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# Astros del cielo profundo: recepción de la magia renacentista en la *Trilogía cósmica* de C. S. Lewis

Mario Ramos Vera

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**Abstract:** Magic performs a significant role in C. S. Lewis's *Space Trilogy*. This magical thought rests on a pre-copernican cosmology of the two spheres, on the division between theurgy and goetia and christian neoplatonism. These ideas invite us to establish an affinity link with Renaissance magic. However, it should be noted that Lewis explicitly warns of the danger that Renaissance magic means for the salvation of the soul.

**Keywords:** C. S. Lewis; Imaginative Thought; Mythopoeia; Renaissance Magic; Hermeticism; Matter of Britain; History of Ideas; Cosmology.

## Introducción

La magia no es un término unívoco ni neutral. Admite múltiples acepciones, desde la mistificación, el embuste y la fantasmagoría —en un sentido peyorativo— hasta una analogía con la realidad, un arte operativo, una subversión ontológica, sin olvidar una depauperación de la fenomenología religiosa o una suerte de racionalidad precientífica —en términos descriptivos, analíticos y/o polémicos—. Además, mantiene un vínculo de afinidad con los ámbitos de la imaginación y la literatura de fantasía —ya fuera épica, mítica, urbana u oscura<sup>1</sup>—, así como del horror gótico o incluso del terror cósmico. Por este motivo, el pensamiento mágico es un elemento frecuente en la literatura no mimética del profesor C. S. Lewis. Cabe apreciarlo, por ejemplo, en los universos mitopoeéticos de las *Crónicas de Narnia* o la *Trilogía cósmica* (también llamada de Ransom, por su protagonista). Tampoco sorprende que su fantasía, deudora de un trasfondo metafísico platónico y teológicamente cristiano, evoque dos acepciones de la magia. Una, la teúrgia o magia de los númenes, y otra, la goetia, o arte demoniaca. Acepciones de la magia que alcanzarían un desarrollo teórico destacado en el Renacimiento, por ejemplo en las figuras de Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499), Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494). En este artículo aspiro, en consecuencia, a escudriñar las posibles pervivencias y la recepción de la magia renacentista —tanto en un sentido positivo como en su carácter polémico— en el pensamiento imaginativo evidenciado en la *Trilogía cósmica* de C. S. Lewis y más especialmente en su tercer libro, *Esa horrible fortaleza*. A tal fin, voy a seguir el siguiente itinerario para estudiar de manera coherente y sistemática el objeto de esta investigación: en primer lugar (1), desarrollaré la metodología, que se inserta en un debate interdisciplinario —puesto que aborda la

imaginación, la mitopoiesis cristiana y el pensamiento mágico-esotérico renacentista—; (2) pretendo definir académicamente la magia y, concretamente, desbrozar la relevancia del momento neoplatónico y hermético en el Renacimiento; (3) introduciré la *Trilogía cósmica*, las obras que la conforman, su concepción cosmológica y cuál es el papel que la magia desarrolla en esta; (4) compararé el pensamiento mágico renacentista y la concepción de C. S. Lewis para responder a la pregunta de investigación formulada en este artículo; y (5) expondré las conclusiones.

## 1. Metodología y estado de la cuestión

Para identificar las tramas interpretativas preminentes en los ámbitos de los estudios sobre el pensamiento de C. S. Lewis y la magia, con el objetivo de vertebrar un estudio parsimonioso y consistente, he situado esta investigación en los enclaves académicos de la historia de la filosofía y ámbitos afines como el pensamiento cosmológico, la fenomenología de la religión y los estudios académicos sobre el hermetismo, el pensamiento imaginativo y la magia renacentista. No en vano, la magia resulta definitiva en un momento de la Historia de la Filosofía como es el Renacimiento y sirve de gozne o bisagra para impulsar la revolución científica. Por tanto, su carácter sustantivo en la historia del pensamiento es innegable —cabe aludir a la obra de la profesora Yates, por ejemplo<sup>2</sup>—. Resulta preciso un ejercicio de interdisciplinariedad pues, por ejemplo, la cosmología resulta central a la hora de abordar la *Trilogía cósmica*, pues con el rótulo del pensamiento cosmológico abarcamos los modelos conceptuales que han conformado la imagen del mundo a lo largo de la historia por medio de la astronomía, la física y las creencias religiosas<sup>3</sup>. Además, la cosmología renacentista resulta afectada directamente por las ideas emanadas de la magia operativa y de ideas herméticas<sup>4</sup>.

Atenderé a las fuentes primarias que considero ineludibles para esta investigación. Si bien C. S. Lewis esboza en *Esa horrible fortaleza* (1945) un pensamiento mágico inspirado en la teúrgia y la goetia —que recuerda a la dicotomía sublimada por la escuela neoplatónica florentina, especialmente por Marsilio Ficino y Giovanni Pico della Mirandola—, recurriré subsidiariamente también a los dos libros precedentes, *Más allá del planeta silencioso* (1938) y *Perelandra. Un viaje a Venus* (1943). La *Trilogía cósmica* reviste los ropajes de la fantasía y de la especulación científica, con un marcado carácter teológico, y debe parte de su reconocimiento tanto a su diseño narrativo como al

entramado intertextual y su sólida arquitectura teórica. Cosmológicamente, C. S. Lewis plantea un universo de ficción coherente en el que resulta válida la cosmología precopernicana, el universo de las dos esferas —la esfera infralunar y la esfera supralunar— Esta cosmología no sólo sustentaría la *Trilogía de Ransom*, sino que sería estudiada literaria y filosóficamente C. S. Lewis posteriormente en *The Discarded Image* (1962). A mayor abundamiento, a ese corpus teórico añadiré que *Esa horrible fortaleza* desarrolla literariamente *La abolición del hombre* (1943), ensayo sobre ética y antropología filosófica del profesor Lewis desde una perspectiva iusnaturalista y perennialista. Junto a los estudios de cosmología, ética y antropología filosófica, en lo relativo a la magia renacentista resultará esclarecedor otro libro del profesor Lewis. Se trata del libro *English Literature in the Sixteenth Drama, Excluding Drama* (1954).

Desde la perspectiva de las fuentes secundarias, con el objetivo de atender a las interpretaciones de este fenómeno en otros autores, el estado de la cuestión lo marcan dos capítulos del académico Tom Shippey —“New Learning and New Ignorance: Magia, Goeteia and the Inklings” (2007) y “The Ransom Trilogy” (2010)— así como la obra ensayística del erudito del esoterismo Gareth Knight, *The Magical World of the Inklings. J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, Charles Williams, Owen Barfield* (1990). Ambos autores han realizado hallazgos intelectuales significativos que me permitirán profundizar por medio del recurso al ámbito académico de la historia del pensamiento. No tanto porque exista un hueco interpretativo en sus trabajos, sino por la necesidad de contribuir a su teorización puesto que aspiro a aportar nueva profundidad al debate sobre la magia y las posibles reverberaciones renacentistas en la obra de C. S. Lewis al afirmar que esa síntesis de pensamiento mágico y hermético renacentistas, en su dualidad de magia natural y magia diabólica, sería un complemento en la oferta de sentido propuesta en el libro *Esa horrible fortaleza*.

## 2. Precisiones conceptuales sobre el pensamiento mágico y los discursos de la magia renacentista

Aunque denostada y condenada como una mistificación o un engaño de mentes ignoras, Yeats definiría la magia como aquello que moldea los “hilos de la vida (...) para crear los vestidos de creencias”<sup>5</sup>. Su variedad de significados, en ocasiones arduamente conciliables entre sí, abarcaría un conjunto de saberes no convencionales, poderes sobrenaturales o la capacidad de resignificar simbólicamente la realidad. Por ese motivo, antes de profundizar en la recepción del pensamiento mágico renacentista en la *Trilogía cósmica* de C. S. Lewis, considero pertinente elucidar (1) qué entendemos por magia, cuáles son sus rasgos, y, a continuación (2) el destacado lugar que ocuparía en el Renacimiento.

### 2.1. ¿Qué es la magia? Definición académica

Aquello que la magia designa, la *magia* del latín, la *magiké* del griego, los *magus* persas, es una etiqueta poco precisa<sup>6</sup>. Su evanescencia ha servido para designar las experiencias esotéricas de cultos místéricos, prácticas adivi-

natorias, demonolatría y goetia, la aplicación del poder de las estrellas, ritos mágicos, algunos númenes religiosos —teúrgia<sup>7</sup>—, hermetismo, magia natural, cabalismo, alquimia así como modernas prácticas de resignificación simbólica —magia del caos—, de descripción de realidades interiores y de reencantamiento del mundo —v.gr. el movimiento New Age y propuestas neopaganas—<sup>8</sup>. En consecuencia, la magia alude a tramas interpretativas, a saberes dispares y no convencionales, que presentan un aire de familia entre sí, repudiadas por la Modernidad y de las que se predicarían efectos operativos<sup>9</sup>. También propugnaría una vía alternativa a la religión para acceder a la voluntad divina, no a través de la oración sino de la conjuración<sup>10</sup>.

De manera puntual me referiré a la polémica entre pensamiento mágico y científico, que identifica a dos teorías del conocimiento antitéticas<sup>11</sup>. Intuitivamente, como herederos de una cosmovisión ilustrada en Occidente somos conscientes de que el pensamiento mágico supone un desafío cualitativo al constreñimiento cuantitativo del cientificismo, positivismo, mecanicismo y materialismo imperantes. Semejante provocación deriva de la estima que concede la magia al sentimiento, al subjetivismo y a la intuición como elementos prioritarios de su propia epistemología. A mayor abundamiento, la magia ahondaría en este desafío al hacer descansar en la intención y la intersubjetividad los núcleos operativos de sus prácticas esotéricas<sup>12</sup>. De ahí que, frente a un paradigma científico sustentado por una visión “correcta” de la realidad, la magia actuaría como un mapa cognitivo alternativo, que asume la coexistencia de múltiples esquemas interpretativos del ámbito de lo real, de multitud de cosmovisiones, susceptibles de ser interpeladas por medio de prácticas operativas<sup>13</sup>.

Con el afán de comprender qué es aquello que designamos con el rótulo académico de magia, resulta pertinente señalar que existen aproximaciones analíticas, cada una con un sesgo metodológico concreto. Tres son las perspectivas particulares que estudian teóricamente el fenómeno del pensamiento mágico. En primer lugar, el intelectualismo (1), representado por Tylor y Frazer. A su juicio, la magia equipara erradamente una analogía ideal con una conexión real al establecer una ciencia de correspondencias ocultas. A continuación, el funcionalismo (2), de Mauss y Durkheim, caracterizaría la magia por sustentarse en rituales ajenos a redes de sociabilidad convencionales. Finalmente, la perspectiva de la participación (3), de Lévy-Bruhl, haría de la magia un tipo de racionalidad prelógica<sup>14</sup>. Pero esta cuestión académica no agota ahí su alcance, pues junto a los nuevos paradigmas que estudian la magia en el ámbito del pensamiento esotérico occidental (ejemplificados por el profesor Hanegraaff), podemos aludir a sesgos historicistas, de los que darían cuenta cabal Frances Amelia Yates y otros estudiosos del Warburg Institute, así como al estudio sustantivo sobre las retóricas de la magia de Faivre<sup>15</sup>.

Esta pluralidad de enfoques en el pensamiento mágico se contrapondría desde el s. XIX, en el imaginario colectivo y la cultura popular, a la ciencia y la religión. De esta manera, la magia sería un receptáculo de prácticas, corrientes e ideas que, a juicio de Hanegraaff, persiguen múltiples propósitos: (1) el control sobre la realidad merced a fuerzas ocultas o cósmicas, a un orden de simpatías

y correspondencias; (2) un sendero de adquisición del conocimiento; (3) maximizar las habilidades, capacidades o facultades del practicante por medio de la práctica de estas artes para potenciar sus competencias y talentos; (4) sanar las enfermedades del cuerpo y de la mente; (5) lograr el progreso o desarrollo espiritual; (6) contactar con entidades preternaturales, descubrir lo que permanece oculto; (7) la posibilidad de lograr la unidad con la divinidad; y (8) el placer por medio de dinámicas de sociabilidad ajenas a normas sociales tradicionales<sup>16</sup>.

Finalmente, magia e imaginación irían de la mano —no sólo por su actual concepción peyorativa—. La segunda permitiría acceder a niveles de realidad más profundos que aquellos experimentados por los sentidos, actuaría en ese sentido como una mediación entre distintos planos ontológicos, como un puente entre microcosmos y macrocosmos<sup>17</sup>. La magia sería deudora del ámbito de saberes incardinados en el pensamiento imaginativo —esoterismo, hermetismo, gnosticismo, cabalismo...—, en una suerte de sincrética tradición de “conocimiento repudiado”, en palabras de Lachman<sup>18</sup>. Así, formaría parte de una vía alternativa a la ciencia para conocer un mundo extraño y captar realidades<sup>19</sup>.

## 2.2. “Leer en el libro de Dios”: magia, neoplatonismo cristiano en el Renacimiento

Inicio este epígrafe con unas palabras de Pico della Mirandola, que en sus conclusiones aspiraba a compatibilizar Cábala y cristianismo<sup>20</sup>, pues si existe un momento en el que reverbera la magia, sin duda ese periodo es el Renacimiento. En este sentido, con su obra *Giordano Bruno y la tradición hermética* (1964), Frances Amelia Yates apuntalaría un momento cenital de los estudios académicos del esoterismo occidental<sup>21</sup>.

La historia del resurgir neoplatónico-hermético y mágico resultaría “el encuentro singular entre las doctrinas mágico-astrológicas del medievo latino, en que el legado antiguo se había filtrado a través del mundo islámico, y las posiciones helenísticas, reencontradas en las fuentes griegas”<sup>22</sup>. Por una parte, el fallido Concilio de Florencia facilitaría la llegada de eruditos platónicos como Crisoloras o Gemisto Pletón y el acceso a las obras completas de Platón. Por otra parte, contribuiría a este *kairós* el hallazgo del *Corpus Hermeticum*<sup>23</sup>. Haría del Renacimiento “el gran momento del neoplatonismo”<sup>24</sup>, del hermetismo y de una magia deudora de las ideas ejemplificadas singularmente en el grimorio *Picatrix*<sup>25</sup>.

La figura central de este paradigma mágico sería Hermes Trismegisto, trasunto de la divinidad egipcia Toth, el supuesto autor de los textos que conforman el *Corpus Hermeticum*. Estos textos —deudores del platonismo medio, el neopitagorismo y del gnosticismo cristiano (s. II y III d.C.)<sup>26</sup>— vinculaban a Hermes con los patriarcas y profetas de la Biblia, con eruditos de Egipto y *magi* zoroástricos, en una suerte de Tradición unánime, de cadena áurea de verdades perennes y de *preparatio evangelica*<sup>27</sup>. En este sentido, el *Corpus Hermeticum* no alude tanto a la magia como a las leyes de la correspondencia: “Y así los Poderes que se hallan en todas las cosas cantan también dentro de mí”<sup>28</sup>. En consecuencia, junto a la recuperación de los *Himnos órficos*, la magia sería objeto de

los *Oráculos caldeos*, con su heliolatría zoroástrica<sup>29</sup>. La datación de Isaac Cassaubon en 1616 fecharía estos escritos herméticos como una obra de los primeros siglos del cristianismo, atestiguando “incrustaciones multiseculares”<sup>30</sup>.

Por tanto, nos encontraríamos con un pensamiento mágico cuyo fundamento metafísico se sitúa en la esencia oculta de las cosas, pues “existían conexiones entre las cosas que no siempre resultaban aparentes a los sentidos. De ahí la creencia de que lo semejante engendra —o afecta— a lo semejante, y en la existencia de simpatías y antipatías”<sup>31</sup>. De este modo, afirmaríamos una ley de correspondencias ocultas —el microcosmos dentro del macrocosmos—, de espíritus y astros que resultan accesibles para revelar los secretos de un universo “dinámico, animado y activo”<sup>32</sup>, elucidado a la luz de una inteligibilidad universal<sup>33</sup>. A juicio de Haarpur, los *magi* renacentistas

“se colocaban conscientemente en una tradición que procedía, según creían, de los caldeos, egipcios, órficos y pitagóricos; esencialmente la misma tradición que la cadena áurea de la alquimia que anticipaba a los románticos, desde Goethe, Schelling y Coleridge, por ejemplo, hasta W. B. Yeats, T. S. Eliot y C. G. Jung. Sean cuales sean las diferencias en sus expresiones de la tradición —esta ‘filosofía perenne’—, ciertos principios (si se permite recapitular brevemente) permanecen constantes: que el cosmos comprende un sistema de correspondencias, especialmente entre microcosmos y macrocosmos; que el cosmos está animado por un alma-mundo que vincula todos los fenómenos: que el alma humana no es sino una manifestación individual del alma-mundo; que la principal facultad del alma es la imaginación; y que, finalmente, la experiencia de la transmutación personal, de la gnosis, es esencial”<sup>34</sup>.

No es el propósito de estas líneas realizar un listado pormenorizado de los *magi* renacentistas, a saber, Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, Reuchlin, Agrippa, Paracelso, Steuco, Bruno o Campanella, por citar sólo algunos. Todos ellos “se movían entre sueños y magia, entre utopía e ilusiones de paces universales y perpetuas, entre reflexiones críticas capaces de cualquier sondeo interior, entre divagaciones místicas en medio de las almas de las estrellas”<sup>35</sup>. Centraré mi atención en Marsilio Ficino (1443-1499) y Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494), pues en sus especulaciones para aunar hermetismo, magia y cristianismo subyacían ideas que pueden contribuir a responder a la pregunta de investigación.

Ficino, el primer *magus* del Renacimiento tanto en el “sentido de filósofo y sabio como el de mago”<sup>36</sup> abogó por la magia astral y la *magia naturalis*, esto es, una teúrgica neoplatónica. Así lo expuso en la “Apología” de su *De vita* para constatar la plena concordancia de la magia natural con el cristianismo:

“Finalmente, hay dos clases de magia: la de quienes a través de determinados ritos convocan ante sí a los demonios, y confiando en la obra de éstos se dedican a elaborar portentos; esta magia fue del todo rechazada cuando fue expulsado el señor de este mundo. La otra clase es la de quienes someten de forma adecuada las materias naturales a causas naturales, de donde las extraen por medio de una ley admirable. También este último artificio es de una doble clase: una procede de la curiosidad y la otra, de la necesidad”<sup>37</sup>.

No obstante, incluso si el primer tipo está condenado por Dios, también en el ámbito de la magia blanca o natural —advierde Ficino— hay quienes se vanaglorian en trastocar la Creación sólo por curiosidad y ostentación antes que por buscar la sabiduría y son, por tanto, merecedores del reproche divino. Por ello, es preferible la que opera la voluntad del *magi* por necesidad, puesto que vincula la influencia astral con la sanación de cuerpo y alma<sup>38</sup>. Para ello, la imaginación del mago era el cauce de una magia que operaba a través de música, colores, talismanes, poesía y astros —sin que fuesen divinizados—<sup>39</sup> para escudriñar los secretos ocultos de la Creación<sup>40</sup>. A mayor abundamiento, como filósofo abogó por la tesis de la *Prisca Theologia*, la cadena de saberes que Hermes, Zoroastro y Orfeo iniciaron gracias al *Logos* divino y que se ha perpetuado como tradición originaria con independencia del momento y del lugar, conservando el mismo fondo sustantivo pese a los cambios formales.

Si Ficino establecía una cesura entre teúrgia y goetia, su discípulo Pico della Mirandola profundizó en esa distinción al cristianizar la Cábala, la doctrina mística y neoplatónica hebrea, que vinculó con la filosofía natural —su aportación más significativa—<sup>41</sup>. Mantuvo la dicotomía entre magia natural y magia demoniaca, tal y como establece en la *Oración por la dignidad del hombre*, sustentada sobre el fundamento divino de la libertad —no tanto de obrar sino como posibilidad de llegar a ser, de hacerse a sí mismo<sup>42</sup>—: “hay dos clases de magia; una consistente toda ella en obra y poder de los demonios, cosa, por Júpiter, execrada y horrenda; otra que, si bien se examina, no es sino consumada filosofía natural”<sup>43</sup>. De hecho, la primera correspondería a la goetia, mientras que la segunda obedecería a la *mageia* —suprema sabiduría de los *magus* zoroástricos—<sup>44</sup>. Pico della Mirandola defiende esa magia natural, conciliándola con la Revelación cristiana, al considerarla *Sancta Philosophia* y *Prisca Theologia* y así abundaría en sus conclusiones mágicas de las *900 tesis*: “La magia natural es lícita y no está prohibida y de esta ciencia que tiene fundamentos teóricos universales”<sup>45</sup>. Junto a esa magia natural, Pico della Mirandola introduce la Cábala como magia operativa que “confirmaba la veracidad del cristianismo”<sup>46</sup> y reducía “a la unidad la diversidad de doctrinas tanto religiosas como puramente especulativas”<sup>47</sup>. Lo afirma en una de las conclusiones mágicas: “Así como la verdadera astrología nos enseña a leer en el libro de Dios, así la Cábala nos enseña a leer en el libro de la ley”<sup>48</sup>.

El afán de vincular la cosmología cristiana y la epistemología mágica de la teúrgia, que reverbera sublimado en Ficino y Pico della Mirandola, representa la determinación para que “en buena parte de la investigación renacentista se asista a una atenta y preocupada discusión sobre la verdadera y la falsa magia, sobre la verdadera y la falsa astrología, sobre la verdadera y la falsa alquimia”<sup>49</sup>. Comprobaremos si esta vía de acceso a la sabiduría entronca con el modelo cosmológico propuesto por la *Trilogía Cómica* de C. S. Lewis.

### 3. La *Trilogía cómica* (o de Ransom): cosmología, imaginación y magia

A continuación dirigiré mi atención a las obras que componen la *Trilogía cómica* de C. S. Lewis, especialmente

a la tercera —*Esa horrible fortaleza*— para abordar el modelo cosmológico subyacente (3.1.) y dar a conocer la recepción del pensamiento mágico e imaginativo en la misma (3.2.) que, considero, exhiben ideas coherentes con ideas relevantes del pensamiento cosmológico y esotérico.

#### 3.1. “Thulcandra es el mundo que no conocemos”: el modelo cosmológico del Campo del Árbol

Inicio estas líneas con las palabras que el ángel custodio de Marte dedica a nuestro mundo<sup>50</sup>. Un mundo aislado del resto del cosmos a consecuencia de la rebelión luciferina y que incide en la cosmología subyacente a la *Trilogía cómica*, esto es, la imagen del universo influidas por “las concepciones generales que se tenían sobre el mundo y por las creencias religiosas”<sup>51</sup> —el aserto de que el universo admite descripción racional y, por tanto, existe un orden, un *kosmos*<sup>52</sup>—. Imagen, como modelo cosmológico, sería también el término empleado por el profesor Lewis en su obra académica *The Discarded Image. An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (escrita a lo largo de 1962 y publicada en 1964). Obra que daría cuenta del impacto estético que evidenciarían las imágenes del cosmos en la literatura medieval y renacentista. Aunque publicada con mucha posterioridad a su *Trilogía cómica*, *The Discarded Image* recogería conferencias impartidas a lo largo de los años, inclusive durante los años de redacción de la saga de ficción especulativa que estudiamos<sup>53</sup>.

Comenzaré con una sucinta sinopsis de la *Trilogía de Ransom*. En la primera obra de la trilogía, *Más allá del planeta silencioso*, el profesor universitario de filología Elwin Ransom alcanzará Malacandra (Marte) al ser víctima de un engaño de un científico y un estafador sin escrúpulos. Allí encontrará una sociedad de rasgos utópicos, ajena a los conflictos suscitados por carestías o por la lucha por la propiedad. Al contrario, descubre una teocracia delegada por Maleldil/Dios en el oyarsa —ángel custodio de cada planeta— de Marte y sus eldila, o ángeles. En Marte coexiste una sociedad tripartita de razas inteligentes, regida utópicamente a la manera platónica. Así, los mamíferos jrossa serían los productores, cazadores y poetas; los quitinosos pfiltriggi, correspondería a los artesanos y herreros; mientras que los gigantescos y esbeltos sorns desempeñarían el papel de astrónomos y filósofos. La correspondencia con la utopía platónica parece evidente<sup>54</sup>: un régimen tripartito de productores, guardianes y reyes filósofos, en el que primaría una parte del alma sobre las demás —concupiscible, irascible y racional, respectivamente—. Utopía añadida al componente de viaje imaginativo y fantástico desde la Tierra hasta Marte en una nave espacial<sup>55</sup>. A lo largo de sus peripecias en este mundo nuevo, Ransom descubrirá que nuestro planeta está aislado, en una cuarentena sideral, pues habitamos en un mundo sometido al oyarsa rebelde. La rebelión luciferina desgajaría a la Tierra (Thulcandra), del Campo del Árbol, de la infinita música celestial. Así, con el satélite lunar actuando a modo de frontera cósmica, Ransom descubre que la esfera aislada está sujeta a la mortalidad, la corrupción y el mal, mientras que los espacios supralunares bullen de vida y devoción al Creador, como un coro de mundos que viven en perfecta armonía. De esta manera,

en este libro el profesor Lewis recobraría la cosmología precopernicana<sup>56</sup>.

El siguiente libro, *Perelandra. Un viaje a Venus*, recupera el elemento utópico del viaje a un no-lugar imposible. En esta ocasión, Ransom es requerido por los oyarzas leales a Maleldil para que atraviese el cosmos supralunar en un ataúd relleno de flores hasta alcanzar Venus. Allí, en un nuevo jardín del Edén, el protagonista debe evitar que se repita la Caída de Eva. Esta Eva venusiana, denominada Tinidril o Dama Verde, va a padecer las tentaciones de uno de los villanos del primer libro, ahora devenido en un simple títere de los ángeles caídos. Ransom, además, debe facilitar que tanto la Eva como el Adán de Venus se reúnan nuevamente. A la dimensión utópica que plantea el libro —reconocida en el ámbito académico<sup>57</sup>— es preciso sumar un trasfondo medieval cristiano<sup>58</sup>. A juicio de nuestro protagonista, la aparentemente atractiva oferta del Pecado Original aportaría unas ganancias ínfimas comparadas con la devastación causada, aunque finalmente la lealtad a Maleldil prevalecerá y Ransom regresa a su hogar desde su utopía edénica en el mismo sarcófago que le transportó al inicio del relato.

Finalmente, en la culminación de la trilogía, *Esa horrible fortaleza* —que transcurre íntegramente en Thulcandra, nuestro planeta—, C. S. Lewis denuncia la distopía tecnocrática totalitaria que actuaría como mascarada de los oyarzas infernales en la Tierra. En esta obra, su autor demuestra las influencias de su amigo y literato Charles Williams —por ejemplo, el papel de la magia o los mitos artúricos—. A mayor abundamiento, expone sus postulados favorables a la ley natural, recogidos en la obra *La abolición del hombre* (1943). Elwin Ransom sería ahora el líder de la comunidad de St. Anne's, como el nombre de la abuela de Jesucristo y madre de la Virgen María —una alusión teológica que enlaza con una propuesta utópica<sup>59</sup>—, el Rey Pescador de una orden de caballería fiel a los oyarzas. Frente a él se encuentra el N.I.C.E. (Instituto Nacional de Estudios Coordinados), una distopía que rememora la Torre de Babel y su vana pretensión de asaltar los cielos<sup>60</sup>. La protagonista, Jane Studdock debe salvar a su marido, un académico bisoño y arribista, de la influencia del N.I.C.E. al tiempo que contribuye a que Ransom pueda despertar al mago Merlín. En última instancia, sólo la magia artúrica puede evitar el triunfo del oyarza caído. Esta obra despliega varios niveles narrativos, por medio de la dualidad de imágenes, para contraponer la utopía de St. Anne's frente a la distopía del N.I.C.E.<sup>61</sup>. También presenta un nivel muy evidente, pues aborda la aventura y el romance —los amantes son separados y deben reencontrarse— y otro más profundo que elucida las aventuras de cualquier alma y las distintas formas de elegir entre el bien y el mal. Existe un nivel intermedio, una parábola, de lo que ocurre cuando dos personas que mantienen una relación empiezan a tomar caminos diferentes<sup>62</sup>.

C. S. Lewis expone creativamente en esta trilogía a través de un ejercicio de literatura no mimética el modelo cosmológico precopernicano, que estuvo vigente en Occidente durante dos mil quinientos años. Así, a la idea pitagórica de una música de las esferas se suma la noción aristotélica de un cosmos ordenado, corpóreo que se divide en dos esferas. Lo que existe bajo la Luna, la esfera sublunar (a), estaría caracterizado por los cuatros elemen-

tos clásicos, susceptibles de transformación —y por lo tanto de degeneración y corrupción—, y existirían cuatro tipos de “movimiento” horizontal: sustancia, cualidad, cantidad y lugar, siempre originados por un motor intrínseco o extrínseco. La esfera supralunar (b), por otra parte, estaría compuesta por el quinto elemento —éter o *quinta essentia*—, de carácter ingenerable e incorruptible, donde los movimientos serían naturales, circulares, uniformes y eternos. Consecuentemente, en esta esfera la muerte no sería una desdichada circunstancia. Cada esfera celestial quedaría bajo la custodia de una potencia angelical hasta alcanzar un Primer Motor de naturaleza divina. En este sentido, el pensamiento mágico podría operar intuitivamente dentro de esta cosmología de esferas celestiales<sup>63</sup>.

Así lo encontramos expuesto, desde una perspectiva literaria y académica en el libro de Lewis *The Discarded Image*. En su primer capítulo, “The Medieval Situation”, da cuenta de la cosmología de dicho periodo a través de obras literarias que en su afán por codificar, organizar y erigir un sistema ordenado resultarían deudoras del pensamiento de Aristóteles así como de influencias clásicas y judeocristianas. En este sentido, especialmente significativa es la exposición que el profesor Lewis realiza del modelo de las dos esferas<sup>64</sup>. Este modelo serviría de telón de fondo para los artistas, de modelo provisional que permitía salvar las apariencias para los filósofos y era ignorado por los escritores espirituales por su nula incidencia en la salvación del alma<sup>65</sup>. Los capítulos tercero y cuarto permiten al profesor Lewis dar cuenta de los materiales seleccionados para sustentar su tesis. Resulta especialmente interesante que junto a Apuleyo, Boecio o el *Comentario al sueño de Escipión*, del neoplatónico Macrobio —donde introduce una clasificación del valor adivinatorio de los sueños, tan relevante en *Esa horrible fortaleza*— incluya también al Pseudo Dionisio Areopagita, referente del neoplatonismo cristiano. En el capítulo quinto —fundamental para abordar la magia en el tercer libro de la trilogía— desarrolla el modelo cosmológico de las dos esferas, por medio de las distintas partes que conforman el universo y de las correspondencias e influencias astrales<sup>66</sup>. Finalmente, en este capítulo así como en el séptimo dará cuenta de los distintos habitantes del cosmos y de nuestro planeta, con sus distintas facultades<sup>67</sup>. Por otra parte, en su capítulo sexto alude a los *longaevi*, aquellos de larga vida —hadas, ninfas, gnomos, etc.— que vincula en el tercer libro de la trilogía, *Esa horrible fortaleza*, con todos los seres mitológicos que nutrieron el folclore<sup>68</sup>. En este capítulo alude al filósofo y teólogo Bernardo Silvestre, que es citado por el trasunto literario de Lewis al final del primer libro de la trilogía, *Más allá del planeta silencioso*. Alude a la latinización que emplea Silvestre cuando se refiere a los *ousiarches*, a los que renombra como *oyarases*<sup>69</sup>. Junto con la evidente influencia intelectual, artística y social de este modelo, Lewis daría comienzo a su epílogo con el reconocimiento del esplendor y del encantamiento que el mismo ejercía sobre él. Si bien no era verdadero o auténtico en el sentido epistemológico de la ciencia moderna, se trataba de un modelo que funcionaba por analogías, que sugería antes que ilustrar, y que albergaba una mentalidad ajena al paradigma cientificista, mecanicista y determinista<sup>70</sup>. Por ese motivo, la magia tenía

cabida en un paradigma metafórico, ordenado y metafísico.

### 3.2. El papel de la magia y el pensamiento imaginativo en la *Trilogía de Ransom*

La magia desempeña un papel secundario en los dos primeros libros de la *Trilogía cósmica*. En ellos, Lewis no alude explícitamente al pensamiento mágico, sólo vagamente a la magia natural —el conocimiento de las verdades profundas y de la Revelación divina—, a los númenes directamente recibidos de Dios o a la goetia que infecta a los servidores del oyarsa *torcido* (o caído) de la Tierra. Por tanto, expondré las referencias a la magia en cada uno de los tres volúmenes que integran la saga espacial de Ransom para, especialmente, profundizar en las prácticas mágicas de la tercera obra.

#### 3.2.1. *Más allá del planeta silencioso*

Este libro, cuyo contenido metafísico estaría marcado más por el pensamiento utópico que por el mágico, evidencia algunos elementos sutilmente vinculados por la magia. Los agruparé en tres motivos. El primero corresponde a la simbología astrológica de Marte (1), planeta al que es transportado el profesor Ransom. Si Marte queda vinculado con la guerra, con la virilidad y el honor castrense, encontraríamos dos episodios que así lo revelan. En primer lugar, la cacería del jnakra, a la que Ransom acompaña a los jrossa y en la que afronta exitosamente una ordalía guerrera<sup>71</sup>. En segundo lugar, cuando el oyarsa de Malacandra recuerda ante Ransom la guerra en los cielos para apresar al ángel caído, salvar a los pobladores marcianos, y paliar la subsecuente devastación en Marte —“Golpeó tu luna con la mano izquierda y con la derecha trajo a mi *jarandra* la muerte helada (...) Hubo un gran combate y lo expulsamos del cielo y lo confinamos al aire de su propio mundo, como Maleldil nos había enseñado”<sup>72</sup>. Por tanto, dos momentos significativos del relato están impregnados de un aire marcial, honorable, a diferencia de los episodios en que dos asaltantes humanos, Weston y Devine, asesinan con armas de fuego. La mención a la guerra en los cielos, por otra parte, incide en el carácter vicario de los oyarsa y los eldila. Este sería el segundo motivo narrativo vinculado indirectamente con la magia (2), pues se trataría de instrumentos para realizar el plan divino. No sólo en cuanto al conflicto con el ángel caído, también la capacidad de los señores angelicales planetarios para desmaterializar y descorporeizar sería una técnica deudora de Maleldil y su poder divino. El oyarsa es explícito: “Por mi intermedio, Maleldil hace cosas más grandes que ésa y puedo descomponerte incluso en los límites del aire de tu propio mundo”<sup>73</sup>. Los difuntos son descorporizados por Oyarsa, tal y como Ransom narraría al trasunto literario del profesor Lewis<sup>74</sup>. Por tanto, los númenes, la capacidad de realizar prodigios sobrenaturales, proceden de Maleldil<sup>75</sup>. El tercer motivo aparecería en el intercambio epistolar que, a su vez, realiza un C. S. Lewis literario con el protagonista de la obra (3). El primero vincula la existencia de los oyarsas a las referencias que el pensador neoplatónico cristiano Bernardo Silvestre haría en el Medioevo a los *ousiarches*, al tiempo que el

profesor Ransom también recoge la existencia de seres míticos como las bestias de aire de Chaucer<sup>76</sup>.

#### 3.2.2. *Perelandra. Un viaje a Venus*

Como ocurriera en el primer libro de la trilogía, el elemento mágico aparece oblicuamente, en este caso en dos elementos. Análogamente al anterior volumen, la simbología y correspondencia astral del planeta en el que toma parte la acción de nuestro protagonista (1) es evidente. Si Venus permanece asociado con la diosa del amor y la belleza, así las descripciones vívidas del exuberante mundo, de su vegetación, de la agraciada Eva/Tinidril, conducen todas a una vida más bella y auténtica. Así, Ransom mejora su condición física hasta recuperar el vigor y la fortaleza de alguien dos décadas más joven. En este contexto vivificante, la búsqueda de la Eva de Venus para reencontrarse con su Adán planetario a través de las tierras flotantes y de la restringida *tierra fija* suponen una demostración de amor marital, que alcanza su cénit con la danza nupcial planetaria una vez que Weston, poseído por los poderes infernales, es derrotado por Ransom. En ese instante, incluso aparecen esbozadas nítidamente las diferencias en cuanto al carácter del oyarsa marciano, decolores metálicos y fríos, respecto del arconte custodio de Venus, que “resplandecía con un esplendor cálido, que sugería plenamente la vida vegetal fecunda”<sup>77</sup>. En segundo lugar, resulta evidente el platonismo de Lewis, especialmente durante el combate que Ransom mantiene con Weston en la *tierra fija* y, tras resultar victorioso del mismo, su ascenso a través del mundo subterráneo hasta alcanzar la superficie —“La lenta marcha cuesta arriba en la oscuridad duró tanto que empezó a temer estar girando en círculo (...) Las ansias de ver luz se hicieron dolorosas”<sup>78</sup>— y contemplar el sol desplegarse por vez primera sobre Perelandra para anunciar el recibimiento del joven mundo en los Campos del Árbol. Su similitud con el mito de la caverna de Platón resulta elocuente, pues Ransom emerge desde el inframundo, acosado por sombras y falsedades —ora demoniacas, ora naturales— hasta emerger en la cima de una montaña<sup>79</sup>. Por ejemplo, en su combate final con Weston, una sombra insectoide emerge de las profundidades pero revela su carácter inofensivo ante el arrojado de Ransom. Del mismo modo, durante su ascenso Ransom contemplará figuras inquietantes, semejantes a las antiguas divinidades paganas, hasta alcanzar la cima de Venus<sup>80</sup>. Resulta elocuente esta fuente platónica por cuanto la magia renacentista es deudora, como he expuesto, de numerosas interpretaciones neoplatónicas<sup>81</sup>.

#### 3.2.3. *Esa horrible fortaleza*

La obra que concluye la *Trilogía cósmica* recoge las premisas de la magia nítidamente. Por ese motivo, una vez expuesto sucintamente el argumento de la obra, optaré por recoger los principales motivos del pensamiento mágico desarrollados en la misma por el profesor Lewis. Se trata de varias líneas argumentativas que permiten desgranar múltiples facetas de la magia: (1) magia y cristianismo; (2) la dualidad de niveles expositivos; (3) el origen atlante de la magia telúrica; (4) la magia de Logres y Merlín; (5) los *longaevi* y su mundo en retirada; (6) la magia renacentis-



ta; (7) la goetia del N.I.C.E.; y (8) la magia neoplatónica y cristiana.

### 3.2.3.1. Magia y cristianismo

En primer lugar, Ransom estaría vinculado con la magia no sólo a través de sus propios viajes estelares. Así se lo hacen saber a Jane Studdock en la comunidad de St. Anne's. Su propia hermana formaría parte del círculo de iniciados del Sura, un místico cristiano de la India. Místico que habría predicho una crisis planetaria, pues un "gran peligro se cernía sobre la raza humana"<sup>82</sup>. Además, vaticinó también la llegada de una persona que podría decantar la balanza, en este caso Jane Studdock: "El Sura dijo que cuando llegara la hora encontraríamos lo que él llama un vidente, una persona con clarividencia"<sup>83</sup>. Este nivel interpretativo, que semeja al Sura con las líneas herméticas y esotéricas cristianas, de manera semejante a Valentín Tomberg —y deudor de la influencia de su amigo el también inkling Charles Williams<sup>84</sup>—, entre otros, permitiría al profesor Lewis señalar dos elementos, a juicio del investigador del ocultismo Gareth Knight: tanto la corrupción que genera en la vida intelectual un uso errado de la tecnología como el carácter espiritual y físico de la batalla real<sup>85</sup>.

### 3.2.3.2. Dualidad de niveles expositivos en St. Anne's y el N.I.C.E.

En este sentido, las comunidades enfrentadas de St. Anne's y el N.I.C.E. son antitéticas desde múltiples perspectivas<sup>86</sup>: desde el pensamiento político, utópico, la ética, la historia... Existiría un conflicto insoslayable entre Logres —la Bretaña artúrica, que emerge en un espacio mágico— y la Gran Bretaña secularizada, cientificista y positivista<sup>87</sup>. Así, cabe citar por ejemplo la dicotomía entre los vínculos organicistas de St. Anne's con la "feliz Inglaterra" y la distopía prometeica del N.I.C.E., con su sueño de esterilizar el entorno para controlar los procesos biológicos —aquí Lewis recupera una advertencia de su obra *La abolición del hombre*, la capacidad creciente de cada generación por condicionar el futuro de las venideras<sup>88</sup>—. En este sentido, la comunidad de St. Anne's se rige por la igualdad de amor y respeto, con un principio jerárquico acorde a sus capacidades naturales, mientras que en el N.I.C.E. están sometidos a una jerarquía rígida, a rumores e intrigas políticas<sup>89</sup>. En definitiva, todo lo que resulta radiante y exuberante en la comunidad del Rey Pescador Ransom —p.ej. la teúrgia— resulta desvaído y envilecido por la goetia en la distopia tecnocrática de Belbury.

### 3.2.3.3. El origen de la magia telúrica descansa en Atlantis y en Numinor

El origen de la magia es explicado por Lewis a través de la figura de Merlín. El propio hechicero de los mitos artúricos habría sido sacado "de nuestro tiempo unidimensional, durante quince siglos. Pero bajo ciertas condiciones volvería a su cuerpo"<sup>90</sup>. Ese sueño, esa salida a un estado ajeno al cautiverio del tiempo, hacia un "estado paracrónico" como señala Ransom, obedecería al designio de

Maleldil y sus eldila<sup>91</sup>. Al aludir a su estado ucrónico, Ransom alude al origen de la magia practicada por Merlín. Su procedencia se situaría en Atlantis, la legendaria isla perdida de Platón —otra alusión que no resulta baladí y persiste en la tradición hermética occidental<sup>92</sup>—. Ransom insistiría en conectar el antiguo círculo atlante con la Gran Lengua, el idioma solar de los Campos del Árbol, de la esfera supralunar<sup>93</sup>. Un idioma que, desde la Filosofía del lenguaje, obedece a la aspiración de una lengua originaria de la Creación y reminiscencia del Edén perdido. De ahí que al comisionar al longevo profesor Dimble insista en su protocolaria presentación, legitimada tanto lingüística como teológicamente: "Dirá que viene en nombre de Dios y de todos los ángeles y en representación de los planetas de parte de alguien que hoy se sienta en el sitio del Pendragón, y que le ordena acompañarlo"<sup>94</sup>. No obstante, esta magia empuñada por Merlín sería, tal y como asevera Ransom, "el último vestigio, sobreviviendo en el siglo quinto, de algo mucho más remoto. Algo que proviene de mucho antes del Gran Desastre, incluso de antes del druidismo primitivo; algo que nos hace retroceder a Numinor, a los períodos preglaciares"<sup>95</sup>. Ese Numinor, que para Ransom sería el "verdadero Oeste"<sup>96</sup>, quedaría vinculado inmediatamente con una de las creaciones mitopoéticas más célebres del profesor Tolkien, amigo de C. S. Lewis e integrante como él del grupo informal de los Inklings. Así, Numinor, el orgulloso reino de los altos hombres que caería por su soberbia podría ser un trasunto literario de Atlantis. No obstante, dicha magia obedecería a una traslación pálida de las correspondencias astrales en este modelo cosmológico de las dos esferas. Esto es, la influencia de los astros no se produciría realmente en la Tierra, ajena a la esfera supralunar. En este sentido, "después de todo, eran poderes de la Tierra", reconocería Merlín<sup>97</sup>. Ransom así lo confirma a Jane Studdock que la magia terrestre estaría velada, sería un pálido reflejo de la gloria celestial:

"No hay Oyarsa en el Cielo que no tenga su representante sobre la Tierra. Y no hay mundo en el que no puedas encontrar un pequeño compañero no caído de nuestro propio arconte negro, una especie de otro yo. Por eso hubo un Saturno italiano igual que uno celestial, y un Júpiter cretense además del olímpico. Fueron estos espectros terrestres de las altas inteligencias lo que los hombres encontraban en los tiempos antiguos cuando decían que habían visto a los dioses. Era con ellos con los que se relacionaba un hombre como Merlín (a veces). Nunca bajó algo realmente de más allá de la Luna. Lo que te atañe aún más es que existe una Venus terrestre como una celestial, un espectro de Perelandra como una Perelandra (...) la Tierra-Venus debe estar especialmente activa aquí en este momento. Porque es en esta noche cuando su arquetipo celestial realmente bajará"<sup>98</sup>.

Por tanto, el mérito de Ransom sería conseguir que los verdaderos eldila, los príncipes angelicales de Viritrilbia-Mercurio, Perelandra-Venus, Malacandra-Marte, Glund-Júpiter y Lurga-Saturno descendieran para fortalecer la magia de Merlín antes de su enfrentamiento con el N.I.C.E. En consecuencia, en el capítulo 15, "El descenso de los dioses", a St. Anne's descenderían los cinco eldila con sus rasgos particulares —y sus correspondencias astrales reverberarían con sus analogías y su potencial simbólico—: Hermes-Tot-Mercurio-Viritrilbia con el dominio del lenguaje, la rapidez de pensamiento y el dominio de las

ideas; Venus-Perelandra, con la vida, la caridad y la ferocidad; Marte-Mavors-Tyr-Malacandra, con la guerra, el valor y la disciplina; Lurga-Saturno, frío y gravedad; Oyarsa-Glund-Júpiter, demiurgo y *Logos*, no Dios creador, majestad y júbilo<sup>99</sup>.

### 3.2.3.4. El hechizo de Logres y la ambigüedad de la magia de Merlín

Logres, la Bretaña artúrica, genera un espacio subversivo ontológicamente y recupera un encantamiento que contraopone la magia a la Gran Bretaña prosaica, eficiente y literalista de nuestro tiempo. El vínculo de los mitos artúricos entroncaría con la causa celestial de Ransom. Así lo deja entrever Camilla, una de sus aliadas en St. Anne's, al aludir al propio Ransom: "Será llevado, supongo. De regreso al Cielo Profundo. Le ha ocurrido a una o dos personas, tal vez seis, desde que empezó el mundo (...) Y es el Pendragón de Logres (...) todo lo demás se han convertido nada más que en Gran Bretaña"<sup>100</sup>. A ese vínculo se sumarían los conocimientos incomparables de la Bretaña artúrica que obtiene Ransom al conocer a Merlín<sup>101</sup>. No obstante, pese a haber expuesto en el apartado anterior que la magia estaría vinculada con Atlantis y con la Numinor de Tolkien, resulta sumamente ambigua. Cristiana por su finalidad pero turbia en su origen. Así, por ejemplo, queda de manifiesto cuando el mago de la corte de Camelot trata de persuadir a Ransom de que recurra a sus vínculos telúricos para superar sus heridas tras combatir a los ángeles caídos<sup>102</sup>. O cuando afirma: "(...) necesitará mis tratos con el campo y el agua para curar Logres"<sup>103</sup>. Ransom replica: "El alma ha desaparecido del bosque y el agua (...) la Horrible Fortaleza nos enfrenta y es como en los antiguos días, cuando Nimrod construyó una torre para llegar al cielo"<sup>104</sup>. También le precave de la ambigüedad del Arte real<sup>105</sup>: "Le prohíbo hablar de eso. Aunque fuera posible, sería ilícito. Cualquiera que sea el espíritu que aún permanece en la tierra se ha retirado de nosotros mil quinientos años después de su época (...) No debe alzar ni el dedo meñique para conjurarlo. Se lo ordeno. En esta época es totalmente ilícito (...) Nunca fue muy lícito, incluso en su época"<sup>106</sup>. En su papel como artífice de la destrucción de esa Babel transhumana que es el cuartel del N.I.C.E. en Belbury, Merlín triunfa porque a su magia telúrica vincula la influencia astral de los ángeles planetarios leales a Dios/Maleldil y para ello libera a las bestias del yugo demoniaco y confunde el lenguaje gracias a la ayuda del propio ángel planetario de Mercurio<sup>107</sup>.

### 3.2.3.5. Los *longaevi* y la pervivencia de los viejos seres míticos

Si la magia obedecía a un esquema deudor de los orígenes de la civilización atlante y la reverberación de las correspondencias astrales, también tendrían cabida las criaturas del folclore sobrenatural. Así, duendes, sílfides o gnomos formarían parte de la magia de este universo mitopoético —como desarrollaría académicamente el profesor Lewis en *The Discarded Image*—, aun cuando se tratase de un mundo en retirada. Los *longaevi* formarían parte de un tercer orden de criaturas, ni angelicales ni infernales. Uno de los héroes de St. Anne's, el profesor Dimble, al contextualizar a Merlín los definiría como

"neutrales, paseándose (...) Un ser consciente o está obedeciendo o desobedeciendo a Dios. Pero podría haber seres neutrales (...) Solía haber seres sobre esta tierra que se dedicaban a sus propios asuntos, por decirlo así. No eran espíritus auxiliares enviados para ayudar a la humanidad caída, pero tampoco eran enemigos que nos oprimieran. Hasta en San Pablo uno capta destellos de una población que no se adaptaría con exactitud a nuestras dos columnas de ángeles y demonios. Y si retrocedes aún más... todos los dioses, duendes, enanos, ondinas, *fate*, *longaevi*... tú y yo sabemos demasiado para creer que fueran sólo ilusiones (...) Creo que existieron. Creo que había espacio para ellos entonces, pero el universo se ha definido más. No eran todos seres racionales, quizás. Algunos serían meras voluntades inherentes a la materia, apenas conscientes. Más parecidas a los animales"<sup>108</sup>.

Vinculados con un paradigma más cercano al *anima mundi* que al universo mecanicista, cuantificable e infinito, serían "el último vestigio de un orden antiguo en el que la materia y el espíritu estaban, según nuestro moderno punto de vista, mezclados"<sup>109</sup>. No obstante, su manipulación estaría más cerca de la goetia que de la teúrgia o la magia natural. Así trasluce tras el encuentro de la vidente y oráculo Jane con las criaturas primordiales en el jardín de St. Anne's, influidas por el regreso de Merlín<sup>110</sup>. Jane ubicaría a estos seres en la platónica cadena del ser, que contribuirían a hacer del "camino en ascenso, más ricas, más agudas, hasta más feroces, en cada peldaño de la ascensión"<sup>111</sup>.

### 3.2.3.6. La crítica a la magia renacentista

Para el objeto de este artículo, he de destacar que *Esa horrible fortaleza* esboza una crítica hacia la magia renacentista en que Lewis indagará en su posterior obra académica *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, excluding Drama* (1954). En la culminación de la *Trilogía cósmica* recurre a argumentos fundamentales para dar respuesta a la pregunta de investigación. En *Esa horrible fortaleza* aparece recogida con nitidez la impugnación al pensamiento mágico renacentista, que se concibe ajena al Arte real de Merlín,

"el último vestigio de algo más antiguo y distinto, algo traído a Europa Occidental después de la caída de Numinor y que provenía de un época en la que las relaciones generacionales entre la mente y la materia en este planeta habían sido distintas a las que ahora conocemos. Era probable que se hubiera diferenciado profundamente de la magia renacentista. Era posible, aunque dudoso, que se tratara de algo menos condenable, que por cierto había sido más efectivo. Porque Paracelso, Agrippa y los demás habían logrado poco o nada"<sup>112</sup>.

La mención por parte de Lewis de *magi* como Paracelso o Cornelio Agrippa apunta directamente a la consideración peyorativa de la magia renacentista. Abunda en su crítica al apostillar que "el estallido de artes prohibidas del Renacimiento, al parecer, había sido un método de perder la propia alma en términos singularmente desfavorables. Pero el arte más antiguo había sido una propuesta distinta (...) En realidad indicaba al director que detrás había energía eldífica y conocimiento eldífico"<sup>113</sup>. Por tanto, el fundamento de la magia renacentista que aludiría a la animación de artefactos, a la invocación demoniaca y al dominio natural no estaría sustentado sobre la influencia

angelical. Censura, entonces, la magia renacentista como herramienta de control y subversión ontológica, no tanto un hipotético origen perenne de carácter zoroástrico-hermético ni el estudio de la magia natural como Santa Filosofía y Prisca Teología, a la manera de Ficino y Pico della Mirandola. Su crítica apunta hacia la magia demoníaca. Así, censura los comentarios “sobre el *élan vital* y coqueteos con el pansiquismo prometían restaurar el *anima mundi* de los magos”<sup>114</sup>. Esta crítica aparece desarrollada académicamente en la introducción de su libro *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*, denominada elocuentemente “New Learning and New Ignorance”. El paso del modelo cosmológico de las dos esferas, henchido de simpatías ocultas, de colorido, aromas y sabores a un paradigma mecanicista reverberaría en la distinción de Pico della Mirandola, que contrapone la *magia* a la *goetia*<sup>115</sup>. De todos modos, la alta magia medieval resonaría en Ficino, Pico della Mirandola e incluso Paracelso, Agrippa y Dee como un retazo de una sabiduría periclitada, por lo que asume la remota posibilidad de un uso inocente de la misma, opuesta a la magia demoníaca<sup>116</sup>. Su reproche se centra en la magia como herramienta de poder que correría pareja a la voluntad de dominio, cosificación y reduccionismo de la nueva ciencia emanada del Renacimiento<sup>117</sup>. Esto es, el recurso a entidades intermedias, ni angelicales ni infernales, en beneficio propio del mago. De ahí que no quiebre el vínculo con saberes perennes que no persiguen la subversión ontológica por medio de la magia.

### 3.2.3.7. La magia oscura: N.I.C.E. y goetia

En la *Trilogía cósmica* no sólo es posible apreciar una magia equiparable a la teúrgia. También la goetia, la magia oscura, hace acto de aparición en una simetría retorcida. En este caso el N.I.C.E. es su depositario, en la figura de sus iniciados. Al formar parte de los recursos de las potencias angelicales corrompidas, la goetia atestigua su reflejo deformado. Por ese motivo, la goetia no asume ninguna labor de sanación, videncia o de búsqueda de la verdad. Por el contrario, ejerce una función de dominación, embuste y embaucamiento. El transhumanismo incipiente de mantener con vida cabezas extracorpóreas alude tanto a una morfotecnología deshumanizadora y eugenésica como al intento de aprehender prótesis epistemológicas más potentes para profundizar en una dialéctica de conocimientos prohibidos. En primer lugar, su afán eugenésico con el fin de condicionar a las generaciones venideras resulta explícito. Así lo reconoce Lord Feverstone (un Devine del primer libro de la trilogía, ahora aristócrata al servicio del infierno): “esterilización de los incapaces, exterminación de las razas atrasadas (...) reproducción selectiva (...) Después verdadera educación, incluyendo educación prenatal (...) a la larga llegaremos al condicionamiento bioquímico y a la manipulación directa del cerebro”<sup>118</sup>. Además, Filostrato, otro jerarca del N.I.C.E., reconoce su interés por alcanzar una condición posbiológica, más allá de la condición humana. Para ello alude a los impíos seres que moran en la cara oculta de la luna, a quienes considera una “gran raza, más avanzada que nosotros. Una inspiración. Una raza pura. Han limpiado su mundo, se han librado (casi) de lo orgánico... No necesitan nacer, procrear y morir (...) Conservan la inte-

ligencia; pueden mantenerla viva por medios artificiales después de desprenderse del cuerpo orgánico”<sup>119</sup>. Esta condición posthumana asume una concepción estratégica del poder como dominación: “Por supuesto, al principio el poder se verá confinado a una cantidad (una cantidad pequeña) de individuos. Los que sean elegidos para la vida eterna”<sup>120</sup>. Su objetivo sería construir “el primer borrador del verdadero Dios. Es un hombre (o un ser hecho por el hombre) quien por fin subirá al trono del universo. Y regirá eternamente”<sup>121</sup>. Al entender el condicionamiento como estrategia de dominación Lewis evidencia una concepción de la goetia que no dista mucho de aquella interpretación que Couliano realiza de la manipulación de las masas en *De vinculis in genere* de Giordano Bruno<sup>122</sup>. En segundo lugar, esa posthumanidad sería capacidad de mejorar su estatuto epistemológico. Consecuentemente, esto permitiría alcanzar conocimientos felizmente vedados para el ser humano por otros medios. Esa magia oscura permitiría, por medio de la ciencia oscura, una “hipertrofia cerebral provocada artificialmente para sustentar un poder sobrehumano de ideación”<sup>123</sup>, a juicio de un aliado de Ransom. Esos conocimientos prohibidos permitirían crear una raza de seres inmortales, pero todavía sujetos a la corrupción moral de la esfera infralunar, así como un proceso selectivo de “candidatos a la admisión dentro de esta nueva especie o de lo contrario sus esclavos, tal vez su alimento”<sup>124</sup>. No en vano, la fuente de conocimiento de dichos seres posbiológicos provendría de abrir su consciencia a los ángeles caídos<sup>125</sup>.

### 3.2.3.8. Múltiples niveles de interpretación teológica y platónica de la magia en *Esa horrible fortaleza*

La magia enhebraría distintos niveles de interpretación bíblicos y platónicos que dan cuenta del neoplatismo cristiano del autor. Desde una perspectiva teológica, podríamos encontrar los cuatro niveles de interpretación bíblicos propugnados por la exégesis medieval: el nivel literal, pues la magia permitiría subsanar el problema conyugal-moral de los Studdock y celebrar de este modo su eventual reunión; el alegórico, pues gracias a la magia es posible contribuir a la resolución del conflicto cósmico entre el bien y el mal en la escena final de Babel; el moral, porque la magia abre una ventana de oportunidad para el progreso del alma de Ransom, de Merlín y de los Studdock; y el escatológico, puesto que la magia prende el fognazo de destrucción definitiva de Belbury y de la conversión numinosa de St. Anne’s. Junto al ascenso platónico que encontrábamos en la segunda obra de la trilogía, *Perelandra. Un viaje a Venus*, en este libro Lewis presenta la platónica cadena del ser que alcanza hasta Dios y rememora la escala celeste del Pseudo Dioniso Areopagita<sup>126</sup>. Este platonismo, asevera Klein, es de carácter binario pues en esta propuesta lewisiana o un personaje ama la naturaleza y el orden de la cadena del ser o los odia, sin posibles posiciones intermedias<sup>127</sup>. De esta manera, los Studdock inicialmente son hostiles a Dios y sus designios y, en última instancia, contribuyen de manera inapelable a su triunfo<sup>128</sup>.

Tras analizar los principales rasgos del pensamiento mágico en la obra que concluye la *Trilogía cósmica*, resulta posible extraer unas conclusiones provisionales a

modo de síntesis antes de abordar las posibles pervenencias de la magia renacentista en estas obras de C. S. Lewis.

#### 4. La magia renacentista y la *Trilogía cósmica*

Para ahondar en la correlación entre magia renacentista y magia en los tres libros de Ransom, conviene exponer la interpretación que sobre esta cuestión realizaría Shippey (1) para, a continuación, exponer los elementos imaginativos de esta trilogía (2) y, finalmente, permitir que conversen con la apología de la magia natural por parte de sus exponentes originarios, Ficino y Pico della Mirandola (3).

##### 4.1. ¿Existe una magia cristiana e inocente? El análisis de Shippey

El profesor Shippey, en su valioso capítulo “New Learning and New Ignorance” asevera que las ideas de magia serían diferentes en el Medioevo y el Renacimiento, tal y como Lewis las expone en *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*<sup>129</sup>. La magia de Merlín, vinculada con el Medioevo, queda lejos del pensamiento mágico renacentista, más cercano al N.I.C.E. con sus científicos-magos<sup>130</sup>. Shippey corrobora la afirmación lewisiana de una magia inocente, que hoy no sería posible pero acaso en el pasado lo fue —se trataría de un tema propio de los Inklings al cuestionarse por la existencia de una posible magia cristiana—<sup>131</sup>. En este caso, Shippey destaca la influencia de Charles Williams y la posibilidad de que Lewis hubiese adoptado de él un elemento: la goetia de un ávido buscador de poder sería confrontada por cristianos ayudados por figuras providenciales que practicarían magia, una magia reducida a expresar la fe y el conocimiento de la Creación<sup>132</sup>. Considero que esta afirmación no estaría lejos de la magia natural de Ficino y Pico della Mirandola. La magia como dominación sería un reflejo siniestramente simétrico de un cientificismo megalómano, de un sueño de poder, otra forma de goetia<sup>133</sup>. Por todo ello, la magia inocente sería, a juicio de Shippey, afín a la religión. De ahí que el equivalente invertido en el ámbito del cientificismo perverso sería la goetia<sup>134</sup>. Shippey sitúa la centralidad de esta cuestión sobre la magia renacentista en la posible aceptación del cristianismo. Coincido con Shippey, pues el profesor Lewis censura todo intento de dominación, especialmente si parte de reduccionismos antropológicos como la magia o el cientificismo. No obstante, a la posible nostalgia que Lewis evidencia por un modelo cosmológico de analogías y simpatías añadiré un elemento tangencial en el análisis de Shippey. Se trata del pensamiento imaginativo. En consecuencia, cabe preguntar si la magia, en esta trilogía lewisiana, obedecería a las mediaciones del pensamiento imaginativo<sup>135</sup>. A tal fin dedicaré las siguientes líneas.

##### 4.2. El pensamiento imaginativo de *Esa horrible fortaleza*

Aunque esta noción del pensamiento imaginativo excede sensiblemente el cometido de esta investigación, me centraré en los elementos fundamentales del pensamiento imaginativo lewisiano en el tercer libro de la *Trilogía*

*cósmica*. Voy a comenzar con una definición de la imaginación. Este pensamiento en imágenes, cercano a una facultad de conocimiento entre los sentidos y la razón, permitiría acceder a niveles de la realidad más profundos y mediaría entre planos ontológicos<sup>136</sup>. Sería una facultad antropológica que favorece la abstracción intelectual, por medio de imágenes, con una finalidad creativa<sup>137</sup>. Por tanto, se trataría de un conocimiento representativo, independiente de la presencia física, caracterizado por su función creativa como continuadora de la sensibilidad<sup>138</sup>. A juicio de Honda, el profesor Lewis consideraba la realidad objetiva que percibimos, en la que participamos y con la que nos comunicamos como el centro de su pensamiento moral y, por este motivo, la vía imaginativa deviene un modo de aproximación a dicho nivel ontológico, no un ejercicio de escapismo<sup>139</sup>. Esta forma positiva de acceso a la realidad metafísica implica un poder mitopoético innegable<sup>140</sup>. En este sentido, la imaginación lewisiana no quedaría lejos de su correlato renacentista, que concebía esta vía de conocimiento como una facultad cognitiva y creadora de realidades interiores<sup>141</sup>. En cualquier caso, se trataría de un pensamiento imaginativo y metafísico coherente con una metanarrativa cristiana trascendente y celeste. Enlazaría así el pensamiento de Lewis, apostilla Urang, con la imaginación platonizante propia del romanticismo en su vertiente más sobrenatural, en una *sehnsucht*, un anhelo o una nostalgia que ningún objeto de deseo puede satisfacer<sup>142</sup>. Ese anhelo imaginativo del profesor Lewis permite conocer la naturaleza eterna y, para ello, trabajaría con las herramientas de la fantasía<sup>143</sup>. Como esta afirmación no permanece ajena a los rasgos del pensamiento imaginativo renacentista, daré paso a la relación entre magia natural y pensamiento mágico contemplado en *Esa horrible fortaleza*.

##### 4.3. C. S. Lewis y la magia natural —Santa Filosofía y Prisca Teología—

Si el pensamiento imaginativo de Lewis guarda similitudes con planteamientos renacentistas y si, a su juicio, existe un posible uso cristiano e inocente de la magia, conviene comprobar si estas afinidades serían extensibles a la magia natural de Ficino y Pico della Mirandola. Para ello, comenzaré con una alusión a la teúrgia del profesor Dimble, en *Esa horrible fortaleza*, al declamar en el antiguo lenguaje solar, cuyos efectos ontológicos son patentes. Así,

“las palabras que sonaban como castillos brotaron de sus labios (...) La voz no sonaba como la de Dimble; era como si las palabras se expresaran a través de él desde algún poderoso sitio en la distancia, como si no fueran palabras en ningún sentido sino operaciones concretas de Dios, los planetas y el Pendragón. Porque ése era el idioma hablado antes de la Caída y más allá de la Luna, y los significados no eran otorgados por sílabas al azar, por la habilidad o por una larga tradición, sino verdaderamente inherentes a ella como la forma del gran Sol se corresponde con la pequeña gota de agua. Era el Idioma propiamente dicho, tal como había surgido por primera vez, ante el orden de Maleldil, del azogue fundido de la estrella llamada Mercurio sobre la Tierra, llamada Viritrilbia en el Cielo Profundo”<sup>144</sup>.

Este idioma guarda evidentes vínculos con la influencia de Hermes/Mercurio, y no en vano corresponde al lenguaje de la Creación, capaz de conmover sus cimientos. En este caso, sería un medio legítimo para reclamar la plenitud metafísica de un modelo cosmológico de analogías. No se trataría de un reencantamiento del mundo como sentimiento subjetivo o como hechizo, sino más bien un esfuerzo por recuperar una cualidad espiritual, una luminosidad ontológica<sup>145</sup>. Para ello, ese lenguaje solar iría de consuno con la magia atlante, que no en vano permite acceder a un conocimiento primordial y a una ley natural perenne<sup>146</sup>. Cabe añadir otro argumento, pues el tercer libro incluye un sistema simbólico de mediaciones imaginativas que ha de ser desentrañado y en el que reverbera el platonismo cristiano. Se trasluce en la premisa de que el conocimiento es posible y el viaje metafórico de la caverna conduce al reino de Dios, que es activo, omnisciente y providente<sup>147</sup>.

A esta existencia de una cadena áurea de saberes —de *verus prophetas* y *preparatio evangelica*— y al platonismo cristiano sumaríamos una magia inocente, natural, más preocupada por un conocimiento de la Creación divina que por el poder. Merlín, como representante del cristianismo céltico, es su vivo ejemplo, pues combate la corrupción infernal pero no es él quien la destruye, sino que actúa como canal para que los eldila celestes triunfen<sup>148</sup>.

Si podemos encontrar similitudes entre la cosmología de la *Trilogía cósmica* y el *De amore* de Ficino —p.ej. las correspondencias astrales—, también cabe apuntar a la doble distinción entre tipos de magia en el *De vita*<sup>149</sup>. Cabría citar la controversia astrológica del propio Ficino, que corre pareja a la ambivalente presencia de la magia astral en la *Trilogía cósmica*, pues si bien las potencias angélicas planetarias pueden donar númenes y potenciar la teúrgia, en ningún caso Lewis corrobora el determinismo astrológico<sup>150</sup>. Estos elementos, desde la cadena áurea de conocimientos transmitidos desde la Antigüedad, desde la *preparatio evangelica* defendida por algunos Padres de la Iglesia, hasta la controversia astrológica, encuentran su reflejo también en el pensamiento de Pico della Mirandola. Si atendemos a la *Oratio*, al discurso que inauguró el espíritu renacentista, Pico della Mirandola traza en el mismo un recorrido por los artífices de la sabiduría impercedera, de tal suerte que evidencia la cadena áurea<sup>151</sup>. En sus últimos días, Pico della Mirandola daría carta cabal a sus objeciones respecto de la astrología predictiva en las *Disputationes adversus astrologiam divinatricem*<sup>152</sup>. Se trataría de un conocimiento natural<sup>153</sup>. Al mismo tiempo, ambos autores, Ficino y Pico della Mirandola, dividirían la magia entre una teúrgia orientada a glorificar a Dios y una goetia demoniaca. Así lo atestiguan el *De vita* ficiniano y las conclusiones de las *Tesis* de Pico. Consecuentemente, es posible afirmar que concurren estas tramas interpretativas en los tres autores. Se produce una pervivencia atenuada, sutil, pues Lewis expone positivamente varios elementos representativos del pensamiento de Ficino y Mirandola —conocimientos perennes, neoplatonismo cristiano, magia natural inocente y denuncia de la goetia—, en una síntesis con un medievalismo innegable merced a los mitos artúricos y una cosmología precopernicana que fructifican como reflejo de un mundo que se desvanece. A esto cabría sumar otro elemento típicamente

renacentista, la similitud de la *Trilogía cósmica* con el género del pensamiento utópico, que recibiría su nombre por Santo Tomás Moro y su célebre obra, *Utopía*.

Parece innegable que exista recepción renacentista, aun cuando Lewis nos precave de la tentación del uso veleidoso de la magia y asevera que si en algún momento resultó inocente, el rico y alegórico mundo que le dio cabida ha desaparecido. En este sentido sería posible adherirnos al postulado de Haarpur, que asevera que “los alquimistas, todos los magos y la mayor parte de los poetas románticos fueron cristianos que encontraron caminos imaginativos para casar su monoteísmo con el neoplatonismo o el panteísmo”<sup>154</sup>. En el caso de Lewis, quizá estuviese cerca de los postulados de otro Inkling, su amigo Owen Barfield, para quien la magia correspondería a un estadio de consciencia alegórico y simbólico en lugar de a una cosmovisión posterior, como la nuestra, literal, prosaica y mecanicista. Así lo defiende en una de sus obras más significadas, *Salvar las apariencias. Un estudio sobre la idolatría*, en la que aboga por la necesidad de superar tanto esa participación original del mundo denominada magia u ocultismo como la participación científica, que invade el lenguaje de falsos ídolos<sup>155</sup>. A juicio de Barfield la Encarnación y la Resurrección, elementos centrales de la fe cristiana, permitirían alcanzar la participación final, conocer el Nombre Divino<sup>156</sup>.

## 5. Conclusiones

Tras analizar la *Trilogía cósmica*, especialmente el libro que la clausura, aspiro a sintetizar las conclusiones que permiten responder a la pregunta de investigación con la que inicié estas líneas, esto es, ¿se produce una recepción del pensamiento mágico renacentista en *Esa horrible fortaleza*? Desde una perspectiva interdisciplinar, resulta posible afirmar que el estatuto epistemológico de los estudios académicos sobre el pensamiento mágico, como construcción teórica, relevante posa su mirada con especial interés en el resurgir hermético y neoplatónico del Renacimiento.

Por otra parte, la *Trilogía cósmica* del profesor C. S. Lewis supone un ejercicio de ficción y teología especulativa deudor de un modelo cosmológico periclitado pero sugestivo, el universo de las dos esferas ptolemaico y precopernicano en su vertiente neoplatónica y cristiana. Esta saga de literatura no mimética escenifica la lucha por la redención del hombre caído en el pecado y el descubrimiento de su lugar en un cosmos que permanece fiel a los designios del Creador. Además, da cabida a debates significativos en los enclaves de la cosmología, la metafísica o la antropología filosófica.

En los dos primeros libros de la saga —*Más allá del planeta silencioso* y *Perelandra. Un viaje a Venus*—, la recepción del pensamiento mágico es más sutil y queda supeditada al orden cosmológico de las esferas celestiales, pues la magia inocente, de raigambre platónica, permitiría acercarse al conocimiento de Dios. El desarrollo teórico de la magia se ciñe a *Esa horrible fortaleza*, que formula los vínculos entre la teúrgia y los númenes divinos al tiempo que vincula la goetia con los ángeles caídos. No obstante, el origen de la teúrgia estaría situado en Atlan-

tis, y alcanzaría su expresión más majestuosa en los mitos artúricos. La magia tendría continuidad, además, en los seres míticos, heraldos de un mundo antiguo que se bate en retirada. Este libro contiene la censura de la vertiente más operativa de la magia renacentista, encaminada a subvertir ontológicamente y a ejercer un poder concebido como dominación—aunque Shippey afirma que quedaría entreabierto la posibilidad de un uso inocente de la magia por parte del cristiano—.

Se produciría una recepción de ideas renacentistas. Así lo atestiguan su afinidad con el género utópico —en su acepción de un género de viajes fantásticos a regímenes de dichosa perfección o a distopías del mal lugar—, la afirmación de una cadena iniciática de saberes y verdades eternas, conectadas con la ley natural y la censura tanto de la goetia como de la adivinación astrológica al tiempo que postula que la verdadera magia supone el conocimiento de la religión y de Dios.

Concluyo con la respuesta a la pregunta de investigación. Sí existiría una recepción, no directa pero sí sutil y de intensidad gradual, de la magia renacentista en la *Trilogía cósmica* de C. S. Lewis. Tal vez su uso resulte ambiguo, pero permite un espacio de acercamiento —representado por Ficino y Pico della Mirandola, no así por los demás *magi* renacentistas— que permite avanzar en el camino de salvación. Finalmente, es posible apuntar que el planteamiento lewisiano acerca del pensamiento mágico en la *Trilogía cósmica* resulta próximo a la concepción de Owen Barfield según la cual sería un paso más, junto a la ciencia, para encontrar el verdadero conocimiento de la realidad y de Dios. De esta manera, la *Trilogía cósmica* presentaría por medio de la magia “cierto conocimiento de un mundo que estaba más allá de la naturaleza”<sup>157</sup>, el recuerdo de un mundo de analogías y símbolos a desentrañar que atesoraba “el último vestigio de un orden antiguo”<sup>158</sup>.

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- <sup>6</sup> Graf, 2006, pág. 719; Rodríguez Santidrián, 2004, 343.
- <sup>7</sup> También denominada Arte Real, sólo al alcance de “aquellos a quienes los escritores herméticos llamaban Almas Reales”, Mead, 1998, pág. 126.
- <sup>8</sup> Graf, 2006, pág. 719-724; Fanger y Klaassen, 2006, págs. 724-731; Brach, 2006, págs. 731-738 y Hanegraaff, 2006 b, págs. 738-744.
- <sup>9</sup> Couliano, 1987, pág. xvii.
- <sup>10</sup> Morales, 2007, págs. 111 y 112.
- <sup>11</sup> No obstante, resulta “indudable la presencia de la tradición neoplatónica y de la neopitagórica, del pensamiento hermético y de la tradición mágica a lo largo de la proceso de la revolución científica”, Reale y Antiseri, 1988 b, pág. 183.
- <sup>12</sup> Vergel, 2019, págs. 116-122. Esta resignificación simbólica e interpretativa podemos ejemplificarla en la aproximación relativista, contextual y posmoderna de la magia del caos. *cfr.* Atanes, 2018.
- <sup>13</sup> Vergel, 2019, pág. 122
- <sup>14</sup> Esta clasificación es reconocida desde los ámbitos de estudio del esoterismo occidental y el pensamiento hermético (*v.gr.* Hanegraaff, 2006 a, págs. 716 y 717) y de lo fenomenología de las religiones (p.ej. Martín Velasco, 1978, págs. 28-39 y Widengren, 1976, págs. 4-13).
- <sup>15</sup> A su juicio, la magia —por analogía con todo discurso esotérico— presentaría una serie de características. Las cuatro primarias serían las ideas de correspondencias universales, de una naturaleza viviente, del papel mediador de la imaginación y de la transmutación —o segundo nacimiento, de carácter alquímico—. Las secundarias obedecerían a las prácticas de concordancia o simpatía y a la idea de transmisión, *vid.* Faivre, 2010, págs. 11-14.
- <sup>16</sup> Hanegraaff, 2013, págs. 104-117.
- <sup>17</sup> Van den Doel y Hanegraaff, 2006, pág. 606.
- <sup>18</sup> Lachman, 2020, pág. 36.
- <sup>19</sup> Lachman, 2020, págs. 38-42.
- <sup>20</sup> Pico della Mirandola, 1984, pág. 101.
- <sup>21</sup> *Vid.* Yates, 1983. La “tesis Yates” apuntaría a la existencia de una tradición de filosofía oculta, que subyace bajo las tramas interpretativas hegemónicas de la Modernidad. Escrita con entusiasmo, esta obra alcanzó un enorme éxito gracias a un feliz *kairós*, pues se sumarían a la sabiduría de su autora, el espíritu de contestación social de su propia época con la tradición dispar de los *magi* renacentistas. El éxito de esta tesis refleja el enfoque metodológico del Instituto Warburg de Londres, *cfr.* Warburg, 2005; Wind, 1972 y Walker, 2000. Esta tesis gozó de predicamento académico y de una recepción extendida en la cultura popular, especialmente en entornos contraculturales, movimientos *new age* y experiencias lúdico-narrativas. No obstante, ha quedado matizada por los nuevos paradigmas de estudios esotéricos occidentales (Hanegraaff, 2013, págs. 6, 7, 183 y 192; Hanegraaff, 2012, págs. 325-335; Partridge, 2015, págs. 54 y 55) y por corrientes historicistas (Faivre, 2010, pág. 9; Goodrick-Clarke, 2008, págs. 117 y 118).
- <sup>22</sup> Garin, 1981 a, pág. 86.
- <sup>23</sup> El manuscrito que Cosimo de Medici recibió desde Macedonia corresponde al *Laurentianus*, que Ficino tradujo al latín y publicó en 1471, *vid.* Hermes Trismegisto, 1998, pág. 193.
- <sup>24</sup> Alsina Clota, 1989, pág. 110.
- <sup>25</sup> Fanger y Klaassen, 2006, pág. 728-731. Buena prueba de la importancia del *Picatrix* en el Renacimiento es que magia y astrología “encuentran allí justificación y fundamento en el cuadro especulativo del neoplatonismo”, Garin a, 1981, pág. 83.
- <sup>26</sup> Brakke, 2013, págs. 89-142 y Reale y Antiseri, 1988 a, págs. 356-358.
- <sup>27</sup> Antón Pacheco, 2017, pág. 30.
- <sup>28</sup> Hermes Trismegisto, 1998, pág. 110.
- <sup>29</sup> *Vid.* Reale y Antiseri, 1988 b, págs. 40-49.
- <sup>30</sup> Reale y Antiseri, 1988 b, pág. 40. Esta impugnación, objeta el profesor Antón Pacheco, “no significa en absoluto una refutación de la idea de hermetismo cristiano, pues este no es cuestión de Filología o historia factual sino de metafísica y de experiencia espiritual”, *vid.* Antón Pacheco, 2017, pág. 36.
- <sup>31</sup> Sellés, 2007, pág. 102.
- <sup>32</sup> Sellés, 2007, pág. 102.
- <sup>33</sup> Garin, 1990, pág. 179 y Garin, 1981 b, págs. 202 y 203.
- <sup>34</sup> Haarpur, 2010, pág. 198.
- <sup>35</sup> Garin, 1990, pág. 194.
- <sup>36</sup> Haarpur, 2010, pág. 182.
- <sup>37</sup> Traducción correspondiente a Reale y Antiseri, 1988 b, págs. 76 y 77. El original, en latín, sería: “Denique duo sunt magiae genera. Unum quidem eorum qui certo quodam cultu daemones sibi conciliant, quorum opera freti fabricant saepe portenta. Hoc autem penitus explosum est, quando princeps huius mundi ciectus est foras. Alterum vero eorum qui naturales materias opportune causis subiiciunt naturalibus, mira quadam

## Notas

<sup>1</sup> *Cfr.* Pato, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> El “momento Yates”, pese a las contestaciones y matizaciones académicas posteriores, ejemplifica la relevancia académica del pensamiento mágico y sus vínculos con el hermetismo, *cfr.* Yates, 1983.

<sup>3</sup> *Cfr.* Koyré, 1968; Kragh, 2008; Kuhn, 1996 y Sellés, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Solís y Sellés, 2013, págs. 279-281; Reale y Antiseri, 1988 b, págs. 40-49 y 182-193.

<sup>5</sup> Yeats, 2007, pág. 9.

ratione formandas. Huius quoque artificii species duae sunt: altera quidem curiosa, altera necessaria”, Ficino, 1989, pág. 398.

<sup>38</sup> Ficino, 1989, págs. 236-393 y 398. *Cfr.* Voss, 2006, pág. 3.

<sup>39</sup> Zambelli, 2007, págs. 23-25; Van den Doel y Hanegraaff, 2006, pág. 611.

<sup>40</sup> Morales, 2007, págs. 114 y 115.

<sup>41</sup> Rabin, 2008, pág. 155.

<sup>42</sup> Goñi Zubieta, 1996, págs. 28 y 29. Célebres resuenan las siguientes líneas: “Ni celeste, ni terrestre te hicimos, ni mortal, ni inmortal, para que tú mismo, como modelador y escultor de ti mismo, más a tu gusto y honra, te forjes la forma que prefieras para ti. Podrás degenerar a lo inferior, con los brutos; podrás realzarte a la par de las cosas divinas, por tu misma decisión”, Pico della Mirandola, 1984, pág. 105.

<sup>43</sup> Pico della Mirandola, 1984, pág. 131.

<sup>44</sup> Pico della Mirandola, 1984, págs. 131 y 132.

<sup>45</sup> Pico della Mirandola, 1996, pág. 71.

<sup>46</sup> Yates, 1983, pág. 106.

<sup>47</sup> Goñi Zubieta, 1996, págs. 43 y 44.

<sup>48</sup> Pico della Mirandola, 1996, pág. 101.

<sup>49</sup> Garin, 1981 b, pág. 202. La magia obedecería a la exaltación del ideal hermético, a la posibilidad de superar todo fatalismo y de aprovechar la sabiduría: “La infinita potencia del hombre se ampara en la unidad del Acto, y de ahí el dominio que consigue el sabio sobre las estrellas, la plasmación de los elementos por parte del mago, la unidad del ser y del pensar la apertura total de la realidad”, Garin, 1981 b, pág. 216.

<sup>50</sup> Lewis, 2006 a, pág. 172.

<sup>51</sup> Sellés, 2007, pág. 13.

<sup>52</sup> Kragh, 2008, pág. 9.

<sup>53</sup> Hooper, 1996, págs. 524 y 525.

<sup>54</sup> Hein, 1998, págs. 218 y 219. Para abordar las similitudes entre la utopía moreana y la *Trilogía cósmica*, *cfr.* Parker, 2017. A juicio de Parker, si en las dos primeras obras de Lewis se proponen utopías, la tercera exhibe una distopía, en estas obras se producen paralelismos con la obra del mártir católico Tomás Moro. Para un estudio pormenorizado del utopismo en el pensamiento de C. S. Lewis, especialmente en la *Trilogía de Ransom*, *vid.* Ramos Vera, 2020, págs. 197-213.

<sup>55</sup> El viaje formaría parte tanto del género utópico como de una peregrinación espiritual que despierta la conciencia de su protagonista y de los lectores a un modelo cosmológico, metafísico y teológico, Downing, 2007 b, págs. 16-22.

<sup>56</sup> Downing, 2007 b, págs. 22-26.

<sup>57</sup> Downing, 2007 a, pág. 37; Hein, 1998, pág. 225; Kilby, 1978, pág. 27

<sup>58</sup> Downing, 2007 a, págs. 44-48.

<sup>59</sup> Downing, 2007 c, págs. 65 y 66; Searle, 2007, pág. 14. En esta obra, el profesor Lewis realizaría un ejercicio de hermenéutica medievizante, pues sólo el regreso de Merlín permitiría a Ransom convertirse en un trasunto del Rey Arturo Pendragón y planificar el regreso de Logres, la Bretaña de Camelot y Avalón.

<sup>60</sup> Urang, 1971, págs. 24-26.

<sup>61</sup> Hein, 1998, págs. 234 y 235.

<sup>62</sup> Purtil, 2007, pág. 98. Cabe destacar también que la obra supone el descenso infernal de Mark Studdock, como Dante, y las vías para alcanzar la redención, *vid.* Downing, 2007 c, págs. 57-62.

<sup>63</sup> Kragh, 2008, págs. 34-49; Sellés, 2007, págs. 27-29, 44-50 y 101-105; Solís y Sellés, 2005, págs. 90, 168-187, 224-227.

<sup>64</sup> Lewis, 1964, págs. 1-13.

<sup>65</sup> Lewis, 1964, págs. 13-21.

<sup>66</sup> Lewis, 1964, págs. 92-112.

<sup>67</sup> Lewis, 1964, págs. 113-121 y 139-197.

<sup>68</sup> Lewis, 2006 c, pág. 367; Lewis, 1964, págs. 122-138.

<sup>69</sup> Lewis, 2006 a, págs. 217 y 218.

<sup>70</sup> Lewis, 1964, págs. 216 y 217.

<sup>71</sup> Lewis, 2006 a, págs. 112-121.

<sup>72</sup> Lewis, 2006 a, págs. 172 y 173.

<sup>73</sup> Lewis, 2006 a, pág. 191.

<sup>74</sup> Lewis, 2006 a, pág. 226.

<sup>75</sup> A juicio de Urang, en Malacandra imperaría un sentimiento generalizado de lo numinoso, *vid.* Urang, 1971, pág. 15.

<sup>76</sup> Lewis, 2006 a, págs. 217, 218 y 224. En este sentido, Gareth Knight inserta estas afirmaciones en el seno de la tradición ininterrumpida y de la sabiduría perenne pues, no en vano, engarza las alusiones a Bernardo Silvestre con la propia mención que Lewis realiza en *The Discarded Image* a autores como Apuleyo. Las profundas imágenes de Malacandra reverberarían con esa sabiduría soslayada por el mundo moderno pero no completamente olvidada, siempre presta para reemerger en el esoterismo occidental.  *Vid.* Knight, 2010, págs. 45 y 46.

<sup>77</sup> Lewis, 2006 b, pág. 278.

<sup>78</sup> Lewis, 2006 b, pág. 246.

<sup>79</sup> Urang, 1971, pág. 19.

<sup>80</sup> Lewis, 2006 b, págs. 253-257.

<sup>81</sup> Esta ascensión platónica representaría un trayecto de iniciación a la sabiduría prístina y a la cadena iniciática, *vid.* Knight, 2010, págs. 50-53.

<sup>82</sup> Lewis, 2006 c, pág. 144.

<sup>83</sup> Lewis, 2006 c, pág. 145.

<sup>84</sup> Urang, 1971, pág. 24.

<sup>85</sup> Knight, 2010, pág. 54. Para el propio Knight, *Esa horrible fortaleza* abunda en semejanzas con el esoterismo cristiano, merced a argumentos como los siguientes: (1) Lewis revelaría un conocimiento profundo sobre el funcionamiento de fraternidades esotéricas, tal vez por su amistad con Barfield y Williams; (2) Jane y Mark serían candidatos a la iniciación en las sendas esotéricas de la mano izquierda y derecha, respectivamente; y (3) las alusiones a la cara oculta de la Luna, en sentido preternatural, también en sus aspectos malignos, como reseñaban Steiner y Blavatsky, Knight, 2010, págs. 57-64.

<sup>86</sup> *Cfr.* Ramos Vera, 2020, págs. 189-213.

<sup>87</sup> Searle, 2007, pág. 11 y Urang, 1971, pág. 26.

<sup>88</sup> Lewis, 2006 c, pág. 223.  *Vid.* Lewis, 1990, pág. 56. Klein apostilla que el N.I.C.E., al cosificar la naturaleza, la convierte en objeto de explotación orientada a una gestión exitosa, Klein, 2014, pág. 73.

<sup>89</sup> Knight, 2010, págs. 56 y 57.

<sup>90</sup> Lewis, 2006 c, pág. 260.

<sup>91</sup> Lewis, 2006 c, pág. 291.

<sup>92</sup> Knight, 2010, pág. 54.

<sup>93</sup> Lewis, 2006 c, pág. 293.

<sup>94</sup> Lewis, 2006 c, pág. 294.

<sup>95</sup> Lewis, 2006 c, pág. 341.

<sup>96</sup> Lewis, 2006 c, pág. 351.

<sup>97</sup> Lewis, 2006 c, pág. 374.

<sup>98</sup> Lewis, 2006 c, pág. 409.

<sup>99</sup> Lewis, 2006 c, págs. 413-423.

<sup>100</sup> Lewis, 2006 c, pág. 250.

<sup>101</sup> Purtil, 2007, pág. 99.

<sup>102</sup> Lewis, 2006 c, pág. 371.

<sup>103</sup> Lewis, 2006 c, pág. 372.

<sup>104</sup> Lewis, 2006 c, pág. 372.

<sup>105</sup> Lewis, 2006 c, pág. 372.

<sup>106</sup> Lewis, 2006 c, pág. 372.

<sup>107</sup> Lewis, 2006 c, pág. 457-469.  *Vid.* Klein, 2014, pág. 751

<sup>108</sup> Lewis, 2006 c, pág. 367.

<sup>109</sup> Lewis, 2006 c, pág. 368.

<sup>110</sup> Lewis, 2006 c, pág. 406.

<sup>111</sup> Lewis, 2006 c, pág. 407.

<sup>112</sup> Lewis, 2006 c, pág. 258.

<sup>113</sup> Lewis, 2006 c, págs. 258 y 259.

<sup>114</sup> Lewis, 2006 c, pág. 261.

<sup>115</sup> Lewis, 1973, págs. 3-5.

<sup>116</sup> Lewis, 1973, págs. 8, 9 y 12.

<sup>117</sup> Lewis, 1973, pág. 12.

<sup>118</sup> Lewis, 2006 c, pág. 51.

<sup>119</sup> Lewis, 2006 c, pág. 225. Continúa su aserto con una afirmación categorica: “Es para conquistar la muerte o para conquistar la vida orgánica, si lo prefiere (...) Es para sacar de ese capullo de vida orgánica que resguardó la primera infancia de la mente al hombre nuevo, el hombre que no morirá, el hombre artificial, libre de la naturaleza. La naturaleza es la escalera que trepamos y ahora desechamos”, Lewis, 2006 c, págs. 226 y 227.

<sup>120</sup> Lewis, 2006 c, pág. 228. A mayor abundamiento, el mismo personaje defiende que “el poder del hombre sobre la naturaleza significa el poder del hombre sobre otros hombres con la naturaleza como instrumento”, Lewis, 2006 c, pág. 228.

<sup>121</sup> Lewis, 2006 c, pág. 229.

<sup>122</sup> Couliano, 1987, págs. 87-95.

<sup>123</sup> Lewis, 2006 c, pág. 252.

<sup>124</sup> Lewis, 2006 c, pág. 253.

<sup>125</sup> Lewis, 2006 c, págs. 329 y 330.

<sup>126</sup> Searle, 2007, pág. 9.

<sup>127</sup> Klein, 2014, págs. 65 y 66.

<sup>128</sup> Se trataría de una historia de pecado, arrepentimiento y regeneración, *vid.* Urang, 1971, pág. 25.

<sup>129</sup> Shippey, 2007, pág. 23

<sup>130</sup> Shippey, 2007, págs. 27 y 28.

<sup>131</sup> Shippey, 2007, págs. 28 y 29.

<sup>132</sup> Shippey, 2007, págs. 31-39.

<sup>133</sup> Magia y ciencia serían dos vías de acceso al poder.  *Vid.* Shippey, 2010, págs. 245 y 246.

<sup>134</sup> Shippey, 2007, págs. 42 y 43.



<sup>135</sup> Knight defiende que Lewis concebía la actividad mitopoética como la actividad de enlazar imágenes. De esta manera, dichas imágenes afloraban, como un medio de cognición de mundos interiores, *vid.* Knight, 2010, pág. 63.

<sup>136</sup> Van den Doel y Hanegraaff, 2006, pág. 606.

<sup>137</sup> García Cuadrado, 2001, págs. 61-63.

<sup>138</sup> Burgos, 2003, págs. 100-103.

<sup>139</sup> Honda, 2000, viii-xiv.

<sup>140</sup> Urang, 1971, pág. 27.

<sup>141</sup> *Cfr.* Van den Doel y Hanegraaff, 2006.

<sup>142</sup> Urang, 1971, pág. 7.

<sup>143</sup> Urang, 1971, pág. 9.

<sup>144</sup> Lewis, 2006 c, pág. 294.

<sup>145</sup> Dickerson y O'Hara, 2009, págs. 241-249.

<sup>146</sup> *Cfr.* Lewis, 1990.

<sup>147</sup> Bogiaris, 2018, pág. 23.

<sup>148</sup> Downing, 2007 c, pág. 64.

<sup>149</sup> Ficino, 1989, págs. 397 y 398; Ficino, 1986, págs. 125-128.

<sup>150</sup> *Cfr.* Voss, 2006.

<sup>151</sup> *Cfr.* Pico della Mirandola, 1984.

<sup>152</sup> Garin, 1981 a, pág. 114.

<sup>153</sup> Pico della Mirandola, 1996, pág. 71.

<sup>154</sup> Haarpur, 2010, págs. 361 y 362.

<sup>155</sup> *Cfr.* Barfield, 2015.

<sup>156</sup> Barfield, 2015, pág. 231.

<sup>157</sup> Lewis, 2006 c, pág. 407.

<sup>158</sup> Lewis, 2006 c, pág. 368.

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# The Definitions of Number in Boethius's *Introduction to Arithmetic*

Marek Otisk

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**Abstract:** The paper enquires into the reasons why Boethius altered the passage addressing the definition of number in his loose translation of *Introduction to Arithmetic* by the Neopythagorean philosopher and mathematician Nicomachus of Gerasa. While Nicomachus's text contains three definitions of number, Boethius lists only two. However, he also pays attention to the definition he omits, even though he does not regard it as a proper definition. In his view it fails to embody the essence of number, and is to be understood as a description of the components constitutive of the substance of number. Although this is a possible explanation of Boethius's dismissal of the definition provided by Nicomachus, the description also occupies an important place in relation to the general characteristic of number, because Nicomachus's definitions fully correspond to the three basic topics which were central to contemporary arithmetic, viz. the science of number: number as discrete quantity, referring to the properties of numbers and their classifications; number as collection of units, leading to the topic of figural numbers; and number as quantity emanating from unit and subsequently returning to it, corresponding with numerical ratios, sequences and their transfers.

**Keywords:** Boethius; Nicomachus of Gerasa; number; arithmetic; quadrivium.

## 1. Introduction

Medieval arithmetic is fairly far from our contemporary understanding of the science of arithmetic. On the other hand, it is very close to the ancient understanding of the importance of the teaching about numbers (i.e., arithmetic) as this art was constituted during the pre-Socratic period, especially in connection with the Pythagorean school.<sup>1</sup> Ancient and medieval scholars regarded numbers or numeric ratios as primarily representing the basic structure of reality, since they are the essences of things having a divine origin.<sup>2</sup> Arithmetic was regarded as not only the science allowing for conducting arithmetic operations (although this aspect – usually called *λογιστική* – was, as an applied practical arithmetic, part of the contemporary arithmetical art), but, above all, it was a scientific discipline with a significant philosophical and metaphysical overlap, since by the numbers cognition we at the same time cognize the metaphysical structure of reality.<sup>3</sup> Further, numbers are an instrument that sharpens the

intellect and can move the human mind up from the erroneous world to the highest truths and the Divine essence.<sup>4</sup>

In the line starting with Pythagoras and early Pythagoreans, through Plato and Aristotle, over to some Neoplatonists and especially Neopythagoreans, the abovementioned importance of arithmetic, which is at the same time a methodical (or propaedeutic, at least) way to philosophical knowledge,<sup>5</sup> was handed down in different forms. During the Middle Ages, this understanding of mathematics was positively received, which may have been influenced by biblical texts suggesting that numbers were tools used by God in creating the world (most notably *Sap.* 11:20) and medieval mathematics often referred to this.<sup>6</sup>

It is not surprising, therefore, that the most influential arithmetic text of the Middle Ages was the loose Latin translation of the popular textbook by the Neopythagorean mathematician and philosopher Nicomachus of Gerasa called *Introduction to Arithmetic*,<sup>7</sup> contrived by Boethius around 500 AD.<sup>8</sup> In this translation, Boethius mediated to medieval intellectuals a summarization of the Neopythagorean teaching about numbers and about the importance of arithmetic itself.<sup>9</sup> According to this teaching, a number is not only an expression of quantity, but also a metaphysical entity we need to know in order to be able to grasp the world around us and to set out on our journey to God; numbers are patterns according to which God created all of creation and the arithmetic pursuit is at the same time an endeavour to grasp God's wisdom; no philosopher can be a true philosopher without devoting his time to studying mathematics – and especially arithmetic.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, arithmetic can be (not exclusively in medieval times) characterized as the science of numbers and, provided we want to understand it properly in the contemporary context, it is indispensable to focus on the ways number was defined. Nicomachus in his *Introduction to Arithmetic* lists three definitions of number:

- (1) number as discrete quantity (*πλήθος ὠρισμένον*);
- (2) number as collection of units (*μονάδων σύστημα*);
- (3) number as quantity emanating from unit (*πρόσθητος χύμα ἐκ μονάδων συγκείμενον*).<sup>11</sup>

If judged by today's standards, Boethius's translation would not count as an illustrious piece of translation because (as the interpreter himself states in the dedication letter to his adoptive father Symmachus) it treats Nicomachus's text freely (*liberius*), some passages that seemed too extensive (*diffusius*) to Boethius were short-

ened, while others were slightly extended when he thought that Nicomachus was too abrupt (*uelocius*).<sup>12</sup>

This approach to Nicomachus's arithmetic text is clearly reflected even in the case of the definition of number – in his translation, Boethius omits Nicomachus's first definition of number and mentions only the second and third definitions.<sup>13</sup> Since the definition of number is essential for grasping the content of arithmetic, Boethius's modification of the Greek original may seem rather surprising. Therefore, this paper follows two basic issues and tries to:

- elucidate possible reasons for Boethius's omission of one of the definitions of number given by Nicomachus,
- and at the same time, it focuses on all three definitions of number and shows that their formulation is directly connected to the problems which Nicomachean (and in relation to it even medieval) arithmetic tried to solve.

While pursuing these goals, I will define mathematics in accordance with Boethius's texts, per its relation to theoretical knowledge, and establish its place among the mathematical (so called quadrivial) sciences. Next, I will focus on arithmetic itself and introduce the areas of its interest through the various definitions of number as presented by Nicomachus. I will first describe number as discrete quantity (while this characterization is not included among Boethius's definitions for a certain reason, as I assume, this understanding of number holds a firm place in Boethius's account), then I will examine number as collection of units and, eventually, consider number as quantity emanating from unit.

## 2. Mathematics and the quadrivial sciences

In the abovementioned letter to Symmachus (i.e., the prologue to the translation of Nicomachus's *Introduction to Arithmetic*) Boethius characterizes arithmetic as the first of the four mathematical disciplines (*quattuor matheseos disciplinae*),<sup>14</sup> which are collectively referred to as the quadrivium (*quadruuium*), i.e., the four steps (*gradus*) leading up to philosophical wisdom.<sup>15</sup>

Boethius covered the exact place of mathematics in relation to philosophical knowledge in other texts. In the first commentary on Porphyry's *Isagoge* he endorsed the Aristotelian division of philosophy by splitting it into theoretical or speculative philosophy (*theoretica, speculatiua, contemplatiua*) and practical philosophy (*practica, actiua*). Within theoretical philosophy, he established three fundamental scientific domains concerned with *intellectibilia* (i.e., divine science), *intellegibilia* (i.e., mathematics) and *naturalia* (i.e., physics).<sup>16</sup> Similarly, in the later theological treatise *De trinitate (Quomodo trinitas unus Deus ac non tres dii)*, Boethius divides theoretical philosophy into physics (*disciplina naturalis*), mathematics (*mathematica*) and theology (*disciplina theologica*). The subject of mathematics is defined as abstracted from matter and motion, even though it is present in matter as the forms (*formae*) of bodies.<sup>17</sup>

Mathematics is thus situated at the centre of theoretical philosophy.<sup>18</sup> Contrary to physics, it focuses on something stable, although not as metaphysically noble as the-

ology (or metaphysics, i.e., the divine science) which inquiries into an object completely independent of matter.<sup>19</sup> At least since Aristotle, the subject of mathematics had been defined by the category of quantity which is removed from matter, unchanging and stable, but existing in the material world.<sup>20</sup> This description was accepted also by Nicomachus.<sup>21</sup>

Quantity (*ποσόν* or *ποσότης*, *quantitas*) can be divided into two basic kinds: on the one hand, it is a multitude (*πλήθος*, *multitudo*), i.e., something firmly demarcated (*discreta*), delimited and countable, e.g. individual trees, books, etc.; and on the other hand, it is a magnitude (*μέγεθος*, *magnitudo*), i.e., something continuous (*continua*), with a certain extent and thus measurable, e.g. the length of an item, the circumference of a sphere, etc.<sup>22</sup> Boethius analysed the distinction between multitude and magnitude in detail and in a very similar manner in the passage about the category of quantity in his commentary on Aristotle's *Categories*.<sup>23</sup>

Cassiodorus, Boethius's contemporary and successor in the highest Roman office of *magister officiorum*, who knew Boethius's work including the translation of Nicomachus's *Arithmetic*,<sup>24</sup> thus defines the subject of mathematics in a link to Boethius as abstract quantity (*quantitas abstracta*), that is, quantity which is free from all delimitation, i.e., including the difference between countability and measurability.<sup>25</sup> Abstract quantity became the subject of general mathematical inquiry for medieval scholars, which was reinforced by the fact that Isidore of Seville (ca. 560–636) quoted Cassiodorus's Nicomachean-Boethian definition of the subject of mathematics literally in his encyclopaedia *Etymologies*, which was very popular in the Middle Ages.<sup>26</sup>

Boethius (and Nicomachus as well) used the multitude–magnitude distinction to distinguish between four special mathematical sciences, i.e., the *quadrivium*. Multitude can be thought of in itself (*per se*), that is, as discrete delimited multitude, i.e., number in itself, or as a multitude related to another multitude (*ad aliud, ad aliquid*), that is when numbers are ordered according to numerical ratios. The former gives rise to the doctrine of numbers, viz. arithmetic, which inquiries into numbers *per se*, the latter results in the science of music and musical intervals, whose subject are numerical ratios. The second kind of quantity, i.e., magnitude, can also be differentiated further. In this case, Boethius lists the criteria of stability (*immobilis*) and mobility (*mobilis*). The mathematical science that enquires into the unchanging and stable is geometry, while astronomy focuses on magnitudes in motion.<sup>27</sup> In this way, the basic structure of mathematics emerges as it was mediated through Boethius's Neopythagorean reading: the subject of arithmetic is *multitudo per se*, geometry focuses on *magnitudo stabilis*, music deals with *multitudo ad aliquid*, and astronomy is concerned with *magnitudo mobilis*.<sup>28</sup>

According to Boethius, arithmetic enjoys the most important position among the other mathematical disciplines (*principium et mater*), since multitude *per se* is nothing other than number itself, which is necessary for all other (not exclusively) mathematical sciences.<sup>29</sup> Without arithmetic, Boethius writes, there could be no geometry, music, astronomy, or any other kind of human knowledge at

all. Boethius (following Nicomachus) confirms the primacy of arithmetic by the following argument: Numbers (*numerus*) are an expression of God's thoughts according to which God created all of creation, as mentioned before, therefore numbers must be antecedent (*prior*) by virtue of their nature (*natura*). When that which is later (*posterior*) vanishes, e.g. the species 'human' (*homo*), that which is antecedent, e.g. the genus 'animal' (*animal*) is not affected; while when that which is antecedent vanishes (animal), then all that is later and dependent on it (e.g. human) vanishes too.<sup>30</sup> Arithmetic as the science of numbers thus precedes all other sciences because nothing could exist without numbers.

Geometry, Boethius continues, needs arithmetic because it would not be able to think about the shapes (*formae*) of objects (e.g. triangle, quadrangle, etc.) without the ability to describe them using numbers. Music theory, i.e., numerical ratios (*proportionones*), would not be able to create various musical intervals (e.g. octave, perfect fourth, perfect fifth, etc.), if there were no numbers, and thus music needs arithmetic. Astronomy would lack the ability to describe the orbit of space bodies (*circuli, centra*, etc.) and their distances and positions without the knowledge of geometry (geometrical shapes) and music (perfect celestial harmony, *armonica*, music of spheres), therefore even in astronomy numbers are essentially present and without arithmetic there would be no geometry, music, and also no astronomy.<sup>31</sup>

In this manner, Boethius establishes a certain hierarchy of the mathematical sciences. Arithmetic is necessarily the first because for its purposes it needs to possess only numbers and nothing else is essential for it. Although geometry enquires into something *per se* (shapes), it needs numbers for its practice and follows immediately after arithmetic. Music does not focus on something *per se*, at the centre of its attention there are the relative properties of numbers, therefore it is also dependent on arithmetic (i.e., on numbers themselves) and comes third. In the case of astronomy, it is true that it necessarily needs both arithmetic and geometry and cannot operate even without music; therefore, the last fourth place among the mathematical sciences is due to it.<sup>32</sup>

### 3. *Quantitas discreta*: substance or definition of number?

All knowledge thus needs numbers and if humans want to pursue philosophy or science, they must start with numbers. Without numbers, there would be nothing, since everything is created of numbers or numerical ratios.<sup>33</sup> Boethius compares that to human speech when he says that in an analogous manner (i.e., according to a numerical order) syllables (*syllabae*) are created from letters (*litterae*) and then they proceed to fully articulated words (*voces*).<sup>34</sup> This example, e.g. the comparability of the relations between letters, syllables, and speech (*oratio*) and the relations between numbers and creation, is again clearly declared by Boethius in his commentary on Aristotle's *Categories*, where he also explicitly states that numbers are delimited quantities (*quantitas discreta*),<sup>35</sup>

which could be understood as a basic characterisation of number itself.

Boethius's formulation bears a strong resemblance to the first Nicomachean definition of number as discrete quantity (*πλήθος ὠρισμένον*), which Boethius did not include in his translation. There could be several reasons for Boethius's omission of this Nicomachus's definition.

The first possible reason could concern Boethius's knowledge of Nicomachus's treatise. For example, Boethius could have used the manuscript of the text that is missing this definition – e.g., the manuscript H (according to Hoche's apparatus) could be considered.<sup>36</sup> Further, provided that Boethius had encountered arithmetic in the circle of Ammonius Harmiae († ca. 520) in Alexandria, he would have adopted contemporary reading of Nicomachus's text as containing only two definitions of number, i.e. collection of units and "fluxion" theory.<sup>37</sup> An illustrative example of such interpretation is the commentary to Nicomachus's *Introduction to Arithmetic* written by Boethius's contemporary Asclepius of Tralles († ca. 555) where two definitions of number are mentioned in slightly confused form.<sup>38</sup>

On the other hand, (not only) older tradition of interpreting Nicomachus *Arithmetic* obviously preferred distinguishing three definitions of a number. For instance, Iamblichus, although his commentary to Nicomachus's *Introduction to Arithmetic* is very different in its scopes and aims, presupposed more definitions of number, including number as a discrete quantity (*πλήθος ὠρισμένον*), i.e., Nicomachus's first definition of number.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, it may be fruitful to look at this definition in more detail.

Nicomachus's first definition of number is at least confusing, in part because of the ambiguous terminology used by Nicomachus in the introductory chapters of his arithmetic text.<sup>40</sup> While he first distinguished between two types of quantity (*ποσόν*) – multitude (*πλήθος*) and magnitude (*μέγεθος*) –,<sup>41</sup> he subsequently used the term *ποσόν*, formerly declared as quantity, for differentiating between the two kinds of multitude which constitute the distinction between arithmetic and music. In contrast to multitude as (countable) quantity stands magnitude, characteristic for geometry and astronomy, for which Nicomachus in this case used the term *πηλίκοσ*.<sup>42</sup> Even this magnitude is obviously quantity (*ποσότης*), as stated by Nicomachus two chapters later.<sup>43</sup>

Nicomachus confusingly uses the terms quantity (*ποσόν, ποσότης*), multitude (*πλήθος, ποσόν*) and magnitude (*μέγεθος, πηλίκοσ, ποσότης*). Numbers, provided they are defined as discrete quantity,<sup>44</sup> are by this definition primarily considered to be the subject of arithmetic because they must necessarily be multitude conceived in itself. Nicomachus is repeating what he has said earlier to a certain extent, since he specified the subject of arithmetic in a similar fashion a few lines above,<sup>45</sup> only using different terms.

Boethius apparently noticed the terminological ambiguity of Nicomachus's text<sup>46</sup> and tried to unify the involved terms when he used the phrase *multitudo per se*, where *multitudo* is a kind of quantity (*quantitas*) specified by delimitation (*discreta*). Therefore, he found it difficult to repeat Nicomachus's first definition of number as de-

limited multitude, since he would *de facto* be saying that number is delimitation of delimited quantity. For Boethius, number is not delimited multitude (that is, something like *multitudo discreta*), but delimited quantity itself (*quantitas discreta per se*). For Nicomachus and his ambiguous terminology this problem did not arise, since he at the same time confusingly referred to multitude as quantity.

However, terminological issues need not have been the essential reason (in addition to the abovementioned) why Boethius omitted Nicomachus's first definition. The redundancy and untrustworthiness of this definition may be due to the very effort to capture the substance (*substantia*) of number, which is the subject of Boethius's (and Nicomachus's) inquiry immediately prior to the formulations of number definitions. All things are formed according to numbers and numerical ratios and even these numbers are composed of certain components,<sup>47</sup> since numbers are not something entirely simple and are composed (*compositum*) by nature (*natura*). The components of a number cannot be diverse (*diversis*) but must manifest a certain similarity (*similis*). The substance of a number is composed of even (*par*) and odd (*impar*), which can be thought of as contradictory (*contraria*), but by composing even and odd it is possible to make up all the numbers that are used by God to create a harmonic composition (*modulatio*).<sup>48</sup>

The very substance of numbers is thus composite; therefore, it is discrete quantity since every composed substance is discrete and delimited (*discreta*) by its components.<sup>49</sup> If we speak about number as discrete quantity, then we do not define number but describe its substance and, at the same time, we can characterize the place of arithmetic among the mathematical sciences in the same manner (mathematics enquires into abstract quantity, arithmetic deals with discrete quantity).<sup>50</sup>

The distinction between a definition and a description is mentioned by Boethius at several paragraphs of his treatises. According to *Commentary to Categories* definitions (*diffinitiones*) and descriptions (*descriptiones*) are related to the nature or notion of things (*ratio substantiae*) – a definition must be composed from a superior genus (*genus*) and a difference (*differentia*), whereas a description collects the properties (*proprietas*) of certain thing (*res*).<sup>51</sup> Accordingly, a definition must express what the given thing is (*quid sit*).<sup>52</sup> In other words, according to Boethius's second commentary to Porphyry's *Isagoge*: a definition (*definitio*) shows a common (*communio*) substance of many (*multa*) things, while a description (*descriptio*) expresses specific properties (*proprietas*) or qualities of the given thing. If we know properties, we can use a description, but if we know the genus and specific difference, we can formulate a definition, ergo we know a nature or an essence of the thing.<sup>53</sup>

According to these Boethius's statements, a definition must express what the given thing is, it means nature, essence, or substance of the thing. It is beyond doubt that he adhered to the same idea of definition when he was translating the arithmetical textbook by Nicomachus, since he makes an identical statement even in the *Introduction to Arithmetic: quid sit numerus definiendum est*;<sup>54</sup> and he immediately adds the first division (*divisio*) of numbers

which is nothing else than division to even and odd numbers, i.e., definition of the basic components of which the substance of numbers is composed.<sup>55</sup>

The delimitation of even and odd (or similar delimitations) belongs to the substance of numbers, but through the components of number the real definition of number is not expressed – there is no superior genus or specific difference. The components of a number (even or odd) are the basic properties of a number, so we should understand it as a description of a number. Characterizing number as discrete quantity is not a proper definition of number, but merely an expression of the fact that a number is always composed of certain components, i.e., it describes the substance of numbers. That means: any number is always a certain quantity delimited by that particular quantity (e.g. even or odd, specific value of the number, etc.), but this is not a definition.

Therefore, Boethius would have denied the status of proper definition of number in this case, because it is not an answer to the question what number is, but to the question of what the substance of number is composed, while it only defines these components afterwards. This may have been the key reason for Boethius to omit this first definition of number.<sup>56</sup>

Nonetheless, Boethius did understand number as discrete quantity (although discrete quantity cannot be a definition of number) – it is something that belongs to the very substance of numbers, because each number must express some discrete quantity.<sup>57</sup> Arithmetic deals with numbers and its goal is to appreciate the properties of numbers, that is, to discern (*divisio*) the characteristics of number, i.e., discrete quantity *per se*, as described by Boethius himself.<sup>58</sup> The first and main topic of Boethius's *Introduction to Arithmetic* is to specify the various properties of numbers, provided we start from the division to even and odd.

Thus, like Nicomachus in the text Boethius was working with, Boethius gradually deals with the properties of number *per se*, introduces the definitions of even and odd, clarifies the reasons why *unitas* is not a number, but the source, cause and mother of all numbers,<sup>59</sup> and then classifies numbers to explain their properties according to different criteria. Even numbers are further divided to even times even (*pariter par*), even times odd (*pariter impar*), odd times even (*impariter par*), and their arithmetic properties are described. With respect to odd numbers, Boethius discerns prime numbers, i.e., primary and incomposite numbers (*primi et incompositi*), secondary and composite numbers (*secundi et compositi*), and numbers he calls middle (*medii*). He also addresses their properties and instructions for determining sequences of those types of numbers, among others he illustratively describes the so-called sieve of Eratosthenes (*Eratosthenes cribrum*), which serves to identify all prime numbers. By the end of this first thematic part of his textbook, Boethius returns to even numbers and introduces another type of division according to the criterion of the sum of their dividers which results in an integral number (quotient), therefore he discerns perfect numbers (*perfecti*), superfluous numbers (*superflui*) and diminutive numbers (*deminuti*). The algorithm for finding perfect numbers is again clearly described together with the properties of these types of

numbers. The overview of the arithmetic teaching about the properties of numbers *per se* constitutes the larger part of the first book in Boethius's translation.<sup>60</sup>

It seems clear that the substance of number, which is composed of even and odd and which Nicomachus used in his first definition of number, is the main and most important content of the arithmetic science. Number as discrete quantity in itself includes a delimitation of properties (i.e., a description) according to the classificatory criteria which were used by ancient and medieval arithmetic and was its first and most significant topic.

#### 4. Number as *collectio unitatum*

However, arithmetic does not deal only with number, i.e., discrete quantity in itself, that is multitude in itself, but, as mentioned above, it is the science without which the other mathematical sciences would not be possible. This seems to affect the definition of the subject of arithmetic, that is, number. The first definition mentioned by Boethius (the second one mentioned by Nicomachus) was the most widely used delimitation of number in (not only) the Middle Ages.<sup>61</sup> Numbers are defined as collections of units (*unitatum collectio*).<sup>62</sup> In slight variations, this definition is mentioned by all scholars at the turn of antiquity and the Middle Ages whose texts were read at the institutions of medieval education: Martianus Capella wrote about 'congregation of units' (*congregatio monadum*),<sup>63</sup> Cassiodorus defined number as multitude composed of units (*ex monadibus multitudo composita*),<sup>64</sup> Isidore of Seville defined it as multitude built up of units (*multitudo ex unitatibus constituta*).<sup>65</sup>

This definition of number clearly refers to the above-mentioned difference between unit and a number: a number is something composed of units, while unit is not a number but the source, root, cause and mother of numbers. The lowest number is thus number two, since it is the first real collection of units.<sup>66</sup> At the same time, it is clear that by this definition Boethius (and Nicomachus) followed one of the essential themes of the ancient Pythagorean tradition of arithmetic, i.e., figurate numbers.<sup>67</sup>

Figurate numbers are a certain form of transition between arithmetic and geometric teachings since these numbers express the areal or spatial representation of numerical values with the help of unit points ordered into geometrical shapes. This was explicitly highlighted by Boethius when he stated at the beginning of the passage about figurate numbers in his translation of Nicomachus's work that he was going to enquire into quantity, which is not related to something else, but stands by itself and relates to geometric figures. He recalls that geometry as a science originates in arithmetic and uses this as evidence for the importance of these issues for arithmetic because it leads to the next one of the mathematical sciences.<sup>68</sup>

Defining number as collection of units gives rise to the image of a figural representation of numbers. The ordering of units, or representing them with points (*puncti*) as geometrical shapes, corresponds to natural (*naturalis*) signs for numerical values, in contrast to Greek (Nicomachus) or Roman (Boethius) numerals, and we could add also to Arabic numerals. While these commonly used

numerical symbols (*signa numerorum*) are instituted by humans, figurate numbers show numbers as sets of units, that is, if the number 5 is expressed, then this numeral symbol does not correspond to the natural character of the value '5', as this can be achieved only by an ordering of five units together.<sup>69</sup>

The insight that numbers are collections of units ordered into certain geometrical shapes reveals the direct relation of numbers to the created world surrounding human beings, whose building blocks are geometrical forms. When units are ordered into lines, we get linear numbers (*numeri lineares*) characterized by longitude (*longitudo*) as the only direction or dimension (*interuallum*). When the points are ordered in two directions (besides longitude there is also latitude, *latitudo*), plane numbers arise (*numeri plani*), e.g. triangle numbers (*triangulares*), tetragonal numbers (*quadrati*), pentagonal numbers (*pentagoni*), etc. When a third dimension, altitude (*altitudo*), is added to length and width, we get solid numbers (*numeri solidi*), that is, pyramidal numbers (*pyramides*), cubic numbers (*cybi*), etc. These types of numbers are similarly characterized by Boethius and Nicomachus, especially with respect to the way of establishing how figurate numbers refer to various numerical ratios.<sup>70</sup> The relationship to geometry is obvious here, therefore it is not surprising that number was defined in this way by Euclid in the arithmetic book of his *Elements*.<sup>71</sup>

The largest part of the second book of Boethius's *Introduction to Arithmetic* is constituted by a treatise on figurate numbers, which fully corresponds to the definition of number as *collectio unitatum*, while Boethius's own words clearly show that in the case of figurate numbers we are confronted with nothing else than orderings of units. This definition seems to directly refer to the second big topic of the arithmetic of his time. While the description of number as discrete quantity immediately leads to the explanation of the properties of numbers which are constitutive of numbers (i.e., even and odd) and as such essentially belongs to arithmetic, the definition of number as ordered set of units leads to what number is (i.e., definition of number: collection represents the superior genus and units as a specific difference forms each number) and also to the recognition of how important number is – in this case primarily in geometry as a mathematical science.

#### 5. Number as stream issuing from unit (and returning back to it again)

The second definition of number, as listed by Boethius (and the last one listed by Nicomachus), is number as big mass of quantity issuing from unities (*quantitatis aceruus ex unitatibus profusus*).<sup>72</sup> Even in this case, number is fundamentally differentiated from unit since it grows out of unit and unit is once again the cause of all numbers, not a number. Contrary to the definition of number as collection of units, the role of unit is now different: it is the source of numbers, while numbers are specific streams which come out of one, with which they are in a certain proportional relation.

Among the texts from the turn of antiquity and the Middle Ages, Martianus Capella stressed this definition

strongly. In his allegoric text, arithmetic (as well as the other liberal arts) is depicted as a lady presenting her craft. The description of the arithmetical science and its personified appearance reflect the understanding of numbers as streams. From the forehead (*frons*) of Lady Arithmetic a barely visible mystical ray (*radius*) bursts out (*erumpens*), which branches out and grows until it starts to shrink and contract (*contrahens*) back to her forehead.<sup>73</sup> The ray probably represents numbers and sequences, which branch out, according to specific ratios, into mutually interconnected, yet individual types of numbers ordered per these ratios which trace their origin back to unit. These numbers can be retroactively converted to the cause of all numbers, i.e., unit. With this image, Martianus was perhaps presupposing this definition of number as stream of multitude, which comes out of the primary source and (as noted by Capella) returns to it (*a monade veniens multitudo atque in monadem desinens*).<sup>74</sup>

Boethius (possibly inspired by Nicomachus's text) used the term 'quantity' (*quantitas*) in his definition, by which he probably referred to multitude (*multitudo*), as it is the case in Martianus's work. Even in this case, Boethius meant discrete quantity, although this time it was *ad aliquid*, not *per se*, that is, numbers with respect to their relative properties. When we understand numbers as streams coming out of (divine) unit and creating sequences (per specific ratios) that are based on the relations (ratios) between the numbers of this series, in compliance with certain rules, we subscribe to the view of numbers as relative to other numbers allowing to establish proportional relations.<sup>75</sup>

These relative properties of numbers are, per definition, immediately necessary for music, which enquires into multitude related to something else, i.e., ratios.<sup>76</sup> From the point of view of arithmetic, numbers as numerical ratios are therefore divided into two main genera – equality (*aequalitas*) and inequality (*inaequalitas*). While the former involves two numerical values that do not differ (e.g. 5 and 5), in the latter we are dealing with numbers expressing different quantitative values (e.g. 5 and 10). While there is only one kind of equality, there are several kinds of inequality.<sup>77</sup> The basic division of inequalities distinguishes between numbers in which a higher number is compared to a lower one (they are derived from multiples, *multiplex*) and another kind of numbers in which a lower number is compared to a higher one (derived from dividers, *submultiplex*). Both types of inequalities include five species of dissimilar relations between numbers. In the first case, in which a higher number is compared to a lower one, Boethius distinguishes between multiples (*multiplex*), superparticular numbers (*superparticularis*), superpartient numbers (*superpartiens*), superparticular multiples (*multiplex superparticularis*) and superpartient multiples (*multiplex superpartiens*). In a similar way, he distinguishes between five species of numbers when a lower number is compared to a higher one, i.e., submultiplex, subsuperparticular, subsuperpartient, submultiplex subsuperparticular and submultiplex subsuperpartient.

All types of inequality originate from equality and Boethius lists three simple rules<sup>78</sup> which can be applied to original equality (ratio 1 : 1) in order to get multiples

(2 : 1, then 3 : 1, etc.), from multiples superparticular numbers (2 : 1 → 3 : 2; 3 : 1 → 4 : 3 etc.) are obtained; from superparticular numbers either superpartient numbers (3 : 2 → 5 : 3; 4 : 3 → 7 : 4 etc.) or superparticular multiples (3 : 2 → 5 : 2; 4 : 3 → 7 : 4 etc.) are derived, and from superpartient numbers superpartient multiples (5 : 3 → 8 : 3; 7 : 4 → 11 : 4 etc.) are formed. These kinds of inequality are apparently nothing else than streams coming out of unit and creating relative multitudes. Boethius describes in detail not only the origin of these types of numbers; he also provides elaborate characteristics of them and describes their mutual relations (especially between multiples and superparticular numbers), which can be widely used also in other sciences and in particular in music.<sup>79</sup>

One passage of Boethius's considerations about the relative properties of numbers is worth mentioning in order to highlight the connection between these issues and the definition of number. While defining number, Boethius only says that a number is a mass of quantity which comes out of unit, although it seems obvious that he, like Martianus Capella, considered the possible return of these inequalities back to the original equality (unit). At the beginning of the second book of *Introduction to Arithmetic* he introduces a second set of simple rules,<sup>80</sup> which can serve as an easy-to-use tool for converting three-member sequences (i.e., some kind of inequality) to what these inequalities originated from. It is clear that this second set of three rules is reversible to the first set of rules. In this way, all inequalities can be converted to earlier inequalities and in the last step they can be reduced to equality,<sup>81</sup> which fully corresponds to the broader version of this definition of number in Martianus's work.

The overview of the relative properties of numbers in the *Introduction to Arithmetic* is interrupted by the abovementioned passage about figurate numbers, which are revisited by Boethius at the end of his work where he deals with numerical sequences (*proportionalitates*). While figurate numbers prepare ground for geometric science and the relative properties of numbers do the same for music, numerical sequences serve in a certain way as an introduction to astronomy, besides the other mathematical sciences. Boethius first describes sequences generally (i.e., series of – at least – three numbers, whose values are given according to given rules of numerical ratios) and then he introduces ten different types. The main focus is on three of them: (1) arithmetic, where the relation between numbers is given by the difference; (2) geometric, where the values of numbers are delimited by numerical ratios, i.e., quotients; and (3) harmonic sequences, which originate from three numbers in cases when the ratio of the third and first member of this sequence is equal to the ratio between the difference of the third and second member and the difference between the second and first member of this sequence. Specific instructions for identifying the middles of these sequences are also included and further relations between the sequences and figurate numbers are revealed with references to the arithmetic cohesion of geometry and music.<sup>82</sup>

In the last chapter of *Introduction to Arithmetic*, Boethius (and Nicomachus) pays attention to the highest and most perfect harmony (*maxima perfectaue armonia*),

which in a four-member succession encompasses musical intervals and, at the same time, represents the ordering of nature (*natura*), i.e., issues relevant for the ordering of the universe (astronomy and geometry). Perfect harmony captures all three listed sequences by using four numbers (the sequence of the numbers 6, 8, 9, 12 is cited as an example).<sup>83</sup>

The inquiry into numerical ratios and numerical sequences fully corresponds to the definition of numbers as streams or big mass of quantity (i.e. genus) coming out of unit and returning back to it again (i.e., specific difference). It is thus possible to say that, like the previous definition of number and description of the substance of number, the last definition immediately characterizes these big topics of Boethian-Nicomachean arithmetic.

## 6. Conclusion

As implied above, the content of Boethius's *Introduction to Arithmetic* can be divided into several basic thematic areas. After (0) the introductory delimitation of arithmetic, its importance, subject and goal, including its relations to other mathematical sciences (I, 1–3), it deals with four fundamental issues:

- (1) properties of numbers as themselves (I, 3–20);
- (2) properties of numbers in relation to other numbers, i.e., numerical ratios (I, 21–II, 3);
- (3) figurate numbers (II, 4–39);
- (4) numerical sequences (II, 40–54).

Everything is in accordance with Nicomachus's original text, although the translation differs from that in several details.

The ordering of the subject matter is firmly structured. While the properties of number in itself (ad 1) are essentially related to the subject of arithmetic because they describe *quantitas discreta per se*, i.e., multitude in itself, the relative properties of numbers also include a certain overlap with music, since they characterize *quantitas discreta ad aliud*, i.e., a multitude related to another multitude. After multitude is dealt with, attention is focused on numbers which are applied to descriptions of magnitude (*quantitas continua*) – therefore, numbers as the basis for geometrical knowledge are introduced (figurate numbers) and, eventually, the way how numbers are reflected in all the mathematical sciences, that is, among others, how they can create the perfect harmony which is to be found in the cosmos. Boethius acknowledges this thematic transition explicitly<sup>84</sup> and at the same time he fully keeps his division of the mathematical science from the introductory chapters of his translation and his declared intention from the foreword (the accompanying letter), i.e., the endeavour to show why and in what manner arithmetic is the first of the mathematical sciences.

Boethius's definitions of number and the way they differ from those of Nicomachus also seem to be leading (in accordance with the structure of the whole text) to the same goals. When Boethius characterizes number as discrete quantity in itself, he does not include it among the definitions of number, which could be due to several abovementioned reasons, including Nicomachus's not very transparent terminology. Boethius tries to use terms

consistently but, above all, he suggests that when number is delimited in this way, it is not a true definition but rather a description of the components of its substance. By this he also sets down the characterization of number for the first big topic of arithmetic (ad 1), i.e., delimitating the properties of numbers *per se* according to various criteria. The definition of number as collection of units directly related to the mathematical science dealing with something that is *per se*, i.e., geometry. This definition actually says what number is and, on top of that, it shows the importance of number for other mathematical sciences, which fully corresponds to the third (ad 3) domain of arithmetic subject matter, i.e., figurate numbers. The last definition of number, which speaks of big mass of quantity coming out of unit (and eventually coming back to it), refers to the properties of numbers that are not *per se* but related to something else. This is typical for music (and partially even for the movements examined in astronomy) and corresponds to the second (ad 2) and fourth (ad 4) key topic of arithmetic subject matter (in the case of the last thematic transition, Boethius himself mentions that he is returning to an interrupted topic, therefore he was fully aware of the direct interconnectedness between the two issues), since the very idea of stream refers to the mutual cohesion and versatility of number apprehended in this way.

Nicomachus's three definitions are thus at the same time references to the inherent topics of arithmetic as understood by the Boethian-Nicomachean tradition of this science. These three topics was crucial for (not only) early medieval arithmetic, as was briefly documented in this paper. Boethius, as this paper has tried to show, found the first definition inappropriate, but he had to consider it (on conceptual and factual grounds) as a fundamental description of the substance of number, hence he included it in a modified version (not as a definition) in his arithmetic work as well.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Cf. M. Kline, *Mathematical Thought from Ancient to Modern Times*. Vol. 1. New York – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972, p. 29, or C. Rowett, “Philosophy’s Numerical Turn. Why the Pythagoreans’s Interest in Numbers is Truly Awesome.” In: D. Sider & D. Obbink (Eds.), *Doctrine and Doxography. Studies on Heraclitus and Pythagoras*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2013, pp. 3–31.
- <sup>2</sup> Cf. R. Netz, “The Pythagoreans.” In: T. Koetsier & L. Bergmans (Eds.), *Mathematics and the Divine: A Historical Study*. Amsterdam et al.: Springer, 2005, pp. 91–96, or I. Mueller, “Mathematics and the Divine in Plato.” In: T. Koetsier & L. Bergmans (Eds.), *Mathematics and the Divine*, pp. 101–121.
- <sup>3</sup> See, e.g., D. Albertson, *Mathematical Theologies. Nicholas of Cusa and the Legacy of Thierry of Chartres*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 23–39, H. Chadwick, *Boethius. The Consolations of Music, Logic, Theology, and Philosophy*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981, pp. 71–74, or M. Kline, *Mathematics and the Search for Knowledge*. New York – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, pp. 39–43.
- <sup>4</sup> Cf. Plato, *Resp.* VII, 8, 524a–526c.
- <sup>5</sup> See, e.g., J. Caldwell, “The *De Institutione Arithmetica* and the *De Institutione Musica*.” In: M. Gibson (Ed.), *Boethius. His Life, Thought and Influence*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981, pp. 135–137, or W. Bernard, “Zur Begründung der mathematischen Wissenschaften bei Boethius.” *Antike und Abendland* 43 (1997), pp. 65–69.
- <sup>6</sup> For patristic reading, see, e.g., I. Peri, “*“Omnia mensura et numero et pondere disposuisti”*: Die Auslegung von Weish. 11,20 in der lateinischen Patristik.” In: A. Zimmermann (Ed.), *Mensura: Mass, Zahl, Zahlensymbolik im Mittelalter*. Bd. 1. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1983, pp. 1–21, cf. early medieval text – *De arith. Boeth.*, ad prol., p. 128,53–57 or Abbo of Fleury, *In Vict. Calc.* II, 9–11, p. 69; II, 15, p. 71.
- <sup>7</sup> For a delimitation of the importance of arithmetic in Nicomachus, see D. O’Meara, *Pythagoras Revived. Mathematics and Philosophy in Late Antiquity*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997, pp. 14–23, or J.-F. Mattéi, “Nicomachus of Gerasa and the Arithmetic Scale of the Divine.” In: T. Koetsier & L. Bergmans (Eds.), *Mathematics and the Divine*, pp. 125–132.
- <sup>8</sup> For dating, see J.-Y. Guillaumin, “Boethius’s *De institutione arithmetica* and its Influence on Posterity.” In: N. H. Kaylor & P. E. Phillips (Eds.), *A Companion to Boethius in the Middle Ages*. Leiden: Brill, 2012, p. 135, or P. E. Phillips, “Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius: A Chronology and Selected Annotated Bibliography.” In: N. H. Kaylor, Jr. & P. E. Phillips (Eds.), *A Companion to Boethius in the Middle Ages*, p. 552.
- <sup>9</sup> Cf. M. Masi, “Boethius’ *De institutione arithmetica* in the Context of Medieval Mathematics.” In: L. Obertello (Ed.), *Atti del Congresso internazionale di studi Boeziani*. Roma: Herder, 1981, pp. 263–272, P. Kibre, “The Boethian *De Institutione Arithmetica* and the Quadrivium in the Thirteenth Century University Milieu at Paris.” In: M. Masi (Ed.), *Boethius and the Liberal Arts*. Bern: Peter Lang, 1981, pp. 67–80, A. White, “Boethius in the Medieval Quadrivium.” In: M. Gibson (Ed.), *Boethius*, pp. 162–205, or I. Caiazzo, “Medieval Commentaries on Boethius’s *De arithmetica*: A Provisional Handlist.” *Bulletin de philosophie médiévale* 62 (2020), pp. 3–4.

- <sup>10</sup> Boethius, *Arith.* I, 1–2, pp. 9,5–15,23; cf. A. Kijewska, “Mathematics as a Preparation for Theology: Boethius, Eriugena, Thierry of Chartres.” In: A. Gallonier (Ed.), *Boèce ou la chaîne des saviors*. Louvain – Paris: Éditions Peeters, 2003, pp. 635–636.
- <sup>11</sup> Nicomachus, *Intr. arith.* I, 7, 3, p. 13,7–8. English translation by M. L. D’Ooge (Nicomachus of Gerasa, *Introduction to Arithmetic*. Transl. M. L. D’Ooge. New York – London: Macmillan, 1926, p. 190): “Number is limited multitude or a combination of units or a flow of quantity made up of units...” For context, see, e.g., F. M. Petrucci, “Theon of Smyrna: Re-thinking Platonic Mathematics in Middle Platonism.” In: H. Tarrant et al. (Eds.), *Brill’s Companion to the Reception of Plato in Antiquity*. Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2018, pp. 144–146.
- <sup>12</sup> Boethius, *Arith.*, prolog., p. 5,44–53. There are numerous texts analysing Boethius’s understanding of translation (method, aims, form, etc.) – for instance, C. Vogel, *Boethius’ Übersetzungsprojekt. Philosophische Grundlagen und didaktische Methoden eines spätantiken Wissenstransfers*. Wiesbaden: O. Harrasowitz, 2016, especially pp. 125–169, A. Kárpáti, “Translation or Compilation? Contributions to the Analysis of Sources of Boethius’ *De institutione musica*.” *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungariae* 29 (1987), pp. 5–33, C. Bower, “Boethius and Nichomachus: An Essay Concerning the Sources of *De institutione musica*.” *Vivarium* 16/1 (1978), pp. 1–45), C. Vogel, “Die „boethianische Frage“ – Über die Eigenständigkeit von Boethius’ logischem Lehrwerk.” *Working Paper des SFB 980 Episteme in Bewegung* 17 (2019), pp. 23–24, J. Barnes, “Boethius and the Study of Logic.” In: M. Gibson (Ed.), *Boethius* p. 79), A. E. Moyer, “The *Quadrivium* and the Decline of Boethian Influence.” In: N. H. Kaylor, Jr. & P. E. Phillips (Eds.), *A Companion to Boethius in the Middle Ages*, p. 481), etc.
- <sup>13</sup> Boethius, *Arith.*, I, 3, pp. 15,2–16,4. English translation by M. Masi (M. Masi, *Boethian Number Theory. A Translation of the De Institutione Arithmetica*. Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V., 1983, p. 114): “A number is a collection of unities, or a big mass of quantity issuing from unities.”
- <sup>14</sup> Boethius, *Arith.*, prolog., p. 5,54–55; cf. M. Fournier, “Boethius and the Consolation of the Quadrivium.” *Medievalia et Humanistica. Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Culture* 34 (2008), pp. 3–4.
- <sup>15</sup> Boethius, *Arith.* I, 1, p. 9,5–7, or p. 11,64–72.
- <sup>16</sup> Boethius, *I In Isag.* I, 3, pp. 8,1–9,8; cf. A. Hicks, *Composing the World. Harmony in the Medieval Platonic Cosmos*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, pp. 70–73.
- <sup>17</sup> Boethius, *De Trin.* II, p. 8,5–16.
- <sup>18</sup> For further reading, see H. M. Klinkenberg, “Divisio philosophiae.” In: I. Craemer-Ruegenberg & A. Speer (Eds.), *Scientia und ars im Hoch- und Spätmittelalter*. Bd. I. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1994, pp. 3–19, J. A. Weisheipl, “The Concept of Scientific Knowledge in Greek Philosophy.” In: A. Gagne & T. De Koninck (Eds.), *Melanges a la Memoire de Charles De Koninck*. Quebec: Presses de l’Université Laval, 1968, pp. 487–507, or idem, “The Nature, Scope, and Classification of the Sciences.” In: D. C. Lindberg (Ed.), *Science in the Middle Ages*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977, pp. 461–482.
- <sup>19</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Met.* XI, 7, 1064a–b.
- <sup>20</sup> See e.g. Aristotle, *De an.* III, 7, 431b, *Phys.* II, 2, 193b–194a, or *Met.* VI, 1, 1026a and many others. For more details, see e.g., P. Studtmann, “Aristotle’s Category of Quantity: A Unified Interpretation.” *Apeiron* 37/1 (2004), pp. 69–91.
- <sup>21</sup> Nicomachus, *Intr. arith.* I, 2, 5, p. 5,10–12.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* I, 2, 4–5, pp. 4,13–5,10, Boethius, *Arith.* I, 1, p. 10,23–30; cf. L. Corti, “Scepticism, number and appearances. The ἀριθμητικὴ τέχνη and Sextus’ targets in M I–VI.” *Philosophie antique* 15 (2015), pp. 129–130.
- <sup>23</sup> Boethius, *In Cat.* II, c. 201C–205B; cf. A. Hicks, “Martianus Capella and the Liberal Arts.” In: R. Hexter & D. Townsend (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Latin Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. 312–313. For dating, see L. M. De Rijk, “On the Chronology of Boethius’ works on logic II.” *Vivarium* 2 (1964), p. 125.
- <sup>24</sup> Cassiodorus, *Var.* I, 45, 4, p. 40,12, or Cassiodorus, *Inst.* II, 4, 7, p. 140,17–19; cf. J. Caldwell, “The *De Institutione Arithmetica* and the *De Institutione Musica*.” In: M. Gibson (Ed.), *Boethius*, pp. 137–138.
- <sup>25</sup> Cassiodorus, *Inst.* II, 3, 21, p. 130,18–22; cf. J.-Y. Guillaumin, “Boethius’ *De institutione arithmetica*...” In: N. H. Kaylor & P. E. Phillips (Eds.), *A Companion to Boethius in the Middle Ages*, pp. 153–155.
- <sup>26</sup> Isidore, *Etym.* III, preaf., l. 1–5. For more details of the influence of this book, see, for example, A. Fear & J. Wood (Eds.), *Isidore of Seville and his Reception in the Early Middle Ages. Transmitting and Transforming Knowledge*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016, e.g., S. O’Sullivan, “Isidore in the Carolingian and Ottonian Worlds: Encyclopaedism and Etymology, c. 800–1050.” In: A. Fear & J. Wood (Eds.), *A Companion to Isidore of Seville*, pp. 524–568.
- <sup>27</sup> Boethius, *Arith.* I, 1, pp. 10,39–11,43, Nicomachus, *Intr. arith.* I, 3, 1–2, pp. 5,13–6,7; cf. G. R. Evans, “Boethius’ Geometry and the Four Ways.” *Centaurus* 25/2 (1981), pp. 161–165.
- <sup>28</sup> Cf., e.g., U. Pizzani, “Il *Quadrivium* Boeziano e i suoi problem.” In: L. Obertello (Ed.), *Atti del Congresso internazionale di studi Boeziani*. Roma: Herder, 1981, pp. 211–226, M. Masi, “The Liberal Arts and Gerardus Ruffus’ Commentary on the Boethian *De Arithmetica*.” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 10/2 (1979), p. 29, or U. Pizzani, “Studi sulle fonti del «De Institutione Musica» di Boezio.” *Sacris erudiri* 16 (1965), p. 158 etc. For the reception of the quadrivium division in Middle Ages with illustrative diagrams, see D. K. Walden, “Charting Boethius: Music and the Diagrammatic Tree in the Cambridge University Library’s *De Institutione Arithmetica*, MS II.3.12.” *Early Music History* 34 (2015), pp. 207–228.
- <sup>29</sup> For early medieval adaptation, see G. R. Evans, “Introductions to Boethius’ “Arithmetica” of the Tenth to the Fourteenth Century.” *History of Science* 16 (1978), p. 36 or *De arith. Boeth.*, ad I,I, pp. 132,171–133,188.
- <sup>30</sup> Boethius, *Arith.* I, 1, p. 12,73–90, Nicomachus, *Intr. arith.* I, 4, 1–3, pp. 9,5–10,9; cf. M. Fournier, “Boethius and the Consolation of the Quadrivium,” p. 3 and *De arith. Boeth.*, ad I,I, p. 133,200–210.
- <sup>31</sup> Boethius, *Arith.* I, 1, pp. 12,91–14,130, Nicomachus, *Intr. arith.* I, 4, 4–5, 3, pp. 10,9–11,23; cf. J.-Y. Guillaumin, “Boethius’ *De institutione arithmetica*...” pp. 139–141.
- <sup>32</sup> During late antiquity and in the Middle Ages, other methods of the ordering four mathematical sciences existed. E.g. Claudius Ptolemy understood astronomy as the most important science not only among the mathematical sciences; he described it as a more fundamental discipline for human knowledge than metaphysics or theology, that is, in some respects, as the most valuable of all the components of theoretical philosophy – see Ptolemy, *Alm.* I, 1, pp. 5,7–7,24. Another example of a different ordering of the mathematical sciences of the quadrivium could be Boethius’s predecessor, the encyclopaedist Martianus Capella who in his – widely studied, commented, and quoted – cf. M. Teeuwen, “The Pursuit of Secular Learning: The Oldest Commentary Tradition on Martianus Capella.” *Journal of Medieval Latin* 18 (2008), pp. 36–51, or W. H. Stahl, *The Quadrivium of Martianus Capella: Latin Tradition in Mathematical Sciences 50 B.C.–A.D. 1250. Martianus Capella and the Seven Liberal Arts*. Vol. 1. New York – London: Columbia University Press, 1971 – work *On the Marriage of Philology and Mercury* places geometry in the first place and only then comes arithmetic, followed by astronomy and music – see Martianus, *De nupt.* VI, 567–IX, 996, pp. 201,7–384,17. Other similar examples could be listed.
- <sup>33</sup> Boethius, *Arith.* I, 2, p. 14,2–6, Nicomachus, *Intr. arith.* I, 6, 1, p. 12,1–12; cf. G. R. Evans, “Introductions to Boethius’s “Arithmetica”...” p. 36.
- <sup>34</sup> Boethius, *Arith.* II, 1, p. 93,7–9, Nicomachus, *Intr. arith.* II, 1, 1, p. 73,7–10; cf. *De arith. Boeth.*, ad II,I, p. 143,465–469.
- <sup>35</sup> Boethius, *In Cat.* II, c. 203B, cf. M. Asztalos, “Nomen and Vocabulum in Boethius’s Theory of Predication.” In: T. Böhm & T. Jürgasch & A. Kirchner (Eds.), *Boethius as a Paradigm of Late Ancient Thought*. Berlin – Boston: De Gruyter, 2014, pp. 35–39.
- <sup>36</sup> See Nicomachus, *Intr. arith.* I, 7, 1, p. 13 (n. ad VII.7); cf. Boèce, *Institution Arithmétique*. Ed. & transl. J.-Y. Guillaumin. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1995, p. 186, n. 44.
- <sup>37</sup> Cf. J.-Y. Guillaumin, “La structure du chapitre 1, 4 de l’*Institution Arithmétique* de Boèce et le cours d’Ammonios sur Nicomaque.” *Revue d’histoire des sciences* 47/2 (1994), pp. 253–257, or L. Tarán, “Asclepius of Tralles: Commentary to Nicomachus’ *Introduction to Arithmetic*.” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 59/4 (1969), p. 77.
- <sup>38</sup> Asclepius of Tralles, *In Nicom. Arith.* I, μθ, p. 32,1–3.
- <sup>39</sup> Iamblichus, *In Nicom. Arith.*, p. 10,18; see L. Tarán, “Asclepius of Tralles...” pp. 15–17, or G. Radke, *Die Theorie der Zahl im Platonismus: Ein systematisches Lehrbuch*. Tübingen: A. Francke, 2003, pp. 226–227.
- <sup>40</sup> Cf. in similar context J.-Y. Guillaumin, “La structure du chapitre...” pp. 250–252.
- <sup>41</sup> Nicomachus, *Intr. arith.* I, 2, 4–5, pp. 4,13–5,10.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* I, 3, 1–2, pp. 5,13–6,7.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* I, 5, 2, p. 11,16–18.
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* I, 7, 1, p. 13,7.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* I, 3, 1, p. 5,13–14.
- <sup>46</sup> Cf. J.-Y. Guillaumin, “La structure du chapitre...” pp. 251–253.
- <sup>47</sup> Cf. C. Vogel, C. Vogel, *Boethius’ Übersetzungsprojekt*..., pp. 25–27, S. C. McCluskey, “Boethius’s Astronomy and Cosmology.” In: N. H. Kaylor, Jr. & P. E. Phillips (Eds.), *A Companion to Boethius*, pp. 47–73, here pp. 54–55, or W. Bernard, “Zur Begründung der mathematischen Wissenschaften...” pp. 69–70.

- <sup>48</sup> Boethius, *Arith.* I, 2, pp. 14,6–15,13, Nicomachus, *Intr. arith.* I, 6, 2–4, pp. 12,12–13,6; cf. *De arith. Boeth.*, ad I,II, p. 136,260–272.
- <sup>49</sup> Boethius, *Arith.* I, 2, p. 15,12–14; cf. *In Boeth. Arith.* 14, p. 251.
- <sup>50</sup> Cf. Cassiodorus, *Inst.* II, 4, 2, p. 133,8.
- <sup>51</sup> Boethius, *In Cat.* I, c. 166A.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, c. 163D. Cf. also Boethius, *In Cic. Top.* III, p. 318,35–37.
- <sup>53</sup> Boethius, *2 In Isag.* I, 7, pp. 153,9–154,8; cf. J. Magee, *Boethius on Signification and Mind.* Leiden – New York et al.: Brill, 1989, pp. 123–124.
- <sup>54</sup> Boethius, *Arith.* I, 3, p. 15,1.
- <sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* I, 3, p. 16,4–8, cf. Nicomachus, *Intr. arith.* I, 7, 1–2, p. 13,9–13; cf. J.-Y. Guillaumin, “La structure du chapitre...,” pp. 249–258.
- <sup>56</sup> Probably Boethius’s influence made the omission of this definition was common in the Middle Ages – see, e.g., M. Masi, “The Influence of Boethius *De Arithmetica* on Late Medieval Mathematics.” In: M. Masi (Ed.), *Boethius and the Liberal Arts*, p. 82.
- <sup>57</sup> Cf. G. Radke, *Die Theorie der Zahl...*, pp. 767–768.
- <sup>58</sup> Boethius, *Arith.* I, 20, p. 54,74.
- <sup>59</sup> Cf. for instance Abbo of Fleury, *In Vict. Calc.* III,4–5, p. 75–76.
- <sup>60</sup> Boethius, *Arith.* I, 3–20, pp. 16,4–54,76, Nicomachus, *Intr. arith.* I, 7, 2–16, 10, pp. 13,13–44,7, cf. the brief interpretation by J.-Y. Guillaumin, “Boethius’s *De institutione arithmetica...*,” pp. 142–145. These issues are mentioned also by the most influential and best-known work of ancient mathematics, i.e., Euclid’s *Elements*. Although Euclid defines (some) properties of numbers according to the listed classificatory theories as well, in many cases he adopts a different stance and follows different goals – cf. Euclid, *Elem.* VII, def. 6–14, 22, pp. 184,11–186,13, and p. 188,10–11; therefore for the medieval (at least till the 12<sup>th</sup> century) reception of arithmetic as a science, his work (although partially translated to Latin by Boethius) was not relevant and its influence on medieval arithmetic can be considered marginal in comparison to Nicomachus and in contrast to geometry where Euclid’s thinking can be traced more clearly – cf. W. H. Stahl, *Roman Science. Origins, Development, and Influence to the Later Middle Ages*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1962, pp. 198–201, or M. Masi, “Arithmetic.” In: D. L. Wagner (Ed.), *The Seven Liberal Arts in the Middle Ages*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983, pp. 162–164. For early medieval reception in commentary and glosses see, e.g., *De arith. Boeth.*, ad I,III–I,XX, pp. 136,273–139,358 or *In Boeth. Arith.* 15–40, pp. 251–255.
- <sup>61</sup> Cf. e.g. M. Wedell, “Numbers.” In: A. Classen (Ed.), *Handbook of Medieval Culture. Fundamental Aspects and Conditions of the European Middle Ages*. Vol. 2. Berlin – Boston: De Gruyter, 2015, p. 1248.
- <sup>62</sup> Boethius, *Arith.* I, 3, p. 15,2, Nicomachus, *Intr. Arith.* I, 7, 1, p. 13,13.
- <sup>63</sup> Martianus, *De nupt.* VII, 743, p. 269,15.
- <sup>64</sup> Cassiodorus, *Inst.* II, 4, 2, p. 133,12.
- <sup>65</sup> Isidorus, *Etym.* III, 3, 1, 1–2.
- <sup>66</sup> The number two is problematic in many aspects as well – cf., for example, G. Radke, *Die Theorie der Zahl...*, pp. 438–446.
- <sup>67</sup> Cf. T. Heath, *A History of Greek Mathematics*. Vol. 1: *From Thales to Euclid*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921, pp. 76–84.
- <sup>68</sup> Boethius, *Arith.* II, 4, pp. 105,3–106,21, Nicomachus, *Intr. arith.* II, 6, 1, pp. 82,10–83,11.
- <sup>69</sup> Boethius, *Arith.* II, 4, pp. 106,22–107,43, Nicomachus, *Intr. arith.* II, 6, 2–3, pp. 83,12–85,3.
- <sup>70</sup> Boethius, *Arith.* II, 5–39, pp. 110,22–172,41, Nicomachus, *Intr. arith.* II, 6, 4–20, 5, pp. 85,3–119,18; for a brief interpretation, see J.-Y. Guillaumin, “Boethius’s *De institutione arithmetica...*,” pp. 149–151; for the reception within the medieval education, see, for example, J. Høyrup, “Mathematics Education in the European Middle Ages.” In: A. Karp & G. Schubring (Eds.), *Handbook on the History of Mathematics Educations*. New York: Springer, 2014, pp. 111–112; cf. also *De arith. Boeth.*, ad II,III–II,XXXII, pp. 144,511–147,602 or *In Boeth. Arith.* 64–81, pp. 260–263.
- <sup>71</sup> Euclid, *Elem.* VII, def. 2, p. 184,4–5.
- <sup>72</sup> Boethius, *Arith.* I, 3, pp. 15,2–16,1.
- <sup>73</sup> Martianus, *De nupt.* VII, 728–729, p. 261,2–18; cf. M. Masi, “The Liberal Arts...,” pp. 38–39, or W. H. Stahl, *The Quadrivium of Martianus Capella...*, p. 150.
- <sup>74</sup> Martianus, *De nupt.* VII, 743, p. 269,15–16.
- <sup>75</sup> Boethius, *Arith.* I, 20, p. 54,74–76, Nicomachus, *Intr. arith.* I, 17, 1, p. 44,8–9; cf. D. Albertson, *Mathematical Theologies...*, pp. 83–84.
- <sup>76</sup> Cf. e.g. M. T. Rimple, “The Enduring Legacy of Boethian Harmony.” In: N. H. Kaylor & P. E. Phillips (Eds.), *A Companion to Boethius...*, pp. 448–449, 453, or M. Masi, “The Influence of Boethius...,” pp. 81–95.
- <sup>77</sup> For more details, including the reception in the Middle Ages, see, e.g., D. Albertson, “*Boethius Noster*: Thierry of Chartres’s *Arithmetica* Commentary as a Missing Source of Nicholas of Cusa’s *De docta ignorantia*.” *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie médiévales* 83/1 (2016), pp. 143–199.
- <sup>78</sup> Boethius thought of three-member number sequences. If the first sequence is labelled  $a, b, c$  and the sequence created from it  $a_1, b_1, c_1$ , then the three rules for creating inequalities can be formulated as follows:  
 (1)  $a_1 = a$ ;  
 (2)  $b_1 = a + b$ ;  
 (3)  $c_1 = a + 2b + c$ .  
 See Boethius, *Arith.* I, 32, p. 81,36–38: “*Praecepta autem tria haec sunt, ut primum numerum primo facias parem, secundum uero primo et secundo, tertium primo, secundis duobus et tertio.*” English translation by M. Masi, *Boethian Number Theory*, p. 114: “Now these are the three rules: that you make the first number equal to the first, then put down a number equal to the first and the second, finally one equal to the first, twice the second, and the third.” Cf. Nicomachus, *Intr. arith.* I, 23, 8, p. 66,15–22.
- <sup>79</sup> Boethius, *Arith.* I, 21–II, 3, pp. 54,2–105,52, Nicomachus, *Intr. arith.* I, 17, 2–II, 5, 5, pp. 44,10–82,9; for a brief interpretation, see J.-Y. Guillaumin, “Boethius’s *De institutione arithmetica...*,” pp. 145–148, cf. *In Boeth. Arith.* 41–63, pp. 256–260 or *De arith. Boeth.*, ad I,XX–II,II, pp. 139,353–144,510 and for an analysis of its influence on medieval music theory, see for instance J. N. Crossley, “The Writings of Boethius and the Cogitations of Jacobus de Ispania on Musical Proportions.” *Early Music History* 36 (2017), pp. 14–24.
- <sup>80</sup> The second set of rules could be expressed as follows:  
 (1)  $a_1 = a$ ;  
 (2)  $b_1 = b - a$ ;  
 (3)  $c_1 = c - (2b_1 + a)$ .  
 See Boethius, *Arith.* II, 1, p. 94,17–31, cf. Nicomachus, *Intr. arithmeticae* II, 2, 1, pp. 74,16–75,7.
- <sup>81</sup> Boethius, *Arith.* II, 1, pp. 93,3–96,72, Nicomachus, *Intr. arith.* II, 1, 1–2, 2, pp. 73,5–75,14.
- <sup>82</sup> Boethius, *Arith.* II, 40–53, pp. 172,7–220,13, Nicomachus, *Intr. arith.* II, 21, 2–28, 11, pp. 120,2–144,19; for a brief interpretation, see J.-Y. Guillaumin, “Boethius’s *De institutione arithmetica...*,” pp. 151–153, and for reading and influence in the Middle Ages, see, for instance, *In Boeth. Arith.* 82–112, pp. 264–269; *De arith. Boeth.*, ad II,XL–II,LII, pp. 147,603–150,672 or J. N. Crossley, “The Writings of Boethius...,” pp. 13–15.
- <sup>83</sup> Boethius, *Arith.* II, 54, pp. 221,3–226,100, Nicomachus, *Intr. arith.* II, 29, 1–5, pp. 144,20–147,2; cf., for example, P. Jeserich, *Musica Naturalis. Speculative Music Theory and Poetics, from Saint Augustine to the Late Middle Ages in France*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013, pp. 126–134).
- <sup>84</sup> For the first thematic transition, see Boethius, *Arith.* I, 20, p. 54,74–76, for the second transition, see *ibid.* II, 4, pp. 105,3–106,9, for the last transition, see *ibid.* II, 40, p. 172,2–7.

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# Aura in the Age of Aesthetic Rationality: Adorno's Criticism of Benjamin and the Claim for an "Authentic" Modern Art

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**Abstract:** This essay focuses on particular aspects of Adorno's criticism of Benjamin's statements, as they mainly appear in the notorious essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction". Adorno reconsiders the concept of aura and the relationship between artwork, rationality, technique and technology. In order to explicate the background of his criticism, I explore and reconstruct its relevance to cardinal issues in *Aesthetic Theory* and to his ideal conception of a critical and "authentic" modern art. My aim is to demonstrate that divergences in the approaches of the two thinkers constitute not merely an ideological controversy, but a systematic art-theoretical differentiation.

**Keywords:** Critical Theory; Aura and Reproducibility; Aesthetic Rationality; Technique and Technology; Modern Art.

## 1. Introduction

In his essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", Walter Benjamin notes that "around 1900 technical reproduction had reached a standard that not only permitted it to reproduce all transmitted works of art [...but] also had captured a place of its own among the artistic processes".<sup>1</sup> Although he ascertains that the work of art has actually always been reproducible, he prophetically –regarding the digital era– observes the intrinsic role of reproduction in particular art-forms, such as photography and film. For the latter, reproduction constitutes, in addition, not only an "external condition" for mass distribution, but an "inherent" presupposition for its production. Benjamin states that this possibility not only causes, but indeed forces mass distribution due to the expenses of film production.<sup>2</sup> Contrary to Adorno's criticism, Benjamin acknowledges the danger of mass exploitation and ideological manipulation these new technical possibilities might imply. However, as far as it concerns depictive precision and the highlighting of artistic details, Benjamin evaluates positive these technical innovations, expressing his persuasion of the fruitful interplay of art and science in the future. He considers this interplay as a historical analogue to the scientification of art during the Renaissance. Although he notoriously ascertains the decay of aura of authentic artworks of the past through mechanical reproduction and through industrial distribution of their

replicas with various media, he also somehow senses, in the case of new art-forms he analyzes, unforeseen possibilities and the emergence of a new historical era. In this essay, I will focus on particular aspects of Adorno's criticism of Benjamin's statements, as the latter appear in the above mentioned essay and in "Some motifs in Baudelaire". Adorno's main concerns are the notion of aura and the relationship between artwork, rationality, technique and technology. I will relate his criticism to cardinal conceptions, he repeatedly refers to in order to describe the artwork, as content and mimesis. Finally, in order to explicate the background of his criticism, I will explore and reconstruct its relevance to the modernistic movements of the 50s, especially in music, and to his ideal conception of a critical and "authentic" modern art. My aim is to demonstrate that divergences in the approaches of the two thinkers constitute not merely an ideological controversy, but a systematic art-theoretical differentiation; at least for this context, I venture to summarize this differentiation as pertaining to an aesthetic of means and to an aesthetic of content, respectively.

## 2. Reproduction, aura and aesthetic rationality

Adorno adopts Benjamin's observation as far as it concerns the vast historical background of reproduction in artistic practice. But he goes even further. In *Aesthetic Theory* he claims that even the "objectivation of the cave drawing vis-à-vis what is unmediatedly seen [the original real object] already contains the potential of the technical procedure that effects the separation of what is seen from the subjective act of seeing. Each work, insofar as it is intended for many, is already its own reproduction."<sup>3</sup> In his aim to reject –or at least to dialectically moderate– the dichotomization of auratic and technological artwork, it seems here as if Adorno deliberately misreads, or at least separates, Benjamin's statements from their context by using an inept argument. In fact and in a more aptly manner, in his essay "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire", Benjamin allows beauty of *original*, auratic artworks, which were created before the age of technical reproducibility, to be "intended for many". As he states, "on the basis of its *historical* existence, beauty is an appeal to join those who admired it at an earlier time".<sup>4</sup> And by referring to Proust's and Valéry's quasi auratic perception in dreams, he associates his own definition of aura as "unique manifestation of a distance", with the

accumulated –through the course of history– gazes of admiration an artwork contains, which is an analogue to the cult-value: “Some people who are fond of secrets flatter themselves that objects retain something of the gaze that has rested on them (The ability, it would seem, of returning the gaze). They believe that monuments and pictures present themselves only beneath the delicate veil which centuries of love and reverence on the part of so many admirers have woven about them”.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, contra Adorno’s “dialectical critic” (AT, 33), beauty, as accumulated admiration of an artwork by *many* spectators in *different* eras, is intrinsically connected to its authenticity and originality, though “intended for many”. It could here be objected, that the artwork’s admired beauty is not the artwork itself and that the fact of its admiration does not contradict Adorno’s statement about the immanent reproducibility of the artwork towards the object it represents (if it does). However, beauty as *sedimented* admiration presupposes that an artwork has been intended for- and admired by many. Nevertheless, reflections of the kind, pointing to an idea of separation between thingness of the artwork and its aesthetic value, would be more suitable for Analytic Philosophy of Art and quite unfamiliar for Adorno’s thought; according to him, everything that addresses properties of an artwork belongs to its objectivity and reification, having technical and historical-sociological background.

But why does Adorno neglect Benjamin’s above mentioned statements when referring to the archetypal cave drawing? The initial “separation of what is seen from the subjective act of seeing” of the real object, the visual artwork represents, seems to devalue art as object of experience and bearer of truth. Indeed, it places art in the ontological sphere of semblance. But besides anyway salvaging the semblance character of artworks (cf. AT 107-110), Adorno makes here an initial epistemological mistake; the fact that a work of art as such is “intended for many” (als ein vielen Zubestimmtes) does not imply that it also is reproducible. In addition to the notion of aura of the artwork as beholder of accumulated admiration from spectators in the course of history, Benjamin refers to the case of paintings that were kept in altars. That means, they were intended for restricted and *gradual* access, however for many spectators. The authentic original artwork might be intended for many in the context of its perception and evaluation, but that does not necessarily imply that it also is available as *reproduced* object for many, or that this access for many spectators implies reproduction of an initial and, according to Adorno, more original view of an archetypal real object.

It is generally true, that Adorno is not really convinced with Benjamin’s ascertainment of the loss of aura in the age of mechanical reproducibility and, consequently, of aura’s incompatibility with technological progress and modern art. As will be stated below, on the one hand, he tries to salvage aura in the realm of the aesthetic, whereas Benjamin replaces one aspect of aura –the *memoire involontaire*, it evokes– by pointing to the idea of intensities of every day experiences.<sup>6</sup> As will be stated below, this salvation is of crucial importance due to the correlations Adorno attempts between aura and content of the artwork. Following Benjamin, Guy Hocquenghem and René Schérer point to the sensuous and spiritual effect of

the aura of a cultic object. They consider *generally* the aesthetic phenomenon as a field for aura to unfold. In this field the mythical-metaphorical and the real-materialistic element of aura –the above effects– interact,<sup>7</sup> thus enabling the artwork’s transcendence of its spatial and corporeal dimensions. Actually, when referring to the relationship between art and nature, Adorno vaguely recalls Benjamin’s conception of aura, especially as far as it concerns general- and, in addition, natural objects:<sup>8</sup> “authentic artworks... have consistently felt the urge, as if in need of a breath of fresh air, *to step outside of themselves*” (AT, 63, emphasis mine). On the other hand, he is also concerned with aura’s misuse in culture industry: “The phenomenon of aura, what Benjamin described at once nostalgically and critically, has become bad wherever it is instituted and simulated” for instance in the commercial film (AT, 44-45). What Adorno rightly observes and clearly refers to in the *Paralipomena of Aesthetic Theory*, is the phenomenon of “conservation” and “mobilization” of aura for the purpose of creating mood in commercial film. It becomes the “uniform sauce” for culture industry, which seeks to highlight more the image than the content. This, however, proves to be fallacious for the viewer; the concentration on the separated from the artistic content and from the “nexus of the work”, image, especially in the “close-up” of the film, constitutes an inversion (AT, 311); the once sublime appearance of a nearness as distance becomes a contrived nearness of a distance. To relate this peculiarity to Adorno’s sociological considerations, nearness of the image becomes a mimesis of the well individuated subject in the well “administered world”. However, this demonstrated artistic subject may be guided and manipulated by the mechanisms of culture industry. Therefore, it may not be necessarily individuated but alienated, homogenized, thus referring to the masses. Consequently, this kind of *demonstrated* and technically precise individuality in cinematic-photo-graphic depiction constitutes, according to Adorno, false aura, a blank replica of it. Though ascertaining the loss of aura and its replacement with the cinematic image, Benjamin, as mentioned in the introduction, nevertheless evaluates here positively new possibilities for expressive accuracy and sense for psychographic detail through the depictive precision of a new visual art-form, namely photography.

As far as it concerns the perceptive attitudes of the spectator, influenced by Benjamin’s “polar opposites...distraction and concentration”<sup>9</sup> –a hint to Brecht’s effect of alienation<sup>10</sup>– in his writings on art, especially on music, Adorno repeatedly ascertains the gradual decline of the conscious listener with the ability of critique and formal reflection.<sup>11</sup> By facing the products of culture industry, the once critical and informed spectator is now being replaced by the consuming individual. However, this also concerns reproduced sublime artworks of the past, which become corporeal available through optical and tactile proximity or through direct access mechanical reproduction enables; according to Benjamin, the spectator is now tempted to make them his ownership. This constitutes a process of disassembly of the once auratic work. It is true, that it is Benjamin who first ascertains “the desire of the contemporary masses to bring things closer spatially and humanly.”<sup>12</sup> Adorno continues Benjamin’s thoughts in the context of his



critique of culture industry. In addition, in *Aesthetic Theory*, on the occasion of his extremely elaborated analysis of the process of aesthetic experience, he points to the danger of self-projection and naïve identification with the artistic content; he therefore proposes distancing from lived perception, movement to the subject, until self-denial, which he summarizes with a paradoxical and emblematic oxymoron: "artistic enthusiasm is art-alien" (AT, 346). However, under the auspices of mechanical reproduction and culture industry, this kind of perceptual self control tends to become a reminiscent of the past.

From the just above mentioned point of view, Adorno's critique on Benjamin's ascertainment of the loss of aura is plausible; aura indeed might continue to survive, however in a wrong way, as replica of the past, attaining a new cult-value in the promotion and idolization of film- and pop stars.<sup>13</sup> According to Adorno, in the era "of misuse of aesthetic rationality for mass exploitation" through the promotion of optical "copy-realistic" precision, labeled as "camera rationalism" in reproducible art-forms, the verdict against aura "easily becomes the dismissal of qualitatively modern art that distances itself from the logic of familiar things" (AT, 56). Here, the definition of aura as appearance of the artwork's spatial nearness as distance, is being associated by Adorno with the necessary critical distance, modern, not commercial art, should have from the *logic* and irrational rationality of "familiar things". The correlation is precarious and indirect; artworks of qualitative modern art, by distancing themselves from the logic of familiar things, give a promise of seriousness and of not being trivial and commercial. They also evocate an idea of distance as aesthetic prerequisite for their perception and interpretation. However, by correlating this distance with a salvation of aura, which "slips through the wide mesh of [Benjamin's] theory", Adorno forgets that Benjamin clearly introduced the concept of aura as substitute of the cultic value of the once ritualistic, and not autonomous, artwork. That means, he had rather an uncritical attitude of the spectator in mind, who succumbs to the latter's spell. Insofar, distancing of the kind does not guarantee a critical standpoint.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, in the Paralipomena of AT, Adorno insists on this association by forgetting the authoritative power of aura; as he states, Benjamin's aura "touched an inner-aesthetic element": the necessary distance between "aesthetic object" and "observing subject". Such distance is "the primary condition for any closeness to the content of the works" and, foremost, it guarantees the Kantian "concept of lack of interest" (AT, 310) of the aesthetic judgment and art's purposelessness. Nevertheless, aura cannot serve as exclusive criterion for artistic quality and originality, the loss of which points to the products of culture industry and to the mass reproduction and exploitation of the artistic heritage of the past. Despite Brecht's suspicion against the alleged romanticism of Schönberg's atonality and twelve-tone technique, the juxtaposition of song-style and Schönberg's twelve-tone technique –Brecht's and Adorno's favorites respectively– is in fact a juxtaposition of decorative-commercial and critical, technically advanced, modernistic art that embraces

"negative canon" and "spontaneously reacts to the objective situation" (AT, 56; 33-34). The latter, however, appears without the veil of (pseudo-) aura, thus demonstrating the bare process of technical mastering of the material, or, even, by elevating this process to the artwork itself.<sup>15</sup>

Based on the correspondence of the 30s between the two thinkers, Richard Wolin points to Adorno's criticism of Benjamin, namely "of proceeding undialectically" in his notorious essay.<sup>16</sup> Adorno returns to this statement in *Aesthetic Theory* claiming that Benjamin's juxtaposition of auratic and mass-reproduced artwork "neglected the dialectic of the two types" (AT, 56). He detects two levels of dialectic, contemporary art (modern, commercial and politically engaged) should embrace in order to remain true,<sup>17</sup> Benjamin failed to acknowledge; the "dialectic of rationalization" and the "dialectic of technique". As far as it concerns the first, according to Adorno, Benjamin failed to acknowledge a positive moment. In the age of art's mechanical reproduction, Benjamin observed in the loss of aura only negative aspects of aesthetic rationalization. In general, rationalization plays a crucial role within Adorno's theory of art. Stemming from primordial cultic practices, the artwork implies in the process of its creation and as reified object an irrational moment, the "mimetic comportment", for which it always remains a refuge (AT, 53); insofar, art's "enchantment, a vestige of magical phase" cannot be "obliterated" (AT, 58). However, in the process of what Max Weber calls disenchantment and rationalization of the world, the archetypal, magical "mimetic comportment" recedes and the artwork absorbs also rational elements. These concern artistic practices and the "mobilization of technique in an opposite direction than does domination", towards the artwork's formal organization, construction and production. That means that, contrary to the human domination on nature, within art the mobilization of rational procedures is not instrumental.<sup>18</sup> Although art remains a refuge for subjectivity and expression, its salvation beyond the isolation of "a natural reserve of irrationalism", as industrial production aims, is of crucial importance according to Adorno, (AT, 203, 336).<sup>19</sup> This is especially the case for modern art. Because indifferent or, even apathetic, isolation, would also imply societal inertia and deprive modern art of its enlightening mission.

The aporia of the artwork remains its fragile state "between regression to literal magic and surrender of the mimetic impulse to thinglike rationality" (AT, 54). This state of oscillation is being reflected in the mutual interplay of mimesis and rationality in the confrontation of artistic subject and object; on the one hand, mimesis remains an inherent moment of artistic expression: as Adorno states, "expression is a priori imitation". However, this mimetic comportment has to deliberate itself from the boundaries of a "rigid aesthetic superego" (AT, 117). Otherwise, this "imprisonment" would cause a self-projection of the artistic subject into the artistic object. Adorno categorically rejects this possibility, among others when he criticizes the psychoanalytic theory of art and the limitations of artistic intention towards the formation of the artwork (cf. AT, 8; 150). In other words, the subject with his inherently mimetic comportment has to recede. On the other hand, the inherently subjective

mimetic comportment survives in the nevertheless rationalized, through the “process of formalization” (AT, 51), artistic object, paradoxically only in the case of *autonomous* artworks; it appears now as auto-mimesis, as the artworks’ obligatory “semblance to themselves” and not to an external object they would represent or imitate. Adorno does not fully explicate this mysterious transition from mimesis to auto-mimesis, or at least, the reason for his insistence on this notion; he could just operate with the concept of autonomy of artworks. However, both mimesis and auto-mimesis point to a close relationship, to an unmediated effect between external and internal elements, respectively. Semblance to themselves becomes their constitutional law and the close relationship of their elements appears now as meaningful and effective construction, as coherence. This also points to a moment of *rationality* in the “technical procedures” used (AT, 43; 104). Thus, the mimetic comportment of the artistic subject is being moderated, and, insofar rationalized in the process of construction of the artistic object, whereas the objective constructive, and, insofar, rational moment of the artistic object attains a mimetic element in the form of auto-mimesis. If we relate these moments of rationalization and mimesis, inherent in the artwork, to the concept, that triggered controversy between the two thinkers through its treatment in the *Reproduction-essay* (and not in the “*Little History of Photography*”), namely aura, it becomes evident that Adorno tried to rationalize even the latter. He did it by associating aura with the process of the artwork’s formation, namely with the *traces* of artistic craftsmanship, which give an instantaneous but substantial impression to the connoisseur: “*métier*, which appears as breath –the aura of artworks...is the memory of the hand that, tenderly, almost caressingly, passed over the contours of the work and, by articulating them, also mollified them” (AT, 214). Contrary to Benjamin, Adorno’s concept of aura refers not to a vague and fluent area between subject and object; aura is being interiorized, and associated with the artwork’s “content” and objective language (AT, 45; 275). His efforts to objectify aura, thus making it suitable for the artwork of modernity –which has to retain it as value– become evident in its association with “the nexus of its elements” and technique, which underpins this nexus: “Precisely this constituent of art...is what in the artwork escapes its factual reality, what, fleeting and elusive...can nevertheless be objectivated in the form of artistic technique” (AT, 274). Elsewhere, the “transcendence” of the artworks’ factuality, “the breath that surrounds them”, is being highlighted as an effect of the “consistency of their elaboration” (AT, 129). In another context “nexus”, “consistency” and aura’s objectivity become more concrete by the latter’s definition as “uninterrupted sympathy of the [artwork’s] parts with the whole.”<sup>20</sup> This organic relationship realizes Adorno’s “postulated principle of the working out of the form”,<sup>21</sup> thus demonstrating an “internal law”.<sup>22</sup> Consequently, according to Adorno’s work-centered- and work-production-aesthetic, there is a relationship between rationality, rationalized mimesis, coherence and aura. On the contrary, Benjamin’s concept of aura remains per definition an external

characteristic and impression of the artwork towards the spectator, thus “pertaining to the medium of perception”.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, he associates aura with a visual communication between artistic object and spectator; there is an “expectation that our look will be returned by the object of our gaze”. Thus, “to perceive the aura of an object we look at means to invest it with the ability to look at us in return”.<sup>24</sup> According to Benjamin, this expectation concerns as well natural objects and artworks. To conclude, Adorno’s dialectical and, insofar, positive evaluation of Benjamin’s aesthetic rationality, appearing with the loss of aura, implies the latter’s redemption (not as “false” in the products of culture industry), technicalization and integration into the artwork. Therefore, as mentioned above, its salvation is of crucial importance, let alone that he makes associations between breath (meaning, aura), surrounding the artwork, and truth-content.

On a societal level, the positive evaluation of aesthetic rationality is being juxtaposed to the general process of rationalization supported by instrumental reason. By acknowledging the absurdity and “faulty irrationality of the rational world”, appearing particularly in the exploitation of the means in capitalistic society, he is able to juxtapose art’s inner rationality to this prevalent societal irrationality of the “overadministered world” (AT, 53; 54). The analogy is obvious: the former exploits its means and succeeds as product, as made, whereas the latter causes, through irrational exploitation of the means, societal repression. Here, “rationality” and thus its vehicle, the artwork, stand for societal justice. Actually, *this* utopic constellation, should society imitate; artworks succeed as constructs and reconcile their elements, whereas the elements of (societal) reality are irreconcilable.<sup>25</sup> Finally, the dialectical structure of art’s irrationality, expressed through the mimetic element, becomes evident in art’s enlightening mission. This is the way to understand Adorno’s statement that “emancipated from its claim to reality, the enchantment is itself a part of enlightenment: its semblance disenchantments the disenchanted [and rational] world” (AT, 58). To continue Adorno’s thoughts and relate them to his scattered statements, art’s “vestige of its magical phase” constitutes an alternative approach to the rationalized world; while the latter cannot but find irrational solutions entailing societal repression, through the naïveté of its irrational enchantment art plays an enlightening role.<sup>26</sup> Its rebellion against societal “rationality, which, in the relation of means and ends, forgets the ends and fetishizes the means as an end in itself”, “unmasks [this form of rationality] in the principle of reason”. It unmasks namely its contradictory structure and absurdity. What art can alternatively suggest is the rejection of instrumental rationality in bringing “to light [the naïveté of] what is infantile in the ideal of being grown up” (AT, 43).

Apart from Adorno’s general statements on the role of rationality in art, his insistence on the positive aspects of aesthetic rationality indicates the latter’s role in modernity. He associates aesthetic rationality with “the modern as desideratum”. In particular, rationality concerns the handling of the artistic material, it is “the necessity of going to the extreme” with it. It is not a “pseudoscientific competition with the [prevalent] rationalization of the demystified world”, but an extreme exploitation, control



and determination of artistic means, which can now perform what the obsolete traditional "can no longer fulfill" (AT, 35). Therefore, for an advocate of radical modernism and opponent of any post-romantic expressivity, pseudo-aura bears an illusory moment, and, insofar as aesthetic regression, which constitutes an anathema for Adorno. This becomes even more evident in the sensual pseudo-expressiveness of the products of culture industry, like popular music.

The rational moment emerges within the modern artwork in the "principle of construction" (AT, 56-58). Following Benjamin, Adorno considers montage, as "the single technique that goes beyond camera rationalism". But it still deals with elements of reality by transferring "their intention or, at best," by awakening their "latent language". It would be beyond the scope of this essay to explore Adorno's axiological preoccupation with montage, becoming evident, once again, in his writings on music. To make just a hint, it constitutes one of his main points of criticism of the music of Stravinsky. What perhaps links that criticism with his general aesthetic predilections is that he observes in musical montage the lack of syntax, in other words, of coherence, which he detects in Stravinsky's antipode, Arnold Schönberg. In contrast, construction requires a more active involvement of the creator. It is the modern analogue to the principle of composition of the renaissance (AT, 56). It "tears the elements of reality of their primary context" in order to force them to create a new imposed "unity". This unity acquires an element of normativity, thus of general validity: through it art "attains what is overarchingly binding, or if one will, universal." Thus, it bestows to the artwork the vain promise of escaping from its immanent nominalism. Adorno doesn't explicate the way this happens. To continue his thoughts, it is perhaps the eidetic normativity of the reified form which gives the above mentioned promise. Nonetheless, authentic artworks remain unique.

Paradigmatic for the positive aspect of aesthetic rationality becomes radical modern art, especially the music of the so called, Second Viennese School. Working-out of the musical form<sup>27</sup> and the new introduced technique of composing with twelve tones, provided the works with inner coherence. Since Schönberg introduced this new method, he abdicated himself from the tonal legacy of the classic-romantic era. His new method was a rational confrontation with the *problem* of expanding and controlling the musical material, and mastering the form. This method could now perform what the traditional could "no longer fulfill". However, when Adorno returns to the problem of rationality within modern art in *Aesthetic Theory*, he has not only musical Expressionism and Schönberg's twelve-tone technique in mind. Meanwhile, he has experienced the evolution of the so called, New Music. His statements in *Aesthetic Theory* and, foremost, in his *Writings on Music*, oscillate between approval and rejection; on the one hand he is totally aware of the importance of rationalization for modern art and music; on the other hand, as will be stated in the next section, he diagnoses the danger of a total rationalization of the process of artistic creation. What he definitely knows is that rationality became the *modus operandi* for serial composers of the avant-garde of the 50s. Stockhausen's ideal of the

"purity of the work" could only be achieved through rational preselection and preformation of the material.<sup>28</sup> The moment of rationalization is evident; a "thoroughly organized" composition was in the era of total serialism a product of calculation. According to Adorno's theory of art, the opposition of this radical rational creative practice to artistic expressivity is obvious; as mentioned above, he considers expression primarily a mimetic comportment of the subject towards its own feelings and intentions. On the contrary, avant-garde composers displayed an allergy towards the obsolescence of expression.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, in a letter to Luigi Nono from 20.03.1952, Karlheinz Stockhausen stressed that he tried to be "impersonal ... inhuman" during composing.<sup>30</sup>

### 3. Technique, technology and "art in industrial age"

Though ascertaining the decay of aura through mechanical reproduction and though being skeptical regarding the function of the reproduced artwork in culture industry, from an art-theoretical point of view, Benjamin acknowledges that technology opens new paths. As he states, the sense for "hidden details" of the lens brings a "deepening of apperception" and highlights previously "unattainable aspects of the original".<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, he is concerned about the sociological and political misuse of technology in the 30s. He explicitly quotes Marinetti's manifesto and is totally aware of the danger of mobilization and aestheticization of technology in the war.<sup>32</sup> And although he disqualifies Aldous Huxley's considerations on the role of technology within press, artistic production and reproduction as being "not progressive", he explicitly quotes them in an extended footnote: "Advances in technology... have led... to vulgarity". And he continues: "The consumption of reading—and seeing—matter has outstripped the *natural* production of gifted writers and draughtsmen".<sup>33</sup> Therefore, as far as it concerns the "dialectic of technique," Adorno's criticism of Benjamin of proceeding "undialectically" is inaccurate. The two thinkers seem to focus on different aspects by expressing their doubts on the role of technology within art and society. Benjamin's concerns are primarily political and sociological. Adorno's concerns are partly sociological in considering the effect of "the most advanced procedures of material production" however, as far as "they radiate out into areas of life far removed from them" (AT, 34). These areas are the aesthetic of modernistic art, which aims to a sharp and accurate construction and technical progress. At the same time, his concerns also point towards an axiological and ideological disapproval of culture industry, supported by mechanical reproduction. Adorno's critique unveils an elitistic attitude towards the facts, highlighted in Benjamin's and Huxley's above mentioned statements; according to the two thinkers, the growth of population and, consequently the increased needs for education, information, consumption and entertainment caused collateral damages as is the decline of the quality of art through mechanical reproduction and through dissemination of "reading—and seeing—matter".<sup>34</sup> Adorno considers mechanical reproduction as part of industrial production. Applied to the sphere of art, the conditions of production of high industrialism imply

procedures of mechanical reproduction. Therefore, mechanical reproduction becomes for Adorno an aesthetic-ideological anathema. This might be the reason for him for not approaching, let alone, accepting this new era with Benjamin's soberness. Indeed, according to Adorno, industrial production influences negatively artistic production of "true modern art"; because "the shaft [modern] art directs at society is itself social...determined by the conflict with the conditions of production". In order to remain autonomous phenomenon and *fait social*, modern art has actually to react dialectically to industrial production and to the prevalent *Zeitgeist* of progress. Its dialectical societal consciousness (and Adorno's approach) appears externally as a "determinate negation" of these conditions, meaning "a set of prohibitions" which serves as "negative canon". However, internally or "inner-aesthetically", the *need* for *progress* inscribed in procedures of industrial production, also implies "the exclusion of exhausted and obsolete procedures" (AT, 33-34). As far as it concerns their critical standpoint to industrial *mass* production, "authentic modern works" react once again dialectically; procedures of industrial mass production on the one hand "radiate" negatively as "*reduction* of the material tolerated", free of the abundance of the *repetitive* ornamental and, on the other hand, positively, as precise construction. As example Adorno mentions Paul Klee (AT, 34).

Advanced *technique* offers challenges to different art-forms, especially to music. As mentioned above, a proponent of New Music, ideally introduced by the expressionistic movement, Adorno considers the advanced *state of the material*, which dialectically absorbs tradition and at the same time improves and resolves its deficits, as indicator of truth-content of an artwork, the lack of which, according to him, emerges as *technical* failure. Therefore, he highlights the difference between advanced "artistic" technique and adaptation to industrial technology: "Artistic technique is no cozy adaptation to an age that with foolish zeal labels itself technological, as if productive forces alone determined its structure, regardless of the relations of production that hold the former in check" (AT, 59). The crucial diptych, technique-technology is being indirectly assigned with another diptych, the properties activity-passivity. Consequently, "cozy adaptation" to technology means passivity, whereas elaborated technique, activity of the *creating* subject: "When fully developed, technique establishes the primacy in art of *making*, in contradistinction to a *receptivity* of production, however that is conceived" (AT, 60, emphasis mine). As mentioned above, structural bearers of this diptych become construction and montage. Here lies the crux of Adorno's negative evaluation of technology and his criticism of Benjamin's notorious essay: the salvation of the conscious (artistic) subject with the ability of *ποιεῖν*.

There is an additional reason for Adorno's distinction between advanced technique and technology and for his emphasis on the former. Thus associated, artistic technique plays a crucial role in the formation of the work and for its understanding. Contrary to the exteriority of technology, technique is being correlated by Adorno with the content of the artwork. Since content remains ineffable and "something not made, technique does not circum-

scribe art as a whole". As reified, it becomes its bearer: "it is exclusively from its concretion that the content can be extrapolated". Consequently, there is an indispensable reciprocity between technique and content and, as he states, any "abstraction" towards the "supratechnical" is ideological (AT 213). Given Adorno's work-centered aesthetic theory, according to which any objective judgments on art have to face the artwork's objectivity as opposed to Kant's objective subjectivism (cf. AT, 163-164), technique, as objective and inherent moment, "leads reflection to the interior of the works". Advanced technique implies advanced state of artistic material. The latter becomes indicator of truth-content, defined among others by Adorno as historically "correct consciousness" (AT, 191).<sup>35</sup> Thus associated, technique enables the formation of aesthetic criteria; it "authorizes judgment in a region that does not make judgments". This region is the ultimate level of aesthetic experience, where the enigmatic character of the artwork, its "Fragegestalt", appears. Technique becomes the latter's "definable figure" (AT, 213). Since associated with making, technique's limitation lies in art's tension to "represent...the repressed unmade" (AT, 60). Should the latter constitute a primary need for artistic expression and/or an amateurish artistic intention? Adorno doubts on the latter's significance by criticizing, as mentioned above, the psychoanalytic theory of art. Insofar, intentions if reified as *unmade* and *not thoroughly formalized*, could appear as artless, amateurish failure and as technique's "limitation".

Adorno's distinction between technique and technology could be correlated to his observations in the essay "The Aging of New Music". Originally a radio-lecture of 1954, this essay comprises Adorno's skepticism about the evolution of New Music, as demonstrated in the avant-garde movements of the 50s. His concerns are as well aesthetic, music-theoretical and ideological. As far as it concerns the aesthetic dimension, although generally praising, as mentioned in section *ii*), aesthetic rationality in modern art, he observed in the evolution of avant-garde music its limits. The reason was the extreme technicalization of the two prevalent trends, serialism and electronic music. Total serialism in the static "pointillistic music" was based on meticulous preselection and calculation of the material. In the introduced electronic music, musical material was being deconstructed, altered and analyzed to its primary elements. Adorno considered compositions of this era as "Materialkompositionen". However, in this new trend, he diagnosed an "infatuation with the material". The new technical procedures lead to the intended control of an "integrally rationalized music", thus to "total rationalization".<sup>36</sup> This was the consequence –actually the side effect– of the desired, even from Adorno, aesthetic rationality. And it would perhaps be not hyperbolic to claim that such an evolution reminds dialectically the irrationality of the over-administered world which fetishizes the means, in this case the musical material, as an end. Because, as he states, "infatuation with material" or "material fetishism" also implied irrational, almost superstitious, belief in its potentiality.<sup>37</sup> On an aesthetic-ideological level and by reminding Adorno's above mentioned distinction, surrender to total technicalization, based on a *system*, means again passivity; the composer tends to act as a compiler of material, assigning gradually

its role to the performer. Thus, technique reached a vanishing point by acquiring the overwhelming, generating power of technology, repressing the creativity of the subject (producer), who handled the latter; systems of calculative composition turned to systems of *production*. His reference to the "pseudoscientific competition with the rationalization of the demystified world" (AT, 35) in art, addresses creative practices of the avant-garde.

As far as it concerns the music-theoretical aspect, by the end of the 50s rationalization and materialization of the compositional process caused, according to Adorno, the collapse of musical syntax, based on coherence.<sup>38</sup> Traditionally, the latter was supported by the relationship between musical structures and by the normativity of their temporal succession, analogously to language. In *Aesthetic Theory*, Adorno makes a strict correlation between temporal succession and content: "[The music's] content [Inhalt] is in any case what occurs –partial events, motifs, themes, and their elaboration: changing situations. Content is not external to musical time but essential to it, as time is essential to content; content is everything that transpires in time" (AT, 147-148). Though considering music an intentionless language, this correlation assigned to music a syntactical meaning.<sup>39</sup> Musical time, thus defined, is irreversible. But if the new technique undermined the normativity of temporal succession of musical events, thus, it didn't any more support a stable content, as defined by Adorno above. This becomes evident if we take into consideration the variable, interchangeable or even not occurring formal parts of a musical work based on total serialism and, foremost, on aleatorism. Despite the common English translation, it could here be objected that Adorno doesn't anyway have the unmade *Gehalt* but the materialistic *Inhalt* in mind. In that way, there could be *Gehalt* without stable *Inhalt* in avant-garde Music, so in aleatorism. It seems that Adorno doesn't have the theoretical tools to handle this possibility, namely beyond a normative concept of musical work. Finally, on an ideological level, avant-garde, which became the prevalent trend in music in the 50s, supported by a periodical venue –Darmstadt, led to a contradictory and unexpected ideological situation: to the institutionalization of an aesthetic movement as a school and, consequently, to the totalitarianism of its ideals.<sup>40</sup> If "qualitatively modern art that distances itself from the logic of familiar things" should offer resistance to tradition and to the system, the evolution of avant-garde was a failure. Adorno experienced in the New Music of the 50s a decline of its "critical impulse"; in the static constructions of total serialism a loss of "tension";<sup>41</sup> thus elements of "conformism";<sup>42</sup> finally, the decay of the initial ideal of freedom. Therefore, he diagnosed "The Aging of New Music".

Although mainly approaching the problem of reproduction in traditional art-forms, Adorno also briefly touches reproduction in film. He returns to the problem of art's "cozy adaptation to technology" or "absorption of industrial processes" by changing the above mentioned diptych, activity-passivity, to internal-"external": "whenever autonomous art has seriously set out to absorb industrial processes, they have remained external to it. Mass reproduction has in no way become its immanent law of form [...]. Even in film, industrial and aesthetic-craftsmanlike

elements diverge under socioeconomic pressure" (AT, 217). Here, a particular application of technology, namely industrial mass-reproduction, becomes the crux for Adorno's criticism. The hidden starting point is Benjamin's statement that mass reproduction is an "inherent" structural factor for the *production* (creation) and *completion* of a film.<sup>43</sup> Adorno makes in addition an abrupt transition from the art-theoretical to the ideological level; the socioeconomic pressure does not change the fact of the absorption of technological innovations for the *formation* of the film *work*. Rather, it changes its character, artistic value and distribution. However, could the film-line constitute an absorption of "industrial processes", namely of the assembly-line? Or is the gap between them insurmountable since in the former dominates aesthetic pleasure and in the latter professional knowledge?<sup>44</sup> To continue Fues's correlation, the gap between them points to Kant's distinction between free- and mercenary art, based on the criteria of freedom and labor respectively.<sup>45</sup> Contrary to Benjamin and by insisting on the diptych external- internal, Adorno also approaches negatively the scientific aspect of technology's absorption: "As was not infrequently the case in modern movements after World War II, whenever aesthetic technology strove for the scientization of art rather than technical innovation, art was dazzled and went astray" (AT, 59). He also refers explicitly to the difference between "machine art as pseudomorphism" –perhaps a hint to Futurism and to musique concrete of the 50s– and to the "avoidance of industrial thematic material in authentic modern works" (AT, 34). According to him, technology only remains external to "authentic modern works" and its application a superficial transient trend. He insists on the, actually obsolete, ideal of an art with inner formal-syntactical coherence, according to him, "machine art" cannot create and demonstrate: "If technique strives for industrialization as its vanishing point, it does so at the cost of the immanent elaboration of the work and thus at the cost of technique itself", from which content "can be extrapolated" (AT, 217, 213). However, in the case of film, to which Benjamin consistently refers, it is not clear if the distinction between technological aspects and artistic content is possible. Like music, film is a temporal art-form and its content also "transpires" in different levels of time; in the captured narrative time and in the real time of its projection, where technology becomes indispensable. What Adorno does not want to acknowledge is that particularly in film technology becomes the bearer of technique, from which content –according to Adorno, the most important aesthetic entity– "can be extrapolated". An aesthetic entity beyond the technological aspect of film remains the not decisive and epigrammatic *idea* of an artwork (AT, 346). Actually, Adorno prefers explicitly to refer to the interplay of technique and content in other art forms. As mentioned in section *ii*), he considers the cardinal technical principle of film, montage, inferior to the modernistic principle of construction. Indeed, Benjamin does not provide many arguments in this context. However, the juxtaposition internal-external in reproduction's function is clear when he refers to the *process* of *creation*, i.e. *production* of a film-*work* as opposed to the reproduction of a *completed* visual work.

In his aim to put forward his strongest argument against art's absorption of industrial processes, assisted

by technology, Adorno first associates technique, *métier* and craft, considering these notions as synonyms. The question about the role of art in industrial age is therefore the reflection on the grade of its “Technisierung” and “on the relation of artworks to purposefulness”. Artworks, states Adorno, “are defined by technique as something that is purposeful in itself”. He does not explicate this kind of purposefulness, but judging from his emphasis on technical elaboration of the artwork, we may conclude that it is the consistency of construction toward formal completion, what he means. Adorno adopts Kant’s idea of artworks as something purposeful in and of itself with inner teleology (AT, 109). Therefore, “technical forces have no value in themselves” but “in relation to their purpose in the work” (AT, 218), acting as the aristotelian *causa finalis*. However, if art absorbs passively technological innovation for the sake of innovation, the latter will remain purposeless “in and of itself” and not “the immanent law of form”. Adorno does not accept the technological artwork. He goes so far in considering Berlioz’s innovations in orchestration –“a pendant to early world fairs”– as indicating “lack of real compositional elaboration”: “the technological artwork is by no means a priori more consistent than that which, in response to industrialization, turns inward” (AT, 218). In addition, contrary to functional objects and commodities, artworks should remain purposeless. Consequently, “in the process of becoming increasingly technical, which irrevocably binds them to functional forms, artworks come into contradiction with their purposelessness” (AT, 217), tending to thingness: “art that is simply a thing is an oxymoron” (AT, 68). The danger of art’s becoming craftsmanship was also one of his main considerations when he diagnosed the aging of New Music. Finally, in the Paralipomena of the *Aesthetic Theory*, Adorno makes his arguments crystal clear by relating purpose of the technological artwork to function and instrumentalization: “the function of art in the totally functional world is its functionlessness”, the “opposition” to any “instrumentalization” (AT, 320). According to Adorno, Benjamin’s mistake is that though having touched the “inner-aesthetic element” of the Kantian concept of absence of interest in the “aesthetic comportment” for the definition of aura, he “declared it invalid for the contemporary age of mechanical reproducibility” (AT, 310).

Adorno’s negative suggestion on the dilemmatic question whether and how art is possible and “relevant in today’s world” (of the 60s), does not point to a “utilization of available technical means”, as Benjamin does. He proposes a turning inward, meaning an extreme modernistic tension to *apophysis* and mournful introspection. Thus, art could “speak of the most extreme horror through silence” until death, which Adorno ascertains in the hermetic poems of Paul Celan; they express “the language of the lifeless” and “inorganic”, “that of the dead speaking of stones and stars” (AT, 322). This was perhaps, according to Adorno, the only path for “authentic modern works” in the late 60s. Because, “in the face of the threatened transformation into barbarism, it is better for art to come to a silent rather than to desert to the enemy”. (AT, 320).

#### 4. Postscript

Apart from his concerns on political mass exploitation of mechanical reproduction and the decay of aura, Benjamin’s positive evaluation of the revolutionary interplay of art and science as related to technological progress, reveals an intuitive and forward-thinking evaluation of the challenges of his time. Beyond photography and film, mechanical reproduction indeed offered new possibilities for hybridization of traditional art-forms and for the emergence of new. In so far, the acceptance of mechanical reproduction, free of its ideological implications, pertains to an art-theoretical consideration towards the theory of technical means, indeed the theory of media. At this point, Benjamin focuses on how art can continue to exist in (post) industrial age, while Adorno’s criticism and approach focuses on what art should mean in order to retain its dignity. However, art may fail to retain the latter, thus becoming “permeated by the shame...in the face of suffering that escapes both experience and sublimation”, as Celan’s hermetic poetry (AT, 322). Therefore, Adorno makes finally the above negative suggestion. Nevertheless, as we know from his considerations on the art-form he was most acquainted with and *Aesthetic Theory* primarily addresses, namely music, his theoretical tools end in the zenith of modernism of the 60s. And as he states at the beginning of the draft introduction, traditional aesthetics and contemporary art of his time were irreconcilable.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2007) 219-220.

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem, 244.

<sup>3</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, ed. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: Continuum Press, 2002) 33. Subsequent references to *Aesthetic Theory* (hereafter, AT) are given in the main text.

<sup>4</sup> Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire", *Illuminations*, 198.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem, 188.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Guy Hocquenghem and René Schérer, "Formen und Metamorphosen der Aura", in *Das Schwinden der Sinne*, eds. Dietmar Kamper/Christoph Wulf (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1984) 83.

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem, 76.

<sup>8</sup> See, Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire", 186; "The Work of Art...", 222-223.

<sup>9</sup> Benjamin, "The Work of Art...", 239.

<sup>10</sup> Richard Wolin, *Walter Benjamin: An Aesthetic of Redemption* (University of California Press: Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1994) 190.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Philosophy of New Music*.

<sup>12</sup> Benjamin, "The Work of Art...", 222.

<sup>13</sup> Benjamin mentions the "response of film to the shriveling of aura with an artificial built-up of the 'personality' outside the studio. The cult of the movie star, fostered by the money of the film industry, preserves not the unique aura of the person but the 'spell of the personality,' the phony spell of a commodity", see "The Work of Art...", 231.

<sup>14</sup> Osamu Nomura points in addition to the danger of authority, aura evocates. Therefore, it undermines any critical "distancing" from cultic behavior. To continue his argument, the authority of the auratic object may lead once again to neo-cultism towards objects, this time of culture industry. Insofar, as Nomura states, is Adorno's statement not dialectical enough, "Der Begriff der Aura bei Benjamin and Adorno", in *Global Benjamin*, vol. I: *Internationaler Walter-Benjamin-Kongreß 1992*, eds. Klaus Garber & Ludger Rehm (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1999) 404. In the context of culture industry and for any cultic and irrational attitudes towards its functional objects and commodities, the appropriate notion/terminus operandi becomes fetish(ization), Adorno differentiated refers to. Insofar again, false aura leads to fetishization of the object.

<sup>15</sup> By composing his work *Kreuzspiel* in 1951, Karlheinz Stockhausen admitted that he wanted to "experience the creation of music", cf. "Situation des Handwerks (Kriterien der punktuellen Musik)", *Texte zur elektronischen und instrumentalen Musik*, vol. 1 (DuMont Buchverlag: Köln, 1988) 22, translation mine, see also below.

<sup>16</sup> Wolin, 191.

<sup>17</sup> It is evident that only radical modern art fulfills Adorno's aesthetic postulations.

<sup>18</sup> See Donald A. Burke, "Adorno's Aesthetic Rationality: On the Dialectic of Natural and Artistic Beauty", in *Critical Ecologies: The Frankfurt School and Contemporary Environmental Crises*, ed. Andrew Biro (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011) 177-178.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Peter Bürger, "Das Altern der Moderne", in *Adorno Konferenz 1983*, eds. L. v. Friedeburg & J. Habermas (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1983) 184.

<sup>20</sup> Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, trans. Anne Mitchell & Wesley Blomster (New York: The Seabury Press, 1980) 125; see also *Aesthetic Theory*, 214.

<sup>21</sup> Bürger, 180.

<sup>22</sup> Gerhard Richter, "Adorno and the Excessive Politics of Aura", in *Benjamin's Blind Spot: Benjamin and the Premature Death of Aura*, ed. Lise Patt (The Institute of Cultural Inquiry, 2001) 31-32. Cf. also Nomura, 26-32.

<sup>23</sup> Miriam Bratu Hansen, "Benjamin's Aura", *Critical Inquiry* 34 (Winter 2008) 342.

<sup>24</sup> Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire", 188.<sup>25</sup> Cf. AT, 168; Albrecht Wellmer, "Wahrheit, Schein, Versöhnung. Adornos ästhetische Rettung der Modernität", in *Adorno-Konferenz 1983*, eds. Ludwig von Friedeburg and Jürgen Habermas (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1983) 145; Ilias Giannopoulos, "Precarious Autarky: Adorno on Art and Solipsism", *Aisthema International Journal*, vol. VI/1 (2019) 67.

<sup>26</sup> According to Adorno, naïveté plays a crucial role within the aesthetic domain. It constitutes a subjective virtue, interacting with knowledge and has to remain intact for an appropriate appreciation of an artwork. In the process of the multilayered aesthetic experience, as analyzed by him, it constitutes a subjective desideratum: "naïveté is the goal, not the origin" (AT, 338). It presupposes openness and receptivity of the experiencing subject, thus letting himself become enchanted by the artwork.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Bürger, 180.

<sup>28</sup> Christoph von Blumröder, *Die Grundlegung der Musik Karlheinz Stockhausens*, Beihefte zum Archiv für Musikwissenschaft vol. XXXII (Franz Steiner: Stuttgart, 1993) 41.

<sup>29</sup> See, Adorno, "The Aging of New Music", *Essays on Music*, trans. Susan H. Gillespie, ed. Richard Leppert (University of California Press: London, 2002) 191.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted after *Im Zenit der Moderne*, eds. Gianmario Borio & Hermann Danuser (Rombach: Freiburg, 1997) 304, translation mine.

<sup>31</sup> Benjamin, "The Work of Art...", 235; 220.

<sup>32</sup> Ibidem, 241-42.

<sup>33</sup> Ibidem, 247-48, emphasis mine.

<sup>34</sup> Adorno also approaches this problem by introducing the notion of the "semi-classical" music in the critique of culture industry; it refers to standardized popular repertory of western art music, being promoted by recording companies and the artistic programming of concert halls, which "institutionalize" art. These actions aim to profit, a fact he early realized. As far as it concerns the dissemination of "reading-and seeing-matter" in the context of the increased needs for education of wider parts of population, Adorno introduces the theory of half-education.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Luzia Sziborsky, *Rettung des Hoffnungslosen* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1994) 25.

<sup>36</sup> Adorno, "The Aging of New Music", 189-191.

<sup>37</sup> Peter Bürger observes here an additional danger for an aging of modern art: the immanent historical limitations of the material itself. Therefore, the modern artist feels the urge to abdicate himself from the exclusivity of one material. According to Bürger, Adorno does not acknowledge this urge; whereas he repeatedly and explicitly points to the historicity of musical material, in which the development of the complete society is being reflected, he considers only one as representative and true for an era, so in the notorious juxtaposition of Schönberg and Stravinsky in *Philosophy of New Music*.

<sup>38</sup> Adorno, "The Aging of New Music", 191.

<sup>39</sup> See Adorno, "Kriterien der neuen Musik". *Klangfiguren: Musikalische Schriften I. Gesammelte Schriften 16* ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1997) 221-222.

<sup>40</sup> In this era in Continental Europe, whoever didn't follow the aesthetic ideals of Avant-garde became an outsider.

<sup>41</sup> Bürger, 181.

<sup>42</sup> Ibidem, 183.

<sup>43</sup> Benjamin, "The Work of Art...", 244.

<sup>44</sup> Wolfram Malte Fues, "Reproduktion und Simulation: Walter Benjamins Kunstwerk-Aufsatz und die Ästhetik der Postmoderne", in *Global Benjamin*, vol. I: *Internationaler Walter-Benjamin-Kongreß 1992*, eds. Klaus Garber & Ludger Rehm (Fink Verlag: Munich, 1999) 647.

<sup>45</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis, 1987) 171.

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# Fundamentals of the Classification of Sciences

David Alvargonzález

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**Abstract:** This paper seeks to contribute to understanding the fundamentals of an extensively used classification of modern sciences. It opens by setting out the differences between modern sciences and philosophy and then goes on to refute a common misunderstanding in the classification of sciences: that there is such a thing as a system of sciences sharing a common set of principles. In their stead, it puts forward a currently accepted classification of the modern sciences. Recognizing that this classification is hardly original, the paper attempts to shed light on the related fundamentals.

**Keywords:** classification of sciences; system of sciences; hierarchy of sciences; formal sciences; human sciences; natural sciences; historical sciences.

## Introduction

In this paper, I will use Gustavo Bueno's philosophy as my theoretical framework, particularly his philosophy of science as stated in the "theory of categorial closure" (Bueno 2013)<sup>1</sup>. Aware that Bueno's philosophy is hardly known to English-language readers, I will briefly introduce certain tenets of his philosophy that deal with the fundamentals of the classification of sciences. According to Bueno's philosophy:

1. Philosophy is not a science. Sciences are first-order disciplines directly constructed with objects and material operations performed with objects; philosophy, however, is a second-order knowledge that requires the prior existence of first-order knowledge such as techniques, sciences, technologies and ethical and political knowledge, to name but a few. The third section will make further comment in this regard.

2. Although a given science can be understood, in certain ways, as a complex system of theorems, no "system of sciences" exists, since a set of systems is not necessarily a system, just as a group of political states is not a state and a set of circles is not a circle. The second section will touch briefly on this.

The classification of modern sciences advocated herein implies the following:

1. A distinction between sciences and techniques/technologies.

2. A distinction between the so-called "formal sciences" (logic and mathematics) and "non-formal sciences" (all other sciences).

3. A split in the non-formal sciences between, on the one hand, human and ethological sciences and, on the

other, non-human/non-ethological sciences, often referred to as the "natural sciences".

4. Lastly, I will defend the idea that, within the human sciences, historical sciences exhibit specific epistemological features.

The third section of this paper discusses this classification's fundamentals. Aware that this classification is extensively used, I contend that Bueno's theory of categorial closure may still contribute to further understanding. The issues relating to the first two sections will be discussed only briefly, since a more in-depth approach would fan out into problems that cannot be pursued further here. Readers familiar with Gustavo Bueno's philosophy may skip directly to the third section.

## 1. The difference between modern sciences and philosophy

Physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics, psychology, linguistics and other modern sciences are first-order knowledge about certain regions of the world. Each of these sciences has its own field of phenomena, and its particular objects, instruments and operations. Other first-order knowledge includes techniques, technologies, arts and prudence-based disciplines such as ethics, politics, and jurisprudence.

Academic philosophy, though, is second-order knowledge that implies the prior existence of first-order disciplines. The philosophical ideas of causality, truth, beauty, good and identity must take into account a wide variety of first-order knowledge. For instance, the idea of causality runs throughout physics, biology, psychology, history, techniques, politics, jurisprudence, etc. Philosophical ideas are frequently mixed with practical knowledge: the practice of techniques, politics or jurisprudence are accompanied by a multitude of ideas (beauty, prudence, good, justice, and many others), but this does not prevent the dissociation of their practical moment (as first-order knowledge) from their ideological, "philosophical" moment, which implies a certain degree of "theorization" of that practice (Bueno 2010 115-125).

Consequently, classifying the modern sciences is an entirely different task than classifying the philosophical disciplines. In the former, the classes are "formal sciences", "natural sciences", "human sciences", "nomothetic versus idiographic sciences", etc., whereas the latter classification leads to disciplines such as ontology, epistemology, ethics, politics, aesthetics, etc.

Starting with the first *Elements* of scientific geometry (written by Theudius of Magnesia, Eudoxus of Cnidus

and Hippocrates of Chios, at the time of Plato and Aristotle) and up to the full constitution of scientific mechanics (at the time of Newton's *Principia*), certain philosophies and strict sciences coexisted indistinctly within a single, joint science-philosophy block. Platonic, Aristotelian and Thomist systems of philosophy uninterruptedly included the contents of geometry, kinematic astronomy and logic.

The emergence of the modern natural sciences (physics, chemistry, biology, geology and thermodynamics) in the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries showed that philosophy is not a science in the strict modern sense. Still, as late as 1651, Thomas Hobbes sketched out a classification of knowledge in which sciences such as astronomy and geometry shared their place with philosophical disciplines such as ethics and political philosophy (Hobbes 1651, chap. 9). The watershed came with Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, which drew the line between modern science (contemporary Newtonian mechanics) and philosophy (Kant, 1781 and 1787). Encouraged by the advances of modern sciences, Auguste Comte, in *Cours de philosophie positive*, developed the law of three stages, which forecast the disappearance of philosophy as an archaic form of knowledge and the substitution thereof by the emergent positive sciences, including his own social physics (Comte 1830-42). Along with certain renowned logical empiricists in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Comte held that the origin of all sciences was philosophy. Subsequently, once sciences reached maturity, they emancipated themselves and abandoned their old and exhausted mother, which was then seen as a metaphysical vestige. Positivists conceive of the sciences mainly as theories, as maps or representations of certain regions of the world, and maintain that scientific theories come from prior philosophical metaphysical theories.

Other materialist-driven philosophies understand the sciences less as maps of the world and more as interventions on certain areas of reality (Hacking 1983). This understanding is usually associated with the idea that scientific material fields come from prior practical knowledge, an idea defended by many leading historians and philosophers such as Gordon Childe, Benjamin Farrington, Boris Hessen, Ortega and Ludovico Geymonat (Childe 1942; Farrington 1944 and 1949; Hessen 1931; Ortega 1933; Geymonat 1972). Assumptions acting in this paper hold that sciences, understood as first-order knowledge, do not emerge from philosophy, but rather from a wide variety of prior techniques. Accordingly, the origins of geometry can be traced to the techniques of architects, urbanists, and land surveyors (the *harpedonaptai* or "rope stretchers") and those of chemistry in the techniques of pharmacologists, spirits producers, herbalists, metallurgists, dyers and alchemists. In this interpretation, Newton's mechanics does not arise from Aristotle's physics, but rather pushes against it. Modern physics is a radically different, non-philosophical, empirical-mathematical way of taking into account practical, technical problems concerning the motions of bodies and the forces acting on them, both on the Earth and in the skies: bodies rolling on inclined planes or falling from towers, projectiles launched from weapons, planets orbiting the Sun, pulleys and levers, among many others. This theory on the origin of sciences implies that each science has its own material field arising

from certain precursory techniques. As such, sciences and the relationships between them cannot be classified based on a deduction from their phylogeny (as would be the case if all the sciences were "sisters" engendered from the same "mother philosophy" or "branches" sprouting from the same "philosophical trunk").

## 2. No "system of sciences" exists

The idea of system implies the existence of a whole with different parts and the existence of a principle (or set of principles) coordinating these parts; in the case of practical applied systems, the goals pursued act as the coordinators of the system's parts. Two examples may serve to briefly illustrate these two varieties of systems. The first is the periodic table of chemical elements, which is a non-teleological system in which the parts are the elements with their subparts (electrons, protons, configurations), and the principles of classical chemistry (the periodic law, Dalton's law, Proust's law, etc.) act as the coordinators of those elements through their subparts. The second is any given machine, such as an aircraft, which is a teleological, practical, technological system with thousands of parts and subparts coordinated by the overarching goal of the machine, i.e. transporting loads by air. The same can be said about techniques and technologies that pursue practical goals, as occurs in politics and legal doctrine (Alvar-gonzález 2019).

As mentioned, before the first scientific revolution, when philosophy and science were not yet distinguished one from the other, the system of knowledge was guided by certain philosophical principles (Bueno 1991). During the Middle Ages, those principles were mainly of a theological and metaphysical nature. Take for instance the famous *Ihsâ al 'ulûm (Enumeration of the Sciences)* by al-Fârâbî, in which he presented a system of sciences whose highest knowledge and keystone was theology (al-Fârâbî 1953 [1310]).

After modern sciences coalesced, defenses of the idea of a system of sciences were still made based on non-religious premises. A system of sciences would suppose the existence of several sciences, understood as the parts of the system themselves coordinated by the same principles. Notable among those advocating this view is Gabriel Tarde in *The Laws of Imitation* in which he articulated a system of sciences ruled by a single principle of universal repetition, since the sciences were defined as the study of repetitive processes. In his view, the various forms of repetition gave rise to three different types of sciences: mechanical repetition, present in wave transmission, is characteristic of physical sciences; hereditary repetition, as it appears in the reproduction of living entities, is typical of biological sciences; social sciences, for their part, focus of the study of imitative repetition (Tarde 1890-5, chap.1).

Certain Marxists philosophers have also affirmed the existence of a system of sciences. Boniface M. Kedrov conflated strict sciences, techniques and philosophy in a single system guided by a "principle of subordination", which implied that "philosophical sciences", "social sciences" and "psychology" are subordinate to the natural sciences (Kedrov 1961).

The pluralism acting in Bueno's theory of categorial closure dictates that every science has its own material principles governing in the immanence of its own particular field alone. Although certain sciences may share methodological procedures, there is no single set of principles common to all sciences and, consequently, no one single system of sciences exists. The general principle of repetition proposed by Tarde does not take into account particular components which are present in most sciences:  $e$  or  $\pi$  in mathematics, the physical constants  $c$  and  $g$ , the idiographic character of the Sun, Moon, planets, Milky Way and geological fossils and the unrepeatability of historical events. Kedrov's systems of sciences, with its melting pot of heterogeneous disciplines, looks to present the arguable, philosophical principles of Marxism as if they were universal scientific truths.

A given science, such as classical mechanics, can be characterized as a system in which the bases are the scientific theorems and the principles (Newton's famous three principles) coordinate all the theorems of the field through their subparts. The system's parts are often at the same time systems themselves: in an aircraft, there are several different systems (electrical, hydraulic, avionic), each with its own parts and purpose. In the sciences, scientific theorems are also systems, as illustrated by the aforementioned example of the periodic system of chemical elements. The solar system may also serve as another illustration: Kepler's laws are the coordinators of the system whose bases are the Sun, the planets, the satellites and the comets, each with their own constitutive characteristics (Alvargonzález 2019).

However, just as a group of political states is not automatically a state and a set of circles is never a circle, a set of systems is not always necessarily a system. Such is the case with modern sciences: although each science is a system of theorems coordinated by certain principles, numerous sciences as a whole do not give rise to a unified system since they do not share common material principles. A system of sciences would presuppose the existence of several sciences (understood as the system's parts) that are coordinated by the same material principles; this does not happen, though. Jordi Cat has summarized the numerous metaphysical and methodological unity of science projects together with the most relevant criticism lodged against them (Cat 2017). The materialism acting in this paper defends the ontological and methodological pluralism advocated by certain philosophers in the Stanford School (Dupré 1993, Galison and Stump 1996, Cartwright 1999).

### 3. Fundamentals of a classification of sciences based on their internal structure

Bueno's idea of sciences as categorial closures recognizes both the multiplicity of sciences and their mutual irreducibility. However, this plurality does not lead to chaos or preclude a classification grounded on their internal structure as it affects their scientificity. Specifically, I will defend the following:

1. The difference between the sciences, on one hand, and techniques and technologies, on the other.

2. The specificity of the so-called formal sciences and the difference from the rest of the sciences.

3. In terms of the non-formal sciences, the pertinence of the distinction between the human and ethological sciences, on the one hand, and the rest of the sciences (often designated as the "natural sciences"), on the other.

4. The specificity of history and archaeology.

This classification of sciences is by no means original; however, the fundamentals on which it rests remain, in certain chief points, obscure. My argument centers on this classification as grounded on the internal structure of the various scientific fields and on their specific degree of scientificity.

#### 3.1. Fundamentals of the difference between the sciences and techniques and technologies

Aristotle's *Metaphysics* first classified the disciplines into two kinds, speculative (or theoretical) and practical; this was subsequently defended by Augustine in *The City of God* (2012 [ca 415]), Hugh of Saint Victor in *Didascalicon* (1991 [1172]) and Dominicus Gundissalinus in *De divisione philosophiae* (1974 [1150-60]), among many others. The distinction draws on the difference between what ought to be understood and what ought to be done. At a time when philosophy and science had not yet been distinguished, it served to discriminate between two kinds of philosophical disciplines: on the one hand, those dealing with practical, applied problems such as politics and law and, on the other, those focusing on more speculative issues such as theology and mathematics. At present, though, the existence of myriad sciences, techniques and technologies demands that this classification be reconsidered.

The difference between the sciences and techniques and technologies can no longer be understood by distinguishing between theoretical and practical disciplines. Sciences, techniques and technologies are all institutions of a practical nature, since they entail the intervention in and transformation of certain parts of the world. This practical, operational, intervening character is common to all sciences, be they formal, empirical, natural or human, and is also shared by techniques and technologies. As already stated in section 1 above, at their origin, each science exhibits a continuity with an aggregate of forerunner techniques to such a point that certain devices and things of a technical, practical origin still themselves remain in the field of the sciences, albeit in a compounded and transformed state: rulers, compasses, triangles, scales, distillation coils, levers, pulleys, clocks, flasks, monoculares and many others. This proximity between sciences and techniques is an essential principle of Bueno's materialism. Techniques always include certain "theoretical" postulates, even if those theories are mythical, magical or religious. For their part, the technologies present in electronics, nuclear energy, aerospace engineering and medicine require the internal use of strict sciences such as mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology. Even further, sciences, techniques and technologies give rise to disciplines that can be taught and learned in an appropri-



ate institution, and so stand on equal footing from a social point of view.

Notwithstanding this close relationship, sciences, techniques and technologies do show certain distinctive features. Techniques exist long before the sciences, are independent of them and can develop substantially without the need for scientific knowledge. The classical Chinese civilization serves as an illustration of an entire millenary culture developing a large number of significant technical innovations in the absence of any science in the strict modern sense (Needham 1954). In western civilization, nautical techniques enabled the discovery of America and the architectural techniques used to build the great Gothic cathedrals were developed before the first scientific revolution. Techniques imply the “violent” (in the Aristotelian sense) transformation of the world so as to achieve certain practical goals, to either make things (products, machines, buildings, etc.), in line with Aristotle’s *poiesis*, or to rule over the ethical and political *praxis* moderated by the *phronēsis*.

Sciences, though, have no such immediate practical aims: a geometrical theorem or astronomical discovery may lack of any immediate application, even though they represent scientific achievements or universal truths. The distinctive function of sciences lies in that they neither represent reality nor solve particular practical problems; rather, certain regions of reality are only accessible thanks to certain sciences, such as microphysics, astrophysics, genetics, biological evolution and n-dimensional non-Euclidean geometric structures, among many others (Bueno 1995). Although these regions of the world would not come to be constituted as such if the sciences did not exist, the ontological significance of those scientific categories does not depend on the absence or presence of useful applications, since scientific truths and theorems transcend any goal-oriented context.

Technologies and techniques alike share an organization around certain particular practical objectives but, unlike techniques, technologies necessarily include the internal use of scientific theorems and, consequently, they may be seen as applications of certain scientific discoveries. As a counterpart of the dependence of technology on science, the sciences themselves, once they reach a certain degree of complexity, become dependent on the use of a wide array of technological devices. At any rate, recognizing this undeniable interplay between sciences and technologies and their mutual inseparability accords with defending their essential dissociation and differentiation, in the same way as the inseparability of an animal’s various systems (the nervous system, the circulatory system, the digestive system, etc.) accords with their disassociation in anatomical terms.

To summarize, sciences, techniques and technologies are activities of a practical, surgical nature since they imply operations on and transformations of certain bodies. Techniques and technologies must be directly geared towards certain practical goals; sciences need not. The internal organization of a given science does not depend on fulfilling a particular practical purpose (as happens in techniques and technologies), but on its theorems, and on its specific principles, which coordinate those theorems

and make its categorial closure possible. Scientific principles and theorems are universal apodictic truths.

While the preceding paragraphs may seem to have drawn distance from the central topic, distinguishing the sciences from techniques and technologies is instrumental to pinning down the fundamentals of a classification of sciences. As stated above, techniques and technologies can be classified based on their practical goals: medical technologies can be clearly distinguished from aerospace technologies by their different goals. Nevertheless, that practical criterion is not used when taking sciences into account since their advancement does not depend on achieving a single, particular goal. Nevertheless, sciences are also practical activities implying the intervention in, transformation and constitution of chief parts of the world and mark the way to reaching universal truths, as stated in their theorems and principles. This lays the groundwork for locating certain criteria for the classification of sciences by following the way in which they operate with different kind of bodies and by analyzing the way in which they come to their universal theorems and principles. I will contend that these criteria are internal to the sciences since they are taken from the internal structure of their fields and from the degree of scientificity they have achieved.

### 3.2 Fundamentals of the distinction between formal and non-formal sciences

From his transcendental idealist standpoint, Kant conceived of mathematics as an *a priori* discipline that studied the pure forms of intuition, while D’Alembert, Mill and Spencer, among other positivists, understood mathematics as a discipline subordinate to the natural sciences. Wilhelm M. Wundt disagrees with them all in *System der Philosophie*: against Kant, he is suspect of the existence of *a priori* forms and, against the positivists, he argues that certain human sciences, such as economics, psychology and sociology, make use of mathematical methods and, consequently, mathematics is also a constituent of certain human sciences (Wundt 1889b, V). Moving from those theories, Wundt contends that mathematics is neither a natural science nor a human science since it is completely uninterested in empirical reality. In his view, mathematical objects and their properties are purely ideal, for they take into account certain formal properties of the objects, abstracting the related content and focusing exclusively on the forms obtained. Accordingly, he claims that pure mathematics has nothing to do with empirical reality and gives rise to a new realm called the “formal sciences”, which stand in opposition to the “experimental” or “real” sciences.

In my view, Wundt has the merit of becoming cognizant of the fact that formal sciences shared certain distinctive features with and should be distinguished from the rest of the sciences, but he failed in determining their actual differences. He also failed to choose the appropriate words to refer to the two kinds of sciences, since, as I will argue, the labels “formal” and “real” induce confusion when applied thereto.

From the tenets of a materialist philosophy of science, the idea of a science that studies “pure forms” or “purely ideal objects”, a science beyond “empirical reality”, is contradictory. If mathematics and logic are strict sciences (and I contend they are), they should have a material field of objects, and those objects should be materially operated on, transformed and interrelated as in any other science. Matterless pure forms (angels or pure spirits) do not exist and, consequently, cannot shape the field of any science. At any rate, the syntagma “formal sciences” has such widespread use among academics and lay people alike and the risks of coining new terms are so high that I will still use that designation, since I am not looking to coin new words but rather discuss the fundamentals of the classification.

Following the tenet of the inexistence of pure forms, where then does the sui generis status of the formal sciences lie? Bueno’s categorial closure theory states that formal sciences also have a field of objects, which are themselves the typographic materials operated on by logicians and mathematicians. Those typographic, mathematical and logical objects (numbers, variables, curves, polyhedra, etc.) are self-referential since, from a mathematical (or logical) standpoint, their potential references to outside do not matter. Consequently, taking cues from Bueno’s philosophy of the formal sciences, the criterion to differentiate formal from non-formal sciences can be briefly formulated as follows. In the formal sciences, scientists operate with typographic objects (signs) that are self-referential. In the rest of sciences, though, scientists operate with objects other than signs, and signs are mostly allegorical since they refer to objects on the outside (Bueno 1979).

Euclid’s *Elements of Geometry* is commonly recognized as the first strict science, as the first “modern science” *avant la lettre*. As a formal science, geometry is a science of typographic, self-referential objects made with rulers and compasses. From the operations with those self-referential objects, geometers built a vast array of universal scientific truths and theorems, which they coordinated into a system by means of a set of principles and postulates, giving rise to the first known categorial closure of a strict science. Formal sciences are currently viewed as the paradigm of strict scientificity and their demonstrations and theorems are frequently presented as the clearest examples of universal scientific truths.

To conclude this section, I will briefly comment on the labels selected by Wundt to refer to the mathematical sciences. As I have already mentioned, the adjectives “real” and “formal” for the noun “sciences” used by Wundt may induce confusion. Firstly, the word “form” is ordinarily put in opposition to “matter”, following Aristotle’s hylomorphist tradition. As stated, the inexistence of pure forms separate from matter is a pillar of ontological materialism and, consequently, formal sciences cannot study pure forms that do not exist. Furthermore, the non-formal sciences also study many forms as they are embodied into the real world (orbits, trajectories and shapes, among others). Secondly, the contradistinction between formal and real or empirical sciences strongly suggest that formal sciences are neither real nor empirical, which is clearly misleading. Formal sciences are as real as any other sci-

ence, and they have an empirical character since they imply operations with self-referential signs, which are a specific kind of object existing in the real world. As it stands, the distinction between formal and non-formal sciences is, in certain aspects, superficial: both are real, empirical sciences and the fact that the fields of the formal sciences contain self-referential objects does not affect their degree of scientificity.

### 3.3. Fundamentals of the distinction between human and non-human sciences

The constitution of sociology, psychology, linguistics, cultural anthropology, economics and history as positive sciences in the 19<sup>th</sup> century brought in tow an important discussion about the place of these new sciences in relation to the natural sciences. The idea of science as a mere representation of reality neatly cohered with the nature-culture ontological dualism that was born of idealist German philosophy and had broad influence. As a result, leading philosophers understood that each of these two comprehensive ontological spheres, nature and culture, need to be studied by a specific group of sciences: the natural sciences and the cultural sciences (also called the moral sciences, social sciences, human sciences, etc.). This ontological foundation of these two classes of sciences proved compatible with the idea that the human sciences, due to their specific object of study (humankind, culture, society, etc.), make use of certain, particular methodologies. With Weber and Droysen as forebears, Dilthey and Simmel defended the famous distinction between the mechanical procedure of “explanation” (*Erläutern*) used by the natural sciences, and the empathic “comprehension” (*Verstehen*) typical of human sciences (Dilthey 1883; Simmel 1920).

Space constraints prevent me from discussing these theories with due care. For the present purposes, suffice it to say that the sciences, as they exist at present, pose substantial difficulties to the nature/culture divide. Are the contents of formal sciences natural or cultural? Are animal cultures cultural or natural? To what extent are natural sciences themselves a chief component of our cultures? Furthermore, the foundation on which this ontological dichotomy rests is far from clear. As regards the existence of two different methodologies (explanation and comprehension) corresponding to the two different kinds of sciences, the main problem may be stated as follows: is that methodological dualism compatible with the unity of the idea of science and the unity of the idea of scientific universal truth? Does the expression “scientific truth” mean the same thing when referring to the “explanation” built into a formal or natural science and to the “comprehension” of a historical event?

Bueno’s theory of science contends that classifying non-formal sciences into two different groups (human-ethological sciences and “natural” sciences) is meaningful since it affects the structure of their respective operational fields, but cannot be grounded on an ontological dichotomy. As stated above, the field of a non-formal science includes objects other than signs, as well as signs referring allegorically to those objects. Scientists operate and trans-

form those objects and try to find the unchanging aspects of those transformations, which give rise to scientific principles and theorems. Whenever this regularity proves itself to be independent of scientists' will, these principles and theorems can be deemed objective and universally valid. Common to all sciences, this procedure modulates differently depending on the nature of the operated terms of the fields. In the so-called "natural" sciences, the operated terms leading to scientific truths are objects that are either inert or, if not, then the related operations are not taken into account. Conversely, in the human and ethological sciences, certain subjects' operations must always be present in the field, and these operations must be taken into consideration when stating the scientific theorems. Consequently, in the field of human and ethological sciences there are two levels of operations:

1. As in any other science, the scientists' operations with the field's terms.

2. The thematic subjects' operations, i.e. the operations of the subjects studied by that science: speakers, natives, economic agents, historical subjects, animals, etc. These subjects' operations are taken as the terms of the science's study, as the terms of the related scientific field. Human sciences try to explain their operations by connecting them with the field's other terms: artifacts, institutions, etc.

Based on this characterization, the ethological sciences fall on the side of the human sciences since animals may be considered operating subjects, and their operations, as far as they are analogous to humans' in certain aspects, can be terms of a science's field. Here again, there are two operational planes: that of the operating animal and that of the ethologist or psychologist who operates on the operations of the animal.

At this juncture, it is worth remembering that, according to Bueno's theory of scientific truth, the theorems of the strict sciences imply the elimination of the subject. Bueno contends that, in the constitution of scientific truths, the operations of different subjects are neutralized among themselves so that certain relationships between terms can be stated, independently of the subject. This is the case of the observations of many astronomers over the centuries that led to Kepler's laws: The three famous laws establish certain relationships between the terms of the solar system that are deemed independent of the subjects.

Gustavo Bueno argued that certain deficiencies in the human and ethological sciences are but a consequence of the existence of their dual operational plane: the plane of scientists' operations, and the plane of operations of the thematic subjects, be they animal or human. As a result, of this dual operational plane, the fields of human and ethological sciences find themselves structurally tensed between two poles. On the one hand, according to Bueno's theory of scientific truth, there is the requirement to eliminate subjects' operations from the field of the science so that universal, objective scientific truth can be built. On the other hand is the fact that, in the human and ethological sciences, the operations of human subjects (or their non-human animal analogues) must always be present. As operations are more completely eliminated, the more objective, the more scientific the discipline will become; however, its status as "human" science will fall into

jeopardy (assuming, with Bueno, that the human sciences must contain the operations of the thematic subjects). Conversely, if these operations remain in the field, the science then retains a human-ethological character but, consequently, the scientificity of that discipline will be endangered since scientific objectivity implies a neutralization of subjective operations. According to Bueno, this chronic precariousness of the human and ethological sciences is but a consequence of the structural tension between the elimination and maintenance of the thematic subject's operations (Bueno 1978 and 2013). These circumstances do not affect the natural sciences and, accordingly, the classification of non-formal sciences into two groups (natural and human-ethological) can be deemed to be internal to the structure of science itself.

The proposed criterion facilitates an understanding of the proximity between human and ethological sciences. Scientists, the gnoseological subjects, are always humans, since animals do not engage in science. The thematic subject, the subject whose operations are studied by a given science, can be either human (as in linguistics, economics and history) or animal (as in ethology and animal psychology).

#### 3.4. Fundamentals of the specificity of human historical sciences

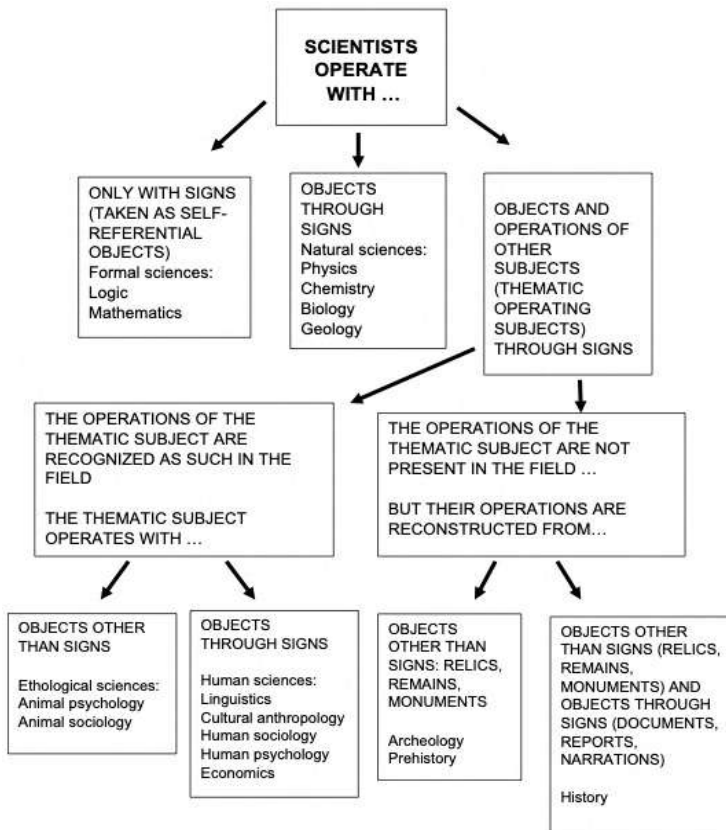
Drawing on the foregoing criterion, in the fields of human sciences the operations of certain subjects (thematic subjects) are recognized as such, and scientific theorems are expected to accommodate those operations within an explanatory context. As stated, this is the case of human sciences such as linguistics, psychology, ethology, sociology, economics and cultural anthropology, to cite but the most relevant. In them, scientists (the gnoseological subjects) interact with speakers, economic agents, natives and animals, among others (the thematic subjects). Historical sciences, though, pose a very specific problem, since past historical subjects have died and their operations are not directly present in the field of the science. Nevertheless, historians must suppose the existence of their past operations by deducing them from the field's object-terms (documents and unwritten remains); otherwise, such remains could not be differentiated from the surrounding objects of non-operational etiology. Hence, historians take relics, remains, monuments, documents, narrations and reports and populate them with the ghosts of their coeval subjects. Consequently, the operations of the thematic subjects (the historical agents), although not in the field directly, are inferred from certain objects. In archeology and prehistory, these objects do not include written vestiges, as they do in history.

The specificity of idiographic history as a scientific discipline has been frequently asserted. In *Scienza Nuova*, Giambattista Vico applied the *verum factum* principle ("the true is the made"), arguing that only the products of human actions can be properly understood and our understanding of the inert world will always be partial: only God, who designed and created the world, has a complete understanding of it (Vico 1725, Element I). In line with Vico, Wilhelm Windelband put forward his distinction

between nomothetic and idiographic sciences: natural sciences are nomothetic since they state universal laws (*nomos*), while history is idiographic since it focuses on the study of particular (*idios*) events. Scientific laws establish functions linking variables, while history studies the reasons why certain actors behaved in a given way (Windelband 1894, Rickert 1926). Robin G. Collingwood, in *The Idea of History*, argued that history focuses on human agents, on human affairs insofar as humans are rational beings, and argued that historians look for the motives that render those actions intelligible (Collingwood 1946). In my view, history, archaeology and prehistory share a common feature, as mentioned: their thematic subjects are dead and the related past operations must be inferred from certain specific objects (relics and narrations). Nevertheless, historical sciences share with the other human and ethological sciences the primary structure of the two operational levels described: the scientists' operations on the field and the thematic subjects' operations in the field. At any rate, the idiographic history, understood as the reconstruction of past, singular events, does not lead to the construction of a system of theorems coordinated by principles. A nomothetic, systematic history would imply the comparison between different isolated events: the parallel, independent evolution of ancient Egyptian and pre-Columbian American empires may serve as an illustration.

**Concluding remarks**

To conclude, at the cost of some slight repetition, I will summarize the fundamentals of the classification of sciences herein defended with the aid of a diagram (see Table 1).



Assumptions acting in this paper require that sciences always imply the intervention and transformation of the surrounding world and, consequently, they always imply the existence of scientists performing a wide array of operations on a field of objects. When scientists operate exclusively with object-signs understood as self-referential, the resulting sciences are formal sciences: mathematics and logic. Euclidean geometry serves as a paradigm of these sciences.

In the non-formal sciences (natural or human-ethological), scientists operate with objects other than signs and the object-signs are used allegorically to refer to something else outside them. Non-formal sciences, for their part, have two different varieties depending on the operational structure of their respective fields:

1. In the natural sciences, scientists operate on objects that either are inert or, if such objects do carry out operations, they are not taken into account. Physics and chemistry are paradigmatic illustrations of natural sciences since physical objects (planets, bodies, etc.) and chemicals (compounds, elements, etc.) do not perform operations.

2. In the human and ethological sciences, though, scientists operate on a field where other subjects' operations (human or animals) are present. Accordingly, those fields have two operational levels: that of the gnoseological subjects (the scientists) and that of the thematic subjects (animals, natives, speakers, etc.). Ethology, psychology and cultural anthropology are examples of these sciences. Sciences studying animal behavior may be differentiated from those studying human operations, since human operations are always accompanied by the use of a very specific language of words.

Historical sciences share this dual operational structure with the other human-ethological sciences, but the former present the particularity that, because the thematic subjects are dead, their operations are not directly in the field and must be deduced from the field's object-relics. When these objects comprise texts from the human language of words (narrations, reports, documents) we speak of history *strictu senso*, while in absence of texts we speak of prehistory and archeology.

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## Note

<sup>1</sup> Brendan Burke and Lino Camprubí translated the Spanish-language word "*categorial*" as the English-language word "categorical" (in Bueno 2013). The English-language word "categorical" (and its Spanish counterpart) takes on a very specific meaning associated with Kantian idealism in such expressions as "categorical imperative" and "categorical syllogism". As this use is foreign to Bueno's materialism, I prefer the adjective "categorial". In Bueno's philosophy, the closure of a given science is "categorial" since it gives rise to a specific ontological category, but it is not "categorical" in the Kantian sense.

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# To Remake Man and the World ...*comme si*? Camus's "Ethics" contra Nihilism

Norman K. Swazo

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**Abstract:** Whether Albert Camus's "existentialist" thought expresses an "ethics" is a subject of disagreement among commentators. Yet, there can be no reading of Camus's philosophical and literary works without recognizing that he was engaged in the post-WW2 period with two basic questions: How must we think? What must we do? If his thought presents us with an ethics, even if not systematic, it seems to be present in his ideas of "remaking" both man and world that are central to his *The Myth of Sisyphus* and *The Rebel*. Curiously, however, this apparent recommendation is ambiguous for the fact that while Camus proposes as much he does so "*comme si*," i.e., from a perspective of "as if." A clarification of this qualification is presented here in the light of the fact that Camus's philosophy of life rejects any nihilist project that countenances either suicide or murder. Thereby, one may argue that Camus indeed has an ethics that remains pertinent to today.

**Keywords:** Camus; philosophical suicide; nihilism; ethics; existentialism.

## 1. Camus's Two Basic Questions

Nietzsche's late 19<sup>th</sup> century anti-metaphysics informs the philosophy of Camus, especially because Camus's philosophical impetus was to counter nihilism and its perceived onset politically in the fascism of twentieth century Europe. For Camus, appeals to the authority of transcendent values—i.e., belief in the God of Abrahamic religion, belief in the classical ideas of the Good, the True, and the Beautiful—have lost what was believed to be an "indubitable" and "unshakeable" foundation. We are suspended (as it were) over an abyss, having lost our false innocence, and this without "lamentation" or "glorification."<sup>1</sup> Accepting these assumptions, then, Camus takes center stage in a 21<sup>st</sup> century interrogation having two questions: *How must we think? What must we do?*

These questions translate to Camus's philosophically fundamental question of suicide. Whether we live or die, those questions presuppose a *practical* rationality. If "what is called a reason for living is also an excellent reason for dying," and vice versa, then one may ask whether Camus presents us with an "ethics" that issues from his encounter with the absurd. Of course, Camus expresses his perception of his time, believing as he did after the Second World War that "we have to hasten to create in the interval between [the "frenzied embraces"

of] war and revolution,"<sup>2</sup> i.e., after a war that promised total destruction. Critics have written little on this aspect of Camus's thought.

Lana Starkey comments that Camus is neglected as a moral philosopher.<sup>3</sup> Herbert Hochberg, however, remains notably severe in his assessment.<sup>4</sup> Hochberg argued that Camus sought, but failed, to derive an ethics from the absurdity of the human condition. Situating Camus among empiricists in epistemological outlook, Hochberg interprets Camus as accepting the factuality of his existence and of the world as disclosed in ordinary experience. Our task is to live in the world as we find it. Camus thus counters the nihilist "who does not believe in what exists." For Camus, however, Hochberg comments, "man cannot grasp rationally an explanation of his and the world's existence," hence the absurdity of the human condition. This condition is expressed in the "polarity" of the human desire to know and the world's silence about the foundations and promises of human existence. In *The Myth of Sisyphus* and in *The Rebel*, Camus refuses the nihilist option: "The final conclusion of absurdist reasoning is, in fact, the repudiation of suicide and the acceptance of the desperate encounter between human inquiry and the silence of the universe."<sup>5</sup> Hochberg complains,

Camus has leaped from the factual premise that the juxtaposition of man and the universe is absurd, to the evaluative conclusion that this state ought to be preserved...For this transition we have no justification. Without such justification, Camus has not, in the least way, made his point. To produce such a justification would obviously involve the construction of an ethic. But it is precisely on this point that Camus builds his ethical view. Hence all that follows leans on a hollow argument.<sup>6</sup>

Hochberg requires a logic of "justification." But, there is ample reason to argue that Hochberg misses Camus's point.

Does Camus's refusal render his "ethics" hollow and inadequate? I propose Camus's questions remain central to a postmodern ethics such as he anticipated would have to be thought differently from the philosophy of Nietzsche, Marx, and Kierkegaard and differently from existentialists such as Jaspers and Sartre. If, upon confronting the absurd, the act of suicide is not a legitimate choice while not believing in God or in the authority of transcendent values, then we have some thinking to do. We have to perform our deeds with reference to a thinking that finds "the means to proceed beyond nihilism."<sup>7</sup> Camus discloses to us "reasons for living and for creat-

ing" beyond the "mortal problems" he has engaged *by way of illustration* (deliberately not to say here, *by way of justification*). Camus does not propose we live haphazardly or in aimless wandering about, but (echoing Nietzsche) instead to live *as creators*.

Camus desires that we proceed beyond nihilism, appropriating Pindar's counsel—to aspire not to immortal life but, rather, to exhaust the limits of the possible.<sup>8</sup> Acknowledging human mortality, we require a sense of what is possible. Despite the absurdity of the human condition, our mortal life is still worth living. Hence, our specifically human task is to work to exhaust the limits of the possible through creative acts. The question, then, is: *How far* shall we go in exhausting the limits of the possible? This question is entirely salient in postmodern context. Camus reminded that Nazism was a movement born of rebellion, but it had an impetus toward irrationality. Nazis were free to act with irrational terror, and thus with impunity. Theirs was a movement of "nihilist revolution," establishing "a *mystique* beyond the bounds of any ethical considerations," its consequences of suicide and murder thereby "neither efficacious nor exemplary."<sup>9</sup>

Camus writes, "Those who rush blindly to history in the name of the irrational, proclaiming that it is meaningless, encounter servitude and terror and finally emerge into the universe of concentration camps."<sup>10</sup> Mussolini's fascism, Hitler's Nazism, Russian Communism betrayed the origin of the revolution, politically cynical in their drawing from "moral nihilism." They offered "private and public techniques of annihilation," suicide and murder: "If men kill one another, it is because they reject mortality and desire immortality for all men. Therefore, in one sense, they commit suicide."<sup>11</sup> These revolutionaries went too far in their turn to history. Camus would have us be rebels "at grips with history," but moving beyond moral nihilism: "instead of killing and dying in order to produce the being that we are not, we have to live and let live in order to create what we are."<sup>12</sup> Contrary to moral nihilism's refrain that "everything is permitted," Camus prefers Van Gogh's "admirable complaint"—"I can very well, in life and in painting, too, do without God. But I cannot, suffering as I do, do without something that is greater than I am, that is my life—the power to create."<sup>13</sup>

In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus opined, "There is but one useful action, that of remaking man and the earth."<sup>14</sup> We can take the statement as comprised of two interdependent assertions: (1) It is *useful* to remake humankind; (2) It is *useful* to remake the earth. For Camus, then, there is some utility to remaking humankind and the earth. 'Remaking' is to be understood with reference to destiny: "It is not sufficient to live, there must be a destiny that does not have to wait for death," he says. "It is therefore justifiable to say that man has an idea of a better world than this."<sup>15</sup> The task is to make one's life a work of art, thus to complete what reality lacks, as lucidity informs us that, "suffering has no more meaning than happiness."<sup>16</sup> With this observation, Camus offers a tragic sense of life: life "can be magnificent and overwhelming—that is the whole tragedy."<sup>17</sup> But this recognition of the tragedy of human life elicits the essential comport-

ment: "The realization that life is absurd cannot be an end, but only a beginning."<sup>18</sup>

When Camus says 'earth' we are to interpret him to mean 'world', the latter understood to be *the locus of meaning and understanding in relation to our disclosure of meaning* (what, as Heidegger put it, is 'world' in the sense of "the referential context of signification," *Bedeutsamkeit*<sup>19</sup>). Yet, in the moment of stating as much, Camus also demurs—"I shall never remake man. But one must do 'as if.'" '...as if...', he says.<sup>20</sup> The statement is enigmatic. In the French, one says '*...comme si...*'. It seems this statement speaks to two actions Camus will not himself undertake. We must clarify the interpretive problem presented in this assertion. There are multiple implicatures present in the statement:

- Implicature 1: 'I shall never remake man.' (*reference to self*)
- Implicature 2: 'I **shall** never remake man.' (*reference to an imperative*)
- Implicature 3: 'I shall **never** remake man.' (*reference to time frame*)
- Implicature 4: 'I shall never **remake** man.' (*reference to action*)
- Implicature 5: 'I shall never remake **man**.' (*ref. to object of action*).

The questions following from these implicatures are obvious. Are we to accent 'I', to say 'Camus means *he himself* will not do so', but that he leaves it open to *others*, to *us*, to do so? Or, are we to accent 'shall', Camus meaning that *he gives to himself an imperative* not to do so, even though he might have an inclination (whether of emotion or appetite) to remake humankind and the world? Etc., etc., the questions follow each implicature. Howsoever we interpret Camus's meaning, we cannot ignore the subsequent statement complicating the interpretation. Despite saying he shall never remake humankind, Camus utters a *general* imperative that seemingly excludes him but not us: "One" *must* do this, he says; "one" must remake both humankind and the world, but ... *as if...*, *comme si*.

Who is this "one" who *must* do so? What does Camus mean here? What does it mean to say, '*as if*', '*comme si*'? Is this the logic of the subjunctive—to say, '*as it were*', thus to say, 'One must remake humankind and the world...*as it were*'? Or, is it the word of the epistemological and moral skeptic—'*as if*' alike to saying, '*well, not quite*'; '*well, not really*'; '*No, I don't really mean that*'; '*No, I don't really believe that*'; '*I mean, as if that were true...but not really*'; and so on? Does Camus mean that one must act to remake humankind and the world *as if it were true* that one *could* remake humankind, even *as if it were true* that one *should* remake humankind and the world, thus to take up the imperative *as if it were* an imperative, even if, were we pressed, we would answer '*Really, truly speaking*, it is *not* an imperative'? Camus uses 'one' to denote what is impersonal and anonymous. But, this 'one' he expects to be made personal when a given person "enters in with his revolt and his lucidity." Indeed, relative to morality, Camus tells us, "Man can allow himself to denounce the total injustice of the world and then demand a total justice that he alone will create."<sup>21</sup>

But one must clarify Camus's '*comme si*' here. Consider examples of common usage:<sup>22</sup>

*Usage 1 means*: "in such a way that something seems to be true," e.g., a) 'It looks as if it's going to rain.', b)

'Jack smiled as though [*as if*] he was [*were*] enjoying a private joke.' *Usage 2 means*: "used when you are describing something and you imagine an explanation for it that you know is not the real one," e.g., a) 'The house was in such a mess—it looked as though [*as if*] a bomb had dropped on it.' *Usage 3 means*: "spoken used for emphasizing that something is not true or is not important," e.g., a) 'Don't get lost or anything, will you?' [*One answers*:] 'As if I would [get lost]—I'm not stupid.', b) 'Why was he worrying about the interview? — As if it mattered anyway!', c) '*As if*'. . . '*comme si*. . .'

Does Camus utter an imperative such that he *really, truly*, does mean that you and I must remake humankind and remake the world, our freedom countering nihilism?

Camus, informing us of his epistemological comportment, admits he does not *know* "whether this world has a meaning that transcends it."<sup>23</sup> He also asserts it is *impossible* for him "just now to know it," thus possibly *later* knowing so. His sense of the human condition, such as he experienced it in post-WW2 Europe after the Holocaust, the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the failure of communist revolution, etc., did not provide him the knowledge he desired. For him, action integrates human and world and works to alter it without moral nihilism. Where there is no absolute negation there is yet reason to live: "I proclaim that I believe in nothing and that everything is absurd, but I cannot doubt the validity of my proclamation and I must at least believe in my protest."<sup>24</sup> Cautious of excess, of transgressing the limit, Camus hopes "for a new creation."

One must answer what one means by 'world'. It is not merely the life-world (*Lebenswelt*) conceptualized by Husserl and Heidegger or the environing physical world that is "the planet Earth." There is a temporal element involved in living. One can (a) merely *await* the future, passively present, surrendered to the dominion of the past as it governs the present; or (b) one can engage the future in anticipatory resolve, attentive to individual and collective potentiality-for-being, the future governing the present through that resolve. Camus seems not to appreciate this distinction, however. He says: "Real generosity toward the future lies in giving all to the present."<sup>25</sup> Does this mean, therefore, that—in view of contemporary concerns—there can be no reasonable appeal to a broad principle of morality such as asserts "duties to future generations," or a principle of "responsibility to protect" the present, including persons, the environment, etc.?

The answers are unclear in Camus's texts. He allows "for those who, without concluding, continue questioning."<sup>26</sup> *We* must continue questioning—such is his imperative countering the unjust act of suicide. Camus does not appeal to "an eternal idea of justice." On the contrary, "If injustice is bad for the rebel"—for Camus, it is—"it is [bad]...because it...kills the small part of existence that can be realized on this earth through the mutual understanding of men. In the same way, since the man who lies shuts himself off from the other man, falsehood is therefore proscribed and, on a slightly lower level, murder and violence, which impose definitive silence."<sup>27</sup> Camus sides with Plato and dialectic to clarify moral rectitude: "Plato is right and not Moses and Nietzsche. Dialogue on the level of mankind is less costly

than the gospel preached by totalitarian regimes in the form of a monologue dictated from the top of a lonely mountain." To refuse Moses is to refuse the transcendent as source of an *a priori* morality; to refuse Nietzsche is to refuse moral nihilism and master-slave morality. Thus, "The logic of the rebel is to want to serve justice so as not to add to the injustice of the human condition...and to wager, in spite of human misery, for happiness."<sup>28</sup>

Through dialectic one attains mutual understanding, keeping the future remains open and disclosing meaningful possibilities. Camus gives all to the present, *intentionally* being generous, giving all, to the future. One does not, therefore, ignore the demands of the future. One accounts for them by giving all to the present.<sup>29</sup> The problem of suicide is faced directly, as foil to the threat of nihilism.<sup>30</sup> Early in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus remarks that there are those who say 'no' to suicide but who "act as if they thought 'yes'." Here the '*as if*' relates thought and deed: One *thinks* the answer to the problem of suicide is 'yes', suicide thus permitted, if not obligatory; but, one *says* 'no', in which case one does not commit suicide. Perhaps one says 'no' impulsively; for, Camus reminds, "We get into the habit of living before acquiring the habit of thinking." The earlier habit of living, countervailing the latter, is potent. To continue questioning is to assure oneself of a tomorrow. One anticipates the eventuality of an answer while doubting reason's potency. We recognize our longing for tomorrow as a sign of "the revolt of the flesh" against the absurd.

The fact of revolt is itself a sign of deference to the claim the future makes on us when one *feels* the world in all its estrangement, where the True, the Good, and the Beautiful seem to be without meaning. Rejecting a formal ethics, Camus opines: "No code of ethics and no effort are justifiable a priori in the face of the cruel mathematics that command our condition."<sup>31</sup> Thus Camus rejects moral justification *a priori*, leaving room for an *a posteriori* warrant in ordinary experience. If we are to remake humankind and the world, then we must attend to *consequences*. To attend to the consequences of our deeds is to attend to the claim of the future upon the present. That is why Camus would give all to the present. One gives all to the present in view of consequences, accounting for what tomorrow *can* bring beyond the "successive regrets and impotences" that the history of human thought has delivered us.

The world is not reasonable relative to Camus's interrogation of the conditions of life experienced in the first half of the twentieth century. But, reason persists, insisting on its "adventure." Even if reason lacks apodictic efficacy it nonetheless possesses and manifests an intensity of hopes. With this hope we may see the way forward to "revolt against the irremediable,"<sup>32</sup> finding small consolation against the absurd, even if with a limited efficacy. Camus counsels: "But he who dedicates himself to the duration of his life, to the house he builds, to the dignity of mankind, dedicates himself to the earth and reaps from it the harvest that sows its seed and sustains the world again and again."<sup>33</sup> Camus, in a quintessentially Nietzschean move, may ask too much of humankind and the world; for, he desires "everything to be explained" to him or, failing that, then "nothing."



In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche asks a set of questions about God: "Why atheism today? . . . 'the father' in God has been thoroughly refuted; ditto, 'the judge', 'the rewarder'. Also his 'free will': he does not hear—and if he heard he still would not know how to help. Worst of all: he seems incapable of clear communication; is he unclear?"<sup>34</sup> Not surprising then that Camus asserts, "The world itself, whose single meaning [he does] not understand, is but a vast irrational." He asserts his belief: "The absurd is born of this confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world."<sup>35</sup> This belief *qua* fact must not be forgotten, hence his imperative: If one must not forget, then one must continue the adventure of thought. That adventure calls forth the deeds that *would*, if they *could*, if they *should*—*comme si*—remake humankind and the world. The three strands of the subjunctive, the indicative, and the imperative are engaged, directing both deliberation and choice.

What are the conclusions of philosophy such as Camus articulates them in his interrogation of the absurd? To say '*x is absurd*' is to say that one faces an apparent material impossibility, or a contradiction of belief concerning some presumed fact of experience. What happens, then, if one says, e.g., 'It is absurd to *think* one must remake humankind and the world,' and then to say further 'it is, *therefore*, absurd in the extreme to *attempt* to remake both humankind and world'? Or, returning to our initial question: If one cannot remove the absurdity at all, are we then to give place to reason's intensity of hope, in particular when one says the foregoing but adds, perhaps reluctantly, '*as if*', '*comme si*'? Must one not consider one's *aim* and one's *strength*, thus to dispose an act proportionate to the aim in view? Camus sets up a *logical* reality, i.e., a logical possibility. He would have us think of a *material* reality, not to leave the aim "impotent." The transition between logical and material reality is itself a creative act, an act of remaking, *if one could*, if one thinks one *should*.

For Camus the absurd is present in the conjunction of the human mind and the world. Any attempt to solve a problem works with experience of both. Hence, Camus the man understands himself to have deep feelings concerning the absurd. This depth of feeling means he cannot fully fathom what he is conscious of saying. Hence, when he speaks his seeming imperative to remake humankind and the world, one may argue, on his own position Camus is not entirely conscious of what remaking humankind and the world entails. He hesitates in the very moment he utters the imperative, hence the '*comme si*'. He does not know—we do not know—whether to take the imperative seriously and grant it practical veracity.

For Camus, 'world' references both a *metaphysic* (for Europe since Plato, that means all Nietzsche sought to overturn and transvalue) and an *attitude of mind*—since Plato and Aristotle, an ontological commitment that is essentialist and archeological-teleological, and since the Church Fathers all that is eschatological. But, there is more here. Camus asserts, "a man defines himself by his make-believe as well as by his sincere impulses."<sup>36</sup> To utter a proposition and add '*as if*', '*comme si*', as Camus does, is to introduce a move in thought from the sincere

to the make-believe—to, what offers itself as logical possibility, but *perhaps also* as material possibility. Camus claims that methods disclose unconsciously present conclusions, though one claims not to know them yet. Camus's quasi-existentialist method of analysis, his sense of the moral in the linkage of the sincere and the make-believe, moves him unconsciously to entertain the make-believe—not in some pejorative sense of installing oneself in fantasy, but in the positive sense of intuiting a logical reality that has some promise of material possibility, hence of "remaking" the present of humanity and the world. If his method "acknowledges the feeling that all true knowledge is impossible," then we are left with the task of navigating appearances, including the totality of the manifest irrationality of human existence and the world. Camus counsels "an active consent to the relative" as one's lucid fidelity to the human condition.<sup>37</sup> One's aims are always approximate, never realized completely. The first rule of conduct, then, Camus articulates thus: "To conquer existence, we must start from the small amount of existence we find in ourselves and not deny it from the very beginning."<sup>38</sup> This rule insists on the consequent imperative of absolute self-expression; in the dialectic one speaks against the overbearing silence of the world.

To acknowledge the absurd is a positive moment in human existence; one's consciousness awakened to irrationality in human experience. When that happens it "provokes what follows." An awakened consciousness of the absurdity of human existence is a provocation that dismisses the option of suicide and raises to the individual his or her conscience: *One must remake humankind and the world*, even if one utters the seemingly necessary refrain—'*as if*', '*comme si*'. This imperative is the requisite response to the fact of the absurd. This is not to say that one identifies objects that incite our fear. Instead, Camus means here what Heidegger calls *dread* (*Angst*), understood ontologically, thus without specific object. In the acknowledgement of dread, "one" must move to remake humankind and the world, even if we are to conclude that Camus himself cannot, or shall not, do so.<sup>39</sup>

Why should *we* defer to this seeming imperative to remake humankind and world? That is a question of justification of an ethics, such as Hochberg demanded of Camus. Camus provides a pertinent insight, telling us that nature negates us, that "At the heart of all beauty lies something inhuman...[but that indeed the] primitive hostility of the world rises up to face us across millennia"<sup>40</sup>—and it is an irrational hostility, despite the "images and designs" by which we have sought to make sense of it. These images and designs are signs of human artifice, of how we have worked to make sense of, and otherwise construct, the world in which we have our being. However, in the provocation that is the consciousness of the absurd, such artifice becomes useless.

In that moment Camus would say that it is "useful" to us to remake both humankind and the world. This is the moment for the onset of a new artifice, the artifice that works with consciousness of the absurd that was felt before but was not admitted as such into daily discourse. Camus will not stand passively before Nietzsche's "naysaying," or Kierkegaard's sickness unto death, or Sar-

tre's nausea and *mauvaise foi*, not even Heidegger's enigmatic *Angst*. He is prepared to ask: "how far is one to go to elude nothing?"<sup>41</sup> With this question, consciousness of the absurd invokes the *conscience* that would, if it could, if it should, respond to the call to remake both humankind and the world. One does not remake with caprice. Rather, "When the throne of God is overturned, the rebel realizes that it is now his own responsibility to create the justice, order, and unity that he sought in vain within his own condition, and in this way to justify the fall of God."<sup>42</sup> Here, perhaps, Camus appropriates the insight of Parain, realizing that "Our language is neither true nor false. It is simultaneously useful and dangerous, necessary and pointless."<sup>43</sup>

Camus appreciates that the utterance issuing from conscience is not a matter of distinguishing the true and the false. Hence, such utterance does not place us before a possible contradiction, that effort at logic "in which the mind that studies itself gets lost in a giddy whirling."<sup>44</sup> The intensity of hope that one may feel is not grounded in apodictic knowledge; hence, no justification *qua* demonstration of certitude can be given. All creative acts produce constructions, images and designs of the human mind. The present task that is *conscientious*, while being *conscious* of the absurd, is to recognize that these images and designs, while not certain, have their utility. To remake humankind and the world is a task to be undertaken without the illusion of certainty, and without the pretense to knowledge. But, the question remains: How far shall we go?

## 2. The "Ethics" of the Absurd

For Camus there must be a logic of which human existence is capable, i.e., that conduces to human existence, not to suicide. He allows that the absurd has its own "commandments" calling forth our action, without escapism into the transcendent. There are two commands in dilemma: (1) *Live* (aware of the absurd); (2) *Die* (lucid of one's mortality). While doubting the authority of apodictic reason Camus nonetheless concedes: "It is useless to negate the reason absolutely. It has its order in which it is efficacious."<sup>45</sup> To that degree, one need not, e.g., yield to the absurd in the Kierkegaardian sense that, Camus says, follows Ignatius of Loyola in sacrificing the intellect in favor of divine superintendence. Camus sets his standard: "I want to know whether I can live *with what I know* and *with that alone*."<sup>46</sup> Not willing to sacrifice the intellect, Camus concedes: "But if I recognize the limits of the reason, I do not therefore negate it, recognizing its relative powers."<sup>47</sup> Rather than seek the rationalist aim of apodictic truth, Camus seeks what is *desirable* within the limits of *relative* truths. "Ethics" would have to be articulated within those parameters.

One who despairs of life yields to the nihilist temptation and commits suicide. Camus, however, recognizing the limit of human reason, presses against that limit, asking how far one will go. Life is lived all the better if it has no meaning, i.e., no meaning such as provided by the metaphysics appealing to the transcendent. He clarifies his aim: "In fact, our aim is to shed light upon the step

taken by the mind when, starting from a philosophy of the world's lack of meaning, it ends up by finding a meaning and depth in it."<sup>48</sup> That meaning is not the leap to faith that installs religious meaning. Neither is it found in the phenomenologist's intentionality that enumerates and describes phenomena without explaining them. So, Camus is left to his own rational devices, allowing what he knows and that alone. This is a function of belief that admits of very limited evidence. Thus, Camus says: "What I believe to be true I must therefore preserve."<sup>49</sup> This is sign of his "conscious revolt." Insisting on an ethics of revolt rather than renounce life in the face of the absurd, he will not suffer to have his and our freedom of rebellion abolished.

At this point one aware of the absurd takes up the charge of conscious revolt, acting according to an 'as if'... '*comme si*.' For, Camus asserts that it is then that one "thinks that something in his life can be directed. In truth, he acts *as if* he were free, even if all the facts make a point of contradicting that liberty."<sup>50</sup> We have here, then, a specific understanding of Camus's sense of the 'as if' that concerned us at the outset. If one is to remake humankind and the world, one does so *not knowing* that one is free (in the metaphysical sense). Notwithstanding, one can engage the present with a view to the future, acting *as if one is free* to do so, giving all to the present thereby in generosity to the future. Camus will say here 'as if' because, as he again concedes: "But at the moment I am well aware that the higher liberty, that freedom *to be*, which alone can serve as basis for a truth, does not exist."<sup>51</sup> That awareness does not preclude one's action in which one believes and pronounces: 'I do so *as if* I were free...'

Problematic in our effort to glean an *ethos* from Camus that accounts for the future, however, is his declaration: "The absurd enlightens me on this point: *there is no future*."<sup>52</sup> What is the implication here? Is one to say: 'If there is no future, then there is only the present,' in which case one commits one's actions entirely to the present? If that is what Camus intends—such that one can, hence, have an attitude of *indifference* to the future—then (a) there is no obvious *duty* to future generations of humanity and (b) there is no *responsibility* to protect the present in view of ostensible duty. There seems to be no imperative to remake humankind or the world; for, that is "non-sensical" in the face of a claim that there is no future. But, one must be cautious here, since, in Camus's sense, 'future' has onto-theo-logical connotations that include teleology and eschatology, both of which Camus rejected as part of Nietzsche's anti-metaphysical position.

Where does this put us in our effort to articulate a coherent ethics? Camus opines: "I see, then, that the individual character of a common code of ethics lies not so much in the ideal importance of its basic principles as in the norm of an experience that it is possible to measure."<sup>53</sup> Entirely salient and informing his ethics, Camus contraposes *ideal principles* and *norms of experience*. *Experience* provides the norm, not the *a priori*, not the *prima facie*, not *abstract* principles. Further, one must mean here an experience one can *measure*. Hence, if one asserts a responsibility to the present, then this must be

warranted by lived experience. A measure must be given. It seems, therefore, (a) if the condition *sine qua non* is experience (consistent with empiricist epistemology), and logically (b) one has no experience of the future (one can have only hopes), clearly the future does not dispose itself in the present to claim us by way of an *a priori* moral imperative. Hence, one cannot find it meaningful to assert such an imperative to remake humankind and to remake the world thereby. The imperative cannot be "truly, really, so"; it can be an imperative only 'as if true... 'comme si c'était vrai.'

But we get ahead of ourselves. We must ask: Which "man" is to be remade? Is it "man" who appeals to the transcendent, "ideal man" who has hope of eternity and victory over individual death that is otherwise absurd? Is it "absurd man" in the flesh, lucid enough to be aware of his absurd existence, who therefore takes on (because he gives to himself) the task of conscious revolt? Following Nietzsche, Camus *would* have us remake the former as "type." But, to speak of the latter type is also to allow for a remaking—because, the absurd man, Camus claims, is "[a]ssured of his temporally limited freedom, of his revolt devoid of future, and of his mortal consciousness;" in that case "he lives out his adventure within the span of his lifetime." This seems problematic, however, if one is to speak of an ethics in the classical sense of concern for alterity. Camus thinks a man in revolt shields his action "from any judgment but his own"—the rebel is indifferent to any claim from alterity, even seemingly indifferent to any claim from posterity. Camus asserts starkly:

There can be no holding forth on ethics. I have seen people behave badly with great morality and I note every day that integrity has no need of rules. There is *but one moral code* that the absurd man *can accept*, the one that is not separated from God: the one that is dictated. But it so happens that he lives outside that God. As for the others (I mean also immoralism), the absurd man sees nothing in them but justifications and he has nothing to justify.<sup>54</sup>

Camus identifies here a contradiction. Those who posit ethical codes but whose practice is contrary are hence without truth or efficacy. But, his experience informs him of individuals having moral integrity without ground in obvious maxims of conduct (whether subjectively or objectively valid). Further, Camus is aware of those who insist on 'immoralism', asserting 'Everything is permitted'. Camus is quick to clarify: What matters is to understand this assertion as "a bitter acknowledgment of a fact," viz., a person possesses "the ability to behave badly with impunity," such evil conduct part of ordinary experience.

Camus, however, does not accept this vulgar sense that, e.g., Dostoevsky seems to express through Ivan in *The Brothers Karamazov*. Camus is quite definitive: "The absurd does not liberate; it binds. *It does not authorize all actions.*"<sup>55</sup> This is so because of the consequences of actions, not in any *a priori* or *prima facie* justification such given in Western moral philosophy. Camus is a consequentialist (not to say utilitarian) in his moral demeanor; for, he assesses that, "All systems of morality are based on the idea that an action has consequences that legitimize it or cancel it."<sup>56</sup> He does not

subscribe to eudaemonist, utilitarian, or deontological systems of morality, since, "if all experiences are indifferent, that of duty is as legitimate as any other. One can be virtuous through a whim."<sup>57</sup> That opinion will not satisfy an Aristotelian or a Kantian, obviously, since it asserts that one can be indifferent to moral virtue or duty but perform according to duty as a matter of inclination or self-interest. This, of course, is not the "strict motive" of respect for universal law or appeal to the "second nature" of habitual praxis.

Camus recognizes a practical link between past, present, and future relative to moral consequence, without privileging the authority of the past or the claim of the future: "At very most, such a mind [that of a responsible person] will consent to use past experience as a basis for its future actions."<sup>58</sup> That consent is merely a matter of fact in a situation of judgment. One may be indifferent, but one has the freedom to consent or dissent. No apodictically warranted imperative of action is presupposed; for, Camus asks (and not rhetorically): "What rule, then, could emanate from that unreasonable order? The only truth that might seem instructive to him is not formal: it comes to life and unfolds in men. The absurd mind cannot so much expect ethical rules at the end of its reasoning..."<sup>59</sup> It can expect only "illustrations," "images," "constructs," from lived experience, where, because no one is "guilty"—e.g., in reference to some objectively valid maxim that warrants moral judgment—there are no singular exemplars *per se*.

It seems Camus insists, then, that one's lived experience is sufficient to the deed that unfolds. All that matters is its efficacy in relation to the aim and the strength invested. One may *choose* to be someone or something, even as, conscious of one's mortality, one trembles. One can be, as Camus presents these two images, an unrepentant Don Juan or a rebellious lady of the stage such as Adrienne Lecouvreur, who had no problem presenting herself as "an unblushing face to the world"—Voltaire, in poetic verse, writing at her death: "Should she then, breathless, criminal be thought, And is it then to charm the world a fault?"<sup>60</sup> In choosing thus, each plays a game; and, he and she consent to the rules of the particular game. One may, of course, decline to play, choose a different game, or choose no game at all (which is, in effect, the choice of suicide). It is thus that one chooses a moral code, an ethics in which one is ever conscious of one's mortality. One subscribes to a maxim (the rule of the game) but only 'as if', 'comme si', taking it *as if true in the moment of living one's experience*, knowing it may not be true. This is a "logical" comportment", Camus argues.

Hence, not committing to an inductive logic of probable consequence, Camus is nonetheless consequentialist in the lucidity of his comportment. He appropriates the moment as lived experience, committing to living what unfolds without pretense of *telos* or *eschaton*. That is why he speaks of Don Juan as one who "achieves a knowledge without illusions which negates everything [men of God] profess," even if such men call down punishment upon his head for the excesses of his interminable devotion to the flesh, his unbridled carnality and debauchery. Similarly, Camus commends

Adrienne who, he reminds, “on her deathbed was willing to confess and receive communion”—thus as a good and convicted Catholic Christian is expected to do—but who, Camus observes, “refused to abjure her profession.”<sup>61</sup> Is one to judge her guilty thereby, as Voltaire asked, thus to condemn her for her choice, such as the Church did in refusing her a Christian burial? Camus says otherwise:

She thereby lost the benefit of the confession. Did this not amount, in effect, to choosing her absorbing passion in preference to God? And that woman in the death throes refusing in tears to repudiate what she called her art gave evidence of a greatness that she never achieved behind the footlights. This was her finest role and the hardest one to play. Choosing between heaven and a ridiculous fidelity, preferring oneself to eternity or losing oneself in God is the age-old tragedy in which each must play his part.<sup>62</sup>

Is her choice absurd? Nay; not for Camus. It *would* have been absurd had she repudiated her art upon confession and communion. That maxim she declined to accept, even as Don Juan declined to say he had loved “at last” and said, instead, that always he loved “once more.” As actor in his game and as actress in her game, both Don Juan and Adrienne *remade* themselves—*comme si*—at least in the *persona* they presented to others.<sup>63</sup>

### 3. The “Ethics” of Conquest?

We return to the question that engages the conquerer’s claim that one must remake humankind and the world as the only meaningfully useful action. This conquerer who would act so no longer conquers territories, not a conquest of “the earth”. Camus speaks of conquest that “lies in protest and the blind-alley sacrifice.”<sup>64</sup> The modern conquerer seeks victory in rebellion as *l’homme révolté*—“revolution...accomplished against the gods” as with Prometheus, “the first of modern conquerers.” One can *choose* to be a modern conquerer: “The conquerers are merely those among men who are conscious enough of their strength to be sure of living constantly on those heights and fully aware of that grandeur.”<sup>65</sup> Yet, they admit of death: “In the rebel’s universe, death exalts injustice. It is the supreme abuse.”<sup>66</sup> But, the rebel chooses so rather than choose the eternal that is mere illusion—for him, one must conquer illusion and appropriate one’s lucidity, even at the point of death.

Camus presented us with the images of Don Juan, Adrienne, and the conquerer, clear that, “these images do not propose moral codes and involve no judgments: they are sketches. They merely represent a style of life. The lover, the actor, or the adventurer plays the absurd. But equally well, if he wishes, the chaste man, the civil servant, or the president of the Republic.”<sup>67</sup> Each remakes him/herself involving neither the absolute negation of suicide nor the surrender to the illusion that appeals to eternal values. Above all one must choose to be lucid, whichever game one chooses to make life possible and meaningful for oneself. There is, for Camus, no *formal*

ethics of judgment, of good and bad, no “right side” or “wrong side” (*l’enverse et l’endroit*). There is only the logic of the absurd that modern conquerers know: “They are not striving to be *better*; they are attempting to be *consistent*. If the term ‘wise man’ can be applied to the man who lives on what he *has* without speculating on what he *has not*, then they are wise men.”<sup>68</sup> Hence, one hesitates to speak of ethics, of morality, in the classical or modern sense. One does not speak of virtue or duty, except as whim. One does not speak of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful and thus assert a *correspondence* between one’s lived experience and postulated transcendent realities. One has only one’s absurd logic, one’s adventure, being consistent in the game one chooses to play, including the game one plays with oneself to remake oneself and to “be” what one will, but “*as if*,” “*comme si*.” One can ask no more of the man or woman who has found his or her lucidity, thereby conscious of the human condition.

The ethics of conquest in Camus’s sense thus alters what it is “to be” a Don Juan or an Adrienne: One must be conqueror “in the realm of the mind, a Don Juan but of knowledge, an actor but of the intelligence...”<sup>69</sup> One must be even more than conqueror of the mind. This Camus identifies with s/he who creates beyond the absurd present as a matter of “metaphysical honor,” despite being lucid about the fact that s/he is defeated in advance by the inevitable enemy that is death.

### 4. From Ethics to Aesthetics

If Camus acknowledges a rank of virtues the highest is that of metaphysical honor, revolt the means to its accomplishment. The rebel’s directive in action, however, is *aesthetic*—not moral in the classical sense but nonetheless finding morality *in* the aesthetic. The problem of life is aesthetic, as he says: “The problem for the absurd artist is to acquire this *savoir-vivre* which transcends *savoir-faire*.”<sup>70</sup> With this comportment the absurd artist renounces whatever “prestige” thought has commanded hitherto. S/he is resigned to the fact that “the intelligence...works up appearances and covers with images what has no reason.” Asserting *savoir-vivre* one lives without apodictic reason as ground of one’s choice of action, hence living *comme si*. Camus realizes the appropriation of *savoir-vivre* must be viewed relative to “fictional creation,” which he characterizes as “a work in which the temptation to explain remains greatest, in which illusion offers itself automatically, in which conclusion is almost inevitable.”<sup>71</sup>

Art, as in the creation of a novel, Camus asserts, “has its logic, its reasonings, its intuition, and its postulates,” its “intellectualization.” In this context Camus expresses his principal concern: “I want to know whether, accepting a life *without appeal*, one can also agree to work and create *without appeal* and what is the way leading to these liberties.”<sup>72</sup> This situates Camus’s imperatives of the absurd he confronts: “If the commandments of the absurd are not respected, if the work does not illustrate divorce and revolt, if it sacrifices to illusions and arouses hope, it ceases to be gratuitous.”<sup>73</sup> If the work of art is no

longer gratuitous, then, Camus decries the consequence: "I can no longer detach myself from it. My life may find a meaning in it, but that is trifling. It ceases to be that exercise in detachment and passion which crowns the splendor and futility of a man's life."<sup>74</sup> This tendency to attachment is, for Camus, entirely problematic if the commandment of the absurd is rebellion, for it leads to resentment and consequentially permits both suicide and murder.

Hence, Camus asks: "In the fictional world in which awareness of the real world is keenest, can I remain faithful to the absurd without sacrificing to the desire to judge?"<sup>75</sup> Camus would have us be careful of the "final illusion" that we are capable of judging the True, the Good, and the Beautiful through such works of art. The prospect of final illusion has its source in "stubborn hope." Rather than commit himself to moral "judgment" or theoretical "justification"—thus to avoid appeal to the authority of apodictic reason—Camus engages such works not morally but aesthetically, all by way of "illustration." He is quick to assert this does not lead to absolute negation. Adhering to the commandments of the absurd, Camus commits himself to denying the moral validity of both suicide (as articulated in *The Myth of Sisyphus*) and murder (as articulated in *The Rebel*). Despite the absurdity of human existence, *relative* truths such as we experience suffice to prohibit both suicide and murder—in the former case, in "the age of negation," so as to affirm *human liberty*; in the latter case, in "the age of ideologies," to affirm *human solidarity* against tyranny and servitude, against any master-slave morality, and even against nationalism.<sup>76</sup> Camus rejects the appeal to absolute freedom, which "is achieved by the suppression of all contradiction: therefore it destroys freedom."<sup>77</sup> There can be no dialectic without contradiction, whether in the assertion that becomes an elenchus or that delivers a provisional truth.

For Camus there is no novelist more *apropos* to his point about stubborn hope than Dostoevsky, whose works of art represent heroes of "modern sensibility," who "question themselves as to the meaning of life."<sup>78</sup> In Dostoevsky's art Camus finds the problem of logical suicide engaged, therein the existential problem of the ground of modernity's ethics. If indeed man has killed "God" (humanity's "metaphysical crime"), then Camus asks (with reference to Kirilov in Dostoevsky's *The Possessed*): "But if this metaphysical crime is enough for man's fulfillment, why add suicide? Why kill oneself and leave this world after having won freedom? That is contradictory."<sup>79</sup> There, squarely, is Camus's problem of *philosophical* suicide, his facing squarely the *logic* of suicide. In the transition from the classical to the modern sensibility, Camus understands the problematic comportment: "As in the time of Prometheus, they entertain blind hopes."<sup>80</sup> The modern sensibility, if it is to be lucid of absurdity, must dismiss such illusion. It must dismiss the final illusion that may be promised in works of art, such as the novel. It is precisely there that one can discern the essential commandment of the absurd, such as Camus clarifies with the foregoing question: *Why kill oneself and leave this world after having won freedom?*

One cannot answer this question without admitting to the absence of "justification" such as a universal rationality prefers. One dismisses the right of "judgment," there being no ground for practical rationality. From the outset and in the end of his philosophical elucidation, Camus champions relative freedom, relative justice, and relative truth, all on the basis of ordinary experience that is, in his purview, tragic. Hence, he asserts, "Instead of saying, with Hegel and Marx, that all is necessary, [rebellion] only repeats that all is possible and that...it is worth making the supreme sacrifice for the sake of the possible."<sup>81</sup> Camus's above question has force, challenging Kirilov's attitude of dismay and disappointment when he says, "I am unhappy because I am *obliged* to assert my freedom."<sup>82</sup> *Unhappily* obliged to assert his freedom? Indeed. Yet, even Nietzsche—"the most famous of God's assassins"—did not wince before that task. He did not commit to the act of suicide though he felt obliged to give himself a new tablet of commandments that would inaugurate a transvaluation of past values. Suicide is not the answer that *savoir-vivre* calls into the forefront of the present moment of lucidity. One must remake both the individual "man" and the "world"—without asking the question (that is "the essential impulse of the absurd mind" when faced with its survey of a given act (such as an act of suicide) or a mind that succumbs to madness), viz., "What does that *prove*?" Camus does not consent to Dostoevsky's stance in *The Brothers Karamazov*, i.e., to assert in the end that "existence is illusory *and* it is eternal."<sup>83</sup>

In the end, Camus offers his alternative to the creative act undertaken by one such as Dostoevsky. Camus's confession is not that of the philosophical artist such as Dostoevsky is philosophical in his creative work. Camus is the absurd artist: "If something brings creation to an end," he argues, "it is not the victorious and illusory cry of the blinded artist: 'I have said everything,' but the death of the creator which closes his experience and the book of his genius."<sup>84</sup> Can one, *as artist*, "prove" oneself victorious, in the end of the work of art? In the shift from the classical *metaphysical* sensibility to the modern *moral* sensibility, then from the latter to an *aesthetic* sensibility, Camus insists on strict adherence to the commandments of the absurd: An absurd artist *shall not*, in the end of his or her work of art, be blinded to the absurd and *shall not* utter an illusory cry that seeks to sustain the bitter hopes of the human heart.

In the shift from the modern moral sensibility to the aesthetic, the absurd artist's metaphysical honor insists on seeing clearly, on persisting in the lucidity that permits no appeal to the eternal or to an absolute rationality that may govern the human condition. Most important, in being confronted with the question, 'Why kill oneself and leave this world after having won freedom?', the absurd artist *shall not* answer that s/he has the incontrovertible answer to that question. Instead, s/he will insist that one ought not kill oneself and leave this world after having won one's liberty, admitting to one's relative freedom. Camus utters his yet salient warning in his insistence on the limit of freedom, on the law of moderation: "Either this value of limitation will be realized, or contemporary excesses will only find their principle and

peace in universal destruction.”<sup>85</sup> A sense of the tragic in human existence requires this sense of limit. After all, Camus asserts, there are those among men who arrive at “the limits of their selves, stumbling over an absurdity they cannot overcome,” and this the consequence of “an excess of liberty.”<sup>86</sup>

Hence, if one will undertake the challenge of remaking humanity and the world, beginning with remaking oneself as absurd artist, one must do so “as if,” “*comme si*,” thereby not presuming to “demonstrate the truth you feel sure of possessing” (as happens in “thesis-novels”). The absurd novelist does what Camus understands himself to do in his own literary work—to *prove* nothing, but “to raise up images,” his works of art “like the obvious symbols of a limited, mortal, and rebellious thought.”<sup>87</sup> After all, Camus remarked once, “Comfortable optimism surely seems like a bad joke in today’s world.”<sup>88</sup> One who, like Camus, is lucid, asserts: “All that remains is a fate whose outcome alone is fatal. Outside of that single fatality of death, everything, joy or happiness, is liberty. A world remains of which man is the sole master. What bound him was the illusion of another world.”<sup>89</sup> That is a lesson learned from Nietzsche and from his life experience. Admitting to one’s mortality, living without the illusory appeal to eternity, *one appropriates one’s liberty to insist on one’s dignity*. No “proofs” are available to us to establish any apodictic, formal, moral truth. We have only a *savoir-vivre*, thus a will to live creatively, “as if...*comme si*.” That style of life may turn out to be both efficacious and exemplary. As Camus says in interview, “An analysis of the idea of revolt could help us to discover ideas capable of restoring a relative meaning to existence, although a meaning that would always be in danger.”<sup>90</sup> Camus’s literary work, as the work of an absurd artist in the act of rebellion and resistance to the totalitarian impulses of the twentieth century, contributes to that aim.

What matters in creative rebellion, Camus declared, is “to create in history what Shakespeare, Cervantes, Moliere, and Tolstoy knew how to create: a world always ready to satisfy the hunger for freedom and dignity which every man carries in his heart.”<sup>91</sup> Such acts of creation are at the center of Camus’s *ethos*:

Is it possible eternally to reject injustice without ceasing to acclaim the nature of man and the beauty of the world? Our answer is yes. This ethic at once unsubmitive and loyal, is in any event the only one that lights the way to a truly realistic revolution. In upholding beauty, we prepare the way for the day of regenerating when civilization will give first place—far ahead of the formal principles and degraded values of history—to this living virtue on which is founded the common dignity of man and the world he lives in...<sup>92</sup>

One asserts thereby the dignity of all humanity in its solidarity, hence Camus’s imperative to one and all to commit neither suicide nor murder.<sup>93</sup> In the end, Camus *would*, if he *could*, because he *should*, die his mortal death. But, in that moment that discloses his finitude, he would do so uttering in song the words of Epicurus: “Ah, with what dignity we have lived.”<sup>94</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Albert Camus, *Lyrical and Critical Essays*, ed. P. Thody, trans. E.C. Kennedy (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), p. 245. Camus, writing in February 1947, uses these words in reference to Jules Roy’s *La Vallée Heureuse*.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 243.

<sup>3</sup> Those writing on Camus’s ethics are few. See, e.g., Michael Mohrt and Warren Ramsey, “Ethic and Poetry in the Work of Camus,” *Yale French Studies* 1 (1948): 113-118; Serge Doubrovsky, “The Ethics of Albert Camus,” in *Camus: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Germaine Brée, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1962), 71-84; Harold A. Durfee, “Albert Camus and the Ethics of Rebellion,” *Foundational Reflections: American University Publications in Philosophy*, 29, (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987), 147-177; Lana Starkey, “Albert Camus and the Ethics of Moderation,” *Parrhesia* 21 (2014): 144-160. Starkey’s use of ‘virtue ethics’ is not to say that Camus seeks to warrant an Aristotelian eudaimonistic ethics, since, as Starkey (p. 7) opines, for Camus “virtues are unintelligible in modernity.” She does, however, want to identify Camus’s notion of *la mesure* as equivalent in meaning to the Aristotelian virtue of temperance or moderation (*sophrosuné*).

<sup>4</sup> Herbert Hochberg, “Albert Camus and the Ethic of Absurdity,” *Ethics* 75(2), (1965): 87-102.

<sup>5</sup> Albert Camus, *The Rebel*, trans. Anthony Brower (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), 6.

<sup>6</sup> Hochberg, 92.

<sup>7</sup> Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, trans. Justin O’Brien (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), “Preface.”

<sup>8</sup> Camus cites Pindar, *Pythian*, iii.

<sup>9</sup> Camus, *The Rebel*, 184.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 246.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 247.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 252.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 257.

<sup>14</sup> Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, 64.

<sup>15</sup> Camus, *The Rebel*, 262.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 261.

<sup>17</sup> Camus, *Lyrical and Critical Essays*, 201.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 201.

<sup>19</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996) Heidegger (BT, III. “The Worldliness of the World,” 59), clarified ‘world’ to be understood in several ways, including “the totality of being which can be objectively present within the world,” also “as that ‘in which’ a factual Dasein ‘lives.’” Later, in section 17 “Reference and Signs” (71 ff.) he writes, “reference and the referential totality were in some sense constitutive of worldliness itself.” Thus Heidegger says (80-81): “As that for which one lets beings be encountered in the kind of being of relevance, the wherein of self-referential understanding is the phenomenon of world.”

<sup>20</sup> Camus, *Le mythe de Sisyphe* (Editions Gallimard, 1942), writes: “Les conquérants savent que l’action est en elle-même inutile. Il n’y a qu’une action utile, celle qui referait l’homme et la terre. Je ne referai jamais les hommes. Mais il faut faire ‘comme si’.”

<sup>21</sup> Camus, *The Rebel*, 258.

<sup>22</sup> *Macmillan Dictionary*, “as if”;

<https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/as-if>, accessed 18 July 2019.

<sup>23</sup> *The Myth of Sisyphus*, 38.

<sup>24</sup> Camus, *The Rebel*, 10.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 304.

<sup>26</sup> *The Myth of Sisyphus*, 7.

<sup>27</sup> Camus, *The Rebel*, 283.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 285.

<sup>29</sup> Despite his rejection of the Christian gospel, it is as if Camus appropriates the adage that counsels taking care of today so that thereby tomorrow will take care of itself.

<sup>30</sup> Ingrid L. Anderson, “Absurd Dignity: The Rebel and His Cause in Améry and Camus,” *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy—Revue de la philosophie française et de langue française* 24(3), (2016): 74-94, at 77, observes: “Camus argues convincingly that the revolutionary desire for a perfected, inevitable future, when coupled with ethical and philosophical bankruptcy, not only rationalizes the suspension of morality, but also ultimately necessitates it. The rejection of what is eventually requires the elaboration of what *ought* to be...”

<sup>31</sup> *The Myth of Sisyphus*, 16.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>33</sup> Camus, *The Rebel*, 302.

- <sup>34</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. W. Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), 66.
- <sup>35</sup> *The Myth of Sisyphus*, 28.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.
- <sup>37</sup> Camus, *The Rebel*, 290.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 291.
- <sup>39</sup> Camus's own involvement in the resistance movement and later journalistic activity attests to his inclination to act to remake the world as he encountered it during his day.
- <sup>40</sup> Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, 14.
- <sup>41</sup> Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, 16.
- <sup>42</sup> Camus, *The Rebel*, 25.
- <sup>43</sup> Camus, *Lyrical and Critical Essays*, 237.
- <sup>44</sup> Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, 17.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 40; italics added.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.
- <sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.
- <sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.
- <sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 57; emphasis added.
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 58; emphasis added.
- <sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.
- <sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 66-67, italics added.
- <sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 67, italics added.
- <sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.
- <sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.
- <sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 67-68.
- <sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.
- <sup>60</sup> Voltaire (Francois Marie Arouet), "On the Death of Adrienne LeCouvreur, A Celebrated Actress," [https://www.poetry-archive.com/v/on\\_the\\_death\\_of\\_adrienne\\_lecouvreur.html](https://www.poetry-archive.com/v/on_the_death_of_adrienne_lecouvreur.html), accessed 25 July 2019).
- <sup>61</sup> *The Myth of Sisyphus*, 83.
- <sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.
- <sup>63</sup> Camus says that although he shall have seen an actor a hundred times he shall not for that have known the man. If all of us present ourselves in images, then there is never any certainty that one has a basis for judging any person as if one knows (certainly) with an indisputable truth or even a truth beyond a reasonable doubt.
- <sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 81-82.
- <sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.
- <sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.
- <sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.
- <sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 91, italics added.
- <sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.
- <sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.
- <sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.
- <sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.
- <sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.
- <sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.
- <sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.
- <sup>76</sup> Camus, *Lyrical and Critical Essays*, 190. Camus opines: "Nationalisms always make their appearance in history as signs of decadence."
- <sup>77</sup> Camus, *The Rebel*, 288.
- <sup>78</sup> Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, 104. Camus clarifies: "What distinguishes modern sensibility from classical sensibility is that the latter thrives on moral problems and the former on metaphysical problems."
- <sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.
- <sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.
- <sup>81</sup> Camus, *The Rebel*, 290.
- <sup>82</sup> Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, 108.
- <sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.
- <sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.
- <sup>85</sup> Camus, *The Rebel*, 295.
- <sup>86</sup> Camus, *Lyrical and Critical Essays*, 204.
- <sup>87</sup> Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, 116.
- <sup>88</sup> Camus, *Lyrical and Critical Essays*, 351. The statement is given in interview with Gabriel d'Aubarede in *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, 10 May 1951.
- <sup>89</sup> Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, 117.
- <sup>90</sup> Camus, *Lyrical and Critical Essays*, 346. The statement is given in interview with Jeanine Delpech, in *Les Nouvelles littéraires*, 15 November 1945.
- <sup>91</sup> Camus, *The Rebel*, 276.
- <sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 276-277.
- <sup>93</sup> There remains the question, if not a complaint, that Camus would, if he must, when spirit and intelligence are in accord, permit killing in de-

fense of justice. Such was his position expressed in his letters to a German friend in 1943 and 1944. See here, Albert Camus, *Lettres à un ami allemande*, ed. Jean-Marie Tremblay (Paris: Les Editions Gallimard, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, 1948; Revised edition 1972; Electronic edition, 2008).

<sup>94</sup> Camus, *The Rebel*, 30.

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# The Religious Enlightenment of Johann Joachim Spalding: A Paradigmatic Case

Laura Anna Macor

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**Abstract:** In the eighteenth century, being both a Christian and a supporter of the Enlightenment was not easy, and this applies in a very particular way to the German clergyman, theologian and philosopher Johann Joachim Spalding (1714–1804). Widely known as the author of the bestseller, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen*, Spalding embodies some recurrent features of the German Enlightenment: he was educated and eventually served as a Lutheran pastor; read the works of Christian Wolff, and was fascinated with Anglo-Scottish moral sense philosophy, contributing crucially to its introduction into the German territories; and finally took a critical stance on the obscurantist politics of Frederick William II and his minister's edict in religious matters. It comes as no surprise that he was credited with symbolic value by both allies and enemies, who saw him as a leading star or radical rebel, eager to modernise – or destroy – the dogmatic system of Protestantism.

This essay aims to reconstruct Spalding's efforts to realise this challenging task. To do so, it will provide a comprehensive overview of Spalding's works, including minor and lesser known writings. Particular attention will be given to Spalding's views on the aim of human life, the role of religion in attaining this, and the distinctive conception of philosophy at stake here. At the same time, Spalding's definition of "enlightenment" (*Aufklärung*) will also be unpacked and carefully explored. In so doing, the article will offer a fresh and additional insight into one of the most fascinating epochs of Western thought and culture, which Spalding – once more – exemplifies paradigmatically.

**Keywords:** Johann Joachim Spalding; enlightenment; philosophy as a way of life; religion.

## Introduction

In the eighteenth century, being both a Christian and a supporter of the Enlightenment was not easy, and this applies in a very particular way to the German clergyman, theologian and philosopher Johann Joachim Spalding (1714–1804). Widely known as the author of the bestseller, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen* – first appearing in 1748 and later republished in ten revised and augmented editions up to 1794, not to mention a great many translations and extracts in anthologies – Spalding embodies some recurrent features of the German Enlightenment: he was educated and eventually served as a Lutheran pastor;

read the works of Christian Wolff, endorsing his willingness to reconcile reason and faith; was fascinated with Anglo-Scottish moral sense philosophy, and contributed crucially to its introduction into the German territories; and finally took a critical stance on the obscurantist politics of Frederick William II and his minister's edict in religious matters. It comes as no surprise that he was credited with symbolic value by both allies and enemies, who saw him as a leading star or radical rebel, eager to modernise – or destroy – the dogmatic system of Protestantism.

This essay aims to reconstruct Spalding's efforts to realise this challenging task, as well as the resistance he met from some prominent orthodox figures. To do so, it will provide a comprehensive overview of Spalding's works, including minor and lesser known writings such as his short contributions to the discussions of the Berlin Wednesday Society (*Berliner Mittwochsgesellschaft*). Particular attention will be given to his views on the aim of human life, the role of religion in attaining this, and the distinctive conception of philosophy at stake here. At the same time, Spalding's definition of "enlightenment" (*Aufklärung*) will also be unpacked and carefully explored. In so doing, the article will offer a fresh and additional insight into one of the most fascinating epochs of Western thought and culture, which Spalding – once more – exemplifies paradigmatically.

## 1. Spalding's Life, Works and Intellectual Import

Spalding was born in the town of Tribsees in Swedish Pomerania in 1714, and was educated according to the standards then prevailing in the cultivated Lutheran milieu. In his childhood and youth, he received both private and school instruction in Classical languages and Hebraic, but most of all in religion, and in 1731 he enrolled at the University of Rostock as a philosophy and theology student with a view to eventually becoming a pastor. The conservative attitude of most of his professors, and particularly their opposition to Wolff's ideas, was so disappointing that Spalding decided to take a rest from his studies, working as a private tutor in Tribsees and Greifswald. During these years, he was able to profit from the acquaintances he was fortunate enough to make, such as the pastor Gottlieb Schulz in Tribsees, who provided him with free access to his library and in so doing gave him the opportunity to read in depth the writings of both Wolff and his supporters at Tübingen, Georg Bernhard



Bilfinger and Israel Gottlieb Canz. So in 1735, Spalding resumed his academic path at the University of Greifswald, where he published and successfully defended a theological disputation centered on the lively topic of Jesus' miracles.<sup>1</sup> One year later, he did the same again at his old university, with a philosophical dissertation in metaphysics vindicating Wolff's system against any prejudice circulating in the German territories, especially at Rostock.<sup>2</sup>

Clearly, Spalding's preferences hovered on the boundary between philosophy and theology, following the most recent novelties in both. He did not draw back from challenges such as rationalism, nor was he – even if temporarily – unaffected by the fascination of heterodox theories including Socinianism;<sup>3</sup> however, he was never led to abandon his sincere and profound Christian faith – quite the contrary. In his 1735 disputation, he defended the credibility of Jesus' miracles against the accusations of emperor Julian as well as modern Deists, and in 1738 he published a second piece of writing – this time in German – revolving around Wolff's ideas, with a view to presenting them as a weapon against “freethinkers”, “atheists”, “Pelagians and naturalists”.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, his intense study of early modern apologetic literature was not confined to theological writings and controversies, but also took in philosophical and ethical debates on faith, revelation and reason.<sup>5</sup> This familiarity with the European intellectual landscape offered much more than mere erudition, and contributed towards producing a particularly open, progressive and liberal attitude of mind.

It was precisely this audacious curiosity that motivated him shortly thereafter to read and appreciate the writings of an English philosopher otherwise ostracised in the German lands for his ambiguous, and partly hostile stance on religion, and particularly the Christian religion. This was Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury, who in the first decades of the eighteenth century passed for one of the most dangerous enemies of faith and morality, and was consequently labelled a deist or free-thinker. Spalding decided to approach Shaftesbury's texts in the early 1740s in order to “study English”,<sup>6</sup> yet ended up finding his author's ideas so convincing that he did not hesitate to embark on a proper translation. So in 1745 he published the first German edition of *The Moralists*, and in 1747 the first German edition of *An Inquiry Concerning Virtue or Merit* – the only other work by Shaftesbury already available in German since 1738 being the *Soliloquy, or Advice to an Author*.<sup>7</sup>

The core of Spalding's interest lay in Shaftesbury's theory of a “moral sensation [*moralische Empfindung*]”, which in his eyes reflected “the creator's wise goodness” and hence could not but be considered “an indubitable thing”.<sup>8</sup> Tellingly, it had been precisely the naturalness in this “perception [*Wahrnehmung*]” and “feeling [*Gefühl*]” for “harmony” and “order”<sup>9</sup> that had provoked major preoccupations amongst theologians, who feared that a natural virtue might undermine the role of divine grace. Once more, Spalding proved courageous enough to challenge the commonly held views of his time, most importantly those of his fellow believers, and to strive for a neutral evaluation – which turned into a proper re-evaluation – of what seemed to be a direct attack at Christianity. As will

be shown in the second section of this article, he would succeed.

In late 1745, after publishing his first translation, Spalding moved to Berlin to take up his new position as the secretary of the Swedish ambassador, whom he had first met earlier that year. In the Prussian capital he was enthusiastically welcomed into a literary and cultural circle, centred around the poet Johann Wilhelm Ludwig Gleim and including fellow correspondents such as Johann Georg Sulzer, all of whom shared a sincere enthusiasm for none other than Shaftesbury.<sup>10</sup> These were “golden days”, as Spalding himself would nostalgically recall in 1764.<sup>11</sup> During this sojourn, Spalding worked at his second translation, which of course represented one of the main topics of conversation during the several meetings among friends, and – to add to his – he became more closely acquainted with the prominent Reformed theologian August Friedrich Wilhelm Sack, whom he initially came across in early 1745.<sup>12</sup> In this context, Spalding was thus able to strengthen the whole spectrum of his interests, both philosophical and theological, and also enjoy the stimulation of intellectual dialogue, thereby gaining in self-confidence. All of this was to prove crucial to his further development.

In the spring of 1747, Spalding left Berlin and returned home in order to resume his plans for a career in the clergy, but also to assist his father, who was seriously ill. In the months spent at his parent's bedside, Spalding wrote his first book, which was also – as emerged before long – his masterpiece. This small treatise, entitled *Betrachtung über die Bestimmung des Menschen* (Meditation on the vocation of the human being),<sup>13</sup> was published in May 1748, bearing testimony to the impact of Spalding's stay in Berlin and most of all to his willingness to combine modern philosophy and the Christian religion. In actual fact, it was primarily the product of Spalding's appropriation of Shaftesbury's ethics and the subsequent discussions with Gleim and his various associates, as is confirmed by Spalding's own recollection.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, it represented the occasion for testing the compatibility of reason and faith, a major preoccupation for Spalding since his university studies at Rostock and Greifswald. Tellingly, this little work became a proper bestseller with ten further revised, updated and considerably augmented editions (1748, 1749, 1752, 1754, 1759, 1763, 1764, 1768, 1774, 1794), as well as several clandestine reprints, reproductions within the works of other authors or anthologies, and translations into Czech, French, Latin, Dutch, Russian and Swedish. Starting with the seventh edition of 1763, the title was shortened to the more direct and impactful *Die Bestimmung des Menschen* (The vocation of the human being).<sup>15</sup> Besides being a visible market success, the treatise also and foremost marked the beginning of a new era in Enlightenment culture, and can thus be considered a “founding document”<sup>16</sup> of eighteenth-century Protestant German theology or, as it has become customary to term it, Neology.<sup>17</sup> Hence, already before his appointment as pastor, Spalding entered the Enlightenment scene as a hero.

In 1749, Spalding finally obtained his first post in Lassan, where he remained until moving to Barth in 1757. In the eight and seven years respectively spent serving as

a parish pastor in these two towns of his native Pomerania, Spalding was able to keep hold of his previous intellectual interests, balancing his ministry with reading, writing and thinking. So in this period he translated the works of two prominent English theologians, namely Jacob Foster and Francis Gastrell, who were both committed to fighting the rise of deism. Moreover, he published short essays, and most importantly his first theological work, entitled *Gedanken über den Werth der Gefühle in dem Christenthum* (Thoughts on the Value of Feelings in the Christian Religion). This treatise first appeared in 1761, being subsequently published in four further editions up to 1784, and was aimed at assessing the role of emotions in religion, with a view to avoiding the excesses of some Pietistic groups.<sup>18</sup>

The year 1764 marked a turning point. In October 1763, Spalding accepted the post of first pastor at the Marienkirche in Berlin, which also meant becoming provost at the Nikolaikirche as well as a member of the Prussian Upper Consistory and, as a consequence, the highest-ranking Lutheran ministry in Brandenburg-Prussia. In June 1764, he moved to Berlin, where he was to remain until his death. Over the last decades of the century, Spalding rose to a leading position in the Berlin Enlightenment and crucially contributed to shaping its main trends. He published several collections of sermons and minor essays, as well as three further books focusing on the function of homiletic activity and the role of religion as opposed to theology as an erudite science. These were entitled as follows: *Ueber die Nutzbarkeit des Predigtamtes und deren Beförderung* (On the Usefulness of the Ministry of Preaching and its Promotion), first appearing in 1772 (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.: 1773, 3<sup>th</sup> ed.: 1791); *Vertraute Briefe, die Religion betreffend* (Familiar Letters on Religion), first appearing in 1784 (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.: 1785, 3<sup>th</sup> ed.: 1788); and *Religion, eine Angelegenheit des Menschen* (Religion, a Concern of the Human Being), first appearing in 1797 (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.: 1798, 3<sup>th</sup> ed.: 1799, 4<sup>th</sup> ed.: 1806). As in the case of his first work, Spalding's later volumes were all republished, mostly in revised and updated editions, which testifies both to his willingness to adjust or reformulate passages – be it for internal reasons or at others' suggestion – and to his immense success. Spalding was in fact a widely-read author, and this applied not only to his colleagues in the clergy, but also to scholars in other fields and even people of inferior education. The latter found in Spalding's texts a way into the most crucial questions in ethics and religion, which he dealt with elegantly, clearly, and without any erudite embellishment; the former followed in his footsteps towards an existential and practical way of thinking, which would unify religion, philosophy, and literature as different tools working towards one end, namely discovering and fulfilling the purpose of human life.

In the light of this, it comes as no surprise that prominent poets, novelists, and thinkers such as Kant, Goethe, Schiller, Fichte and Heinrich von Kleist, all praised Spalding's merits, quoted extracts from his writings, or appropriated some of his ideas;<sup>19</sup> his contribution to his time's intellectual life can be considered a milestone, and nobody who was committed to the ideals of the Enlightenment could ignore it.

Yet Spalding was a protagonist not only of the cultural, but also of the political scene. As a provost and member of the Upper Consistory, in fact, he played an important role in the administration and supervision of primary and university education, as well as the whole range of pastoral activity across all the Lutheran parishes of the Prussian territory. His own pastoral care and representative responsibilities were also his duty. However burdensome and stressful all this might have been – and at least at the beginning, it was certainly so<sup>20</sup> – it carried enormous symbolic value and influence. So it was not without effect when in 1788 Spalding resigned as provost in (implicit yet evident) protest against the Edict on Religion issued by Johann Christoph Woellner that same year.<sup>21</sup> Although he did not leave the Upper Consistory – in whose activities he participated actively until Autumn 1791 – Spalding's decision quintessentially embodied the dissent of the Berlin Enlightenment against the new king and his cultural and religious politics, and made him a living paradigm of his theoretical convictions.<sup>22</sup>

## 2. Spalding and Philosophy

Spalding's interest in philosophy was a constant throughout his life and did not originate merely in a personal predilection. As the biographical sketch provided in the previous section should have at least hinted, it responded to a quite precise project of religious renewal. Spalding was in fact committed to restoring religion to its original mission, i.e., helping, guiding and orientating human beings on their earthly path, and this implied alliance with philosophy and separation from theology. The latter he regarded as a science for the few; the former he came to discover as a universal form of knowledge available to all. Spalding had gained this conviction by the mid-1740s – that is, already before being appointed a parish pastor – and he never abandoned this outlook. What followed was an intense and uninterrupted reworking of this first insight.

While delving as a student into the multifaceted early modern controversies about revelation and reason, Spalding in fact developed a clear predilection for universal and existential arguments over erudite ones: in his eyes, the truth of Christian faith did not lie in difficult, obscure and often ambiguous theories, but rather was a simple message speaking to any- and everybody. In origin, the Christian religion was not a system, nor did it presuppose a specialist language; it was a form of knowledge within everybody's reach, dealing with issues of general interest. “[T]he inner excellence of Christianity” applies to “truths, moral doctrines and motives of consolation”,<sup>23</sup> and hence does not need any scholarly support in order to be properly grasped.

Paradoxically enough, embracing the apologetic fight against the enemies of Christianity and working on a philosopher who was usually counted among these very enemies here came together and created a new kind of vision of religion and its relation to philosophy. In point of fact and against all expectations, it was none other than the “Oracle of the Deists”, Shaftesbury, who contributed the final and crucial element to Spalding's unfolding ide-

as,<sup>24</sup> which had ultimately lacked a clear anthropological basis. This was provided by the notion of “moral sense”, which Spalding considered essential to an overall reassessment of Shaftesbury’s thought, and accordingly made into the inner voice leading the human being to God. In fact, this moral sense was a feeling, perception or sensation, naturally given to everybody regardless of education, previous knowledge or particular profession, and in Spalding’s view it identified the distinctive feature of the Christian faith as speaking to any- and everybody. In the light of this, it makes perfect sense that Spalding made Shaftesbury’s ethics his chief argument in support of the truth of Christianity. But this is not all that Spalding learnt from Shaftesbury.

The latter’s commitment to Greek and Latin culture was also a consideration, and by no means a secondary one. Besides translating *The Moralists* and the *Inquiry*, Spalding knew all of Shaftesbury’s writings included in the three volumes of the *Characteristics*,<sup>25</sup> which consistently testify to a very specific way of conceiving of philosophy. This was a legacy of Ancient thought, according to which philosophy is considered a tool for dealing with universal issues – the place of the human being in the world, the rules that govern behaviour, the pathway to happiness – and accordingly prioritises practice over speculative enquiry. In current studies, the expressions most commonly used to identify this particular perspective are “philosophy as a way of life” or “art of living”, “mode of life”, “style of life”, and “care of the self and others”. Pierre Hadot and Michel Foucault were responsible for inaugurating a new departure in research in the 1980s, calling attention to the originally existential mission of philosophy, which was increasingly lost sight of over the Middle Ages, but especially in the early modern era.<sup>26</sup>

Being an enthusiastic reader of the Ancients – and likewise a strong supporter of the lasting validity of their ideas – Shaftesbury typically embodied the relevant traits and was not coincidentally identified by Hadot as a shining exception to the general oblivion that he lamented.<sup>27</sup> So he opened his *Soliloquy* with a telling quote from the Latin poet Persius, aimed at clarifying the existential import of the subsequent reflections: “nec te quaesiveris extra” reads the seventh line of Persius’ first *Satura* (Satire), which Shaftesbury (himself) translates as “No need to inquire outside yourself”.<sup>28</sup> Against the background of this verse, Shaftesbury defines the soliloquy as a “sovereign remedy and gymnastic method” enabling the individual “to gain [...] a will and [...] a certain resolution by which he shall know where to find himself, be sure of his own meaning and design and, as to all his desires, opinions and inclinations, be warranted one and the same person today as yesterday and tomorrow as today”.<sup>29</sup> To succeed in this, no “learned a childhood” is required nor previous instruction “in our own and other higher ‘natures’, ‘essences’, ‘incorporeal substances’, ‘personalities’ and the like”; on the contrary, all this scholarly equipment is to be put aside in order “to come leisurely, in another view, to inquire concerning our real self and end, the judgment we are to make of interest, and the opinion we should have of advantage and good, which is what must necessarily de-

termine us in our conduct and prove the leading principle of our lives”.<sup>30</sup>

In his *Miscellaneous Reflections*, Shaftesbury projects these considerations into a fictitious scenario, which was to prove crucial to Spalding himself:

Let us suppose a man who, having this resolution merely, how to employ his understanding to the best purpose, considers *who or what he is, whence he arose or had his being, to what end he was designed, and to what course of action he is by his natural frame and constitution destined [...]: what we are and the lives we are born to live [Quid sumus, et quidnam victuri gignimur?].* ‘Where are we?’, ‘Under what roof?’, ‘Or on board what vessel?’, ‘Whither bound?’, ‘On what business?’, ‘Under whose pilotship, government or protection?’ are questions which every sensible man would naturally ask if he were on a sudden transported into a new scene of life.<sup>31</sup>

Once more, Persius is the inspiration, and particularly verse 67 of the third *Satura* (Satire).

Given the amount of time spent reading and translating Shaftesbury’s texts, but also – and maybe most importantly – intensively discussing them with his Berlin friends, it is little wonder that Spalding chose to open his first book with the same quote. “*Quid sumus? et quidnam victuri gignimur?* – Persius” reads the first line of the *Betrachtung über die Bestimmung des Menschen* (Meditation on the vocation of the human being) in the first, as in all ten further authorised editions.<sup>32</sup> Accordingly, Spalding’s treatise stages a monologue by a fictional I – or rather, by the fictional I created by Shaftesbury in his *Miscellaneous Reflections* – who commits him- or herself to discovering the meaning of existence and the following rules of behaviour. The underlying conviction is of course that expressed by – again – Shaftesbury in his *Soliloquy*, namely that introspection is the only way to achieve such an end.

I see that I can spend the brief time that I must live in the world according to very different basic rules, whose value and consequences therefore cannot be the same in any way. Since I undeniably find in myself an ability to choose and to prefer one thing over another in my decisions, thus in this case too I must not proceed blindly, but first try to distinguish, as best as my abilities allow me, which way is the most secure, most respectable and most advantageous. [...] It is well worth the effort to know why I exist and what I should be according to reason.<sup>33</sup>

The ensuing inner journey leads the protagonist over sensibility and intellectual activities to virtue and ethics, finally enabling him, or her, to acknowledge the existence of God and the immortality of the soul.<sup>34</sup> In all this, Spalding’s fictional I is completely alone in that he, or she, does not speak to anybody else nor read any book, be it religious or philosophical. The speaking hero gives up any external assistance because, on the one hand, “examples” stemming from daily life are “so infinitely different from one another” that “choosing a guide from among them” would produce much more “confusion and embarrassment” than looking for “the right way” autonomously; and on the other, he, or she, totally trusts the voice within, alerting him, or her, whenever anything is wrong, e.g., causing “the painful feeling of remorse after performing actions” that are not just.<sup>35</sup> Shaftesbury’s moral sense is

evidently the underlying anthropological premise as well as the key to the success of the whole process. So there is no need of others' opinion or erudite authorities, not even those of the clergy, whose ranks Spalding was about to enter. In the first edition, the Bible does not figure at all. Paradoxically, though, the Ancients do. Besides opening the soliloquy with a verse from Persius, Spalding places two further quotations from Latin authors in strategic positions, with Horace appearing on the cover, and Cicero on the final page.<sup>36</sup>

Clearly, Spalding's willingness to apply the ancient way of conceiving philosophy to religion in order to restore it to its original task, implies refraining from explicit theological references, since these could distract from the existential core of Christianity, misleading one into prioritising knowledge and education over the purity of the heart. Accordingly, no complete understanding of any dogma is required, no matter how crucial it may seem. So in the text itself there is no mention of original sin, nor of the justification *sola fide*, and the several objections raised in this regard by orthodox Lutherans such as Johann Melchior Goeze or Johann Martin Chladenius did not motivate Spalding to change this.<sup>37</sup> In 1749, he added an appendix clarifying his purely Christian intentions as a reply to Goeze's direct attack – and more precisely his accusation of deism – but at the same time declaring himself not to deem it necessary to adjust the monologue accordingly.<sup>38</sup>

The *Betrachtung über die Bestimmung des Menschen* (Meditation on the vocation of the human being) has been appropriately described as the “matrix of a rich and consistently unfolding and expanding life's work”.<sup>39</sup> As a matter of fact, Spalding devoted all of his subsequent writings to vindicating the universal character of the Christian religion, while distinguishing this from the cultivated competencies that some Christians may possess, on account of their background or particular job. So in the aforementioned *Ueber die Nutzbarkeit des Predigtamtes und deren Beförderung* (On the Usefulness of the Ministry of Preaching and its Promotion), religion does not include “merely theoretical doctrines”, “scholastic over-subtleties”, and “church doctrines”;<sup>40</sup> these are “very empty and sterile speculations”, which often prove “simply vain” – and one might wish that they do not turn out “something more than vain”.<sup>41</sup> This applies to all those difficult teachings which do not exert any influence over human behaviour, since they address purely speculative issues, such as the doctrines of the two natures of Christ, the Eucharist, or the Trinity.<sup>42</sup> These belong to the field of “science”, but not that of religion, because “each religious truth derives its importance from its force in bringing the soul in the right direction and raising it to God”; yet Spalding does not intend to dismiss them entirely, since they “give the intellect nourishment and pleasure”, and satisfy the “desire to know”.<sup>43</sup> Put simply, they do not help human beings to become better.

However, other theological theories are very likely to affect human conduct detrimentally, since they concern practical and ethical issues. This is the case with original sin and the justification *sola fide*, which call for strong theological competence in order to be properly understood or at least interpreted, and otherwise risk undermin-

ing the individuals' ability to work on themselves.<sup>44</sup> For this reason, preachers should refrain from dealing with them in sermons, and Spalding did so himself, or more precisely: he omitted any reference to original sin, while explicitly claiming – against the letter of Lutheranism – that good works were necessary for salvation.<sup>45</sup> For, as Spalding had already stated in the appendix to his Gastrell translation of 1755, a “way of philosophising” which “turns its supporters into worse human beings” cannot “possibly be worth a thing”,<sup>46</sup> and this applies also – or rather, pre-eminently – to the Christian religion.

The key to succeeding in giving Christianity back to this task is *Aufklärung*.

### 3. Spalding and the Enlightenment

Spalding's contribution to the Enlightenment is beyond dispute. Not coincidentally, the term *Aufklärung*, or any of its equivalents in languages other than German, occurs in the title of almost every piece of scholarship on Spalding, both theological and philosophical. Sometimes, it is used as a scholarly category encompassing the historical epoch in which Spalding lived as well as its distinctive intellectual features; at others, it is used to designate a dynamic and never-ending theoretical process, mostly associated with a cultural project that began in the past and is still ongoing.<sup>47</sup> So we may come across rather neutral formulations such as *Johann Joachim Spalding: Ein Beitrag zur Theologie der Aufklärung*,<sup>48</sup> *Johann Joachim Spalding: Meistertheologe im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*,<sup>49</sup> and “The Determination of Man: Johann Joachim Spalding and the Protestant Enlightenment”;<sup>50</sup> and elsewhere we find more qualifying expressions aimed at describing the very nature of Spalding's understanding of the enlightenment, e.g., *Aufklärung der Religion: Die Religionstheologie Johann Joachim Spaldings*,<sup>51</sup> and *Aufklärung als Selbstdeutung: Eine genetisch-systematische Rekonstruktion von Johann Joachim Spaldings “Bestimmung des Menschen” (1748)*.<sup>52</sup> Further elements are provided by studies focusing on Spalding's “representations about the aims of ‘true enlightenment’”,<sup>53</sup> as well as his participation in the well-known debate around the very notion of *Aufklärung*, and his linguistic usage of the whole semantic spectrum surrounding the noun, including verb (*aufklären*, “to enlighten”), adjective (*aufgeklärt*, “enlightened”), and other cognate terms (e.g., *Aufklärer*, literally “enlightener”).<sup>54</sup>

In what follows, both continuity and discontinuity with the past will be pursued with a view to, first, confirming the close connection between enlightenment and religion alongside the crucial role of the subject in enabling and enhancing this very connection (continuity); second, unearthing the cultural project underlying this insight, which stems from a practical conception of philosophy in the footsteps of the Ancients, audaciously projected onto Christianity (discontinuity). To achieve this end, some chosen passages from Spalding's texts – spanning from the first published work to the mature writings – will be quoted, and in at least one case made available in English for the first time. As a result, enlightenment as a process relating to self-perfecting and, hence, as a way

of life will emerge as a hitherto neglected, or maybe forgotten if not unacknowledged, aspect of Spalding's thought.

From the outset of his literary activity, Spalding makes no mystery of his conceiving enlightenment and religion as being closely intertwined, with the latter identifying the most significant field of application for the former. So in 1748 the doctrine of the immortality of the soul "promises a complete enlightenment [*Aufklärung*] of all [...] obscure points in the plan according to which the world is ruled",<sup>55</sup> and a year later "the light of the Gospel" is said to have "enlightened [*aufgeklärt*] the spirits".<sup>56</sup> Accordingly, in 1772 "an enlightened Christian [*ein aufgeklärter Christ*]" is someone who comprehends and fulfils the main purpose of the Christian religion,<sup>57</sup> which is nothing other than "the main and ultimate end of all religion, namely, to make the human being better and happy".<sup>58</sup> Against the background of these selected, highly representative extracts, it is legitimate to conclude that in Spalding's eyes *Aufklärung* was, or rather, is a process and method of moving away from the darkness of superstition, ignorance and prejudice towards the light of truth, justice and happiness. Not for nothing are the adjectives accompanying the noun often comparatives (e.g., "more complete [*vollständiger*]"),<sup>59</sup> or do they designate by their very essence the idea of continuous growth (e.g., "constantly increasing [*fortwachsend*]"),<sup>60</sup> in both cases indicating an open course rather than the achievement of a final goal. That this steady development does not refer merely to theoretical problems and related concepts, but also, and most importantly, to existential issues such as those of ethics and religion, is indicated by further linguistic associations, pointing to the consoling and practical relevance of the enlightenment, which is described as "comforting [*trostvoll*]",<sup>61</sup> "useful [*nützlich*]",<sup>62</sup> and "highly beneficial [*heilsamst*]",<sup>63</sup> So enlightenment and religion converge in helping human beings find their direction in life and follow the necessary rules of behaviour in order not to lose their way.

An extremely interesting, detailed and programmatic definition of *Aufklärung* is to be found in a brief text written by Spalding in 1784 for a very exclusive circle of readers. These were the members of the so-called *Mittwochsgesellschaft* (Wednesday Society), a secret cultural group that met in Berlin twice a month (in autumn and winter) or once a month (in spring and summer), always on Wednesdays. It was founded in 1783 with a view to reflecting on and fostering enlightenment, but closed in 1798 as a consequence of the edict against clandestine societies issued by Frederick William III of Prussia. Over these fifteen years of activity, it counted no more than twenty-four members in all. The gatherings consisted of a presentation by one or, more frequently, two members, and a subsequent discussion as well as dinner; in the weeks following the official meeting, the manuscripts were circulated and members could provide further feedback in the form of written notes. All of this had to remain secret.<sup>64</sup>

Spalding was a member of this group and, as far as the extant documents permit us to judge, he was an active participant from 1783 to 1786, attending meetings and also contributing notes to the following discussions.<sup>65</sup> One

of these notes is of the utmost interest in the present context, as it addresses the chief issue of the time, namely "what does to enlighten mean?" or "What is enlightenment?"<sup>66</sup> Since it is generally unknown – especially in the English-speaking world – it might be useful to quote this text extensively, although not in full.

Both of the present essays as well as the remarks thereon have provided very useful motives for contributing to specifying the otherwise oscillating usage of the term *enlightenment* [*Aufklärung*]. My concept is as follows: according to the metaphor, enlightenment [*Aufklärung*] refers to previous darkness and is per se a disclosure of the light or of the hitherto lacking true knowledge. The latter happens *either* when all knowledge is lacking *or* when wrong representations are already in place. That lack simply requires instruction, but I do not think that according to the linguistic usage all instruction, e.g., of a child, should be called enlightenment [*Aufklärung*]; on the contrary, rather, this consists in dissipating the darkness caused by erroneous representations that are already in place. The child, the wild savage – in general the complete innocent – is *instructed*; the one who is captured by unfounded prejudices is *enlightened* [*aufgeklärt*].

This last word, if used without any further apposition and more precise determination, seems to me not to apply to any form of disclosed knowledge or removal of any erroneous prejudice; rather, it seems to apply only to right representations regarding the common matters of interest for the human being and the citizen, without limiting oneself to the insights belonging to a particular social condition or job. [...] So according to this concept, to work on *enlightenment* [*Aufklärung*] as such and with no further addition, would mean to teach those individuals who are caught in prejudices about reasonable truths in religion and the human rights, as well as the constitutional rights of the citizens taking into account the social constitution. [...]

Spalding  
May 24, 1784.<sup>67</sup>

Again, Spalding is committed to vindicating the universal relevance of the enlightenment, which is not primarily aimed at solving esoteric issues or merely speculative problems, but is intended for the human being as such. Enlightenment is a lifelong process to be enacted in daily life, since the issues addressed are intrinsically practical, and furthermore, they can never be exhausted – at least not in this life. The introspective journey undertaken by the protagonist of Spalding's first work provides a paradigm for this training, which appeals to any- and everybody in any and every stage of their adult life. In the eleventh and last edition of *Die Bestimmung des Menschen* (The Vocation of the Human Being), Spalding not coincidentally insists on the lasting relevance of his youthful treatise, which was meant to serve as a model for "application on oneself" following the example of the fictional I in order to augment the "beneficial influence" of the considerations being made "on honesty and religiosity".<sup>68</sup>

So continuously working on oneself with a view to perfecting one's representations regarding the most urgent needs of human existence is enlightenment, or perhaps we should add: religious enlightenment. For in Spalding's eyes, there is no enlightenment without religion, or more precisely, there is no true enlightenment without true religion, and it is not possible to call for pure *Aufklärung* outside of Christianity, whose main task lies in making,

“through real enlightenment”, “the basic truth of Christian worship certain to my intellect and important to my heart”.<sup>69</sup> In this, Spalding was and remained a typical representative of the German Enlightenment.

## Abbreviations

AA: Immanuel Kant, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. by the Königlich Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften (and successors) (Berlin and Leipzig: 1900ff.).

SpKA: Johann Joachim Spalding, *Kritische Ausgabe*, ed. Albrecht Beutel, I, vols. 1-6/2: *Schriften*, II, vols. 1-6: *Predigten* (Tübingen: 2001-2013).

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *De calumnia Juliani Apostatae in confirmationem Christianae religionis versa Exercitatio Theologica [...]*, SpKA, I, 6/1, 1-37.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Dissertatio philosophica, quaestionum metaphysicarum bigas sistens [...]*, SpKA, I, 6/1, 39-74. The most detailed survey of Spalding's life and work is provided by Albrecht Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding: Meistertheologe im Zeitalter der Aufklärung* (Tübingen: 2014). Insightful analysis of Spalding's education and early Wolffianism is provided by: Clemens Schwaiger, "Zur Frage nach den Quellen von Spaldings *Bestimmung des Menschen*: Ein ungelöstes Rätsel der Aufklärungsforschung," *Aufklärung. Interdisziplinäre Halbjahresschrift zur Erforschung des 18. Jahrhunderts und seiner Wirkungsgeschichte* 11/1 (1999): 7-19; Marco Sgarbi, "Il destino dell'ontologia: Johann Joachim Spalding interpretare di Christian Wolff," in *Zwischen Grundsätzen und Gegenständen: Untersuchungen zur Ontologie Christian Wolffs*, eds. Faustino Fabbianelli, Jean-François Goubet and Oliver-Pierre Rudolph (Hildesheim: 2011), 172-73; Georg Raatz, *Aufklärung als Selbsteutung: Eine genetisch-systematische Rekonstruktion von Johann Joachim Spaldings "Bestimmung des Menschen" (1748)* (Tübingen: 2014), 63-85.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Lebensbeschreibung*, SpKA, I, 6/2, 117.

<sup>4</sup> *Der Wolffischen Philosophie Bittschrift an die Akademie zu R\*\**, SpKA, I, 6/1, 78, 93.

<sup>5</sup> On this wider context as well as Spalding's position within it, I refer to Laura Anna Macor, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen (1748-1800): Eine Begriffsgeschichte* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: 2013), 74-79; Michael Printy, "The Determination of Man: Johann Joachim Spalding and the Protestant Enlightenment," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 74/2 (2013): 189-212.

<sup>6</sup> *Lebensbeschreibung*, SpKA, I, 6/2, 124.

<sup>7</sup> On the German reception of Shaftesbury's writings and thought, including a complete list of both published and only projected translations, see the standard monograph by Mark-Georg Dehmann, *Das "Orakel der Deisten": Shaftesbury und die deutsche Aufklärung* (Göttingen: 2008).

<sup>8</sup> [Johann Joachim Spalding,] *An den Leser*, in Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, *Die Sitten-Lehrer oder Erziehung philosophischer Gespräche, welche die Natur und die Tugend betreffen, aus dem Englischen des Grafen von Shaftesbury [sic] übersetzt nebst einem Schreiben an den Übersetzer* (Berlin: 1745; reprint ed. Heiner F. Klem-

me, Bristol: 2001), 16. In both his translations, Spalding included extensive prefaces, staging a fictional dialogue between the translator and an anonymous friend of his, with the latter being given as the author of the first preface. For this reason, some scholars suppose that the first preface stems from a close interlocutor of Spalding, and not from himself, cf. Michael Albrecht, "Zum Wortgebrauch von 'Aufklärung' bei Johann Joachim Spalding. Mit einer Bibliographie der Schriften und zwei ungedruckten Voten Spaldings," in *Vernunftkritik und Aufklärung: Studien zur Philosophie Kants und seines Jahrhunderts*, ed. Michael Oberhausen (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: 2001), 14; Ulrich Dreesman, *Aufklärung der Religion: Die Religionstheologie Johann Joachim Spaldings* (Stuttgart: 2008), 33. However, others are of the opposite view, cf. e.g., Dehmann, *Das "Orakel der Deisten"*, 132; Raatz, *Aufklärung als Selbsteutung*, 181-82. Spalding's editor Albrecht Beutel first opted for not including this preface in the relevant volume of Spalding's critical edition (cf. SpKA, I, 6/1, XVIII), but later considered the possibility of Spalding's intentionally disguising his identity (Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, 46-47). I am firmly convinced that Spalding composed both prefaces and followed literary conventions of the time in presenting them as an epistolary dialogue.

<sup>9</sup> *Schreiben des Uebersetzers an Herrn –*, SpKA, I, 6/1, 177 (this second preface is explicitly attributed to the translator himself, who addresses all the issues raised by his anonymous friend – signing as S.A.T.I.P. – in 1745).

<sup>10</sup> For further details about this circle one can profitably read: U. Dreesman, "'Enthusiasmus der Freundschaft': Kirche und Freundschaftskultur am Beispiel Johann Joachim Spaldings," in *Christentum im Übergang: Neue Studien zu Kirche und Religion in der Aufklärungszeit*, eds. Albrecht Beutel, Volker Leppin and Udo Sträter (Leipzig: 2006), 151-59; Dehmann, *Das "Orakel der Deisten"*, 223-29; Raatz, *Aufklärung als Selbsteutung*, 131-39.

<sup>11</sup> *Spalding an Gleim*, August 9, 1764, in Johann Joachim Spalding, *Briefe*, eds. Albrecht Beutel and Olga Söntgerath (Tübingen: 2018), 163.

<sup>12</sup> Sack was, and remained, one of Spalding's closest interlocutors; on Sack's life, works and thought see Mark Pockrandt, *Biblische Aufklärung: Biographie und Theologie der Berliner Hopprediger August Friedrich Wilhelm Sack und Friedrich Samuel Gottfried Sack* (Berlin and New York: 2003); Albrecht Beutel, *Aufklärung in Deutschland* (Göttingen: 2006), 252-54.

<sup>13</sup> The German noun *Bestimmung* is a properly untranslatable term, since its polysemy has no satisfactory equivalent in English (nor in French, Spanish or Italian). The most commonly used options include "vocation", "calling", "determination", "destination" and "destiny", but each of these necessarily leads to the loss of at least some of the shades of meaning coexisting in the original. That said, in what follows the word "vocation" is consistently used, since this is the prevailing trend in the majority of specialised studies. On the linguistic and semantic aspects relating to the noun *Bestimmung* and its possible translations, see: Jean-Louis Vieillard-Baron, "La notion de 'Bestimmung'," in Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Conférences sur la destination du savant (1794)*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ed. Jean-Louis Vieillard-Baron (Paris: 1994), 94-97; Pascal David, "Schicksal/Verhängnis/Bestimmung," in *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*, ed. Barbara Cassin, Emily Apter, Jacques Lezra and Michael Wood (Princeton and Oxford: 2014), 931-32; Laura Anna Macor, "Destinazione, missione, vocazione: 'un'espressione pura per la pura idea filosofica di *Bestimmung des Menschen*,'" *Rivista di storia della filosofia* 70/1 (2015): 163-201.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Lebensbeschreibung*, SpKA, I, 6/2, 133.

<sup>15</sup> For these and further editorial details, see Macor, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen*, 100-109.

<sup>16</sup> Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, 86.

<sup>17</sup> On this category, its emergence and usage, I refer to Eric Carlsson, "Eighteenth-Century Neology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theology, 1600-1800*, eds. Ulrich L. Lehner, Richard A. Muller and Anthony G. Roeber (Oxford: 2016), 642-48.

<sup>18</sup> On Spalding's intellectual activity in these years, see Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, 49-53, 129-40.

<sup>19</sup> On Spalding's gigantic impact on his contemporaries, see: Fotis Janinidis, "'Bildung' als 'Bestimmung des Menschen'. Zum teleologischen Aspekt in Goethes Bildungsbegriff," *Pädagogische Rundschau* 53 (1999): 441-55; Reinhard Brandt, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen bei Kant* (Hamburg: 2007), 61-77, 108-25; Laura Anna Macor, *Der moralische Zirkel der menschlichen Bestimmung. Friedrich Schillers Weg von der Aufklärung zu Kant* (Würzburg: 2010), 25-71; Fichte's Vocation of Man. *New Interpretative and Critical Essays*, eds. Daniel Breazeale and Tom Rockmore (Albany, NY: 2013); Laura Anna Macor, "Kant und Spalding über menschliches Verdienst und Gnade Gottes. Philosophie und Theologie im Dialog," *Historia philosophica. An International*



*Journal* 13 (2015): 73-88; Risto Saarinen, *Recognition and Religion: A Historical and Systematic Study* (Oxford: 2016), 125-36 (Anerkennung in Religion: Fichte and Spalding); Albrecht Beutel, "Der junge Goethe als Zaungast der Neologie. Theologiegeschichtliche Bemerkungen zum Pastorbrief von 1773," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 116/3 (2019): 290-321; Laura Anna Macor, "Kleist, Johann Joachim Spalding and the *Bestimmung des Menschen*: Philosophy as a Way of Life?," in *Heinrich von Kleist: Literary and Philosophical Paradigms*, eds. Jeffrey L. High, Rebecca Stewart and Elaine Chen (Rochester, NY: 2022), 209-32.

<sup>20</sup> Spalding's memories are unequivocal in this respect, cf. *Lebensbeschreibung*, SpKA, I, 6/2, 156-60.

<sup>21</sup> According to his autobiography, Spalding did not want his sermons to be subjected to an "Inquisition tribunal", obsessively intent on finding justification for quick condemnation, cf. *Lebensbeschreibung*, SpKA, I, 6/2, 180-81.

<sup>22</sup> For a survey of the relevant debates, see Michael J. Sauter, *Visions of the Enlightenment: The Edict on Religion of 1788 and the Politics of the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century Prussia* (Leiden: 2009); Uta Wiggemann, *Woellner und das Religionsedikt: Kirchenpolitik und kirchliche Wirklichkeit im Preußen des späten 18. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: 2010).

<sup>23</sup> *Lebensbeschreibung*, SpKA, I, 6/2, 120.

<sup>24</sup> For the label "Oracle of the Deists", see Dehmann, *Das "Orakel der Deisten"*, 89.

<sup>25</sup> Spalding was in possession of the 1733 edition of the *Characteristics*, which is identical to that of 1714, cf. Macor, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen*, 80.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, ed. Arnold I. Davidson, transl. Michael Chase (Oxford and Malden, Mass.: 1995); Pierre Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, transl. Michael Chase (Cambridge, Mass., and London: 2002); Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France 1981-82*, ed. Frédéric Gros, general eds. François Ewald and Alessandro Fontana, transl. Graham Burchell (New York et al.: 2005). Foucault acknowledged several times his debt to Hadot, who in turn commented on Foucault's theories explicitly; their views were very close, and pursued the same end, namely reconstructing a forgotten history of philosophy as well as vindicating an obscured way of doing philosophy, but they were not identical. On all this see: Arnold I. Davidson, "Ethics as Ascetics: Foucault, the History of Ethics, and Ancient Thought," in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ed. Gary Gutting (Cambridge, Engl.: 2005), 123-48; John Sellars, "Self or Cosmos: Foucault versus Hadot," in *The Late Foucault: Ethical and Political Questions*, eds. Marta Faustino and Gianfranco Ferraro (London: 2020), 37-52; Michael Ure, "Foucault's Reinvention of Philosophy as a Way of Life: Genealogy as a Spiritual Exercise," in *The Late Foucault: Ethical and Political Questions*, eds. Marta Faustino and Gianfranco Ferraro (London: 2020), 19-36.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, 321.

<sup>28</sup> Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. Lawrence E. Klein (Cambridge, Engl.: 2000), 70.

<sup>29</sup> *Ivi*, 84.

<sup>30</sup> *Ivi*, 137.

<sup>31</sup> *Ivi*, 406.

<sup>32</sup> SpKA, I/1, 1, 42-43.

<sup>33</sup> SpKA, I/1, 1 (1<sup>st</sup> ed.: 1748).

<sup>34</sup> For a detailed overview of the structure and content of this work, see: Andreas Kubik, "Spalding's *Bestimmung des Menschen* als Grundtext einer aufgeklärten Frömmigkeit," *Zeitschrift für neuere Theologiegeschichte* 16/1 (2009): 1-20; Caroline Tippmann, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen bei Johann Joachim Spalding* (Leipzig: 2011); Laura Anna Macor, "The Place of the Human Being in the World: Johann Joachim Spalding, Religion, and Philosophy as a Way of Life," in *On the Human Vocation*, eds. Courtney D. Fugate and Anne Pollok (London: 2022), forthcoming.

<sup>35</sup> SpKA, I/1, 1 (1<sup>st</sup> ed.: 1748).

<sup>36</sup> Cf. SpKA, I/1, LII, 25 (1<sup>st</sup> ed.: 1748). On Spalding's proximity and debt to the Ancients, I refer also to: Brandt, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen bei Kant*, 72-73, 145-54; Ludwig Coenen, *Studien zur Anthropologie und Religions-Philosophie von Johann Joachim Spalding* (Berlin: 2018), 71-91.

<sup>37</sup> On Goeze's and Chladenius' criticism, as well as Spalding's reaction, see: Albrecht Beutel, "Spalding und Goeze und 'Die Bestimmung des Menschen': Frühe Kabalen um ein Erfolgsbuch der Aufklärungstheologie," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 101/4 (2004): 426-49; Macor, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen*, 111-39.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. SpKA, I/1, 214 (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.: 1749).

<sup>39</sup> Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, 86.

<sup>40</sup> SpKA, I/3, 134, 153, 174 (1<sup>st</sup> ed.: 1772).

<sup>41</sup> SpKA, I/3, 147 (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.: 1773).

<sup>42</sup> Cf. SpKA, I/3, 147, 150 (1<sup>st</sup> ed.: 1772).

<sup>43</sup> SpKA, I/3, 139, 163 (1<sup>st</sup> ed.: 1772). On the distinction between religion and theology in Spalding's work, see: Dreesman, *Aufklärung der Religion*, 121-31; Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, 229-30.

<sup>44</sup> SpKA, I/3, 179-84, 191-95 (1<sup>st</sup> ed.: 1772).

<sup>45</sup> On this see Lavater's letter to Breitinger of July 6, 1763, describing Spalding's homiletic activity in Barth, cf. Ursula Caffisch-Schnetzler, "'Wegzuleuchten die Nacht menschlicher Lehren, die Gottes Wahrheit umwölkt': Johann Caspar Lavaters literarische Suche nach dem Göttlichen im Menschen, dargestellt an den Wurzeln der Zürcher Aufklärung," in *Bodmer und Breitinger im Netzwerk der europäischen Aufklärung*, eds. Anett Lütteken and Barbara Mahlmann-Bauer (Göttingen: 2009), 505-507.

<sup>46</sup> SpKA, I, 6/1, 269.

<sup>47</sup> Usually, the term "enlightenment" is capitalised if it serves as a historiographical category, designating the eighteenth century and/or the relevant intellectual and cultural movement; otherwise, i.e., if its meaning shifts to the "process – or act – of enlightening", lower case is used. In this final section, this convention will be followed. The standard narrative on the emergence of this distinction is summarised very clearly by James Schmidt, "What Sort of Question Was Kant Answering When He Answered the Question: 'What Is Enlightenment?'," in *Rethinking the Enlightenment: Between History, Philosophy, and Politics*, eds. Geoff Boucher and Henry Martyn Lloyd (Lanham: 2008), 90: "both he [Kant] and his contemporaries used the noun *Aufklärung* to characterize a set of practices, attitudes, projects, and activities in which individuals were engaged, rather than the historical epoch in which they lived. It was not until Hegel's Berlin lectures on the philosophy of history and the history of philosophy that *Aufklärung* began to be used to designate what we have now come to call 'the Enlightenment'". However, a clear consciousness of the special role played by the early modern era, and particularly by the eighteenth century, is to be presupposed in Enlightenment thinkers themselves – one only has to think of Kant's well-known definition of his epoch as "an age of enlightenment [*Aufklärung*]", in "Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?," AA, VIII, 40; "An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?," in *What Is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions*, ed. James Schmidt (Berkeley-Los Angeles and London: 1996), 62.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Joseph Schollmeier, *Johann Joachim Spalding: Ein Beitrag zur Theologie der Aufklärung* (Gütersloh: 1967).

<sup>49</sup> Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding*.

<sup>50</sup> Printy, "The Determination of Man".

<sup>51</sup> Dreesman, *Aufklärung der Religion*.

<sup>52</sup> Raatz, *Aufklärung als Selbstdeutung*.

<sup>53</sup> Coenen, *Studien zur Anthropologie und zur Religions-Philosophie von Johann Joachim Spalding*, 158.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Albrecht, "Zum Wortgebrauch von 'Aufklärung' bei Johann Joachim Spalding"; Giuseppe Landolfi Petrone, "Woellners und Spaldings Antwort auf die Frage: 'Was ist Aufklärung?'," in *Religion und Aufklärung. Akten des Ersten Internationalen Kongresses zur Erforschung der Aufklärungstheologie (Münster, 30. März bis 2. April 2014)*, eds. Albrecht Beutel and Martha Nooke (Tübingen: 2016), 183-92.

<sup>55</sup> *Betrachtung über die Bestimmung des Menschen*, SpKA, I/1, 20 (1<sup>st</sup> ed.: 1748).

<sup>56</sup> *Betrachtung über die Bestimmung des Menschen. Anhang bey der dritten Auflage*, SpKA, I/1, 202 (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.: 1749).

<sup>57</sup> *Ueber die Nutzbarkeit des Predigamtes und deren Beförderung*, SpKA, I/3, 93 (1<sup>st</sup> ed.: 1772).

<sup>58</sup> *Betrachtung über die Bestimmung des Menschen. Anhang bey der dritten Auflage*, SpKA, I/1, 204 (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.: 1749).

<sup>59</sup> *Gedanken über den Werth der Gefühle in dem Christenthum*, SpKA, I/2, 24 (1<sup>st</sup> ed.: 1761).

<sup>60</sup> *Neue Predigten. Zweyter Band*, SpKA, II/3, 48 (1784).

<sup>61</sup> *Neue Predigten. Erster Band*, SpKA, II/2, 186 (1<sup>st</sup> ed.: 1768, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.: 1770, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.: 1777).

<sup>62</sup> *Neue Predigten. Zweyter Band*, SpKA, II/3, 42 (1784).

<sup>63</sup> *Vertraute Briefe, die Religion betreffend*, SpKA, I/4, 86 (1<sup>st</sup> ed.: 1784).

<sup>64</sup> On all this, I refer to: Günter Birtsch, "Die Berliner Mittwochsgesellschaft (1783-1798)," in *Über den Prozeß der Aufklärung in Deutschland im 18. Jahrhundert: Personen, Institutionen und Medien*, eds. Hans Erich Bödeker and Ulrich Herrmann (Göttingen: 1987), 94-112; Ernst Haberkern, *Limitierte Aufklärung: Die protestantische Spätaufklärung in Preußen am Beispiel der Berliner Mittwochsgesellschaft* (Marburg:



2005); Walther Gose, "Berliner Mittwochsgesellschaft," in *Handbuch der Berliner Vereine und Gesellschaften 1786-1815*, ed. Uta Motschmann (Berlin and Boston: 2015), 171-84; Ritchie Robertson, *The Enlightenment: The Pursuit of Happiness 1680-1790* (London: 2020), 369.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Albrecht, "Zum Wortgebrauch von 'Aufklärung' bei Johann Joachim Spalding, 35-36; Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, 213-17.

<sup>66</sup> Albrecht, "Zum Wortgebrauch von 'Aufklärung' bei Johann Joachim Spalding, 35.

<sup>67</sup> Albrecht, "Zum Wortgebrauch von 'Aufklärung' bei Johann Joachim Spalding," 38-39. Spalding was reacting to the presentations by Johann Friedrich Zöllner and Christian Gottlieb Selle, and in the proceedings of this discussion, his note follows that by Moses Mendelssohn, which would later be published in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* as the well-known essay quoted by Kant himself at the end of his own text. On this particular round of discussion, see: Henri Hümpel, "Was heisst aufklären? – Was ist Aufklärung? Rekonstruktion eines Diskussionsprozesses, der innerhalb der Gesellschaft von Freunden der Aufklärung (Berliner Mittwochsgesellschaft) in den Jahren 1783-1789 geführt wurde," *Jahrbuch für die Geschichte Mittel- und Ostdeutschlands* 42 (1994): 185-226; Schmidt, "What Sort of Question Was Kant Answering When He Answered the Question: 'What is Enlightenment?'"?

<sup>68</sup> SpKA, I/1, 32 (11<sup>th</sup> ed.: 1794).

<sup>69</sup> *Vertraute Briefe, die Religion betreffend*, SpKA, I/4, 195 (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.: 1785).