by discussing 263a1. Here Plato distinguished between uncontroversial (*homonoētikos*) and controversial (*stasiōtikos*) words. For example, "when we say 'iron' or 'silver', we all understand the same thing" (*hotan tis onoma eipēi sidērou ē argurou ar' ou to auto pantes dienoēthēmen*; 263a5).[1] By contrast, when we say 'Justice' or 'Goodness', "we disagree with each other and with ourselves" (*ti d' hotan dikaiou ē agathou; ouk allos allēi pheretai, kai amphisbētoumen allēlois te kai hemin autois*; 263a10). What is the point of Plato's distinction between uncontroversial and controversial words?

Let us attempt to shed light on Plato's distinction by way of a simple example. Suppose that Jane and Joe are dinning. While eating her salad, Jane raises the question whether the fork she is using is made of silver. Plato's distinction makes clear that such question poses no issue, for the correct application of the predicate 'is a silver fork' is uncontroversial. It is clear that one can determine whether a fork is a silver fork or not by a simple method (e.g. by performing an acid test). Now suppose that Joe raises the question whether the death penalty is just. Plato's distinction makes clear that this question poses a serious issue, for the correct application of the predicate 'is just' is controversial. Indeed, in contrast with Jane's silver fork case, it is not possible to determine whether the death penalty is just or not by a simple method.

The essential point of Plato's distinction, as our comparison suggests, is that the resolution of disagreements concerning the use of certain words such as 'Iron', 'Odd', 'Older', etc., is uncontroversial while the resolution of disagreements concerning the use of some abstract nouns such as 'Love', 'Justice', 'Beauty', etc., is controversial. It is worth to notice that Plato perspicuously made the same point in the *Euthyphro* 7b-d when he presented two cases in which disagreement is easily resolved. First, Socrates says that if we disagree about "which of two numbers were the greater", we can easily reach an agreement by using arithmetic. Second, Socrates says that if we dis-

agree about "the relative size of things", "we should quickly put an end to the disagreement by measuring the disputed quantity". By contrast, Socrates says, "Is it not about right and wrong, and noble and disgraceful, and good and bad? Are not these the questions about which you and we and other people become enemies, when we do become enemies, because we differ about them and cannot reach any satisfactory agreement?" (*Euthyphro* 7d). Hence, both in the *Euthyphro* and the *Phaedrus*, Plato suggested that the application of some words, for example, 'Justice', 'Good', etc., are a source of puzzlement and that such puzzlement is the source of philosophical inquiry. A such, philosophical inquiry is about controversial words.

How can we resolve disagreements about controversial words? In the *Phaedrus*, Plato suggested that we disagree about controversial words because words such as 'Justice' are equivocal in the sense that they signify similar but different experiences for every speaker. Hence, we disagree about the *meaning* of such words. For example, if we disagree about whether the death penalty is just, we disagree because we hold opposing interpretations of 'Justice' or, in other words, we hold opposing views of *what justice is*. Notice that by introducing a distinction concerning words (*onomata*) Plato suggested that our disagreement over a controversial word F can be resolved by identifying what F-ness is. Consequently, controversial words can become univocal by *signifying* Forms.[2] Therefore, the most plausible hypothesis concerning what would constitute the resolution of a disagreement about controversial words in the *Phaedrus* is the following:

(I) For every controversial predicate F there is definition D such that D correctly defines F and D resolves the disagreement about F.[3]

The main thrust of (I) is what Dancy refers to as the "Intellectualist Assumption" (Dancy 2004, 36).[4] Following Dancy, we shall formulate this assumption as follows:

(IA) To know that . . . F —, one must be able to say what the F, or F-ness, is.

"Here '. . . F —' is to be any declarative sentence containing 'F' (or 'F-ness,' or 'the F'). For example, if 'F' is 'pious,' then '. . . F —' could be 'this action is pious' or 'piety is a good thing.'" (Dancy 2006, 72) We should note that saying what the F or F-ness is amounts to *defining* it.[5] Thus, if Plato endorsed (IA) in the *Phaedrus*, which is plausible given Plato's distinction between controversial and uncontroversial words, then dialectic as the method of philosophical inquiry should help us move from ignorance to knowledge by finding correct definitions of controversial words.

It is crucial to note that the need for a method of philosophical inquiry reflects an asymmetry between language and reality: Forms make words meaningful and, consequently, propositions involving those predicates are true when Forms are instantiated. Yet definitions cannot make Forms be. Hence, whether the definition of F is correct depends on how the Form F is. Therefore, what is at issue is not the possibility of defining controversial words, but the existence of a *reliable* method, namely, a

method that takes into account the asymmetry between predicates and Forms. This desideratum for the method can be expressed as follows:

(II) For every definition *D* of a predicate *F*, *D* is correct if and only if *D* corresponds to the Form of *F* (i.e. *D* says what it is *F*).

However, since we do not have direct cognitive access to Forms, (II) poses a new problem: How can one determine the correctness of a definition reached by the method? For example, consider a debate over the claim that virtue is knowledge. If virtue is knowledge, a correct definition of virtue would include knowledge. As such, we acknowledge that a definition of virtue is correct if and only if such definition corresponds to the Form of virtue. Yet what is at stake in reaching a correct definition is the feasibility of the method. At this point Plato's *antilogikē technē* (*Phaedrus* 261d) takes a central role. Dialecticians begin with a candidate *definiens* (i.e. a suitable expression putted forward to define adequately some controversial predicate *F*) that must be tested by giving and asking for reasons. Accordingly, in order to conclude that virtue is knowledge, this claim must stand up to critical examination or, in other words, it must be satisfactorily defended against objections. Hence, the *antilogikē technē* is a necessary condition for the correctness of Plato's method because it is the practice of giving and asking for reasons concerning a candidate *definiens*.

Finally, based on the above discussion, it is in order to consider the following question: can (E), (H) or (C&D) be identified with dialectic as the method of philosophical inquiry as construed by Plato in the *Phaedrus*? If dialectic is understood in terms of its goal, namely, to help us move from ignorance to knowledge by finding correct definitions of controversial words, it becomes clear that (E), (H) or (C&D) cannot be identified with dialectic because neither of them can meet such goal in isolation. A caveat is in order, though. One should note that (E) can help us move from ignorance to knowledge in the sense of making us aware that we do not know what we assumed to know. In other words, it achieves progress by identifying mistaken knowledge claims. Since (E) makes progress in the sense of giving us knowledge of ignorance, (E) would not be a method of philosophical inquiry *per se* but another procedure: a procedure that allows puzzlement and, thus, shows the necessity of inquiry in the presence of ignorance and legitimate controversy. Likewise, (H) can help us to conjecture a candidate *definiens*, and (C&D) can help us by postulating a genera and testing a candidate *definiens* in terms of "cutting" according to the natural joints of reality. Yet it is evident that each procedure in isolation is not enough for a movement from inquiry to knowledge.

Therefore, neither (E), (H) and (C&D) are methods of philosophical inquiry *per se*. Consequently, it is at least possible to conceive (E), (H) and (C&D) as procedures of a general method of philosophical inquiry. As such, it is possible to conceive them as *dialectical procedures*. Hence, the essential issue now is to show how these procedures are implicitly articulated in the *Phaedrus*. And this is what we shall do in the next section.

3. Articulating the Method

The goal of this section is to locate (E), (H) and (C&D) into the general picture of dialectic we are advocating. Yet it might be objected from the outset that Plato did not mention (E), (H) as dialectical procedures in the *Phaedrus*. Hence, there is no textual evidence supporting our hypothesis. However, it is important to acknowledge that from the fact that Plato did not *mention* (E), (H) as dialectical procedures in the *Phaedrus* it does not follow that he did not *use* them.[6] In order to lend plausibility to this thesis, let us consider an example, namely, Plato's use of (C&D) in *Euthyphro* (11e – 12e). After repeated failures on the part of Euthyphro to give an account of piety, Socrates remarked that one can characterize the even as that part of number which is divisible into two equal parts. Then, he invited Euthyphro to characterize piety by saying what part of justice it is. Using a different terminology, one can say that Socrates introduced above the basic roles of genus, differentia and species, respectively: number, divisible into two equal parts, and even. This becomes clear since number is a kind and Socrates proposes to treat even as a species. Then he adds to the genus "divisible into two equal parts" functioning as the differentia characterizing the species. Euthyphro tried to follow Socrates by answering that the pious is the part of the just concerned with assistance (*therapeian*) to the gods, while that concerned with assistance to men is the other part (*Euthyphro* 12e). Euthyphro failed to support such characterization since he was not able to offer a plausible interpretation of the assistance one renders to the gods. Thus, as the textual evidence from the *Euthyphro* shows, Socrates uses but not mentions (C&D), which some scholars assume to be a method developed in the *Phaedrus* and the late dialogues. Accordingly, we will examine textual evidence from the *Phaedrus* showing that Plato used (E), (H) as dialectical procedures.

In the sequel, in order to show how the dialectical procedures are implicitly articulated, we shall consider two methodological movements. First, the movement from puzzlement to inquiry, which concerns how Plato's distinction between controversial and uncontroversial words relates to (E). Second, the movement from inquiry to knowledge, which concerns *procedural* questions concerning the method of finding correct definitions of controversial words.

3.1 From puzzlement to inquiry: *Elenchus*

Here we will elaborate on the relation between the notion of controversial words and (E), namely, puzzlement. Let us begin by briefly describing how (E) is usually practiced in Plato's dialogues: let Proponent and Opponent be two speakers and let them start from a thesis, *A*, accepted by Proponent. Then, Opponent should ask questions that Proponent can answer by "yes" or "no" leading Proponent to accept further theses, say *B* and *C*. By using *B* and *C* as premises of an argument concluding ¬ *A*, Opponent intends to show that although *A*, *B* and *C* are individually plausible, together constitute an *inconsistent* cluster of

theses. As a result, Proponent and Opponent reached an *aporia*.

Is (E) a refutative technique? We agree with Castelné-rac & Marion (2009) that (E) does not aim at *refuting* the initial thesis. As such, (E) puts the emphasis not on whether the theses under examine are true or false but rather in whether we can find an *inconsistency*. Following this view about (E), it is plausible to claim that its purpose is to help proponents to realize that they need to examine critically the beliefs at stake. This is a key element involved in philosophical inquiry: if belief revision in respect to a topic is unnecessary, there is no point in inquiring about it.

Plato's point concerning belief revision is not superfluous because speakers standing from the first-person perspective would consider their opponents to be mistaken since they presume their own beliefs are true. That is why we need a distinction between uncontroversial and controversial *words* and a technical way to help those who presume their beliefs are true to realize that they are committed to inconsistent beliefs. Hence, the rationale of (E) is not to claim victory over an opponent by refutation. On the contrary, its rationale is to make us realize that our beliefs concerning a controversial word like 'Justice' are inconsistent. This means that those who employ (E) help their opponents to realize that they only know that some or all of the individually plausible propositions at stake are false, because together they conform an inconsistent premise-set. So constituted, (E) is relevant for inquiry as far as it makes us aware of the fact that we held inconsistent views and thus motivates us to revise our beliefs. As such, (E) shows us the origin and motivation of philosophical inquiry. Thus, we agree with Politis' interpretation that definitional inquiries "are set in motion by an *aporia* – in the sense of a particular problem – and it is the inability to answer the *aporia* that motivates and justifies the demand for a definition."[7] (Politis 2015, 2).

Therefore, Plato's distinction between uncontroversial and controversial words articulates the relevance and importance of (E), one of the main aspects of dialectic as the method of philosophical inquiry since it ignites a movement from puzzlement to inquiry. How to move forwards from inquiry to knowledge?

3.2 From inquiry to knowledge

Let *F* be a controversial word under dispute and suppose that Proponent and Opponent reached an *aporia* concerning *F*. Then, their inability to resolve the *aporia* puzzles them and motivates them to start inquiring about the nature of *F*. Proponent and Opponent aim at defining *F*. Given this goal, we should ask three procedural questions:

(i) How one is to find the category to which *F* belongs?
(ii) How one is to find a suitable candidate *definiens* for *F*?
(iii) How one is to assess *F*'s suitable candidate *definiens*?

In the sequel, we shall show that the answers to (i), (ii) and (iii) are Collection (hereafter (C)), (H) and Division (hereafter (D)) respectively.

3.2.1. How one is to find the category to which *F* belongs?

Where does an investigation into a controversial word such as 'Love' begin? Plato told us in the *Phaedrus* that skilled dialecticians seek to concur about the Form to which they apply the predicate 'Love', and they aim to find a correct definition of 'Love'. This means that they aim to find a definition that is exhaustive and informative. If a definition is exhaustive and informative, it should help us grasp the property or set of properties that make a Form, say, the Form of Love, what it is.

What sorts of individuals does a general terms pick out? In the Socratic dialogues, Socrates asks "What is *F*?", where *F* stands for general terms such as 'Justice', 'Virtue', etc., and the interlocutor often answers by listing items he regards as instances of the general term under inquiry. Evidently, a definition in terms of a list is neither exhaustive nor informative. The point is that Socrates wants to know the common feature that all the items on the list share and what makes all the items on the list instances of one Form. Following this point, inquirers should "see" or "grasp" the common feature of the objects falling under certain kind.

In the *Phaedrus*, Plato called the technique to grasp the common features of the objects falling under a predicate (e.g. red roses falling under the predicate 'Red'), and the common features of predicates falling under a category (e.g. '*x* is a cat' falling under the category '*x* is a feline'), *sunagōgē*[8]:

That of perceiving and bringing together in one idea the scattered particulars, that one may make clear by definition the particular thing which he wishes to explain; just as now, in speaking of Love, we said what he is and defined it, whether well or ill. Certainly by this means the discourse acquired clearness and consistency. (*Phdr.*, 265d).[9]

The first point to note about (C) is that it can happen from the outset of an inquiry and, as we shall show later, in the course of any division. By employing (C), a dialectician gathers a number of separate objects or types of objects (*ta pollachēi diesparmena*) into one Form (*mia idea*).[10] It becomes clear that the dialectician uses (C) to establish the Form or category to which the *definiendum* (*hekastos*) belongs. For example, consider the controversial word 'Love'. Its *mia idea*, the Form to which *love* belongs, is *mania*. Our interpretation of 263a is that both (C) and (D) are concerned with general terms, and specifically, controversial words. Now, the phrase "*eis mian te idean sunorōnta agein ta pollachēi diesparmena*" is about gathering a plurality into "one form''. However, for the method, only controversial words involving certain plurality are relevant. In addition, predicates convey Forms or categories rather than particular objects.

Paragraph 265d indicates that what is dispersed in many ways is joined in order to establish a *mia idea*. The concept of *mia idea* is a relational one. A *mia idea* is always the *mia idea* of a *definiendum*. For example, *mania* is the *mia idea* of Love. As this example illustrates, the *mia idea* of *F*-particulars is a common feature share by all of them. In turn, the *mia idea* of the Form *F*, the Form that collects all *F*-particulars, is a common feature shared

by all kinds to which *F* belongs, say, the *G*-Form. For example, consider a bouquet of red roses. The *mia idea* of the rose-particulars is denoted by the word 'Rose' and the *mia idea* of 'Rose', a Form, is denoted by 'Rosaceae'. Of course, the *mia idea* cannot be an accidental common feature, for example, redness, but a general and essential feature.

How (C) is articulated as a dialectical procedure? Our position takes as starting point a corollary of the notion of *mia idea*: the *mia idea* of *F* is a necessary condition to be an *F*, but not a sufficient condition. For example, it is necessary to be a feline to be a cat, but it is certainly not sufficient. In other words, the goal of (C) is to guarantee that our definition is *exhaustive* (i.e. that it includes *all* instances of *F*). As such, (C) is akin to a process of categorization. For example, dialecticians grasp instances of love by inspection and generalize that every instance of love is also an instance of *mania*. However, the converse does not hold. Thus, love is *not* every other type of mania. Hence, to say of love that it is a *mania* is to say that *mania* is the *mia idea* of love. However, the Form of Mania is divided into two sorts: beneficial and harmful. Thus, if one compares all instances of love and all instances of gluttony, but one does not specify which sort of *mania* is each one of them, then it is uninformative both to say "love is *mania*" and "gluttony is *mania*".

It becomes clear that the *mia idea* of *F* is not its definition but rather certain part of its definition: in defining *F*, the *mia idea* of *F* satisfies the condition of exhaustiveness but not the condition of informativeness. For example, the definition of love is not mania *simpliciter* but "certain form of mania" (*manian tina, Phaedrus* 265a6), of course. Evidently, this means that *F* is a part of its *mia idea* and what is left of the *mia idea* is *not F*.

3.2.2. How one is to find a suitable candidate *definiens* for *F*?

In this section, we shall argue that (H) is the procedure to find a suitable candidate *definiens* for certain controversial predicate *F*. Hence, we begin by defending that (H) is the meeting point between (C&D) in the *Phaedrus*. Our hope is to show that if one accepts this thesis, one can offer an organic picture of the method, and that this picture is attractive enough to lend plausibility to our contention. We base our case for the thesis that (H) is the meeting point between (C) and (D) on *Phaedrus* (236b), (237b7-d3) and (238d8-e2).[11] Our strategy is to show that in these passages Plato *uses*, but not mentions, (H) in order to make a transition between (C) and (D).

We shall begin by assessing (236b): "I will allow you to take it for granted [*hupotithesthai*] that the lover is less sane that the non-lover [...]".[12] Plato does not mention the noun 'hypothesis' here, yet he uses the verb *hupotithēmi* to convey "to take for granted". In addition, it is clear that the candidate *definiens* that Socrates is going to take for granted is that lovers are less sane than non-lovers. The essential point we would like to draw from the above passage is that in order for the speech to take course it is required to postulate a candidate expression that defines ad-

equately the *definiendum*. And this requisite is satisfied by postulating a candidate *definiens* for examination

Next, we would like to draw attention to Plato's use of *mia archē* and *homologiāi themenoi horon* in 237b7-d3.[13] According to Socrates, it is a mistake not to agree upon a candidate *definiens* from the outset of the speech. The parts involved in the discussion should not assume that they already know the subject matter since the aim of the method is to reach a correct definition. Accordingly, the first step in this direction is to find the *mia idea* of the *definiendum*. However, as we have shown in the previous section, the *mia idea* of *F* satisfies the condition of exhaustiveness but not the condition of informativeness. As a result, we need a candidate *definiens* in order to start a process of deliberation. The reason for this is that without such candidate *definiens* it would be impossible to start dividing in order to find a correct definition. Hence, the point we have attempted to draw from (237b7-d3) is that dialecticians reach the candidate *definiens* by way of (H).

Finally, let us connect this last point with (238 d8-e2). In (237d3-4), Socrates agrees with Phaedrus that the *mia idea* of love is *epithumia* (desire), which is evident and commonly accepted (*hapanti dēlon*). However, it is clear that simply saying that love is desire is uninformative. Accordingly, Socrates continues by putting forward a candidate *definiens* (*eirētai te kai hōristai*, 238d8): love is irrational desire upon beautiful things (see 238b6-c4). Hackforth remarks about this *definiens*:

It is not said that ὕβρις is a Form of ἐπιθυμία: rather it is the name of that psychical state which results from the victory of irrational desire for pleasure over rational belief, which aims at good; nevertheless the connexion of ὕβρις with ἐπιθυμία is so close that the speaker treats the species of the one as species of the other, and in the end arrives at a definition of love which, as were led to expect at the outset, makes it a Form of desire, and carefully states its specific difference" (1952: 40-41).

The crucial point, as Hackford remarks, is that Socrates reaches a candidate *definiens* of love that carefully includes its specific difference. Yet we contend that this particular move, which is made possible by (C), is the product of (H). The purpose of using (C) is to find the *mia idea* of the *definiendum*. In turn, the purpose of using (H) is to find a suitable a candidate *definiens*. For it is clear, and this is the essential point here, that without such candidate *definiens* it would be impossible to start dividing in order to find a correct definition. Indeed, in the *palinode* Socrates makes Phaedrus realize that the candidate *definiens* he putted forward in 238d8 is incorrect.

In sum, (H) is in the *Phaedrus* an interim step between (C), the process of agreeing concerning the *mia idea* of the *definiendum*, and (D), the process of testing the candidate *definiens* advanced in (H) by dividing it "according to the natural joints" of the Forms. Thus, it is necessary to clarify the import of (D) in what follows in order to get a clearer picture of the general theory of the method of philosophical inquiry in the *Phaedrus*.

3.2.3 How one is to assess F's suitable candidate *definiens*?

In (264c), Socrates introduces a criterion of adequacy for a good speech in order to clarify his criticisms of Lysias' speech, namely, "organic unity". He says: "But we do think you will agree to this, that every discourse must be organized, like a living being, with a body of its own, as it were, so as not to be headless or footless, but to have a middle and members, composed in fitting relation to each other and to the whole."[14] There are "two procedures", which contribute to the organic unity of a speech. First, one should begin, as Socrates did in his first speech, with a *definiens* of the controversial predicate under discussion because this allows for "the speech to progress with clarity and internal consistency" (265d). Of course, there is no *definiens* without a *mia idea*. Hence, a candidate *definiens* purports adequately to define the predicate under discussion and is comprised of both a *mia idea* and a difference that corresponds to the *definiendum*; we have argued that dialecticians make this step by means of (C) and (H). Second, one should proceed to test the correctness of a *definiens* by dividing it "according to the natural joints" of the Forms (*kat' arthra hēi pephuken*) (*Phdr.*, 265e-266b). The goal of this final section is to elaborate on this claim and, hence, attempt to understand how (D) works.

We shall take as the starting point of our discussion of (D) Plato's image of the butcher in *Phdr.*265e-266b: dialecticians should perform (D) at the natural joints of a Form. Otherwise, it is like hacking off bits like a bad butcher. Accordingly, dialecticians divide the *mia idea* according to the Form into two parts: a sinister part (*skaios*) and a proper part (*dexia*). Plato's use of the terms *skaios* and *dexia* is evocative of opposition. For example, since madness is the *mia idea* of love, love is a Form of madness (*manian ...tina* 265a8). Then, in order to know what kind of madness love is, dialecticians should cut madness itself at its natural joints. The outcome of this cut gives us the proper positive part of love or "divine madness", and, by opposition, its *sinister* negative part or "human madness". Yet the Form of divine madness divides into four parts, namely, prophetic, inspirational, poetic and erotic. Therefore, love is erotic (divine) madness (*erōtikē mania* 265b2).

Plato used the verbs *diatemnein* and *temnein* to refer to the action of dividing. If we give primacy to the verb *temnein*, the cuts can be in two, three or more parts. By contrast, if the verb *diatemnein* prevails, the cuts must be in two parts. Therefore, 265a8-265b2 lends plausibility to a polytomous view about (D) while 265e-266b lends plausibility to a dichotomous view about (D). In order to avoid contradiction, we shall lend plausibility to the following interpretation: every division is dichotomous in a *logical* sense but further polytomous divisions could be made depending on the nature of the Form in question. Let us elaborate on this proposal.

How to interpret philosophically Plato's image of the butcher and Plato's use of the terms *skaios* and *dexia* in (265e)? We interpret these elements as meaning that the dialectician must divide methodically, that is, with certain rational principle in mind. Accordingly, if a dialectician "cuts" correctly, he will find the "sinister part" of a predi-

cate *F*, which is its contradictory, namely, not-*F*, and "the proper part" of a predicate *F*, which is its content. In other words, the proper part of the definition of a controversial predicate *F* is identical with itself and thus none of the objects that fall under *F* also fall under not-*F*.

Hence, we interpret the "sinister part" of a predicate *F* and the "proper part" of a predicate *F* as contradictory opposites. One should distinguish between two kinds of opposites. The first kind is contrary opposites, for example, "the rose is red" and "the rose is green". The second kind is contradictory opposites, for example, "the rose is red" and "the rose is not red."[15] A pair of contrary opposites are mutually inconsistent but not necessarily exhaustive. Hence, they may be simultaneously false but they cannot be simultaneously true. For example, it is not true that all apples are red or green. Some apples are yellow. However, no apple can be red *and* green in respect of the same part of it and at the same time. By contrast, a pair of contradictory opposites are mutually inconsistent and necessarily exhaustive. Hence, they cannot be simultaneously true nor simultaneously false; one must be true and the other must be false. For example, an apple is either red or not red in respect of the same part of it, in relation to the same thing and at the same time. Thus, the difference between contrary and contradictory opposites is that a pair of contrary opposites are exclusive, but need not be exhaustive while a pair of contradictory opposites are exclusive and exhaustive.

Our point is that a positive "proper" part of a predicate, its content, always stands correlative to a negative "sinister" part. In other words, to define a predicate in some way or other is to contradistinguish it from that to which that definition does not apply. It makes no sense to attribute a feature to something if this feature does not "cut", divide, or distinguish what it involves from what it does not involve. Now, if the "proper part" and the "sinister part" of a predicate *F* are contradictory opposites, that is, the "proper part" involves what *F* is and its "sinister part" involves what *F* is not, then the principle behind (D) is the principle of non-contradiction (PNC). This principle says that contradictory predicates cannot belong to the same object at the same time and in the same respect. In other words, contradictory opposites are mutually inconsistent.

Hence, (PNC) is the principle granting correct cuts or cuts according to the "natural joints". The reason this seems to be so is that if one cuts like an inexperienced butcher, one might include in the definition of *F* features that are not part of the content of *F*. In other words, one might conflate what *F* is with what *F* is not. This confusion is in a sense "sinister" or negative for cognition and action since entertaining in the meaning of *F what F is not* derives a contradiction. For example, consider a proponent and an opponent inquiring into the definition of 'Whale'. They both agree that if *x* is a whale, then *x* is a marine animal. Then, the proponent proposes the following "cut" to the candidate *definiens*: if *x* is a whale, then *x* is a fish. The opponent rejects this "cut" as inadequate. Indeed, he claims that although all whales are marine animals, whales are not fish but mammals: whales are warm blooded while fish are cold-blooded. Whales use their blowholes to breathe air with lungs while fish get oxygen

directly from the water through their gills. Whales have follicles and hair on their smooth skin while fish have scales. Whales milk their babies while fish cannot.

As our example illustrates, a bad dialectician is like a bad butcher: they both make wrong cuts by including in the definition of *F* features that are not part of the content of *F*. Therefore, in a *logical* sense, every cut is dichotomous.

The view that every cut is dichotomous in a logical sense has notable advantages over the view that every cut is dichotomous in a metaphysical sense. First, it does not contradict the textual evidence showing polytomous cuts. Second, if one accepts that every cut is dichotomous and it reflects the ontological nature of the Form in question, it follows that every Form is a complex object having a positive part and a negative part and that those parts are ontologically substantial. A moment of reflexion shows that these consequences entail serious problems. On the one hand, one would be committed to negative Forms; hence, one would be committed to assign truth-values to sentences containing negative predicates such as "There are non-dogs". On the other hand, the endorsement of negative Forms generates a multiplication of entities without necessity.

Finally, having explained the logical sense of dichotomous divisions, let us consider the sense in which it is possible to admit polytomous cuts by returning to a previous example. The Form of divine madness divides into four parts, namely, prophetic, inspirational, poetic and erotic. Hence, this is a clear case of a polytomous cut since there are undeniable instances of prophetic madness, inspirational madness, poetic madness and erotic madness.[16] Thus, a dichotomous cut would be subject to counterexamples. For example, if one were to cut divine madness into two kinds, say, prophetic and inspirational, rather than in four parts, an interlocutor could offer a counterexample, say, a case of poetic madness, and show that the use of (D) has been inadequate. Therefore, cuts can be polytomous in a metaphysical sense.

One might object that the example of madness can be interpreted as a counterexample to the claim that every cut is dichotomous in a logical sense, for there is no obvious "logical cut" in such example. However, this objection falls short because there is a trivial dichotomous cut in such example: one can cut divine madness into erotic divine madness and non-erotic divine madness. Indeed, love is *neither* prophecy, inspiration *nor* poetry. In this sense, it is clear that the proper part of love concerning divine madness is erotic in *opposition* to everything that is divine madness but is *not* erotic. Hence, Socrates defines love this way.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, we have argued that (UI) is a suitable interpretation of Plato's view of dialectic as the method of philosophical inquiry. Starting from Plato's distinction between controversial and uncontroversial words, we proceeded to characterize dialectic in terms of its goal, which is to help us move from ignorance to knowledge by finding correct definitions of controversial words. We noted that the need for a method of philosophical inquiry reflects an asymmetry between words and Forms: Forms make words meaningful but definitions cannot make Forms be. Accordingly, we concluded that since neither (E), (H) or (C&D) can achieve this goal in isolation, none of them can be a proper method of philosophical inquiry. Then, we made explicit how the *Phaedrus* (261a-266b) implicitly articulates (E), (H) and (C&D) as dialectical procedures. In particular, we showed that dialectics involves two cognitive movements: a movement from puzzlement to inquiry and a movement from inquiry to knowledge. We showed that the inability of speakers to resolve an *aporia* about a controversial word such as 'Justice' puzzles them and motivates them to start inquiring about the nature of 'Justice', and that speakers can achieve this change by way of (E). Once speakers have acknowledged that they should start inquiring, they aim to move from inquiry to knowledge by defining 'Justice'. Given this goal, speakers should proceed by identifying the category to which 'Justice' belongs, finding a suitable candidate *definiens* for 'Justice', and, finally, assessing the suitable candidate *definiens* for 'Justice'. We showed that speakers can fulfill these tasks by using (C), (H) and (D) respectively.

In sum, we have attempted to show that (UI) eliminates an interpretative gap that obscures our understanding of dialectic as Plato's philosophical method. In this sense, we have attempted to show that (UI) is more economic and more explicative than (PI). To be sure, exploring further implications and objections to (UI) are much more intricate projects. Here we hope only to have offered some reasons to believe that (UI) can shed light on Plato's view of dialectic as the method of philosophical inquiry.

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Notes

[1] "263a3-4 τῶν τοιούτων: the reference is initially unclear, as Ph.'s response confirms (a5); but S. clarifies in a moment (a6) that he is talking about words (i.e. nouns, ὀνόματα)'' Yunis (2011: 190).

[2] This conclusion suggests the view that Forms are meanings, which means that Forms are discovered by answering the question "What general terms are meaningful?". As such, a meaningful general term signifies a Form, which is indeed the meaning of that general term.

[3] One shall note that (I) does not entail that philosophical disagreement is *merely* about meaning. The crucial point is that if one does not understand the meaning of 'Justice', then one cannot determine whether the proposition expressed by the utterance of, say, "The death penalty is just" is true or false. As this example illustrates, it is necessary to understand the meaning of controversial words in order to determine whether the sentences in which they occur are *true* or *false*.

[4] This assumption is also referred to as the "Principle of the Priority of Definition".

[5] See Benson (1990) for another compelling defence of (IA).

[6] As we saw in the introduction, Irwin used this type of argument concerning (E); see (Irwin 1988,7).

[7] We shall note, though, that Politis restricts his interpretation to Plato's early dialogues.

[8] This is the aspect of the method we have referred by '(C)'.

[9] Many scholars approach *sunagōgē* in relation to paragraph (249b-c), which concerns *anamnēsis*. Both 265d and 249b-c display the verb *sunaireō* because both refer to the action of assembling the manifold in a unity. The difference is that the paragraph including *anamnesis* presents a general description of *sunagōgē*, without considering it as a method or a procedure. Although the act of gathering consists in unifying the manifold by reasoning, in 249b-c it is not mentioned how this occurs. We agree with Griswold (1986:116), who have strongly argued against identifying "recollection" with "collection". For a discussion of this issue, see (Author, 2017).

[10] Collection has been interpreted as "intuition" by F. M. Cornford (1960: 186-7, 267) and W.K.C. Guthrie (1975). Richard Robinson (1953) has interpreted (C) as a systematic procedure accompanied by intuition. W.D. Ross (1951), Hackforth (1952), and David White (1993) have interpreted collection just as a systematic procedure.

[11] Scholnicov (1992) holds this view.

[12] Hackforth (1952:34).

[13] Hackforth (1952:38).

[14] Hackforth (1952:128).

[15] See Horn (1989).

[16] And, as Ackrill (1997) remarked, this is not an exceptional case for Plato; see *Philebus* 16d and *Statesman* 287c.

Idea, Concept and Symbol in Hegel and Gadamer

William Konchak and Björn Thorsteinsson

Abstract: The robust and encompassing nature of Hegel's absolute idealism is both compelling and problematic. This paper explores Hans-Georg Gadamer's critical appraisal of the Hegelian legacy through the prism of aesthetics and, in doing so, raises general questions about the status and scope of philosophical conceptualization, and, thereby, about the relationship between philosophy and art – or between Concept and symbol. Through an examination of Gadamer's articulation of the symbol and other aspects of his aesthetics, an approach is elaborated that strives to be more open, imaginative, fluid, and humble than traditional Hegelian viewpoints. However, given that Gadamer was also strongly influenced by Hegel, it is also considered how Gadamer's critique and development of Hegel's thought may provide an important opening towards engaging Hegel's thought in a contemporary context. This influence and divergence is considered in relation to Gadamer's conception of the symbol and Hegel's notions of the Concept and the Idea, offering indications of how Hegel's approach may be defended as well as discussing to what extent his thought can possibly enhance Gadamer's perspectives. The ultimate goal is to point towards a synthesis between our two thinkers, suggesting in the process that aesthetics and philosophy should be seen as complementary, and in this respect, so too should the symbol and the Idea.

Keywords: Hegel, Gadamer, idea, concept, symbol.

Introduction

The robust and encompassing nature of Hegel's absolute idealism is both compelling and problematic. This paper explores Hans-Georg Gadamer's critical appraisal of the Hegelian legacy through the prism of aesthetics and, in doing so, raises general questions about the status and scope of philosophical conceptualization, and, thereby, about the relationship between philosophy and art – or between Concept and symbol. Through an examination of Gadamer's articulation of the symbol and other aspects of his aesthetics, an approach is elaborated that strives to be more open, imaginative, fluid, and humble than traditional Hegelian viewpoints. However, given that Gadamer was also strongly influenced by Hegel, it will also be considered how Gadamer's critique and development of Hegel's thought may provide an important opening towards engaging Hegel's thought in a contemporary context. This influence and divergence will be considered in relation to Gadamer's conception of the symbol and Hegel's notions of the Concept and the Idea, offering indications of how

Hegel's approach may be defended as well as discussing to what extent his thought can possibly enhance Gadamer's perspectives. The ultimate goal is to point towards a synthesis between our two thinkers, suggesting in the process that aesthetics and philosophy should be seen as complementary, and in this respect, so too should the symbol and the Idea.

1. Introducing the Speculative and the Symbolic

Gadamer and Hegel both attempt to overcome subject/object dualism and subsume that apparent opposition under a greater unity. The fact that Gadamer's hermeneutics is influenced by Hegel's thought is well known, but the ways in which the two thinkers agree and disagree have been the subject of much debate. Gadamer draws upon Hegel's dialectic, but tempers the repercussions of the latter through the lived experience of dialogue within language, and, as we shall see, the difference between Gadamer's understanding of the symbol and Hegel's central conception of the Idea can be seen as exemplary of this tempering process. In many ways, Gadamer's thought springs from a re-thinking of Hegel's thought through the consequences and limitations of human finitude.

For Hegel, the faculty of the understanding is limited in that it posits a fixed relation between subject and object by means of propositional statements, whereas the Concept breaks past these restrictions through its own self-movement in a dialectical process moving towards higher unities.[1] Gadamer's own variant of this is the lived process of dialogue, whereby following the subject matter gives rise to less robust unities within language. In this respect, Hegel's conception of truth is driven by a strong notion of teleology, implying that consciousness will successively move towards ever more clarity through dialectical processes and culminate in the transparency of the Absolute Idea. Gadamer distances himself from such teleology and its accompanying notions of the Absolute and sees understanding as an ongoing and unending process. From a contemporary viewpoint, notions such as the absolute and a fully transparent knowing may appear too metaphysically laden and too dismissive of the subjective perspective and human limitation. On the other hand, a Hegelian-inspired approach such as Gadamer's that distances itself from the Absolute and from teleology may encounter difficulties in relation to justifying its notions of truth. In order to assess this situation, we will turn to explore Gadamer's conception of the symbol and to his aesthetics more generally, as for Gadamer aesthetics is the eminent domain for experiences of truth.

For Gadamer, the symbol serves as a point of contrast against Hegel's Idea. Although, like Hegel's speculative conceptions, the symbol points to a relation to the whole, this is not something that will ever be experienced in total clarity, given the essential limitations of our human finitude. Gadamer writes:

In the last analysis, Goethe's statement "Everything is a symbol" is the most comprehensive formulation of the hermeneutic idea. It means that everything points to another thing. This "everything" is not an assertion about each being, indicating what it is, but an assertion as to how it encounters man's understanding. There is nothing that cannot mean something to it. But the statement implies something else as well: nothing comes forth in the one meaning that is simply offered to us. The impossibility of surveying all relations is just as much present in Goethe's concept of the symbolic as is the vicarious function of the particular for the representation of the whole. For only because the universal relatedness of being is concealed from human eyes does it need to be discovered. (Gadamer 2008, 103)

Thus emphasizing our human finitude, Gadamer draws upon Heidegger's conception of the interplay of concealing and revealing to point to an experience of truth that is never fully transparent (Gadamer 1986). Nevertheless, this (partly) concealed "universal relatedness of being," found within the symbol, which may with ample justification be called speculative, serves as a basis of truth.

Gadamer develops his notion of the symbol by drawing on the conception of a token that has been split in two. He elaborates on this notion in two ways, firstly by providing an example of a host that breaks up a token and gives half of it to his guests, the idea being that the two halves may later be brought together in an act of mutual recognition between the parties holding the halves. Secondly, he turns to Plato's *Symposium* for the well-known idea that humans were originally spherical creatures who, on account of misbehaviour, were cut in two by the gods, and now seek a sense of wholeness through rejoining their 'missing half' in the experience of love (see Gadamer 1986, 31-32). In this vein, as we shall see, Gadamer wants to uphold the idea that beyond our current experience of fragmentation there exists the possibility of greater unity, if we only could recognize our relation to a greater whole. The first aspect of Gadamer's notion of the symbol implies, as he puts it, "something in and through which we recognize someone already known to us" (Gadamer 1986, 31), whereas the second aspect seems more generally existential as well as metaphysical.

In order to better explicate Gadamer's conception of the symbol, it is helpful to discuss the difference between symbol and sign. A sign is something that points beyond itself and functions within an agreed-upon social convention. In contrast, Gadamer writes, "the symbol is not an arbitrarily chosen or created sign, but presupposes a metaphysical connection between visible and invisible" (Gadamer 2004, 64). He addresses the challenges of overcoming the tension between the world of ideas and the world of the senses, noting that the symbol, especially in its religious usage, abides in this tension.[2] Again, Gadamer draws upon Goethe's conception of the symbol and writes:

In fact, what distinguishes the symbol even as Goethe conceives it is that in it the idea itself gives itself existence. Only because the concept of symbol implies the inner unity of symbol and what is symbolized, was it possible for the symbol to become a basic concept universal to aesthetics. A symbol is the coincidence of sensible appearance and suprasensible meaning, […] not a subsequent co-ordination, as in the use of signs, but the union of two things that belong to each other […]. (Gadamer 2004, 67)

Thus, there is a real connection of the sensible and suprasensible within the symbol. In other words, Gadamer's account of the symbol is presentational and not representational, meaning that the truth appears within the symbol itself, rather than pointing beyond itself.

It seems clear, then, that Gadamer's own conception of the symbol is inspired by the metaphysical resonances of the historical conceptions discussed above, although it may be debatable to what extent, as this is not made explicit. In this respect, in any case, the symbol brings in the notion of a real connection to a greater unity inherent in reality, one which provides a bridge between the sensible and suprasensible, or, said another way, figures as a visible placeholder of the invisible greater whole. This would seem to resonate with Gadamer's understanding of the beautiful: "The ontological function of the beautiful is to bridge the chasm between the ideal and the real" (Gadamer 1986, 15). Speaking of the symbol, Gadamer writes that it is "that other fragment that has always been sought in order to complete and make whole our own fragmentary life," whereas the experience of the beautiful, or, as he puts it, "particularly the beautiful in art, is the invocation of a potentially whole and holy order of things, wherever it may be found" (Gadamer 1986, 32). Through this holistic dimension of the symbol and of the beautiful, we encounter what may justly be called a quasi-mystical or religious aspect of Gadamer's thought,[3] one which finds affinities with a certain conception of the mystical that plays a significant, albeit often overlooked, role in Hegel's speculative dialectic. In the *Encyclopaedia Logic*, for example, Hegel evokes a relation between the truly rational or speculative on the one hand and the mystical on the other hand:

As we have seen, […] the abstract thinking of the understanding is so far from being something firm and ultimate that it proves itself, on the contrary, to be a constant sublating of itself and an overturning into its opposite, whereas the rational as such is rational precisely because it contains both the opposites as ideal moments within itself. Thus, everything rational can equally be called 'mystical'; but this only amounts to saying that it transcends the understanding. It does not at all imply that what is spoken of must be considered inaccessible to thinking and incomprehensible. (Hegel 1991, 133)

Thus, what is experienced as mysterious from the point of view of the understanding can attain clarity in the heightened and more unified experience of the speculative.[4] The relation between fragment or part and whole is exemplified in Gadamer's thought through the symbol, whereas for Hegel this is achieved through the Concept, defined by Hegel as, precisely, "[the] unity of the universal and the particular" (Hegel 1991, 255).

Although we have been discussing the mystical resonances of Gadamer's and Hegel's thought, these should not be taken in an other-worldly sense. Gadamer's aesthetics is focused on the here and now and his understanding of the symbol is presentational, meaning that the truth that the symbol harbours appears within it rather than beyond it. In this respect, it should be stressed that for Hegel, the Idea, as it appears here and now, also implies an interplay of truth and concealment; for, as he writes: "When we speak of the Idea, it must not be taken to mean something far away and beyond. Instead, the Idea is what is perfectly present, and it is likewise to be found in any consciousness too, however confused and impaired it may be there" (Hegel 1991, 288). In other words, we can clearly see here that for Hegel, there is a sense of, and appreciation for, a certain irreducibility of the experience of finitude, and the possibility of the process of the dialectic resides precisely in raising thought towards greater clarity and comprehension of the whole in its totality. Thus, in practice, Hegel may not be as insistent on the immediate actualization of an absolute knowledge as is commonly assumed. In this light, we would do well to bear in mind his famous claim that any individual cannot avoid being "a child of his time" (Hegel 1967, 11), in the sense of being limited to the present situation. In this manner, then, we find in Hegel an appreciation of our perceiving our contemporary world as a confused or even mystical whole, prompting us to make one-sided propositions that sooner or later reveal themselves to be limited and off the mark. Still, in this very act of proposition-making, marked as it is by the static opposition of subject and object, the seed of the dialectic movement of the Concept can be found:

In cognition, what has to be done is all a matter of stripping away the alien character of the objective world that confronts us. As we habitually say, it is a matter of "finding ourselves in the world," and what that amounts to is the tracing of what is objective back to the Concept, which is our innermost Self. The explanation as we have given shows how absurd it is to consider subjectivity and objectivity as a fixed and abstract antithesis. Both moments are thoroughly dialectical. The Concept, which is initially only subjective, proceeds to objectify itself by virtue of its own activity and without the help of an external material or stuff. And likewise the object is not rigid and without process; instead, its process consists in its proving itself to be that which is at the same time subjective, and this forms the advance to the *Idea*. (Hegel 1991, 273)

Here we behold the speculative approach in its contrast to propositional language and the understanding. Gadamer, for his part, draws upon Hegel´s understanding of speculative thought and transfers the experience of the speculative over into language (a move which he maintains moves beyond Hegel's dialectic, which in his opinion subordinates language to the statement), succinctly defining the speculative in terms of its deployment of "words [that] do not reflect beings, but express a relation to the whole of being" (Gadamer 2004, 465), and later goes on to remark that "all interpretation is, in fact, speculative" (Gadamer 2004, 468). For our two thinkers, then, it may be said that the speculative involves a profound relation to a greater whole, a relation that may, to some degree at least, be achieved in practice. For Hegel there certainly is a strong impetus towards a self-overcoming aiming for a

greater unity; however, the question is whether and how a full transparency should be seen as possible or even attainable. For Gadamer, on the other hand, given our human finitude, we clearly can never completely overcome our prejudices or fragmented perspectives. With this in mind, we will now turn to a closer examination of the proximity between Gadamer's hermeneutics and aesthetics on the one hand and Hegel's philosophy on the other hand.

2. Gadamer's Aesthetics and its Commonalities with Hegel

In his essay "The Heritage of Hegel," Gadamer remarks that "it was the great theme of the concretization of the universal that I learned to consider as the basic experience of hermeneutics, and so I entered once again the neighborhood of the great teacher of concrete universality, Hegel" (Gadamer 2007, 334). Gadamer writes that for him "it was not a matter of becoming a disciple of Hegel, but rather of interiorizing the challenge that he represents for thinking," adding that "[u]nder this challenge, the basic experience of hermeneutics began to reveal its true universality to me inasmuch as our use of language, or better, inasmuch as the use that language finds in us whenever we think, pervades our whole experience of the world. Language is constantly achieving the concretization of the universal" (Gadamer 2007, 334). In fact, Gadamer (1976) argues that Hegel's contemporary relevance lies in linking his thought to language.[5]

For Gadamer, it is precisely through language that we can experience a relative freedom and transcendence, and this relation is crucial in his productive engagement with Hegel. When addressing the issue of freedom, Gadamer remarks that "we are moved in the space of freedom," adding that "[t]his space is not the free space of an abstract joy in construction, but a space filled with reality by prior familiarity" (Gadamer 2007, 335). For what is at stake here, Gadamer adds, "Hegel had the beautiful expression, 'making oneself at home'" (Gadamer 2007, 335). That expression, for Gadamer, is something that has to be interpreted and applied to our current circumstances, at least if we want to attend to the Hegelian legacy:

Precisely therein does it make sense to see oneself an heir of Hegel —not by thinking his anticipation of the absolute as a knowledge that we entrust to philosophy; still less by expecting philosophy to serve the demands of the day and to legitimate any authority that pretends to know what the moment requires. It suffices to acknowledge with Hegel the dialectic of the universal and concrete as the summation of the whole of metaphysics until now, and along with this to realize that this has to be summed up ever anew. (Gadamer 2007, 335-336)

For Gadamer, this Hegelian dialectic of the universal and concrete, which has to be "summed up ever anew", now finds its place within language[6] and tradition, and he writes:

In full awareness of our finitude, we remain exposed to questions that go beyond us. They befall us—if not the individual in his quietest moments, then all of us, from the vantage point of that in the light of which we all know ourselves. And in this way

we all confirm Hegel's doctrine of the absolute spirit. With Hegel we know about the manifoldness of the encounter with ourselves that reaches beyond every historical conditionedness. (Gadamer 2007, 336-337)

The appreciation that Gadamer finds for Hegel's position here is quite striking, given the strong emphasis that the former places in his own thought on our historical embeddedness and human finitude and speaks to the tension between human limitation and strong notions of truth. In this respect, let us consider our previous discussion about the difference between a sign based on human convention (a form of historical conditionedness) and the symbol as a real connection between the sensible and suprasensible (which presumably is beyond historical conditioning in some way, even if our entry to this experience is through our prejudices). Seemingly the experience of a symbol may take us, if not completely out of our historical conditionedness, then as least provide us with a glimpse of truth which may help us know ourselves in a different way from prevailing customs and our own inadequate prejudices that do not live up to the subject matter of the symbolic experience. Gadamer points to how, despite social utilitarianism and the prevalence of science, the experience of art and religion are still relevant to human experience, as is thinking (Gadamer 2007, 337). In this respect, for Gadamer, whether we are considering language, tradition, or the symbol, all three promote a transcendence beyond our particular conditioned points of view, much in the same way that the Idea, for Hegel, moves past the limitations inherent in the external points of view of discursive thought. Gadamer also points to how that which comes forth in a work of art has an affinity to the Absolute:

If an artwork exercises its fascination, everything that has to do with one's own meaning and one's own opining seems to disappear.
    The same thing holds true when one is dealing with a poem. One does well here to recall again Hegel's concept of the Absolute. (Gadamer 2007, 214)

In this spirit, we would suggest that Hegel's Idea does not need to be seen in stark contrast with Gadamer's symbol. Rather, it can be conceived as involving a spectrum between relative indeterminacy and clarity, with each extreme providing its own type of insight that may complement the other.
    For Hegel the primary need is for philosophy to move past the external way of experiencing the world, which poses a subject over and against an object. In a similar way, for Gadamer, moving past the first external experience brings out a deeper recognition with something we are already acquainted with:

Recognition means knowing something as that with which we are already acquainted. The unique process by which man "makes himself at home in the world," to use a Hegelian phrase, is constituted by the fact that every act of recognition of something has already been liberated from our first contingent apprehension of it and is then raised into ideality. […] Recognition elicits the permanent from the transient. It is the proper function of the symbol and of the symbolic content of the language of art in general to accomplish this. (Gadamer 1986, 47)

For Gadamer, thus, this act of recognition is achieved via the symbol, whereas for Hegel, the being at home in the world, at stake here, is achieved through the universality of thought: "[…] thinking's own *immediacy (that which is a priori)* is inwardly reflected and hence inwardly mediated; it is *universality*, the overall being-at-home-with-itself of thinking" (Hegel 1991, 37). For Gadamer, something akin to this is achieved through the recognition of the permanent in the symbol, art, and language more generally. With Gadamer's conception of the "inner ear," we also find a movement beyond the contingent as an active aspect of aesthetic experience:

Every reproduction, every poetic recitation, every theatrical performance – however great the performers may be – only succeeds in communicating a genuine artistic experience of the work itself if with our inner ear we hear something quite different from what actually takes place in front of us. The constituent elements with which we construct the work are not provided by the reproduction, the presentation, or the theatrical performance as such, but by the work that has been raised to ideality in our inner ear. (Gadamer 1986, 44)

One of Hegel's primary reasons for devaluing art is that it is limited by is its sensuousness; here we find Gadamer drawing upon the symbol and the inner ear to move past the contingent (an aspect of which is presumably sensuousness). Gadamer goes on to remark that "[t]he ideal creation only arises insofar as we ourselves actively transcend all contingent aspects," and later adds that "[t]he process by which we liberate ourselves from such contingency defines the cooperative part we have to play as participants in the play of art" (Gadamer 1986, 44). In this respect, although we must still consider that for Gadamer this would not be a complete detachment (although it almost sounds that way in these passages), given how he also crucially allies his symbolic conception with presentation and the role of finitude more generally in his thought, a poetic experience through the inner ear could be seen as a form of relative freedom from the sensuous form of the work, which could perhaps be characterized as a type of potential immanent experience of the invisible whole that resonates forth through language. In this respect, rather than debating and agonizing over how much or how little we may surpass our contingency, we suggest that Hegel and Gadamer find common ground in their encouragement of transformation towards more relational perspectives.[7] Perhaps it is not of capital importance whether we utilize the conception of the inner ear, the symbol, the Concept or the Idea, or place these efforts under the auspices of aesthetics or philosophy; rather, we should realize that these conceptions all entail attempts to relate and encourage holistic experience that can potentially change us.
    Thus, we gain insight into the way in which the relational perspectives that pervade Gadamer's aesthetics have strong affinities to Hegel's conception of thinking as universality and being-at-home in the world. To give an example, Gadamer presents his conception of the festival as "the inclusive concept for regaining the idea of universal communication" (Gadamer 1986, 12) as well as "an experience of community [that] […] represents community in its most perfect form" – an experience, he goes on to

tell us, which "is meant for everyone" (39). Gadamer's notion of the festival should thus obviously be understood as involving an eminently encompassing and unified perspective. Similar observations can be made with regard to Gadamer's conception of play, which points to broader points of view beyond the self-conscious awareness of the players. And as we have discussed, the symbol is a type of recognition that supersedes fragmented perspectives. All three conceptions would seem to harbour affinities to Hegel's Idea in respect to promoting experiences of greater relationality. Gadamer interprets the goal of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* as follows:

In the *Phenomenology* the course and goal of the movement of thought is clear. The movement there is the experience of human consciousness as it presents itself to the thinking observer. It cannot maintain its first assumptions, e.g., that the sense certainty is the truth, and is driven from one shape to the next, from consciousness to the highest objective forms of spirit and ultimately to the forms of absolute spirit in which "you and I are the same soul." (gadamer 1976, 85)

We find strong commonalities between the conception of sharing "the same soul" and notions of participation in Gadamer's aesthetics. For example, let us consider the following passage from Gadamer:

[…] the distinctive mark of the language of art is that the individual art work gathers into itself and expresses the symbolic character that, hermeneutically regarded, belongs to all beings. […] The intimacy with which the work of art touches us is at the same time, in enigmatic fashion, a shattering and a demolition of the familiar. It is not only the "This art thou!" disclosed in a joyous and frightening shock; it also says to us; "Thou must alter thy life!" (Gadamer 2008, 104)

Here, again, we observe a similar movement of mutual recognition – an injunction to change one's life that speaks through the hermeneutical condition belonging "to all beings". Thus, we see that a battery of aesthetic conceptions within Gadamer's thought seem to cover many aspects of Hegel's speculative dialectic. In this respect, Gadamer points to the important role of aesthetics in a contemporary context as a way of bringing out what was previously covered by metaphysics, for example when he writes: "[…] I believe that the arts, taken as a whole, quietly govern the metaphysical heritage of our Western tradition" (Gadamer 2007, 195). Indeed, his own aesthetics seems to seriously take on this role. In this respect, Gadamer's aesthetics provides an alternative way to present aspects of Hegel's speculative dialectic in a more modest form via the symbol and otherwise, as does the lived experience of dialogue and poetic language.

3. Teleology and Truth

As we have seen, within Gadamer's aesthetics there is an affinity to the basic movements of Hegelian thought. However, one issue that would seem to separate Hegel from Gadamer is the former's adherence to teleology. For example, Hegel writes that "[i]t is the realization of purpose […] that forms the passage to the *Idea*" (Hegel 1991,

273). In contrast, Gadamer explicitly distances himself from teleology:

[…] we cannot simply follow the Greeks or the identity philosophy of German idealism: we are thinking out the consequences of language as a medium.

From this viewpoint the concept of belonging is no longer regarded as the teleological relation of the mind to the ontological structure of what exists, as this relation is conceived in metaphysics. Quite a different state of affairs follows from this fact that the hermeneutical experience is linguistic in nature, that there is dialogue between tradition and its interpreter. The fundamental thing here is that something occurs (etwas geschieht). (Gadamer 2004, 457)

Here Gadamer is highlighting that the experience of belonging is something beyond our conscious control, but this event is seemingly not an instantiation of Hegel's "cunning of reason," but rather the interplay between ourselves, language, and tradition. However, removing teleology, and, for example, bringing into question stronger versions of the Absolute, raises potential problems. For example, lacking the basis of the Idea, why should any given form of tradition or use of language be better than any other? Or why should we be attempting to work towards greater wholeness or raise up reality to heightened perspectives (as Gadamer at least implicitly seems to suggest)? Language and tradition seem to take over the role of the Hegelian Spirit in Gadamer's thought, but it is not entirely clear how he can keep strong notions of truth once he drops notions such as teleology and brings into question the Absolute (to some extent).[8] One answer to how Gadamer justifies truth would seem to lie with his conception of the symbol. That is, we have argued that his notion of the symbol points to a greater unity that is of the nature of reality, and although this isn't a vision of truth in utter clarity, it obviously is clear enough that it points to the value of greater holism. In this regard we would argue that there is actually a modest type of teleology, or at least a strong normative emphasis, at work in Gadamer's thought in respect to the desirability to recognize a relation to a greater whole, pointing to a perspective of progress more in the line of a modest wisdom than self-conscious clarity. This may help provide some modest criteria in respect to self-understanding, a perspective that can work well with Gadamer's understanding of the symbol as an opaque yet true experience of heightened relationality. In this respect, then, Gadamer's seemingly hard line on perspectives of progress could be attributed to a number of factors, including his concerns with Enlightenment perspectives and scientific progress and their tendency to denigrate paradigms of thought from the past and exalt their own perspectives and methods, to concerns over the strong conceptions of progress in the Hegel's thought, or even possibly more personal experiences such as the horrors of experiencing the effects of both World War I and II and how this might bring any sense of progress into question.

Moving past the dichotomies of progress versus stagnation and symbol versus Idea also may help serve a broader vision to move past the dichotomy of aesthetics versus philosophy, towards seeing them in mutually supportive roles. The archetype and constant reference-point

in this regard is doubtless Plato's attack on the poets in Books III and X of the *Republic*. As has become notorious, Plato wanted to exclude the poets from his ideal *polis* on the grounds that poetry was twice removed from the real world of ideas and, hence, that it was prone to give rise to dangerous deviations from the course set by the philosophers, the sole possessors of divine wisdom. Thus Plato can be seen as defining the terms of the dispute between artists and philosophers that has been going on ever since, albeit with variable vigour. We want to point to the need to surpass this dichotomy, seeking aid in Gadamer and Hegel. Thus, Gadamer makes an important comparison between art, as exemplified by poetry, and philosophy:

[…] both the poetical and philosophical types of speech share a common feature: they cannot be "false." For there is no external standard against which they can be measured and to which they might correspond. Yet they are far from arbitrary. They represent a unique kind of risk, for they can fail to live up to themselves. In both cases, this happens not because they fail to correspond to the facts, but because their word proves to be "empty." In the case of poetry, this occurs when, instead of sounding right, it merely sounds like other poetry or like the rhetoric of everyday life. In the case of philosophy, this occurs when philosophical language gets caught up in purely formal argumentation or degenerates into empty sophistry. (Gadamer 1986, 139)

Gadamer's critique of the condition of art and philosophy in the present makes it clear that he thinks these unique modes of human expression are, precisely, at risk of degenerating into rhetoric and sophistry. The scientific conception of truth, in its haphazard approach to real human interests, has become the rule of the day. A corollary of this development is that the peculiar truths of art and philosophy have become marginalized and are increasingly disregarded.

In this respect, and very importantly, Gadamer and Hegel agree upon one significant but controversial point: namely, that there really *is* truth in art and philosophy. This would seem to fly in the face of the positivist or empiricist conception of truth – the conception that, of course, is the epitome of the scientific consciousness. Surely, Hegel would have joined hands with Gadamer in the struggle against this one-sided conception. The differences between Hegel and Gadamer, as brought out in this paper, are only significant to a certain degree. The contrast between symbol and Idea reflects the *relation* of art and philosophy, stemming from Hegel's more ambitious notion of the ability of human beings to uncover the whole truth – not to the role that these disciplines, could, and we argue, should, play in the world. In an important sense, of course, Hegel can be seen as more optimistic than Gadamer, thinking that the progress of philosophy, understood as the furthering of the highest ends of humankind, is literally self-propelled and unstoppable. A consequence of this belief is the opinion that we have seen Gadamer criticising, that philosophical concepts can, potentially at least, fully explain everything in the world, including the most profound and mystical works of art. To a certain extent, this perspective can be seen at work in the self-confident progression of our technology. But to associate Hegel with this deliberately non-philosophical phenomenon would be a mistake – and, of course, Gada-

mer does nothing of the sort. Rather, both thinkers can be seen as adhering to a modest notion of progress towards wisdom, a process which will always be on-going, and one that may avoid the problems inherent within excessive beliefs in progress.

As we have alluded to above, although Gadamer is a philosopher who emphasizes finitude, the relation to the infinite also places a significant role in his thought. Risser (2002), although acknowledging that Gadamer's thought can be read as a form of Hegelianism,[9] points to a distance that informs the proximity of Gadamer with aspects of Hegel's thought, for example as indicated by how Gadamer wants to champion Hegel's 'bad infinity,' which Risser interprets in relation to the importance of Heidegger's idea of radical finitude for Gadamer's thought.[10] These are important aspects of Gadamer's thought and, given our human finitude, understanding will always be on the way. However, Gadamer also speaks positively of Hegel's 'good infinity' when discussing the rhythm and recitation of poetry, and remarks that "[t]he verse participates in the roundness of all creations and is like a circle, that good infinity about which Hegel speaks and which he opposes to the bad infinity of an unbounded movement and of the continual self-over-reaching-of oneself. This good infinity is the whole" (Gadamer 1992, 91). Gadamer's thought seems to revolve around the tension between infinity and finitude, and in this respect, when he later continues with his description of the whole, Gadamer writes:

We are ourselves encompassed by the whole, which we are and which is in us; but not encompassed in such a manner that the whole would be present for us as the whole. We encounter it rather as the totality and the vastness, wherein everything is, only through adhering to what has been allotted us, i.e., the *nómos*, whatever it may be. (Gadamer 1992, 91)

Thus, we have a connection to the whole, although the experience of the whole is not completely available to us at once, given our finitude. Gadamer's conception of the symbol would seem to embody this tension, and our point here is that the role of the infinite in Gadamer's thought brings him closer to Hegel.

On the other hand, perspectives of finitude are also relevant in relation to Hegel's thought, particularly in terms of its contemporary relevance, and we suggest that Gadamer's reading of Hegel's thought and how he incorporates Hegelian perspectives into his own thought via language is helpful in this regard. Thus Gadamer writes that Hegel's attempt to provide an all-encompassing philosophy "remains only an approach. Perhaps this attempt is limited in the same way that the interpretation of any poem is limited" (Gadamer 1986, 138). Gadamer's point here is an important one and can be elucidated as follows. Both philosophy and poetry are mediated by language, and as such, they are subject to the hermeneutic condition of finite human beings. Both philosophy and poetry require a receptive and understanding reader to give them life; without such a reader, they are but empty, physical signs. Of course, 'reading' can here be taken to apply to aesthetic experience in general; learning to read in this sense is the precondition of a genuine experience of art. As Gadamer writes: "We must realize that every work of

art only begins to speak when we have already learned to decipher and read it" (Gadamer 1986, 48). The same would surely apply to any work of philosophy: it only presents itself to us in the way that our condition allows. In the same way as art, philosophy needs an appreciative 'spiritual' reading for its physical signs – its 'sensuous appearance' – to come alive.[11] Whether we are considering 'reading' in respect to a text, art or in a more expansive sense as a metaphor for understanding and experience more generally, for both Hegel and Gadamer we need to move beyond strict physicality and propositional thought and representation towards more relational viewpoints, be this conceived as a type of philosophical thinking or linguistic experience. Hegel's Idea helps us envisage a type of philosophical thinking that seeks to surpass subject/object dualism in favour of a more unified type of thinking, one which emphasizes clarity; and Gadamer's symbol helps us along the same trajectory but emphasizes the relative obscurity of such an endeavour. Such an obscurity should not merely be seen as privative; rather, ambiguity itself may open up different paths to insight and truth. In fact, we could say that each approach potentially reveals truth, and, at least to some extent, covers different ground. In this respect, rather than prematurely closing on our possibility for clear philosophical thought or aesthetic insight through symbolic experience (or poetic thought and language), we would suggest that both approaches have value and may be complementary towards fostering thinking and 'reading' in more holistic and dynamic ways. But, in a society dominated by technology and end-oriented rationality, the capability for this sort of 'reading' is not highly valued. The ancient adversaries of art and philosophy, for so long competitors for the 'right to truth,' thus find themselves engaged in one and the same defensive battle – a battle that, indeed, would seem to be one of survival. Perhaps their only hope is to leave their disputes in the past and join forces in a magnificent union of the spirit, *sharing* their task: to *seek* the truth, and to point to the limitations and misconceptions of any dogmatism that claims to have appropriated the human condition once and for all.

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Notes

[1] For example, Hegel writes: "[…] the Concept is the universal which maintains itself in its particularizations, overreaches itself and its opposite, and so it is also the power and activity of cancelling again the estrangement in which it gets involved" (Hegel 1975, 13).

[2] Gadamer points out that "[t]he possibility of the instantaneous and total coincidence of the apparent with the infinite in a religious ceremony assumes that what fills the symbol with meaning is that the finite and infinite genuinely belong together. Thus the religious form of the symbol corresponds exactly to the original nature of 'symbolon,' the dividing of what is one and reuniting it again" (Gadamer 2004, 67). The symbol provides an opportunity for oneness to become present.

[3] Admittedly, this reading of Gadamer is not without tension. For example, Gadamer writes that "[l]anguage is more than the consciousness of the speaker; so also it is more than a subjective act. This is what may be described as an experience of the subject and has nothing to do with 'mythology' or 'mystification'" (Gadamer 2004, xxxiii). However, it should be noted that, in Gadamer's view, contemporary aesthetics developed a "quasi-religious function […], both in theory and practice" (Gadamer 1986, 15), and his own conception of the symbol could be seen as part of this heritage. Gadamer remarks that "we feel that the communal spirit that supports us all and transcends each of us individually represents the real power of the theater and brings us back to the ancient religious sources of the cultic festival" (Gadamer 1986, 63), which seems to be an example of the quasi-religious function that aesthetics takes on in his thought.

[4] Hegel, it should be noted, is wary of the vicissitudes of the 'non-philosophical' or 'non-speculative' usage of terms and concepts, as can be seen from the following remarks which we find in his discussion of the limits of mathematical thought: "As so often happens elsewhere, so here, too, we find that terminology is stood on its head: what is called 'rational' belongs to the *understanding*, while what is called 'irrational' is rather the beginning and a first trace of *rationality*" (Hegel 1991, 300). In this way, then, the process of moving past the dualistic and external representations of the understanding towards the Idea seems to be irrational from the perspective of the understanding.

[5] Gadamer raises the question whether, just as Hegel's *Phenomenology* points beyond itself to the *Logic*, "the logic of the self-unfolding concept necessarily point[s] beyond itself too, that is, […] to the 'natural logic' of language?" (Gadamer 1976, 99). He later writes that "the languageness of all thought continues to demand that thought, moving in the opposite direction, convert the concept back into the valid word. […] Dialectic must retrieve itself in hermeneutics" (Gadamer 1976, 99). That is, although Gadamer gives some credit to Hegel for recognizing the role of language, he sees Hegel as not going far enough, and, thus, Gadamer's own hermeneutics with its emphasis on language can be depicted as an ideal vehicle for making Hegel relevant in a contemporary context.

[6] Gadamer explains the freedom that language gives humans: "To rise above the environment has from the outset a human—i.e., a verbal—significance. Animals can leave their environment and move over the whole earth without severing their environmental dependence. For man, however, rising above the environment means *rising to 'world'* itself, to true environment. This does not mean that he leaves his habitat but that he has another posture toward it—a free, distanced orientation—that is always realized in language" (Gadamer 2004, 442). Just as for Hegel the mind gives humans freedom, so too does language for Gadamer, particularly poetic language, although this freedom will never be complete.

[7] Both Gadamer and Hegel point to the need to exert effort to bring more unified perspectives into one's experience. For Hegel, rather than following the Understanding, where an object is seen standing against a separated subject, with scientific cognition there is a need for abandoning oneself in thought, which "demands surrender to the life of the object, or, what amounts to the same thing, confronting and expressing its inner necessity" (Hegel 1977, 32). This leads to dissolution of our prior conceptions, opening the way towards more unified perspectives, which Hegel describes as the "strenuous effort of the Concept" (35; translation altered). In this respect, we should note that for Gadamer there needs to be an effort to cultivate a symbolic perspective, and this task, e.g. the "recognition of the symbolic […]," is one that "we must take upon ourselves" (Gadamer 1986, 47).

[8] For example, Pippin (2002) writes that "without Hegel's argument for the relevance of criteria of genuine *success* in such attempts (ultimately the so-called 'Absolute' viewpoint), we will end up with simply a narrative of what had been taken, as a matter of historical fact, to be failure, success, reformulation, and so forth (in so far as we, by our lights, could understand them now). And there is no reason in principle why such a narrative must be so radically distinct as a mode of knowledge; it seems compatible with a certain kind of cognitive, hermeneutically reflective, historical anthropology (which is what philosophical hermeneutics, without this normative animus, becomes)" (240). This is a good point, although we would suggest that whatever criteria for success Gadamer may provide is more easily found in his aesthetic viewpoints, which are more strongly related to the Absolute and truth more generally.

[9] Risser (2002) writes: "Despite Gadamer's desire to maintain a certain distance from Hegel, the shadow of Hegel looms large and remains problematic. Gadamer's insistence of the finite and dialogical character of thinking in opposition to a Hegelian dialectic of infinity can in fact be interpreted as a mark of distance that does not constitute a real difference at all. It can be argued that Gadamer's whole of tradition is but a variation on the Hegelian 'truth is the whole,' that dialogue remains wedded to determination not unlike Hegelian concrete universality, and that the movement of tradition is not unlike the movement of spirit that wants to make itself at home in the world" (86-87). Risser interprets Gadamer's understanding of infinite dialogue and his distance from Hegel by emphasizing how Heidegger's understanding of radical finitude influenced Gadamer's thought.

[10] Hegel famously draws a distinction between two types of infinity. At one point he elucidates this difference by way of a well-chosen example, where the 'true' or 'good infinity' can be likened to an irrational number captured by a fraction such as 1/7, whereas 'bad infinity' can be likened to writing the same number as a decimal fraction, which essentially comes down to an endless row of numbers which cannot be fully captured through signs: $0.1428571429\ldots$; see Hegel (1995, 261-262). Risser (2002) provides a nuanced reading of how Gadamer incorporates the bad infinity into his thought.

[11] It is worth noting that on our interpretation here, philosophy is itself subject to the limitation that Hegel ascribed to art: namely, that of relying for its expression on sensuous appearance. The point here is this: isn't philosophy, just as much as other kinds of writing, 'bound by the letter', as it were? From this perspective, indeed, the special status of philosophy in the scheme of things becomes suspect.

Critique of Reason in Gaston Bachelard's Philosophy of the Imagination

Sunjoo Lee

Abstract: A tension runs through the whole of Gaston Bachelard's philosophy: between science and poetry, and between reason and imagination. One facet of the tension is the critique of reason Bachelard's works on imagination engage in. This paper examines the critique in comparison with the ideas and arguments presented by Theodor Adorno, one of the foremost critics of reason in the 20th century. Bachelard's study of the imagination is not a romantic, unreflective flight from the rigor and objectivity of sciences into the realm of the subjective. Imagination to Bachelard is a distinctly human activity with which reason's limitations and excesses can be counterbalanced. All eight books by Bachelard on imagination, from *The Psychoanalysis of Fire* through *The Poetics of Reverie*, are considered together with Adorno's works such as *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and *Negative Dialectics*. The affinity between Frankfurt School and French history and philosophy of science has been underscored by Michel Foucault but remains a topic that hasn't attracted much attention from students of modern European intellectual history. Hoping to make a contribution on this topic, this paper explores the intersections between Adorno and Bachelard surrounding the question of reason.

Keywords: Gaston Bachelard, Theodor Adorno, Imagination, Rationality, 20th Century European Philosophy.

Introduction

At the opening of *Fragments of the Poetics of Fire*, the very last book he was still working on by the time of his death, Gaston Bachelard says something quite revealing about his study of the imagination. When he first started working on literary imagery, he believed that he would be able to study images as he did "scientific ideas," that, through a rational approach to the examples of literary imagery he could collect and classify, he would discover "the lines of a new science of poetic language" (Bachelard 1997, 3). He later realizes the "paradox in studying the imagination "objectively"," that there are fundamental differences between scientific ideas and literary images and he cannot study them in one and the same way. Scientific ideas cannot be separated from their past, for they are "invented only as correctives to the past" (Bachelard 1997, 7). They, in other words, have a long history, whereas poetic imagination "has no history at all. It admits of no past preparation." Subsequently, as he tells us, he resolved to "lead two lives" (Bachelard 1997, 9).

Bachelard is foremost known as a philosopher – rare among modern philosophers – who was at home in both of "the two cultures," to use the polemical phrase that came into prominence since C. P. Snow's celebrated Rede Lecture of that title in 1959. Bachelard himself wasn't particularly vocal either about the matter – the split of Western intellectual life into two cultures, one of the sciences and the other of the humanities – or how it might be resolved. As far as his own work life is concerned, he seems to have been a convinced separatist; his acknowledging, most notably in *Fragments of Poetics of Fire* as cited above, about the need to "lead two lives" – that he could work in peace only when matters of concepts and those of imagery remain divided into "independent halves" (Bachelard 1997, 8) – has been duly noted and sometimes been taken to confirm a "radical duality" (Kotowicz 2016, 11) of his thought. But the question of the relationship between the two domains in Bachelard's philosophy is far from being settled. Some commentators, in spite of what Bachelard himself says in *Fragments of Poetics of Fire* and elsewhere, argue that there is fundamental unity in Bachelard's thought; others believe that the clean-cut division between the two is really just that – a necessary and well-justified bi-partition between science and poetry. Still others present more nuanced views; Roch Smith, for instance, points to "a subtle "cross-fertilization"" (Smith 2016, 133) between Bachelard's philosophy of science and that of imagination. Mary McAllester Jones gives a brief survey of the differing views on the question and criticizes them as a whole by noting that they all "destroy peculiarly Bachelardian tension between science and poetry, reason and imagination." (Jones 1991, 91) Her own, more considered understanding of the Bachelardian polarity propounds that, while "Science and poetry are undeniably distinct" in Bachelard, a uniquely Bachelardian theme in philosophy – which she names "subversive humanism" – runs through both, often bringing them together (Jones 1991, 91). Under the aegis of subversive humanism, in Jones's account, both science and poetry in Bachelard create tensions between subject and object, letting us experience "the shifting and breaching of their familiar frontiers" (Jones 1991, 92). Bachelard's reinterpretation of subject-object relation leads to an abolition of "the frontiers of the internal and external worlds, making them reciprocal and interdependent" (Jones 1991, 13). Affirming the work of human creativity and the role of language in this regard in

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both science and poetry, Jones concludes, Bachelard's subversive humanism redefines the human.

The present essay examines one element of the tension Jones underscores between science and poetry, reason and imagination, in Bachelard; namely, the ways in which his philosophy of the imagination performs a critique of reason, a critique that makes his works on the imagination go beyond the confines of poetics and come into contact with epistemology. The imagination in Bachelard's works stands in opposition, largely implicitly but at times quite explicitly, to what he calls "the stolid brand of rationalism [*rationalisme immobile*]" (Bachelard 1997, 8; Bachelard 1988b, 33). For starters, against the stolid, "immobile" rationalism, a rationalism that "acquires a taste of school" and becomes "cheerful as a prison gate, welcoming like a tradition . . . a spiritual prison,"[1] Bachelard champions an *activism* of imagination. In Bachelard's universe, the ideal of purity, for instance, can be either defined by reason (rationalist) or experienced in imagination (activist). When it is rationalist, we depend on our practical experience and take care "not to mix the pure with the impure," for we know "In such a mixture the pure is invariably ruined" (Bachelard 2002a, 254). In contrast, when purity is *imagined*, when the ideal of purity becomes an "activity" and "embodies a triumphant *act of purification*," the antithesis between purity and impurity becomes a veritable *duel*, in which purity "*attacks* impurities." Rituals of aspersion reflect this power of imagined purity; David in Psalm 51 repents his sin and pleads for renewal in these words: "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow." As Bachelard comments on this verse, hyssop "was the smallest of the flowers [the Hebrews] knew" and was "used for sprinkling" (Bachelard 1983, 142). When water is imagined to have purifying power, only a few drops of water are enough to give purity to the soul of a sinner. Or, to put it a little more dramatically: "A single dewdrop purifies a cesspool" (Bachelard 2002a, 254). Imagined purity sets in motion "the *will to purify*," compared to which the ideal of rational purity becomes utterly "inert" and "defenseless against insult and injury."

Imagination is activist because imagination is not perception; whereas perception is "a familiar memory, an habitual way of viewing form and color," imagination "*deforms* what we perceive" (Bachelard 1988a, 1). Imagination being the human psyche's faculty of "*openness* and *novelty*," (Bachelard 1988a, 1) images "*precede* perception, initiating an adventure in perception" (Bachelard 2002a, 3). Given this dynamic *cogito* of the images, imagination diverges even more widely from conceptual thinking than from perception. As one of the often cited statements Bachelard makes in this respect has it, "concepts and images develop on two divergent planes of the spiritual life" (Bachelard 1971, 52). Concepts can have precisely outlined meanings but images "do not withdraw into their meaning" and "tend to go beyond their meaning" (Bachelard 2011, 2). Bachelard even goes so far as saying that a task of a poetics is to establish the reign of poetic language, where ordinary language is freed from "the obligations of ideational coherence" and from "servitude to meaning" (Bachelard 1997, 17). The divergence between concepts and images lets Bachelard ascribe an

ontology to images and become increasingly convinced of the autonomy of the imagination. It was his last "wild ambition" to work out "the principles of spontaneity itself" from the language of imagery (Bachelard 1997, 5).

Michel Foucault is the first commentator on Bachelard who recognized and underlined an affinity between French history of science and the Frankfurt school. Given that French historians of science all in their own way wrestled with the aspects of the question of *Aufklärung*, "If one had to look outside France for something corresponding to the work of Koyré, Bachelard, Cavaillès, and Canguillhem, it would be in the vicinity of the Frankfurt School, no doubt, that one would find it" (Foucault 1998, 469). At the heart of the endeavor of both groups are the questions surrounding reason. The history and fate of reason are crucial concerns to both; Bachelard wrote a book called *The Formation of the Scientific Mind*; Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer co-wrote *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Indeed what strikes the reader of Bachelard's works on poetics is the unmistakable, intriguing resonances between his thinking and that of Adorno's; it is almost as if Adorno gives a philosophical programme and Bachelard its implementation. In what follows, intersections between their thoughts will be pursued, such that they demonstrate how Bachelard's thinking on the imagination becomes also a critique of rationality, in much the same vein as that of Adorno's. Deeply idiosyncratic in their approach and style, and thoroughly against system-building in philosophy, both Bachelard and Adorno present their commentators with unusual difficulties. Any attempt at explicating their thoughts in a neatly organized, systematic manner is easily defied. An alternative is to rely on chronology. Starting from *The Psychoanalysis of Fire* and ending with *The Poetics of Reverie*, all eight works on the imagination published in Bachelard's lifetime are discussed. They have been divided into four pairs; the two works in each pair are more connected to each other than to other works not only by close publication dates but thematically as well. Reading these works chronologically has in fact one advantage for the topic at hand. One gets to have a clearer sense that reflecting on the nature, past and future of the human mind, of which reason and imagination are two key facets, was indeed an abiding concern for Bachelard, that it is present in his works on the imagination from the start till the end.

1. Discovering the Furthest Limits of Our Mind: *The Psychoanalysis of Fire* (1938) and *Lautréamont* (1939)

The Psychoanalysis of Fire is now widely considered a turning point in Bachelard's career, that which marks the beginning of his active interest in the question of imagination, but this slim book was originally meant as a work in epistemology, a companion volume to *The Formation of the Scientific Mind*, which was also published in 1938. This latter work is subtitled "A Contribution to a Psychoanalysis of Objective Knowledge," and deals mainly with a series of "epistemological obstacles" – this famed, Bachelardian notion designates a cluster of instincts, passions, or values that hinder the mind from achieving objective, scientific knowledge – the scientific mind has had

to overcome in its formation. Fire – an object of fascination from time immemorial – was to be psychoanalyzed as one of such obstacles in *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*. So at the very outset, in the first paragraph of the "Introduction" to the book, Bachelard says: "scientific objectivity is possible only if one has broken first with the immediate object, if one has refused to yield to the seduction of the initial choice, if one has checked and contradicted the thoughts which arise from one's first observation" (Bachelard 1964b, 1). And a few pages later, Bachelard states clearly what he intends with the book, that it will be "an illustration of the general theses put forward in [*The Formation of the Scientific Mind*]," that "as an example of that special psychoanalysis," the personal experiences of fire discussed in the book will be demonstrated to be "human errors," and that it will show clearly "how the fascination exerted by the object *distorts inductions*" and thereby improve the "pedagogy of scientific instruction" (Bachelard 1964b, 5).

And yet, only two out of seven chapters – chapters 4 and 5, "Sexualized Fire" and "The Chemistry of Fire: History of a False Problem," respectively – explicitly discuss fire as an epistemological obstacle and all the rest are an almost guileless encomium to the allure of fire that has held such power in the minds of poets and novelists, philosophers and scholars, and, of course, Bachelard himself. Even in chapters 4 and 5, where one reads Bachelard writing as an avowed epistemologist – that with the error of the animistic intuition of fire exposed, "we wish to denounce this false assurance which claims to connect fire and life" (Bachelard 1964b, 46) or that "through the naïve ideas that have been developed about it, fire affords examples of the *substantialistic obstacle* and of the *animistic obstacle* which both impede scientific thought" (Bachelard 1964b, 61-2), he writes, for instance – Bachelard never becomes fully denunciatory of the enthused confusions fire creates but sooner or later turns contemplative and appreciative of fire's power. So when Bachelard writes of alchemy and its grand error, of how it is "penetrated by an immense sexual reverie, by a reverie of wealth and rejuvenation," of how "this *sexual reverie*" of alchemists is "a *fireside reverie*," and then remarks, "Far from being a *description* of the objective phenomena, it is an attempt to *inscribe* human love at the heart of things" (Bachelard 1964b, 51), the reader rightly senses that Bachelard's sympathy is aligned more with the inscription of love than with the description of phenomena, that alchemists' passionate reveries cannot simply be dismissed as "human errors."

The Psychoanalysis of Fire redeems, and *not* condemns, "the primitive scale of values" (Bachelard 1964b, 4) even scientists return to when they are not practicing their specialty. And this ambivalence, this going against his original plan for the book is in evidence very early on and lasts throughout, which can be disconcerting and leave the reader with the impression that the book is "disorderly and incomplete."[2] It is in chapter 1, "Fire and Respect: The Prometheus Complex," that, far from hindering intellectual progress, our love and "respect" for fire is shown to be its great instigator. For children brave enough to transgress the social interdiction not to touch fire, fire teaches "*clever disobedience*" (Bachelard 1964b,

11). The social interdiction will quickly turn into an intellectual one as the children grow and the disobedience fire taught them will now become "a veritable *will to intellectuality*" (Bachelard 1964b, 12). Prometheus complex is the name Bachelard gives this, i.e. the "tendencies which impel us *to know* as much as our fathers, more than our fathers, as much as our teachers, more than our teachers."

This strange book may be best characterized as an attempt at a theory of intellectual experience. "Theory of Intellectual Experience" was a title Adorno originally had in mind for what later became the "Introduction" of *Negative Dialectics* (Adorno 2008, xi). Adorno here propounds a task for philosophy, one that embraces "things which ever since Plato used to be dismissed as transitory and insignificant," namely "nonconceptuality, individuality, and particularity" (Adorno 1973, 8). Philosophy has now to concern itself with "the qualities it downgrades as contingent, as a *quantité négligeable*." Bachelard himself doesn't call them by these names but these are the running themes in Bachelard's poetic works, starting from *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*. When Bachelard says, "I would rather fail to teach a good philosophy lesson than fail to light my morning fire" (Bachelard 1964b, 9), recalling the matinal ritual of kindling a fire in the hearth, of which his father was in charge when he was a child, he seems to make good-hearted fun at traditional philosophy, to which anything in the order of the pleasures of morning fire would belong to the category of contingent quality or "negligible quantity." But it is before fire that a child, by leaning "his elbows on his knees and [holding] his head in his hands," learns to assume "the attitude of the Thinker" (Bachelard 1964b, 17). Reveries before fire are reinstated with the philosophical dignity they deserve. Fire, with all the power it has to suggest change, becoming, forces of life and death, and renewal, leads to what Bachelard names the "Empedocles complex"; a "magnifying reverie" can turn any burning log into a Mount Etna, before which we are urged "forward to meet our destiny," giving us a proof that "the contemplation of fire brings us back to the very origins of philosophical thinking" (Bachelard 1964b, 18). Bachelard ends *The Psychoanalysis of Fire* fully convinced of the indispensability of the imagination for our intellectual life. We are the creation of our reverie because "it is reverie which delineates the furthest limits of our mind" and because "Imagination works at the summit of the mind like a flame" (Bachelard 1964b, 110).

The ambivalence that runs through it makes *The Psychoanalysis of Fire* less of a study proper of the imagination than a primal history of subjectivity, in which the genesis of intellectual experience is located in reverie/imagination. Given this, *Lautréamont* may be said to herald the true beginning of Bachelard's over two-decades-long exploration of the imagination. Bachelard's subject in the book is the unusual excess of speed and aggression in the poetry of Lautréamont, the pen name of Isidor Ducasse, whose *Les chants de Maldoror* was written and published in the late 1860s and was rediscovered and idolized by surrealists decades later. Bachelard puts the uniqueness of Lautréamont and *Les chants de Maldoror* succinctly when he compares them with Nietzsche and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: "Compared with Lautréamont, how slow Nietzsche seems, how calm and com-

fortable with his eagle and serpent. One moves like a dancer, the other springs like a tiger" (Bachelard 1986, 3).

Bachelard sees the main thrust of Lautréamont's "poetry of provocation, of muscular impulse" (Bachelard 1986, 5) as "the will-to-live" turned "a will-to-attack" (Bachelard 1986, 3); this will-to-attack in turn is seen as "a need for action, a will to take advantage of all living forms in order to give their action a poetic character, their formal causality" (Bachelard 1986, 86). This subsumption of aggression – which can be truly brutal in *Les chants de Maldoror* – into poetic dynamism is not to take teeth out of Ducasse's poetry. In the last pages of *Lautréamont*, Bachelard proposes what he calls "non-Lautréamontism," not in the sense of "*opposing* Lautréamontism in any way" but in the sense of *opening* it in the most fruitful way, just as Euclidean geometry can mutate into non-Euclideanism (Bachelard 1986, 90). The actual physical movement of humans is but a poor imitation of that of animals, whose vehemence and rapidity Ducasse's poetry dazzlingly captures. The task for the proposed non-Lautréamontism is to reintegrate "the human into the passionate life," the life "that will spill out of *Maldoror* in all directions," so that we learn "the truly human joy of action" in "the *dream of action.*" Bachelard concludes that non-Lautréamontism thus understood belongs to "the preliminary tasks for a pedagogy of the imagination."

Reflecting on the primitive cave paintings in connection with the question of the origin of art, Adorno questions whether their apparent naturalism is a naturalism of simple imitation. As art, what remains vague about them is due to "something of the indeterminate, of what is inadequate to the concept" in them (Adorno 1997, 326). Cave paintings, in Adorno's view, aspire to what Paul Valéry demanded of art, namely "the painstaking imitation of the indeterminate, of what has not been nailed down." In this view, the "greatest fidelity to the portrayal of movement" that characterizes cave paintings suggests that the creative impulse behind these painting is not "naturalistic imitation but, rather, from the beginning a protest against reification" (Adorno 1997, 326-27). The same can be said of Ducasse's poetry of animal aggression and violence. *Les chants de Maldoror* and *Lautréamont* are both impassioned protests against reification. What Adorno sees in Edgar Allan Poe, Bachelard sees in Isidor Ducasse. Adorno and Bachelard find in Poe and Ducasse "*Ratio* itself [becoming] mimetic in the shudder of the new" (Adorno 1997, 20).

2. Recovering Moralities of Water and Air: *Water and Dreams* (1942) and *Air and Dreams* (1943)

In *Water and Dreams*, a deeply unconventional book, under the simple rubric of "water's morality," Bachelard undertakes a naturalist reconception of morality, in which the imagination plays a decisive role and the limitations of a rationalist approach to morality are critiqued.

Bachelard first reproaches scholars who readily consign the purity of water to the realm of rational hygiene. To them, washing is simply a matter of cleansing off the dirt and being restored to cleanliness. Erwin Rohde among them for instance, as cited by Bachelard, calmly

recommends using running water for washing off severe pollution, the more of running water the more severe the pollution (Bachelard 1983, 141). Bachelard notes this way of seeking the purifying value in water will hardly attract any attention: "The rational value – the fact that the current carries refuse away – is too easy to refute for anyone to hold it in the slightest esteem." As moral ideals, purity and purification are not experienced on the basis of reasoning. Rather, "All purity is, in fact, substantial. All purification must be thought of as the action of substance."

Imagination's activism regarding a special purifying power in water has already been noted. Now attention must be paid to what Bachelard makes of the difference between conceptual understanding and imagining. When it comes to purity, "washing" as a concept refers to a rationally determined practice and describes poorly what we experience internally. By contrast, an act of sprinkling – "aspersion" – retains and conveys purity *imagined*, "a purity both active and substantial." It is not washing but aspersion that "is dreamed of as the primary operation" and "produces the maximum psychological reality" (Bachelard 1983, 142). To Bachelard, the *value* imagination gives to a material experience of water is always sensed as a "drama of the purity and impurity of water" (Bachelard 1983, 137). Purity of water is a valorized reality and valorization is an act of imagination. Since water is "a pure matter *par excellence*" and our understanding of purity is always imbued with the "poetic solidity" of water's purity, it is not possible to *know* purity, even when it is not directly of water, without reenacting the "drama" of the purity and impurity of water (Bachelard 1983, 134).

What Bachelard here points to converges in effect with what Adorno calls the "mimetic element of knowledge" (Adorno 1973, 45). Conceptuality supplants the mimetic element; mimetic element is "what [the concept's] abstractionist mechanism eliminates" (Adorno 1973, 8). In reclaiming the mimetic element conceptuality has so far abandoned, Bachelard goes further than Adorno and links it directly with morality. Since purity of water is both active and substantial, "one drop of pure water suffices to purify an ocean; one drop of impure water suffices to defile a universe" (Bachelard 1983, 142). Either of these two is a "moral direction of the action chosen by material imagination." The action of the drop of water is "dreamed like a substantial becoming" and, because it is dreamed, this substantial becoming intimately concerns the dreamer as well; the becoming, "desired in the inner recesses of the substance," starts from "the condensed will" of the dreamer (Bachelard 1983, 143). In this respect, Bachelard asserts, water's substantial becoming reveals "the destiny of a person" (Bachelard 1983, 142).

In addition to purity, Bachelard's example of water's morality is clarity. Every morning before starting the day, cold water on our face "reawakens an energy for seeing"; "It makes sight active, makes a glance an action, a clear, distinct, easy action" (Bachelard 1983, 145). In this way, the freshness of cold water on our face translates into a freshness of the impression the visible world gives. Bachelard quotes from Théophile Gautier a passage about a painter, who paints "in a pavilion situated in the middle of a small body of water" and learns "to preserve the inte-

grality of his hues." Bachelard comments: "Near water, light takes on a new tonality; it seems that light has more clarity when it meets clear water." For moral lessons learned from water to be efficacious, water's substance must become our own substance; as Bachelard puts it, "We are moved to see a scene with limpid eyes when we have reserves of limpidity" (Bachelard 1983, 146). Water's morality builds up its reserves within us: those of purity and clarity; even of youth, for it is water's "fresh and youthful substance" that teaches us how to regain vitality, the power of youth. To anyone who knows water's morality, linking water with one's destiny is no vain exaggeration. Water really is "an essential destiny that endlessly changes the substance of the being" (Bachelard 1983, 6).

Early in *Water and Dreams*, Bachelard gives a definition of the imagination and, in a striking manner, links it with the Nietzschean *übermensch*: "The imagination is not, as its etymology suggests, the faculty for forming images of reality; it is the faculty for forming images which go beyond reality, which *sing* reality. It is a superhuman faculty. A man is a man to the extent that he is a superman" (Bachelard 1983, 16). His next book, *Air and Dreams*, which contains a chapter on Nietzsche, is devoted to what this brief outline of the imagination as a superhuman faculty means, as it can be experienced with aerial poets such as Percy Bysshe Shelley, Rainer Maria Rilke, Friedrich Nietzsche and in aerial phenomena such as "The Imaginary Fall," "The Blue Sky," "Clouds," or "The Aerial Tree," as they are named in the titles of the book's chapters. In Bachelard's reading, all these poets and phenomena give us their aerial lessons; they teach us that "without aerial discipline, without apprenticeship in lightness, the human psyche cannot evolve" (Bachelard 1988a, 261).

The chapter on Nietzsche ("Nietzsche and the Ascensional Psyche"), the only self-contained piece of work devoted to one thinker Bachelard wrote, shows what contribution sensitivity to the imagination of a thinker can make to a deepened understanding of his/her thoughts. Nietzsche's key doctrines – *übermensch*, will to power, eternal return – are presented as essentially a call for an "aerial discipline" – one may translate the call as: "*Become* light. *Become* the imaginary matter of air" – in ways that add unexpected precision and concretion to them. In *Air and Dreams*, Bachelard becomes more explicit about his Nietzsche-inspired "translat[ing] humanity back into nature" (Nietzsche 2002, 123) project. In the concluding paragraph of the book, he first exhorts us to live up to the double power of language, its "virtues of clarity and the powers of dream" (Bachelard 1988a, 266). Then he adds: "Really knowing the images of words, the images that exist beneath our thoughts and upon which our thoughts live, would advance our thinking in a natural manner." Especially in *Air and Dreams*, but not limited to it, the word "natural" is often meant more in the sense of "naturalist," i.e. to become closer to nature in a programmatic, self-conscious way. Bachelard in these words really is proposing that a naturalist reconfiguration of philosophy, in which the imagination is allowed its indispensible role, is one way for philosophy to renew itself.

Adorno concludes the course of lectures titled "The Problems of Moral Philosophy" he gave in 1963 by sounding a note of doubt about the possibility of moral philosophy proper in our time. In this, almost exclusively Kant-dominated course, Adorno gives significant class time to a discussion of Nietzsche and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in the very last session; in his view, as moral philosophy, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is a failure and provides a case in point for its near bankruptcy (Adorno 2001, 171-76). Adorno's dry, unsympathetic and unimaginative reading of this important work presents an interesting contrast with Bachelard's inspired reading of Nietzsche in *Air and Dreams*; this contrast itself suggests what may crucially be at issue in reconfiguring moral philosophy and philosophy more broadly, namely whether rationality – "the rational, the concept, the argued, the logical, the abstract," as Michèle Le Doeuff enumerates in her polemic against philosophy's self-understanding as solely and entirely a rational enterprise (Le Doeuff 2002, 1) – as currently practiced is really adequate to the tasks philosophy sets itself. This is not a topic to be addressed here but Adorno's dialectical rigor, which is exemplary in its unfailing sensitivity to the matter at hand, lapses – one may even say, fails – with regard to Nietzsche. This is indicative of both Nietzsche's innovation in philosophy and the limitation of dialectics faced with such innovation. At any rate, on this one point, Adorno's critique of reason will have to be directed to him as well.

3. A Copernican Revolution of the Imagination: *Earth and the Reveries of Will* (1943) and *Earth and the Reveries of Repose* (1948)

According to *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, "Bourgeois society is ruled by equivalence. It makes dissimilar things comparable by reducing them to abstract quantities" (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002, 4). The principle of equivalence governs enlightenment thinking; "Everything has value only in so far as it can be exchanged, not in so far as it is something in itself" (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002, 128). Every event is explained as repetition; enlightenment's "arid wisdom" sees "nothing new under the sun" (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002, 8). To any possible experience, boundaries are drawn; boundaries that dictate "Whatever might be different is made the same." When thinking is finding and establishing equivalence, truth in general is equated with classifying thoughts and "the knowledge which really apprehends the object" is tabooed along with mimetic magic (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002, 10). Under such "universal mediation," qualities are liquidated and human beings are forced into conformity (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002, 9).

Dialectic of Enlightenment does give the impression that the reigning social machinery modeled on the enlightenment reason and its corrosive power is omnipresent and omnipotent; nobody escapes, no exit from the machinery. Many passages in *Earth and Reveries of Will* seem to have been written as if in response to precisely this aspect of Adorno and Horkheimer's work. Bachelard defines human character itself in terms of its refusal to conform: "human character could be defined as the indi-

vidual's system of defense against society, as a process of opposition to society" (Bachelard 2002a, 21). Human beings are capable of resisting because they have reserves of psychic energy immune to social control. At "the borders of social reality," he says, "it behooves us to consider truly primordial material realities, the way they are found in nature, as so many invitations to exercise our strengths" (Bachelard 2002a, 23). These realities lead us to the "unconscious recesses of human energy, as yet untouched by the repressions dictated by prudent reason."

To Bachelard, when imagining, an individual is "a dreamer who flees from society, who claims the world as his sole companion" (Bachelard 1983, 133). The critique of reason contained in his theory of imagination also becomes an implicit critique of the social. He makes a distinction between the social and the natural in the unconscious: "the *social* unconscious, motivated by greed, does not contaminate the natural unconscious" (Bachelard 2002a, 228). The natural unconscious, greed-free, does not "desire diamond arithmetically, by the carat" (Bachelard 2002a, 229). Not only do we not desire diamond by the carat, "in our deepest dreams valuables are never sold"; rarely, in our dreams, precious stones may be "*given* away, but never *sold*." In other words: imagination has no place for the principle of equivalence. As Bachelard puts it, "It would appear that profound dreaming – dreaming that has left the social for the cosmic realm – has no understanding of exchange." Numerous passages in the chapters of *Earth and Reveries of Will*, especially in the one on "Crystals and Crystalline Reverie," attest to "the knowledge which really apprehends the object" (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002, 10).

As *Dialectic of Enlightenment* presents it, the self-destruction of Western reason is inseparable from that reason's domination over nature, nature external and internal. The authors give this central thesis a series of eloquent variations. For one: "world domination over nature turns against the thinking subject itself: nothing is left of it except that ever-unchanging "I think," which must accompany all my conceptions" (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002, 20). For another: "It is the identity of mind and its correlative, the unity of nature, which subdues the abundance of qualities. Nature, stripped of qualities, becomes the chaotic stuff of mere classification, and the all-powerful self becomes a mere having, an abstract identity" (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002, 6). The calamitous dialectic of the destruction of qualities and the incapacitation of the subject stands condemned throughout *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Sharing in, albeit tacitly for the most part, the authors' judgment in the book, Bachelard's works on the imagination show how things still could be otherwise.

The last in line before *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard's most well-known work on the topic of the imagination, *Earth and Reveries of Repose* presents his most philosophically deepened understanding of the imagination so far. A subversion of the stable subject-object relation has always been a crucial part in his thoughts about the imagination but it was often more hinted at than clearly stated; in *Earth and Reveries of Repose*, this element is accentuated and given a radicalized turn. At the very outset of the book, Bachelard gives a definition of

the imagination, which clearly codifies the subversion of the subject and object in the act of imagining: "the imagination is nothing other than the subject transported into things" (Bachelard 2011, 2). The book has for its subtitle "An Essay on Images of Interiority"; Bachelard's definition is given in light of the human tendencies of "interiority," or introversion, in the imagination. Given this "all-consuming *desire* to go deep into matter," "it is by means of images that the most accurate diagnosis of the temperaments can be made." In other words, the nature of our subjectivity is best measured *not* in itself but in the images we create and love.

Accounts this brief will hardly do justice to Bachelard's often difficult but deeply original and subtle ideas. Elucidating and expanding the definition of the imagination given here deserves a long commentary of its own but will have to be left for another occasion. Suffice it to say that salvaging of qualities and recuperation of the subject are the philosophical tasks Bachelard explicitly set himself in *Earth and Reveries of Repose*. Here again it is as if Bachelard is writing in reply to Adorno. Quality is most of all captured in an intensification of the subject's relating with the object. Bachelard's term for this intensification is "the *tonalized subject*." (Bachelard 2011, 63). When the subject is tonalized, it can "break through crude sensation (colors or scents) and extol nuances" (Bachelard 2011, 60). Qualities may be defined as these nuances apprehended and adhered to with passion. Since every nuance is a "*change*" in the imagination (Bachelard 1988a, 4), "qualities are not so much states for us but processes of becoming" (Bachelard 2011, 65). A world of qualities is a world in motion and change. As Bachelard puts it, "Qualifying adjectives . . . are closer to *verbs* than to *nouns*. *Red* is closer to *redden* than to *redness*." In the imagined motion and change, "the intensity of a quality is taken to be the tonalization of the whole subject"; thus the imagination of quality "merges together the subject and the object" (Bachelard 2011, 66).

In connection with these reflections on qualities, Bachelard in *Earth and Reveries of Repose* declares nothing less than a "Copernican revolution of the imagination" (Bachelard 2011, 59), with which he refers to the inversion in the subject-object relation the imagination achieves. The merging together of the subject and the object is also an inversion since, in the merging, quality is not to "be sought in the object's *totality*" but to "be sought in the *total adherence* of a subject who is deeply committed to what he or she is imagining." To put this in Adornian terms, the revolution is one that achieves a "reversal of subjectivity from the domination to the liberation of nature" (Hullot-Kentor 2006, 40). Recovering the memory of nature is in the order of reason's *telos*, a possibility not yet fully realized, in Adorno's thoughts; Bachelard's works, full of "enchanting materialism that can leave imperishable memories in a soul" (Bachelard 2011, 37), show us that such recovery, such memory, has always been with us – if only we heeded the lessons from the imagination.

4. For Our Consciousness Is Destined for Greater Exploits: *The Poetics of Space* (1958) and *The Poetics of Reverie* (1960)

It is not at first obvious but Bachelard is polemic through and through. *The Poetics of Space*, the best-known, most widely read and appreciated book among all of Bachelard's works, is often taken as light-hearted (breezy and pleasant) and, somehow in correlation with this light-heartedness, as a work of an intellectual lightweight (intriguing but inconsequential); yet staged on almost every page of the book is a quarrel with establishment ideas, a quarrel considered, pointed, and consequential. Psychoanalysis, phenomenology (of the mainstream version), and positivism are among the most recurrent of his targets. Opening the book, one may in fact sense right away his rebellion against received ways of doing philosophy from the titles of chapters, "Nests," "Shells," "Corners," "Miniature," "Drawers, Chests, Wardrobes" and so on, in the last of which Bachelard engages in an impressive critique of Bergsonian conceptual philosophy.

In a nutshell, his quarrel in the book is with reification: methodologies, styles of thinking, or ideas that have become dogmatic and routine, ossified and stifling. In the chapter "Corners," Bachelard takes issue with an ideal commonly held, especially among philosophers of certain bent: clarity of language. He poses a question – may one not attribute "grace to curves and . . . *inflexibility* to straight lines?" – then tells us that Bergson once did and that such usage of language does "not exceed *meaning*" (Bachelard 1964a, 146). He presents a little more unusual combinations of a qualifier and a noun – a warm curve, a cold angle – and says, "it is a poetic fact that a dreamer can write of a curve that it is *warm.*" This poetic fact may be defended on the ground that similar examples – simple cases of defamiliarization – abound in literature. But Bachelard does not think it is simply a question of poetic license; a warm curve has a direct psychological reality. As an "inhabited geometry," and a "minimum of refuge," it often is at the center of our reveries of repose, reveries of a beloved "corner." Bachelard admits such reveries aren't really all that common, so he adds: "But only the dreamer who curls up in contemplation of loops, understands these simple joys of delineated repose" (Bachelard 1964a, 147).

It's not an admission of him going too far, though. He gives another example of "a single word" having "the germ of a dream" from Joseph Joubert, that eminently sensible French moralist, who, curiously, felt certain words/ideas as "huts." Joubert knew "the intimate repose" some words somehow let us experience, as if we are inside a cozy, comforting hut. In fact, the hut itself is such a word; as Bachelard writes in another chapter in the book, the hut belongs to "the legendary images of primitive houses" (Bachelard 1964a, 31); its essence being "the essence of the verb "to inhabit"," the hut "becomes centralized solitude" (Bachelard 1964a, 32). As an image, the hut blends "memory and legend" and is "both a history and a prehistory" (Bachelard 1964a, 33). With this example from Joubert, Bachelard likens words to houses – "little houses, each with its cellar and garret" (Bachelard 1964a, 147) – and imagines what element in the meaning

of a word lives in what part of the house. So "Common sense lives on the ground floor, always ready to engage in "foreign commerce," on the same level as the others, as the passers-by, who are never dreamers." To paraphrase: on the ground floor lives the most social, i.e. the most widely agreed upon element of the meaning, at the ready to conduct trade with others. Leaving the ground floor, upstairs is the direction for the more aerial, or immaterial, sense of the word and downstairs for the more terrestrial: "To go upstairs in the word house, is to withdraw, step by step; while to go down to the cellar is to dream, it is losing oneself in the distant corridors of an obscure etymology, looking for treasures that cannot be found in words." It is the poet that lives freely in all the floors of the word house: "To mount and descend in the words themselves – this is a poet's life. To mount too high or descend too low, is allowed in the case of poets, who bring earth and sky together." The philosopher by contrast has little leeway in the house. As Bachelard sardonically puts it in a question: "Must the philosopher alone be condemned by his peers to live on the ground floor?"

Bachelard's attempt at undoing the ideal of clarity in language is a polemic against what Adorno called "our positivistic *zeitgeist*" (Adorno 1973, 40). Clarity and communicability of language as desiderata for thinkers: Bachelard takes this to be, again in Adorno's words, "an agent of social control, and so of stupefaction" (Adorno 1973, 51). Whereas Bachelard's polemic in the chapter "Corner" of *The Poetics of Space* is almost too poetic to be manifest, Adorno's is forthright, resolute, and carried out repeatedly in his major works. In *Negative Dialectics*, he says: it is an "all but universal compulsion to confuse the communication of knowledge with knowledge itself," but under present conditions "each communicative step is falsifying truth and selling it out" (Adorno 1973, 41). In the "Notes and Sketches" of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the authors have a section titled "Isolation by Communication," in which they point out, among other things, that "the mendacious idiom of the radio announcer fix[es] itself in the brain as an image of language itself, preventing people from speaking to one another" (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002, 183). The ending of the section is resounding: "Communication makes people conform by isolating them" (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002, 184). In "Enlightenment as Mass Deception," the chapter on the culture industry in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the authors note that the demand for communicability of language is a corollary of culture becoming advertising. They write: "the more completely language coincides with communication, the more words change from substantial carriers of meaning to signs devoid of qualities" (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002, 133). Adorno puts his objection to communicability as an ideal perhaps most strongly in *Minima Moralia*. In section 64, titled "Morality and Style," he presents what communication in actuality consists of: "Only what they do not need first to understand, they consider understandable; only the word coined by commerce, and really alienated, touches them as familiar" (Adorno 1974, 101). Then he gives his verdict: since "Few things contribute so much to the demoralization of intellectuals," those wanting to avert the demoralization "must recognize

the advocates of communicability as traitors to what they communicate."

The noted antithesis between society and world in Bachelard is paired with another antithesis, between reason and imagination; reason corresponds to society and imagination to world. Pitting world/imagination against society/reason is an important motif in *The Poetics of Reverie*. In the chapter, "Reveries toward Childhood," he puts this pair of antitheses as follows: "From the time a child reaches the "age of reason," from the time he loses his absolute right to imagine the world, his mother, like all educators, makes it her duty to teach him to be *objective* – objective in the simple way adults believe themselves to be "objective." He is stuffed with sociability" (Bachelard 1971, 107). Education is to socialize the child into conformity. To be rational is to "follow closely in the path of the lives of others." *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, in connection with civilization's proscription of mimesis, makes the same point. The means with which those in power keep the "masses from relapsing into mimetic behavior" include "the education which "cures" children of childishness" (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002, 148).

The meditations/reveries on words and their magic-like, evocative power that fill the pages of *The Poetics of Reverie* are, to borrow the terms from *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, an attempt to *de*-rationalize and *re*-mythologize language.[3] In the last work on the imagination published in his lifetime, Bachelard in effect performs a restitution of the poetic knowledge of the world over and against the rational knowledge of the object. In *Air and Dreams*, he writes: "As is only right, the poetic knowledge of the world precedes rational knowledge of objects. The world is beautiful before being true. The world is admired before being verified" (Bachelard 1988a, 166). This is a rare statement in which Bachelard explicitly speaks of a possible filiation between poetics and science. That he gives priority to the poetic over the rational is noteworthy. Bachelard did not believe in drawing and maintaining strict boundaries, either in poetics or in epistemology, either self-imposed or from without. He compares chemistry with poetry in this regard: "Some man-made chemical bodies are no more real than the *Aeneid* or the *Divine Comedy*. In some ways, it does not seem to us more useful to speak of the boundary of Chemistry than of the boundary of Poetry" (Bachelard 1970, 83). Echoing what he said in the last pages of *The Psychoanalysis of Fire* – that "it is the reverie which delineates the furthest limits of our mind" – Bachelard writes, toward the end of *The Poetics of Reverie*, that dreams before fire "reveals to us the furthest countries of our secret soul" (Bachelard 1988a, 192). In *The Poetics of Reverie*, he takes it as his duty to follow to the utmost limits all "the singular reveries," "those lines of aberration which are familiar to us" (Bachelard 1988a, 17) because "consciousness is destined for greater exploits" (Bachelard 1988a, 2).

Conclusion

What Bernard Williams says of Nietzsche applies to Bachelard – and to a lesser extent, Adorno as well. With

these thinkers, "the resistance to the continuation of philosophy by ordinary means is built into the text" (Williams 2006, 300). Gilles Deleuze, in an interview, speaking of the need for a new language for philosophy, notes: "the problem of formal renewal can be posed only when the content is new" (Deleuze 2004, 140). He goes on to say: "We get the feeling that we can't go on writing philosophy books in the old style much longer . . . So, I think everyone is on the look-out for something new" (Deleuze 2004, 141). His example of an innovator in content and style in philosophy is Nietzsche. Alongside Nietzsche, Adorno and Bachelard will also have to be considered as important innovators, in what they had to say and how they said it. In *Earth and Reveries of Repose*, Bachelard speaks of philosophy lagging behind science; since philosophy has discredited the notion of the noumenon, philosophers "close their eyes to the amazing constitution of a *noumenal* chemistry which, in the twentieth century, represents a major systematics of the organization of matter" (Bachelard 2011, 8). What these philosophers believe to be their lucidity of the mind is often only the effect of "denying all the light," the light that, ironically, "comes from darker areas of our psyche." Their lucidity, in other words, is an outcome of keeping off "the interests that encourage the attainment of knowledge," and rendering themselves inert with regard to the experiences that will provoke such interests to them.

In a note for his lecture on negative dialectics, Adorno reverses the 11th thesis in Karl Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach* and writes: "Another reason why the world has not changed is that too little is interpreted" (Adorno 2008, 55; original emphasis). The example he gives of philosophy's not having done its part in interpretation is "the uncritical acceptance of the domination of nature in Marx." Among so many other things, Bachelard is also a *hermeneut*: not just of texts, but of myriad of our experiences, most of which hitherto have been kept in the dark; experiences where mind and matter, human and nature, permeate into each other and closely intermingle. Reflecting on alchemists' active "*participation*" in the substantial forces of matter, which invariably led them to *revere* the substantial becoming they desired and could induce in their laboratories, Bachelard writes: "Admiration – or wonderment – is the first and ardent form of knowledge, it is knowledge that extols its object, that valorizes it" (Bachelard 2011, 35-6). One senses here an ironic nod at Platonism. Adorno, for his part, striving to salvage "art's rationality," seeks recourse to "Plato's doctrine of enthusiasm as the precondition of philosophy and emphatic knowledge" (Adorno 1997, 330). Their recasting of Platonism has to be noted, though no space is left for discussing it. In their critiques of reason the "relation of the subject to objectivity" is reconstituted in such a way that it "joins eros and knowledge" (Adorno 1997, 331).

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Notes

[1] Gaston Bachelard, "Surrationalism," in *Gaston Bachelard: A Philosophy of the Surreal*, p. 77. Bachelard's essay "Le Surrationalisme" was first published in *Inquisitions* in 1936, then reprinted in *L'Engagement rationaliste* (1972). Kotowicz translated and included it in the Appendix of his book.

[2] These are Bachelard's own evaluation of the book, as cited by C. G. Christofides in his "Bachelard's Aesthetics," p. 267. Bachelard gives it in an interview in 1957, where he notes that, in *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*, he took some scientific results from *The Formation of the Scientific Mind* and joined them with literary documents. He did this because the four elements, the fascination with which had to be psychoanalyzed and eliminated in *The Formation of the Scientific Mind*, for it forms a powerful epistemological obstacle in the scientist's mind, nonetheless "corresponded to some sort of human necessity"; if science no longer had any place for them, then it had to be found somewhere in literature by way of the imagination, and this is why the book "is both disorderly and incomplete" (Christofides 1962, 267). In Bachelard's retrospective view, it is not his ambivalence – between science and imagination – but the way it was written that gave the book those qualities. A measure of ambivalence, if only retrospectively, is to be sensed, though, when he further comments: "[*The Psychoanalysis of Fire*] is a book I would like to rewrite. I have always thought that I would give this work the same extensive treatment that the other three elements received in my researches" (267-68).

[3] In their discussion on culture industry as "Enlightenment as Mass Deception," Adorno and Horkheimer point to the contribution customers themselves make, through their language, to "culture as advertising" (133). Their language is rationalized; language "before its rationalization . . . had set free not only longing but lies," and now "in its rationalized form it has become a straightjacket more for longing than for lies." Rationalizing language converges with "demythologizing" it, whereby it "change[s] from substantial carriers of meaning to signs devoid of qualities."

Reviews

Giovanni Magrì, *Popolo, nazione ed esclusi. Tra mito e concetto* (Roma: Castelvecchi, 2020).

In una fase storica contrassegnata da sovranismo, populismo, nazionalismo, pervicace razzismo, e da una retorica che annacqua e confonde queste categorie, *Popolo, nazione ed esclusi* di Giovanni Magrì esce in maniera tempestiva e benefica, terza pubblicazione della collana "Filosofia e pensiero critico", diretta da Antonio Cecere e Giorgio Fazio per l'editore Castelvecchi. Tanto più perché questo libro, pur presentandosi come un *pamphlet*, offre una ricostruzione storica in cui l'erudizione non fa alcun danno alla chiarezza, permettendo al lettore di penetrare i concetti nella loro problematica complessità senza sforzo. L'impresa è quella di sottrarsi all'inflazione delle parole, risalendo la genealogia che le informa e così abilitando a un uso consapevole e serio.

Il percorso storico di Magrì attraversa le costellazioni concettuali in cui si generano le parole "popolo" e "nazione", la cui forma contemporanea è forgiata in epoca moderna, ma la cui genealogia può esser fatta risalire fin all'antichità, quando le strutture giuridiche avevano come destinatario un popolo variegato e, diremmo oggi, multinazionale. Riandando a tale scenario, al riparo dalla retorica contemporanea e ben differente rispetto alla configurazione stato-nazionale moderna, è possibile attingere un significato di "popolo" costitutivamente teso all'unitarietà, all'insieme organico e articolato delle parti in gioco. Il gioco, allora, era ovviamente quello ereditato dalla *Res publica*, in cui il popolo era il soggetto di appartenenza a un medesimo quadro istituzionale, di co-implicazione non solo di interessi ma della stessa vita di ciascuno in seno a un complesso e delicato organismo. Già nel mondo romano antico, la ricostruzione di Magrì può mettere in luce un aspetto centrale del concetto di popolo, ossia il rapporto di reciproco rimando fra l'aggregazione che esso designa e il quadro istituzionale e giuridico che detta ordine a tale consorzio, rendendo tale soggetto di appartenenza al contempo l'oggetto della normazione.

Se nella sua definizione eidetica "popolo" designa una qualche genericità in cui possono interagire organicamente le differenze, la ricostruzione storica permette di osservare il ricorrere, ogni volta che si usa tale nozione, non solo di un *communio utilitatis*, che rappresenta il movente profondo dei soggetti aggregati, ma anche di un *consensus iuris*, come condizione perché tale aggregazione sussista. Non quindi una mera moltitudine di individui, e non necessariamente un insieme omogeneo, ma un'unione volta alla tutela della comune utilità all'interno di una precisa configurazione di poteri. Una definizione che si rivela sempre più importante in età moderna, nella scena di gestazione dello Stato moderno, in cui "popolo" diviene vero e proprio termine tecnico capace di risolvere un problema di legittimazione del potere assai cogente data la novità delle strutture istituzionali nascenti. Già la città-stato greca antica e la *civitas* romana rappresentano contesti in cui un certo significato di libertà e un certo senso di uguaglianza dei singoli sono avvertiti come impreteribili (per quanto dentro una prospettiva essenzialistica e gerarchica, sia della natura, sia dell'umano). Tale urgenza è conservata e rielaborata in funzione della prospettiva antropologica del tutto nuova che accompagna la gestazione dello Stato moderno, in cui dunque "popolo" concorre a giustificare l'esercizio del potere su e tra uomini pensati come ugualmente liberi, e la cui libertà può essere davvero realizzata solo grazie alla tutela istituzionale.

In questo senso, ci informa Magrì, si tratta di un'astrazione, di uno strumento giuridico: è solo dopo che il quadro istituzionale e giuridico si è formato e imposto, che esso trova nel popolo la propria legittimità, teoricamente sostenuta mediante varie formulazioni, fra le quali la più nota è forse quella di Hobbes, che fa ricorso allo scenario di estremo pericolo, di disordine e nocumento reciproco, di paura, per ritrarre una moltitudine che chiede di essere tutelata, che si fa soggetto della richiesta di divenire oggetto del potere sovrano. È il momento costitutivo a segnare la nascita assieme dello Stato moderno e del suo popolo, l'atto performativo con cui una moltitudine, dicendo "noi", si rende popolo; ma, potremmo aggiungere soffermandoci sulla funzione strategica delle nozioni così scompaginate, questo è anche il momento in cui, imponendosi la parte sul tutto (il noi sugli altri) e universalizzando il proprio dominio, essa si fa quadro istituzionale generale, legittimando la propria presenza attraverso l'ordine pacificato che destina al popolo, altrimenti moltitudine dispersa.

Parimenti antica nel suo senso generico, la parola "nazione" assume un significato politico molto più recentemente, durante il XIX secolo, e proprio nel chiasmo formato dalle due linee di giustificazione appena richiamate, sia per conservare e consolidare la forma statuale attraverso l'emersione di una forza coesiva che scorreva carsicamente sotto le istituzioni, sia per contestarne l'artefazione giuridica attraverso argomenti storico-politici atti a mettere in risalto la natura parziale di uno scenario istituzionale che si vuole universale. La parola "nazione" viene caricata di significato politico nel riemergere di domande teoriche e rivendicazioni particolari sopite nell'alveo dello Stato moderno. Che si tratti della domanda, sollevata già da Hobbes e poi evasa con la risposta della paura e della minaccia reciproca, relativamente agli elementi storici concreti che spingono davvero una moltitudine a unirsi, e a come sia definibile la tensione a muovere il primo passo verso la pattuizione del consorzio sociale; oppure che si tratti delle rivendicazioni di parti del popolo, gruppi, classi, etnie, subordinati a un ordine la cui

universalità non riconoscono e la cui presenza è sofferta come stigma di una sconfitta: la parola "nazione", scrive Magrì, più che un'astrazione strumentale e giuridica viene rispolverata come un'astrazione mitica e, così, funzionalizzata all'uso politico.

Il XIX secolo, in Europa, ha lavorato alla ricerca di un riferimento oggettivo del concetto di "popolo", alla creazione di una realtà concreta e storica capace di riempire un concetto ormai frusto, e a sua volta abbastanza ampia e vaga da potersi riempire di tutta una serie di dati storici ed elementi naturali concorrenti a generare una coesione e un sentimento che la dimensione prevalentemente giuridica di popolo non poteva più produrre. E che si tratti di una produzione mitografica significa che essa procede da una ricostruzione della storia condotta a posteriori, in cui il gioco narrativo si fonda sull'alternarsi di ricordo e oblio, sulla selezione di aspetti che, proprio mentre forniscono motivi di coesione, e proprio nella misura in cui tale coesione si fa forte e stringente, escludono in maniera irrevocabile. Ad arricchire il quadro di Magrì sul concetto mitografico della nazione, oltre alla dimensione sentimentale che cementa il fissismo identitario, si aggiunge l'urgenza di una mediazione che non solo garantisca sulla purezza e sulla veridicità di tale identità, ma sappia catalizzare la comunicazione, altrimenti impossibile, tra lo spirito della nazione e gli individui che ne fanno parte: personalità carismatiche, ceti sociali, *élite* culturali.

Il modello hobbesiano di Stato ha potuto imporsi grazie alla sua capacità di garantire efficienza e funzionalità nell'affrontare la modernizzazione sociale, culturale ed economica, assicurando pace sulle discordie interne e libertà soggettiva mediante la separazione della sfera pubblica e di quella privata. Solo dopo il tardo Settecento, lo Stato col suo correlato, il popolo, e la nazione si fondono in un connubio in cui è difficile non riconoscere come l'elemento nazionale funga da catalizzatore di coinvolgimento e partecipazione attiva. Vi è stato, quindi, un momento in cui il movente nazionale ha funto da catalizzatore per mobilitare, attraverso un appello preter-razionale, larghe fasce della popolazione altrimenti escluse: prima di perdersi in una crescente autostilizzazione, motivo di repulsione per tutto quanto fosse straniero, l'appartenenza alla "nazione" ha saputo creare un vincolo di solidarietà tra persone fino allora reciprocamente estranee, integrando socialmente gli individui grazie a forme giuridicamente mediate e legittimate di solidarietà, non riducibili alla sola sottomissione allo Stato. Ed è su questo delicato equilibrio che si concentra Giovanni Magrì nel considerare gli aspetti inizialmente promettenti del mito nazionale, capace di coinvolgere l'umano anche nella sua dimensione non strettamente razionale, prima di scadere in una narrazione immediatamente volta all'esclusione violenta.

La fragilità razionale della narrazione mitica della nazione non può essere intesa se slegata dalla funzione storica che essa ha ricoperto, pena l'incomprensione di quanto sia ampia e varia la serie di motivi, razionali e irrazionali, che promuovono l'azione collettiva. In particolare, interrogando autori come Rousseau e Kant, si incontrano argomenti a sostegno di una promozione anche della dimensione non strettamente razionale del mito nazionale. Sostegno sorprendente ma che, se inteso correttamente, può risultare motivo di riflessione progressiva ancora oggi.

In effetti, in Rousseau e in Kant il fattore nazionale è posto al servizio di quella spinta coesiva e solidale indispensabile alla formula, altrimenti asettica, dello Stato moderno; come mette in luce correttamente Magrì, non si tratta perciò di sciovinismo, bensì di una ben riposta riflessione sulla cittadinanza, come punto di equilibrio ideale fra la libertà degli individui e solidarietà politica. Si tratta, in altre parole, di promuovere un autotrascendimento in favore di una dimensione collettiva cui la componente nazionale, culturale, linguistica, spirituale, può concretare una sostanza altrimenti impalpabile; e, così, si tratta di produrre la più ampia gamma di ragioni per promuovere una responsabilità reciproca fra i cittadini e con le istituzioni comuni, senza che tali ragioni siano subite come una zavorra nell'esercizio della libertà individuale. La mobilitazione della dimensione nazionale che si ritrova in Rousseau o in Kant è volta alla creazione di un orizzonte simbolico in cui riconoscere un'identità sovraindividuale, una confidenza, un senso di familiarità e di collettività, che permetta agli individui, almeno parzialmente, di non sentire la difficoltà quando c'è da mettere da parte il proprio interesse particolare in favore del bene collettivo. Un orizzonte che può essere considerato come una specie di principio costitutivo della vita politica, come innesco della serie logica e fenomenologica di "noi", "bene comune", "solidarietà"; ma, ci mette in guardia Magrì, si tratta di elementi assai fragili, anzi, volubili, che hanno finito, e minacciano costantemente di finire, per attivare un'eterogenesi dei fini affatto nociva.

Il confronto con la nozione di "nazione" permette di considerare quanto ampia sia la componente non logica, non razionale, non calcolabile, imprevedibile della coesione sociale a premessa del funzionamento delle procedure politiche. Tanto più in uno scenario storico in cui le coordinate geopolitiche e istituzionali sono assai differenti rispetto a quelle definite dopo la pace di Westfalia. Non solo il disfacimento della tradizionale struttura statuale prodotto dalla globalizzazione modifica il campo entro cui si muovono i popoli e le culture, ma anche il mutare di razionalità in senso neoliberale, con l'esclusione dal godimento di un certo benessere di larghe fasce della popolazione, sta già incentivando motivi di unità e lotta che declinano il nazionalismo seccamente in forme di razzismo, senza nemmeno passare per la formula intermedia del patriottismo. Questo testimonia la delicatezza e l'importanza di considerare con consapevolezza dinamiche che, se lasciate strisciare liberamente nella storia, producono catastrofi inimmaginabili. Certo, la coappartenenza a un "noi" permette azioni virtuose e imprese che l'individuo, per sé, non saprebbe accettare. Ma il segno di queste impresa non è necessariamente quello di un'apertura inclusiva e accogliente.

Viene dunque da pensare che, se è urgente una dimensione di riconoscimento simbolico reciproco, perché essa sia aperta alla corresponsabilità e all'accoglienza si dovrà lavorare alla permeabilità dei suoi confini, alla plasticità dei suoi movimenti, alla contaminazione dei suoi contenuti. Ciò che, più di tutto, preme sottolineare è la differenza tra, da un lato, un dato di fatto, storico, naturale o, in generale, concreto e collocato, considerato come punto di partenza in favore di un compito a venire, in favore cioè di una costruzione progressiva accogliente rispetto alle aggiunte che liberamente l'incontro con altri offre, e,

dall'altro lato, un dato di fatto che diviene esso stesso il compito storico da compiere, un'essenza da realizzare e alla quale attaccarsi con pervicacia escludente e violenta. A seguito della stimolante e preziosa lettura del libro di Giovanni Magrì, in gran parte dedicato alla ricostruzione della storia dei concetti di "popolo" e "nazione", l'impegno di cui l'autore pare volerci incaricare è un pensiero sul terzo elemento del titolo: l'esclusione. E forse, nell'attrito fra i due concetti di popolo e nazione, e il ripensamento contemporaneo della nozione di cittadinanza, è proprio un processo culturale quello che la politica dovrà avviare, perché il riconoscimento e l'unità non siano mai a discapito dell'accoglienza e dell'inclusività.

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