



STUDIA UNIVERSITATIS  
BABEȘ-BOLYAI



# PHILOSOPHIA

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**STUDIA  
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PHILOSOPHIA**

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## ON DWELLING HEIDEGGERIAN ALLUSIONS TO ARCHITECTURAL PHENOMENOLOGY

NADER EL-BIZRI\*

**ABSTRACT.** This paper investigates the phenomenon of dwelling in Heidegger's thought. This endeavour is undertaken in the context of accounting for his take on the gathering of the fourfold (earth, sky, mortals, and divinities) in things amongst which we dwell. It is also situated in relation to his existential analytic of *Dasein*, his reflections on death, time, and space. This line of inquiry is moreover placed within the broader constellation of the published recollections of Heidegger's thought in connection with his meditations on the unfolding of the essence of modern technology and its en-framing, his contemplation of the origins of the work of art, and the way these aspects connect with his call for re-thinking dwelling anew in terms of what can be seen as an ontological response to the questions of the meaning, truth, and place of being.

**Keywords:** *Art, Dasein, Death, Dwelling, Space, Technology*

### BY WAY OF A PRELUDE: ON DWELLING

The aim behind this paper is to investigate the phenomenon of *dwelling* in Martin Heidegger's thinking, while situating it within the broader constellation of the various manifestations of his thought.<sup>1</sup> Such line of inquiry addresses salient features of the architectural and topological significance of rethinking dwelling as a prolegomenon to meditating on architectural phenomenology and its conditions of possibility as a domain of philosophizing, which can be situated at the interface between philosophical thinking and architectural thought.

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<sup>1</sup> This is particularly based on rethinking selected elements of my earlier article: Nader El-Bizri, "Being at Home among Things: Heidegger's Reflections on Dwelling", *Environment, Space, Place* 3 (2011), pp. 47–71. This present paper is also informed by a postgraduate phenomenology seminar that I taught at the University of Lincoln and by a sixth year design studio project that I supervised at the same university in the Faculty of Art, Architecture and Design.

To reflect on the phenomenological approaches to architecture, to the built and natural environment, or to embodiment in lived experiences, and the various aspects of spatial humanities, we have not restricted our analyses in this present paper to surveying the manifestations of phenomenological motifs within architectural theoretic discourses or critical commentaries on design. Our aim is rather humbler and more defined in scope in terms of undertaking focused pathways in inquiry to examine the engagement with architectural phenomena from Heideggerian perspectives.

Meditations on phenomena associated with dwelling have been pivotal to many humanistic disciplines, especially when linked to the investigation of space and the nature of place, and in examining their architectonic and topological characteristics, or the situational aspects of the cultural and societal interactions within architectural and geographic locales. Whilst such inquiries are becoming abundant in the context of spatial humanities, the investigation of their metaphysical bearings and ontological underpinnings is still hitherto rather rare. This is manifestly the case with the little attention given to addressing the ontological question concerning the essence of dwelling.

To commit to the close textual reading that our inquiry necessitates, we need to account for fundamental leitmotifs in Heidegger's thinking about dwelling, even though this present paper may also be situated within the literature of architectural humanities and the *philosophy* of architecture.

The phenomenological approaches to architecture and to the notion of lived space would be mediated in this context by inquiring about the ontological orientations in Heidegger's take on dwelling. This turn in thinking aims at transcending the rather facile or dilettante manners by which the theories of architects have in most cases approached such matter to be thought, be it at the level of architectural thinking, design practice, pedagogy, critique, or curating. Thinking about dwelling within architectural circles in quasi-phenomenological ways did not always attend with thoughtfulness to the intrinsic intricacies of Heidegger's ontological pathways and the integrity of his thought.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The interest in phenomenology amongst erudite architects, be it academicians or intellectually-orientated practitioners, goes back to the first decades of the second half of the twentieth century. This was most notably witnessed with the oeuvre of the Norwegian architect and scholar, Christian Norberg-Schulz in his *Genius Loci, Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1980), then in the *Concept of Dwelling* (New York: Rizzoli, 1993). More recently, a wider reception of phenomenological approaches to architecture has been embodied in the works of the Finnish architect and theorist, Juhani Pallasmaa, as set in *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* (New York: John Wiley, 2005), and in *The Architecture of Image: Existential Space in Cinema* (Helsinki: Rakennustieto, 2001). Various phenomenological influences can be witnessed in the writings and practices of academic architects, such as: Alberto Pérez-Gómez

To redress this lack, we turn our gaze herein towards Heidegger's meditations on *Wohnen* and *Aufenthalt* as originally set in the lecture he delivered at the Darmstadt symposium in August 1951, and later gathered in the epistle: "*Bauen Wohnen Denken*" ("Building Dwelling Thinking").<sup>3</sup>

A Heideggerian account of dwelling presupposes an ontological elucidation of the essence of "things". This matter was addressed in Heidegger's lectures of 1935 and 1936 in Freiburg and Zürich, respectively entitled: "*Das Ding*" ("The Thing") and "*Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*" ("The Origin of the Work of Art").<sup>4</sup> Thinking about the essential nature of things is itself mediated by way of considering the unfolding of the essence of modern technology (*das Wesen der modernen Technik*) in terms of what Heidegger referred to as "en-framing" (*Ge-Stell*).<sup>5</sup> Such questions also lead to rethinking dwelling in connection with the unified event that Heidegger evoked in the 1950s under the appellation: "the fourfold" ("*Das Geviert*"),<sup>6</sup> namely: "earth and sky, divinities and

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and Marco Frascari in Canada, Kenneth Frampton and Steven Holl in the United States, Adam Caruso and Peter Zumthor in Switzerland, Dalibor Vesely and Peter Carl in the United Kingdom, and amongst others like David Leatherbarrow, Robert Mugerauer, Adam Sharr etc. Despite these interests and activities, the architectural engagements with phenomenology are rarely taken to the level of philosophical specialism or to advanced conceptual and methodological expertise. Rather, the architectural handling of phenomenology remains on the whole fragmentary in its adaptive appropriation of leitmotifs from the legacies of variegated phenomenologists. The impact of such practices also made its way into architectural pedagogy, in the domains of theory, history and critique of architecture, with some effects being attested in studio jury panels. Nonetheless, the interest in philosophy within architectural circles goes beyond phenomenology, and tends at times to be idiosyncratic in imprudently blending phenomenology with distinct traditions in modern "Continental Thought". At times certain interests in architectural circles arose around figures such as Louis Althusser, Henri Lefebvre, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, and Jacques Derrida. They also appeal to the writings of a new generation of theorists such as Luce Irigaray, Andrew Benjamin, Edward Casey, Karsten Harries, Peter Eisenman, Daniel Libeskind, and Bernard Tschumi. However, these architectural theorizing attempts are not grounded in their variegated commentaries on phenomenology or on deepened serious readings from the works of Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Gaston Bachelard, or Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

<sup>3</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen: Günther Neske Verlag, 1954), pp. 145–162; Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), pp. 145–161; Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1993), pp. 347–363.

<sup>4</sup> Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, *op. cit.*, pp. 17–87; Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, *op. cit.*, pp. 143–212.

<sup>5</sup> Heidegger, *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, *op. cit.*, pp. 13–44; Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, *op. cit.*, pp. 311–341.

<sup>6</sup> Heidegger uses herein an antique appellation that surpasses the monad of monotheism, the Platonic dyad, or the triad of Trinitarian thought. His "fourfold" hints idiomatically at an expression that is derived from the ancient tradition of Galen in medicine, which evoked the correlative schema of the four humours, the corresponding four temperaments, the elements in nature, the seasons, the qualities (dryness, wetness, coolness, hotness), the accompanying dietetics, the associated bodily organs, the cardinal signs, the winds, etc. This also embodies the antique macrocosm-microcosm analogy. I discussed this elsewhere in: Nader El-Bizri, "Microcosm and Macrocosm: A Tentative Encounter between Graeco-Arabic Philosophy and Phenomenology," in *Islamic Philosophy and Occidental Phenomenology on the Perennial Issue of Microcosm and Macrocosm*, ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2006), pp. 3-23.



mortals" ("*Erde und Himmel, die Göttlichen und die Sterblichen*").

Heidegger's thinking about the fourfold is ontological and not based on sciences such as: geology and geography (studying *earth*), meteorology and astronomy (observing the *sky*), anthropology, biology, sociology and psychology (examining *mortals*), theology (contemplating the arcana of *divinities*). The ontological character of dwelling in terms of gathering the fourfold into their essential oneness carries its spatial significance (*Raumbedeutungen*) in terms of attending to the question of being (*Seinsfrage*). Dwelling transcends architectural design and the making of place through the arts and sciences of building construction; despite the fact that Heidegger's thinking about dwelling takes place in the context of post-war reconstruction in Europe.<sup>7</sup> Our thinking in this regard should aim at tracing back the phenomenon of dwelling into that domain to which *everything that is* belongs; namely to reflecting on the question of being in a manner that is unlike our quotidian ways of accounting for everyday phenomena. Things amongst which we dwell admit the coalescence of the fourfold (*Das Geviert*) as an essential singular event that gathers earth, sky, divinities, and mortals into a primal unified oneness.

## MORTALS

To grasp the essence of dwelling we ought to think about the meaning, truth, and place of the fourfold as they are gathered into their original togetherness. We start with the being that inquires about its own being insofar that it is a *mortal*. In *Sein und Zeit (Being and Time)* the mortal being that inquires about its own being is designated by the individuating expression: "*Dasein*" (namely "being-there" / "being-here" in the world);<sup>8</sup> or what Jean Beaufret rendered as: "*être-là*" qua "being-here" or specifically as "*être-le-là*" qua "being-the-here"; i.e. *Dasein* as "*hereness*".<sup>9</sup> *Dasein* is the being that is concerned about its being and death as a mortal,<sup>10</sup> which understands itself in terms of its possibility to be itself or not to be itself. Being-in-the-world (*In-der-Welt-sein*) is *concerned being* that reflects on the possibility of its not-being,<sup>11</sup> and I would add, of the non-being too of loved ones who are brought into the preserve

<sup>7</sup> The Marshall Plan (European Recovery Program, ERP), 1948–1952.

<sup>8</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1982), pp. 334–335.

<sup>9</sup> Jean Beaufret, *Dialogue avec Heidegger, Tome II: Philosophie moderne* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1973), p. 51; Jean Beaufret, *Dialogue avec Heidegger, Tome IV: Le chemin de Heidegger* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1985), pp. 113–115.

<sup>10</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1953), p. 12; Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: SUNY Press), p. 10.

<sup>11</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, *op. cit.*, p. 61; Heidegger, *Being and Time*, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

of our care. The mortal, insofar that it is a being who reflects on the possibility of its own death, is concerned about its being and the meaning, truth, and place of its being. Ontologically, this manner of thinking is not letting the question of *Dasein's* being fall into oblivion (*Vergessenheit*). In being-in-the-world *Dasein* is destined towards-its-end. As a mortal, my being-in-the-world is that of being-toward-death (*Sein-zum-Tode*) as the possible annihilation of all my existential possibilities.<sup>12</sup> *Dasein* is destined to run-ahead-of-itself towards a *futural* (*zukünftig*) past that is most certain, whilst being most indeterminate in its happening. *Dasein* has an unfinished quality since it only reaches its wholeness (*Gänze*) in death. Dwelling is thus the mode of being-in-the-world of my *Dasein* as a mortal. However, this does not entail that I darken my earthly dwelling by blindly staring toward the end.<sup>13</sup> Rather, *Dasein* is always already dying in being-toward-its-end.<sup>14</sup> *Dasein* is timing and spacing in being-ahead-of-itself as already destined to annihilation. As Emmanuel Levinas argued in this regard: if death “is” you are “not” and *vice versa*: “*si tu es, elle n’est pas...si elle est, tu n’es pas*”, namely, that there lies an abyss separating the present from death: “*il y a un abîme entre le présent et la mort*”.<sup>15</sup>

Levinas’ words become whining when we listen to what Maurice Blanchot puts forward in *L’instant de ma mort*.<sup>16</sup> Therein he notes that one is prevented from dying by death itself (“*empêché de mourir par la mort même*”), whereby one is dead and immortal at the same time (*mort-immortel*). As if an external [bodily] death clashes with an inner mortality (“*comme si la mort hors de lui pouvait désormais que se heurter à la mort en lui*”), whereby an affirmation of being alive is opposed by an assertion of one’s own death (“*Je suis vivant ... Non, tu es mort!*”). The moment of death is an instance of an extraordinary lightness in being.

How *Dasein* takes death as the horizon of disclosing the manner it conducts its being-in-the-world, which becomes a basis for being-itself, being-with-others cum dwelling. In its authentic mode of being-in-the-world, *Dasein* does not shrink back from itself in fear from the nothing of its being-toward-death.<sup>17</sup> *Dasein* is thusly resolute in facing up to the dread of its destining towards an end beyond the busyness of everydayness (*Alltäglichkeit*) and the dealings that comfort its angst about the nothing in which its being is held. *Dasein* has the *courage to be*, which transcends soldiery fortitude by way of a directed wise wilfulness. The mortal wonders about the meaning,

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<sup>12</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *L’être et le néant: essai d’ontologie phénoménologique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1943), pp. 594–595.

<sup>13</sup> Heidegger, *Basic Writings, op. cit.*, pp. 352–353.

<sup>14</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit, op. cit.*, p. 254; Heidegger, *Being and Time, op. cit.*, p. 235.

<sup>15</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, *Le temps et l’autre* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1991), pp. 59, 73.

<sup>16</sup> Maurice Blanchot, *L’instant de ma mort* (Paris: Gallimard, 2002), pp. 9, 11, 15, 17.

<sup>17</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit, op. cit.*, p. 185; Heidegger, *Being and Time, op. cit.*, p. 174.

truth and place of being, and ultimately looks upon the abyss of its nonbeing as an individuated being, and in the “loneliness of an anchorite”.<sup>18</sup> *Dasein* is brought back from its falling prey (*Verfallen*) to the public domain of the neuter “they” (*Das Man*) and of being lost in it.<sup>19</sup> The non-worldly character of such nothingness lets an ontological difference emerge that is unlike any being. In thinking about the nothing, the *being* of beings (*Sein des Seienden*) is thought as being ontologically different from all.<sup>20</sup> The question remains: “*why are there beings at all rather than nothing?*”

The nothing figures in relation to being by saying that “from the nothing comes nothing” (*ex nihilo nihil fit*), or theologically that “from nothing comes created beings” (*ex nihilo fit ens creatum*), or that “from the nothing all beings as beings come to be” (*ex nihilo omne ens qua ens fit*); and it is the latter that solicits Heidegger’s reflection on the belonging of the nothing to being.<sup>21</sup>

### TEMPORALITY

By running ahead of itself in anticipation, *Dasein*’s possibility is impossibility. *Dasein* is time (*Zeit*) in being temporal in its destining towards its most certain and yet indeterminate existential end.<sup>22</sup> Temporality (*Zeitlichkeit*) is grasped herein as the horizon of the *existenziale Analytik des Daseins* (section 24, *Sein und Zeit*). The finitude of our time gains its meaning by way of dedicating the little we have of it to others, or to collective projects, and doing so with care, in toil, sacrifice, and labour, in the fear of killing or being killed, in the anguish about the loss in bereavement of loved ones. In the dread from the nothing in which we are held as mortals, we become restless about the time that passes away despite the newness it promises as a future. In the dreadfulness of experiencing the *nihil*, a gaping hole opens up in being that swallows the world, that hammers meaning and with it the ideas by virtue of which our words hook into worldly things. All becomes slippery and unveiled in its being as that which is held out into the nothing. The angst that the dread from the workings of the *nihil* brings about is subsumed in Heidegger’s allusions in the interpretation of *Sein* by way of his own grasp of Nietzsche’s “*der Wille zur Macht*” (will to power) and “*die Ewige Wiederkunft des Gleichen*” (eternal recurrence of the same). These are projected attempts to think about what has

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<sup>18</sup> To evoke herein the theological pathway of Paul Tillich’s *The Courage To Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1954), pp. 30-31.

<sup>19</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, *op. cit.*, p. 191; Heidegger, *Being and Time*, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

<sup>20</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 362–363.

<sup>21</sup> Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, *op. cit.*, pp. 108–110.

<sup>22</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Begriff der Zeit*, ed. William McNeill (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), pp. 10–14.

independence from the time that passes away and is annihilated. This solicits revengefulness and repulsion from the passing away of time, by willing everything as an *eternity* of sameness in all becoming (to let rest happen in motion, the eternal touching the temporal, and bringing together into oneness the two ontological poles of Pre-Socratic wisdom). Such outlooks are not foreign to what announces itself through the unfolding of the essence of modern technology as the advent of the age of the rotating mechanical power in the reproduced recurrence of the same, and in the blanket modelling of reality in mathematical terms.<sup>23</sup>

Thought becomes remembering—expecting across generations of mortals in the three modalities of time: of past ancestors that *have been*, of present contemporaries we *live with*, and of future descendants who are *yet to come* in posterity. Such state of affairs can take an architectonic sense in terms of the manner traces of mortals are left in stone, in wood, in codices, and ultimately in the emergence of what we collect in archives of their belongings, and of edifices they leave behind for us to dwell in or cede to ruin.

Archiving becomes in itself an art that has its own science, which makes its way into shaping certain modes of thinking in connection with scholarship (in receiving the classics; documenting, safekeeping, cataloguing them). The passage of time is seen as a demarcating incommensurability between ideas across the ages. This pushes custodians of archiving in academia to approach the handed down over manuscripts with a penchant for documentation, whereby commentary becomes narrowly set in its contextual determinants to the point that it cannot be interpreted hermeneutically in connection with posterity.<sup>24</sup> The archives become anchors that resist the time that passes away, and hence, for mortals, they open up a region that receives their trace and safeguards it posthumously. This archiving can become architectural, through structures that retain the trace of their builders and of their dwellers across history; from civilizations that come down to us through the ruins of their built environment, as deep in time as ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia. The trace can become a constellation of textual fragments (like the *Epic of Gilgamesh* coming down the ages over five millennia). Such relics anchor history despite the time that passes away. The historical trace that is extant can be indeed millennial

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<sup>23</sup> Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?* trans. J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), pp. 105–108.

<sup>24</sup> I discussed elsewhere the dominance of archival scholarship in approaching pre-modern intellectual and material-culture history of classical Islamic civilizations, which censures attempts to rethink the philosophical legacies and artworks within comparative frameworks that take into account the hermeneutic approaches to classics and handed down over artifacts and relics from the past: Nader El-Bizri, “The Labyrinth of Philosophy in Islam”, *Comparative Philosophy* 1.2 (2010), pp. 3–23; Nader El-Bizri, “Le renouvellement de la *falsafa*?”, *Les Cahiers de l’Islam* 1 (2014), pp. 17–38.

and hence approximates the eternal as it touches the temporal;<sup>25</sup> though not in the sense of an “eternity” that the ancients conceived in connection with the Divine, or what Nietzsche evoked through an eternal return of the same. For such hints at *the eternal* signal what Rilke called for as: letting Gods emerge from things by which we dwell!

### EN-FRAMING

Angst from the time that passes away, from a *nihil* that annihilates within being, also calls from within its essence for safeguarding the time of others. Do not hinder, obstruct or neglect the existential possibilities of mortals. Such sentiment, as a call of conscience, is set against the horizon of the being of others toward-death. It is the calling for being at peace with-one-another in our stay amidst things, as a basis for compassion, mercy, dignity, empathy, in which unfurls charity, hospitality, parenting, and dwelling.<sup>26</sup>

To safeguard one’s own possibilities, and to shelter and spare those of others against the finitude of time in their being-in-the-world as mortals, calls for not being harassed, ordered about, or hindered. Albeit, the eventfulness of certain happenings hold sway upon us in appropriative, challenging, and ordering manners that are not simply of our own mere doing. According to Heidegger, such destining is brought our way through the unfolding of the essence of technology that is nothing technological *per se* (*das Wesen der Technick ist nichts Technisches*).<sup>27</sup> This state of affairs sets upon us

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<sup>25</sup> We explored this notion of the coming to a togetherness of the eternal and the temporal in connection with the thought of Kierkegaard in: Nader El-Bizri, “Variations ontologiques autour du concept d’angoisse chez Kierkegaard”, in *Kierkegaard notre contemporain paradoxal*, ed. Nicole Hatem (Beirut: Université Saint-Joseph, 2013), pp. 83–95.

<sup>26</sup> This contrasts with the claims made by Levinas in his critique of the existential analytic of *Dasein* in *Sein und Zeit* (*Being and Time*), which is seen by him as being conducted from the standpoint of affirming the impersonal and lonely character of *Dasein* (*le Dasein esseulé*) that stands in a relation of “side to side” (*côte à côte*) with others, around a common project, theme, or goal, instead of being in a “face-to-face” relationship with others. According to Levinas, this constitutes the meaning of Heidegger’s notion of “*Miteinandersein*”, as being reciprocally with one another: “*être réciproquement l’un avec l’autre*” (Levinas, *Le temps et l’autre*, *op. cit.*, 18–19, 69, 88–89). Following the line of thinking about giving one’s own limited time to others, a belief and resoluteness (*Entschlossenheit*) in turning impossibility into a possibility also underpins the convictions of those who destine themselves to voluntary self-sacrifice and utter altruism; what the ancients named: “martyrdom”, as testament and witness. This outlook unto death may also take place as suicide in receiving being as a burden in living with guilt, helpless, or hopelessness that contemplates self-annihilation in being. This also contrasts with Levinas’ view of our indebtedness to others. I addressed this in: Nader El-Bizri, “Uneasy Meditations after Levinas”, *Studia Phaenomenologica* 6 (2006), pp. 293–315; Nader El-Bizri, “Being-towards-death: On Martyrdom and Islam”, *Cristianismo nella storia: Ricerche storiche esegetiche teologiche* 27 (2006), pp. 249-279.

<sup>27</sup> Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, *op. cit.*, p. 311.

the most dominant, all pervasive, and expansionist mastery over the revealing of truth (*das Entbergen*), which frames beings by way of calculative commands as: objectless energies or power reservoirs; namely, what Heidegger named: “*Bestand*” (standing-reserve).<sup>28</sup> Correct *truths* are disclosed within the specificities of calculating parameters that frame them and are allotted to them. The unfolding of the essence of modern technology is co-entangled with the nihilism of an erupting struggle over the domination of earth in which beings are reportable in the manner they get framed and challenged as standing-reserve, and are henceforth made answerable in a particular way to how they are interrogated.

En-framing is an event that overwhelms and subjugates all other possible ways of revealing truth (*Wahrheit*) as *Unverborgenheit* qua *alētheia*, whilst challenging forth, commanding, ordering, and harassing all beings with demands to supply answers, energies, powers, stockpiles that are readied and on-call. Such en-framing (*Ge-Stell*) appears as a danger (*die Gefahr*) to the effacement of the possibilities of dwelling through sheer manipulability. The mysterious *coming to presence* and the uncanny *withdrawal into absence* of beings in their being as a movement from concealment into un-concealment, from unveiling to veiling, is forgotten, and hence, this state of affairs belongs to the metaphysical history of being (*Seinsgeschichte*) that is marked by an oblivion of the question of being (*Seinsfrage*). “The essence of technology comes to the light of day only slowly” ... “this day is the world’s night rearranged into merely technological day”.<sup>29</sup> We are not only forgetful of the *being* of beings in our ever distracted handling of *beings*, but more fundamentally we are oblivious of our remembrance in forgetting our oblivion.

Against the modes of revealing that are set at work by way of en-framing, Heidegger evokes other ways of bringing-forth (*Her-vor-bringen*) into presence, letting appear, un-veiling what is brought from concealment, through what the Greeks named: “*tekhnē*” and “*poiēsis*”.<sup>30</sup> This corresponds with the calling of the work of art as it unfolds from its origin through *Dasein*’s being-in-the-world as a mode of poetically dwelling on earth. Such call seeks to shelter the promise of resisting the mortals’ destiny of being chained to technology, and of being subject to the incessant demands that are made on our finite passing time. Sparing such hope of dwelling passes by way of fetching it home back into its essence; as when Heidegger evoked the verses of Hölderlin, that: “where danger is, there grows the saving

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<sup>28</sup> Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, *op. cit.*, p. 322.

<sup>29</sup> Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

<sup>30</sup> Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, *op. cit.*, pp. 318, 335, 339.

power too”.<sup>31</sup> Saving sets what is to be spared freely into its essence within the unfolding of its destiny; like it is the case with being freed into our own essence as mortals while at the same time being destined to death. In “*Vom Wesen der Wahrheit*” (“The Essence of Truth”), Heidegger held that freedom consists of letting beings be in their disclosure by *releasing* them (*Gelassenheit*);<sup>32</sup> and I would add, of doing so by letting them be-towards-death in peace. Freedom is thusly a mode of un-concealment that happens despite being chained by the overwhelming dominance of the orderings of en-framing.

## ART/ARCHITECTURE

The space of freedom is opened up as a rift, a leeway, a clearing, a region that makes room for potential existential possibilities at the heart of our finitude in being destined to death. Dwelling is a sojourn in the world within the space of the free that is cleared in the region of destining. Freedom is not as such wilful or determined through a causal human willing (or an ethical-political sense of liberty or human rights). It is not a fate that compels, since what is as such belongs to en-framing. Freedom initiates revelation despite en-framing. Heidegger’s “*Riss*” (rift) carries spatial connotations in opening up a cleft or cleavage (*Die Zerklüftung*) that is a liminal gap in-between opposing regions, which nonetheless holds them together whilst at the same time setting them apart in separation. The *Riss* is not a mere rifting that ripped open; rather it is the intimacy in which opponents belong to one another, carrying them into the source of their unity and common ground. Hence, a rift-design draws together into unison, through outline, figure and *Gestalt*, by setting itself in the hardness of stone, in wood, in the trace of ink and lead.<sup>33</sup> In such shaping, the rift is emplaced by way of a particular mode of placing (*Stellen*) that is not that of en-framing (*Ge-Stell*), nor in being simply a tearing open that incises. It is in the rift that the region of the free is opened up by way of the gathering of the fourfold (earth-sky-mortals-divinities) in dwelling. This state of affairs also announces the calling of art, like when Walter Benjamin noted in his *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit* (The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical

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<sup>31</sup> Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke, Band II* (Berlin: Propyläen, 1943), p. 190; Heidegger *Poetry, Language, Thought, op. cit.*, p. 118; Heidegger, *Basic Writings, op. cit.*, p. 333.

<sup>32</sup> Heidegger, *Pathmarks, op. cit.*, pp. 126–127.

<sup>33</sup> This brings to mind a visual manifestation in artistic/architectural terms of “splitting” of built forms, their incision and cutting, through the 1970s artwork of the New York avant-gardist Gordon Matta-Clark. The physicality of the trace as a form of demarcating a rift, even as a line traced on paper, is unattainable through the computer-aided graphics. I discuss this aspect elsewhere in: Nader El-Bizri, “*Paeraga – Carnet de Croquis: ‘ni oeuvre, ni hors d’oeuvre’*”, in *Recto-Verso: Redefining the Sketchbook*, eds. Nader El-Bizri with Angela Bartram and Douglas Gittens (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 27-38.

Reproduction) that “self-alienation has reached such a degree that it can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order” (*Ihre Selbst-entfremdung hat jenen Grad erreicht, der sie ihre eigene Vernichtung als ästhetischen Genuß ersten Ranges erleben läßt*).<sup>34</sup> Revealing lays claim herein to the arts most originally, and in the manner the poetical pervades revelation in the essential unfolding with exaltedness into the beautiful. In *Philokalia*, “beauty” is one of the names for the happening of truth as unveiling (and in Islam, the “Beautiful” [*al-Jamîl*] is one of the ninety-nine “Names of God”). Such orientation towards the arts is not determined by sheer aesthetic-mindedness or by conceptual-criticisms in the unfurling of artworks. In a similar vein, dwelling is not simply determined via the agencies of architectural design or the techniques of engineering, even if it presupposes in some of its manifestations the presence of a locale for gathering the fourfold (earth-sky-mortals-divinities) and giving their admittance a shelter. Art in its essence is a setting-upon-itself-into-work of the advent of truth that opens a region for its bestowal and granting, which points to poetic dwelling.

The calling of the arts is that of making-room by way of a clearing, a rift-leeway, which lets beings come into appearance and brings them forth into presence by way of un-concealment. Thinking holds sway as remembering (*Erinnerung*) and awaiting (*gewärtigen*) that lets what presences comes forth, rather than appropriating it to serve in manipulability the unfolding of the essence of modern technology. This calls for bringing the artwork into its essence as what arises out of itself, wherein beauty is revealed as one of the names for the happening of truth. Appealing again to Hölderlin, Heidegger meditates on the saying: “*Full of merit, yet poetically man dwells on this earth*”. Such promise of poetic dwelling is not restricted to the arts or artists, in the same way that dwelling is not housing, and that the essence of architecture is not architectural design and construction. Dwelling is the happening of an appropriating event as *Ereignis*, which gathers the fourfold into their primal and simple essential oneness as: *Erde und Himmel, die Göttlichen und die Sterblichen*.

## THE THING

Dwelling is the gathering of the fourfold in the manner they are admitted and installed in things that we never abandon in our being-in-the-world. To dwell is to meditate on the question concerning the *thing* (*die Frage nach dem Ding*) that

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<sup>34</sup> Refer to Sections II and IV of Walter Benjamin, *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*, in *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1977); Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, trans. Harry Zohn, in *Film Theory and Criticism*, eds. Gerald Mast and Marshall Cohen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 612–34.



coalesces the fourfold into their oneness. To spare the gathering of the fourfold, as a mode of letting dwelling be, is to set the four free into their own essence by way of admitting them and installing them in things that grant a cleared region for their gathering (*Gegenden des Gevierts*). We never abandon our stay with things in our being-in-the-world, even when they withdraw into the slippery regions of indifference and seem to no longer concern us (as when we suffer from dread, depression, apathy, slothfulness, ennui, etc.).

The “thingly” (*Dinglish*) character of a thing (*l’être-chose d’une chose... sa choséité*) should manifest how in its essence it is singular, individual, and a definite article closed unto itself: “*hors série dans la série*”.<sup>35</sup> This runs against the modern turn in our technological age, not only in its powers of mechanical reproduction, but also of its digitized reproducibility. Benjamin cautioned about this aspect from the onset of the twentieth century:

Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be. This unique existence of the work of art determined the history to which it was subject throughout the time of its existence.

The presence of the original is a prerequisite of authenticity (*Das Hier und Jetzt des Originals macht den Begriff seiner Echtheit aus*), which is external to reproducibility. Such *authenticity* points to the “aura” of a work of art (without parapsychological connotations). This is brought forth from the uniqueness of an artwork as it is embedded in the fabric of art traditions (*Die Einzigkeit des Kunstwerks ist identisch mit seinem Eingebettetsein in den Zusammen-hang der Tradition*) and their ritualistic cult-praxis within the specific situational locales of original uses.<sup>36</sup>

Having considered some aspects of what pertains to thinking about the essence of an artwork, we have to bring such meditations to bear on the manner the work of art contributes to a gathering of the fourfold; namely of being on earth, receiving the sky, awaiting divinities and initiating mortals. It is herein that comes to presence the essence of dwelling. *Saving the earth* is nurturing, cultivating, nursing, constructing, erecting edifices, landscaping, making room, building that lets locales appear and allow for installing and admitting the fourfold as gathered in their essential oneness. *Receiving the sky* is heeding its clemency, the coming and going of nights and days, of cyclic seasons, the sending of rain, of sun light and heat, the

<sup>35</sup> Jacques Derrida, *La vérité en peinture* (Paris: Flammarion, 1978), p. 229; see also my treatment of this question in “*Parerga – Carnet de Croquis: ‘ni oeuvre, ni hors d’oeuvre’*”, *art. cit.*

<sup>36</sup> Refer to Sections II and IV of Walter Benjamin’s *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*, *op. cit.*, and his *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, *op. cit.*, pp. 612–34.

yielding of fruit and nourishment through harvest. *Initiating the mortals* passes by way of letting their being–toward–death becomes accepted with resoluteness as what belongs to their essence; albeit with anguish also over the welfare of those who are in our care should they survive us. The earth thus opens up a world of lived experiences, and shelters its traces, letting mortals dwell their earthly life under the heavens, and receiving mysterious insinuations from an *otherness* that is sustained in history and communal life by *naming divinity and awaiting its beckoning messengers*. The gathering of *Erde und Himmel, die Göttlichen und die Sterblichen* is thing–dependent, for it happens as an event of dwelling–amongst–things.

In *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, Heidegger depicts in a manner that surpasses architectural description the ways by which a Greek temple stands on earth, in the middle of a rock–cleft valley. Therein, the temple encloses the figure of the godhead, whilst holding its ground against the violent storms raging in the heavens above it. In firmness, it towers in the sky and makes visible the expanse of its air. Situated in its locale, the temple gathers earth and sky, and lets mortals witness the battle of the lofty and holy with the flighty and unholy in insinuating signs of divinities. The temple reaches out beyond its design and erection as a built structure; it rather sets up a world whilst setting itself back unto earth as what shelters it. In its site, world and earth enter into strife; resting on earth, the world strives to surmount it, and yet earth reclaims it and conceals it, by safeguarding its revelation to posterity, as descending mortals that are yet unborn. World and earth raise each other into their essential natures in the intimacy of belonging to one another, despite the rift that separates them.<sup>37</sup>

A painting, like one from Van Gogh’s serial pictorial depictions of shoes, is interpreted by Heidegger as being a rendering of the shoes of a German peasant woman,<sup>38</sup> and more essentially, as being a *thing* that gathers the fourfold. Heidegger tells us that German peasant women wore similar shoes in working the soil of the fields; accumulating toil and tenacity in everyday labour, and how these become revealed through the dark worn insides of Van Gogh’s depiction of the shoes, which carry a rugged heaviness with the dampness and richness of the soil that weathers their leather and soles. Heidegger sees how the loneliness of pathways in the fields as the evening descends stretch beneath the steps taken with these worn shoes. In them vibrates “the silent call of earth”, with quiet gifts it grants in the ripening grain, surging

<sup>37</sup> Heidegger, *Basic Writings, op. cit.*, pp. 167–181.

<sup>38</sup> Heidegger, *Basic Writings, op. cit.*, pp. 159–160. Heidegger’s claim was interrogated by Derrida in the context of contrasting it with the views of Meyer Shapiro, in terms of interpreting Van Gogh’s painting of the shoes, and the ontological significance of such accounts when thinking about the happening of truth in painting (Derrida, *La vérité en peinture, op. cit.*, p.289). This controversy, which took a political–economic tone, contested the restitution of the shoes to the *painter*, to a *peasant*, or to a *proletarian labourer*, or perhaps simply *imagined*.

from the desolation of wintry fields, and letting harvest come, by receiving the rain, cold, dryness and heat from the sky, in the grand comings and goings of seasons as they are modulated by the motions of heavenly spheres. The shoes are pervaded by uncomplaining and patient worries as to the certainty of bread, and to be joyful in having once more withstood want and hunger. Through all of this, thanks are given with gratitude for the providence that grants via its beckoning messengers. The artwork lets the essence of the shoes become manifest as what gathers the fourfold and lets them come into appearance, and this depicts for us what withdraws from our world in the epoch of en-framing.

The architectonics of things, be it artworks or architectural built forms, come again to the fore in the manner a bridge gathers the fourfold. Heidegger evokes the scene of an old bridge (in Heidelberg) that brings into togetherness earth and landscape around a meandering stream. The bridge rests with its heaviness upright, while being rooted in the bed of the stream. Its piers bear the load of arches that let the waters of the stream run their wandering course, gay and quiet in the summery seasons, while flooding in storm with the thaw of torrential waves in times of winter. The vaulted bridge swings with apparent lightness above the water despite its actual heaviness. It sets its roots upon the earth, and becomes solidly readied to receive the inclemency of the weather and fickleness of sky. This bridge grants mortals their way across the ages. It lets them linger or hastens their crossings from a bank to another; as if in their ways to and fro, they strive to surmount all that is common and unsound in their everydayness, and prepare themselves to stand before the haleness of divinities,<sup>39</sup> be it those in flight or whose signs of arrival are awaited.

Such gifts surpass the work of art and architecture. They are also disclosed via nature *per se*, by way of a simple outpouring of a drink, which is gathered from the water–spring wherein the rocks dwell in the dark slumber of earth, receiving rain, light and heat from the sky. The water–spring dwells in this marriage of earth and sky, in a gift of outpouring that quenches the thirst of mortals in their conviviality; refreshing, enlivening, and being consecrated as libations to be offered to the divinities, or turning into a stream that grants life to beings. Such gifting, which solicits thanking, dwells in the gathering of the fourfold, joining their remoteness in intimacies of nearness, through things that sustain the granting of *what grants in being*.<sup>40</sup>

One also pictures an old German farmhouse at the edge of the Black Forest, built some two hundred years by the dwelling of peasants. It is placed on the wind-sheltered slope of the mountain, looking south, set among the meadows close to the spring and its gifting of water. Its wide overhanging shingle roof bears up the burden of snow, and reaching deep down, the chambers shield against the storms of long wintry nights. The altar is in the corner behind the community

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<sup>39</sup> Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, *op. cit.*, pp. 354–355.

<sup>40</sup> Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, *op. cit.*, pp. 170–173.

table, making room for the hallowed places of childhood and the coffin “tree of the dead” (*Totenbaum*). Generations dwelled as such under one roof in a journey through time. This image evokes the mystique that surrounded Heidegger’s hut; the three-room cabin in Todtnauberg, at the edge of the Black Forest. He claimed an intellectual and emotional intimacy with it and its surroundings; even suggesting that it expressed itself through him almost without agency<sup>41</sup>.

The gathering of the fourfold also goes beyond the tectonic things as such in terms of happening through the sayings of poets as they are filled with songs and words of poesy (what for Heidegger cometh forth from Heraclitus, Hölderlin, Rilke).

### DIVINITY

Our reflection on the gathering of the fourfold, through things that come to presence by way of nature, the work of art and architecture, and yet that surpass the materiality and corporeality of such *things* in becoming a site of dwelling, allows us to grasp the manner earth, sky and mortals are brought into their togetherness in their essential unity through things by which we dwell. The hardest to fathom in this regard is the manner by which mortals “await divinities”. For how could the phenomenon of the divine be graspable when posited from outside the sphere of historical outlooks on religion or any form of deism or theism? In what way do mortals await divinities in dwelling with—one—another upon earth, under the heavenly vault? It might well be the case that it is less obscure for us to think about being on earth, receiving sky, initiating mortals, since it is noticeably harder to meditate on “awaiting divinities”, especially if such a calling is undertaken from outside the sphere of religiosity.

The signs of the divine are revealed in Heidegger’s account of dwelling through what he takes to be “the beckoning messengers of the godhead”, those upon which mortals hold up what is un-hoped for, waiting for intimations of their coming and not mistaking the insinuations from the withdrawal of their weal, their absence in the depths of misfortune.<sup>42</sup> The divinities are not simply in flight or withdrawn into self-refusal and concealment, for, have they all along never been, even in the comings and goings of godheads as apportioned in the sequence of civilizations? Albeit, as Heidegger enigmatically noted in the *Beiträge zur Philosophie* (*Contributions to Philosophy*; section 251): “a people are only a people when they receive their history as apportioned by the finding of their God”. So, are we to think of divinities from the site of communal life with its collective memory and sociology of religion? Or are we to think about the divine from the locale in which an existential angst erupts concerning the nothing into which we are held as mortals in our thrown destining to death?

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<sup>41</sup> See Adam Sharr, *Heidegger’s Hut* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).

<sup>42</sup> Heidegger, *Basic Writings, op. cit.*, pp. 351–352.

The nothing is not disclosed as a being (as noted in “*Was ist Metaphysik?*” / “What is Metaphysics?”); rather *Dasein* is essentially held out into the nothing in being itself *a being unlike beings*.<sup>43</sup> *Dasein* thinks with angst about the empty otherness of the nothingness of its future as absence in being destined to non-being. However, the nothing is not a pure privation, but rather, it presences as a negating annihilation within our being-in-the-world that is ontologically unlike any being. The nothing is felt in what I described much earlier as a gaping hole in my being that swallows the entire world. This is dying before death, and being prevented from dying by the yet coming death.

The oddness in thinking about “the nothing” is that its privative character does not veil the manner by which its “*is*” persists as what is mysteriously experienced as an annihilation from within being-in-the-world, and is itself uttered in language by saying “it *is* no-thing”. Within this “*is*” lies concealed everything that is most worthy of thought about being.<sup>44</sup> Absence would thusly provoke a mode of reflective thinking/questioning about presence. The annihilating character of the *nihil* in being-toward-death of mortals keeps the meaning, truth and place of being as thought-provoking questions worthy of thought. Death becomes a “shrine of the nothing” that harbours within itself the presencing of being.<sup>45</sup>

Heidegger’s interpretation of the essence of the Greek conception of *phusis* (*natura*) in the context of commenting on Aristotle’s Book *Beta*, chapter I of the *Physics*, leads us to say that the decisive factor in drawing an ontological distinction between beings proper and non-beings is that of presencing, as always already there (like a *hupokeimenon*), while non-beings are at times present, on the basis of the presence of beings proper, and at other times absent.<sup>46</sup>

To think about the mortality of mortals in their being-toward-death is already a tacit mode of evoking divinities, not as gods that have been, but as mute signs of a self-sending and self-withdrawal of being. In the “*Brief über den Humanismus*” (“Letter on Humanism”) Heidegger asserts that thinking about being thinks the nothing by way of thanking what grants.<sup>47</sup> And yet, what is gathered in the gift recollects itself in appropriating the fourfold and in staying within the event of bringing the remoteness of their regions into an essential oneness. If it is the case that divinities are in abandonment, flight and withdrawal, the hidden fullness of the wealth of what has been through their presencing, becomes an awaiting-remembrance that recollects their signs despite their absence. The “no longer present” is at the same

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<sup>43</sup> Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, *op. cit.*, pp. 101–103.

<sup>44</sup> Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, *op. cit.*, p. 362.

<sup>45</sup> Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, *op. cit.*, pp. 178–180.

<sup>46</sup> Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, *op. cit.*, pp. 105–107.

<sup>47</sup> Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

time “the not yet here”; the flight of godheads is thus a veiled arrival of their inexhaustible nature, despite abandonment, flight, withdrawal, self-refusal, or concealment. This embodies the guardianship of vigilant watchfulness for the remembered “what has-been” in the awaited “yet to come”.<sup>48</sup> I remember and wait...

We do not decide how beings appear or come forward into presence in the clearing (*Lichtung*) of being,<sup>49</sup> which is an unveiling. In withholding their presence, the gods let the night remain; and yet, whether or how the day of holiness dawns, with the epiphany of the sacred, remains unclear in Heidegger’s thought; the tracks to the divinities remain veiled, and pathways to haleness and wholesomeness are still effaced. For there comes a distress from an “abandonment by being” (*Seinsverlassenheit*) due to the flight of gods (*Flucht der Götter*; sections 251–254, *Beiträge zur Philosophie*), which also points to remembering–expecting (*erinnernd–wartend*) without flight or arrival of divinities (*das ist weder Flucht noch Ankunft der Götter*). The dread accompanies the *awaiting* as underpinned by *expecting*, even if it is done in patience and with steadfastness. What belongs to the essence of a people is grounded in the historicity of those who belong to themselves out of belonging to a god (*das Wesen des Volkes gründet in der Geschlichkeit der Sichgehörenden aus der Zugehörigkeit zu dem Gott*). Herein the insight is to think about the divine (*theios*) rather than the god (*theos*).

The saying of Heraclitus (*Fragment 119*) resonates from the oldest of old of thoughts as one recites: “...*ēthos anthrōpōi daimōn...*” – namely, as Heidegger reckons, “the [familiar] abode of man is the open region of the presencing of god [the unfamiliar one]”. Heidegger took “*ethos*” therein to be “character” as well as “abode” or “dwelling–place”. He grasped it as such as an open region in which human beings dwell by way of making room for the safeguarding of what belongs to the essence of *Dasein*. For “here too the gods are present”: “...*einai gar kai enthautha theous...*” as Heraclitus added.<sup>50</sup> Dwelling is accordingly a mode of abiding steadfast in a stay in the nearness of divinities: “now it is time that gods emerge from things by which we dwell”: “*Jetzt wär es Zeit, daß Götter träten aus bewohnten Dingen!*”<sup>51</sup>

What is most thought–provoking is that, against such background in thinking about divinities within the context of the manner “thinging” things gather the fourfold, science itself compels us within the epistemic spheres of knowledge to annihilate things *qua* things in no longer admitting their “thingness” (“thinghood”), and in turning them into objects of research. If this happened “long before the atom bomb exploded,”<sup>52</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, *op. cit.*, pp. 177–178, 183–184.

<sup>49</sup> Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, *op. cit.*, pp. 234, 242.

<sup>50</sup> Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, *op. cit.*, pp. 257–258.

<sup>51</sup> Maria Rainer Rilke, *Gesammelte Werke, Band II* (Leipzig: Insel-Verlag, 1930), p. 185; Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, *op. cit.*, p. 344.

<sup>52</sup> Heidegger *Poetry, Language, Thought*, *op. cit.*, pp. 170–171.

then the unfolding of the essence of modern technology furthermore renders objects *objectless* as standing reserve. If Heidegger held that “science does not think”, namely that it does not think in the way that thinking is a mode of thanking that recollects/awaits. Perhaps *sapiential* thought is simply homesickness. Being at home amongst things that gather the fourfold in dwelling keeps the question of the meaning, truth, and place of *being* worthy of questioning, which is a piety in thinking that gives thanks, and in it resides in stillness the oneness of *earth–sky–mortals–divinities*.<sup>53</sup>

Heidegger enigmatically pronounced: “*Nur noch ein Gott kann uns retten*” (only a god can save us).<sup>54</sup> Albeit, the saving power arises from the site of danger, and what threatens most in the age of the unfolding of the essence of modern technology is en–framing. However, ontologically, what threatens is *the annihilation from within being* that marks our being–towards–*deaths* as mortals with finite times that pass away. What transcends this predicament of mortality and en–framing is that which is freed from the passing away of time and from being en–framed in its being; namely what is eternal and limitless, or what in the idea we would have of it would bring about the notion of eternity and infinity. And yet, what is as such can only be what humans all along have described by the attributes of Divinity that are internal to the eminence of the idea of a God (or the godhead that enters the idea).<sup>55</sup>

## SPATIALITY

Gathering the fourfold in their essential oneness, bringing them from the remoteness of their regions into the intimacy of nearness in a stay with things by way of dwelling, is throughout spatial. Dwelling allows for a locale that makes space for a site that admits and installs the fourfold within *things* that shelter their gathered essence. A place is hence freed by opening up a room for a leeway (*Spielraum*) and a clearing (*Lichtung*). A thing situates a locale that allows for a site that makes space for the gathering of the fourfold.<sup>56</sup> Making room, opening up a space, situating a site by way of having a locale, all affirm the belongingness of building and cultivating to dwelling.

Building as a mode of constructing locales is an architectural and architectonic mode of founding, joining, and organizing spaces. It is the process by virtue of which edifices may indeed guard and preserve the fourfold without design, and it is as such a mode of building in architecture that lets the simple essence of dwelling become possibly sheltered in coalescing the fourfold hither into a locale, like a bridge, a

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<sup>53</sup> Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, *op. cit.*, p. 362

<sup>54</sup> *Der Spiegel*, Hamburg, 31 May 1976, pp. 193–219.

<sup>55</sup> See: Emmanuel Levinas, *De Dieu qui vient à l'idée* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1986), p. 104 ff.

<sup>56</sup> Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, *op. cit.*, pp. 355–358.

temple, a farmhouse. Building becomes thusly worthy of thinking, not simply from the viewpoint of the professional take on architecture, or the techniques of engineering in erecting the built environment or managing the sustainability of ecological landscapes. Building is intertwined with thinking in the search anew for the essence of dwelling as the existential earthly plight of mortals destined to end.<sup>57</sup>

If the reflection on dwelling is intimately connected with meditations on the kind of being of space, there is nonetheless an inherent perplexity in the manner we inquire about spatiality due to the lack of a fundamental transparency concerning the ontological interpretation of the question of being (*Seinsfrage*). As Heidegger noted in section 24 of *Sein und Zeit*, the decisive grasp of this ontological problem lies in freeing up the question of the being of space from the narrow and undifferentiated concepts of being. An investigation of the being of space is mediated via the *existentiale Analytik des Daseins* as care (*Sorge*), and in the manner it takes space in by way of making room (*Einräumen*) for a leeway (*Spielraum*) or a clearing (*Lichtung*) that lets dwelling be.<sup>58</sup>

Heidegger's reflection on space in connection with the phenomenon of dwelling differs from Husserl's research on space (particularly in *Ding und Raum*, and partly in *Ideen-I*).<sup>59</sup> Heidegger's approach does not focus on a phenomenological analytic of the manifold of appearances of an unchanged and structurally unified *thing* in its immediate givenness to intuition,<sup>60</sup> within the dynamics of an "oculo-motor" (*ocluomotorisch*) field. Heidegger is not concerned with the unity of a given object of perception in terms of its kinaesthetic constitution through kinetic complexes of (subjective-objective) bodily displacements, rotations, inversions, *et hoc genus omne*. His thoughts on this are also unlike those that later emerged through Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of space,<sup>61</sup> which is an analytic of anonymous, pre-personal,

<sup>57</sup> Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, *op. cit.*, pp. 358–363.

<sup>58</sup> Nader El-Bizri, "ON KAI XΩPA: Situating Heidegger between the *Sophist* and the *Timaeus*", *Studia Phaenomenologica* 4 (2004), pp. 95–97.

<sup>59</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Ding und Raum (Vorlesungen 1907)*; posthumously published in *Husserliana XVI*, ed. U. Claesges, 1973 (Husserl's *opera omnia*); a.k.a. *Dingvorlesung* ("Thing-Lectures"). For an annotated English translation, see: Edmund Husserl, *Thing and Space, Lectures of 1907*, trans. by Richard Rojcewicz and ed. Ulrich Claesges (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997). Refer also to: Edmund Husserl's *Ideen-I*, in *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologischen Forschung, Band I* (Max Niemeyer, 3rd ed. 1928). This seminal text was also published in *Husserliana III* as: *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Erstes Buch: Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie*, ed. W. Biemel (revised ed. K. Schuhmann, 1976). For an annotated French translation, see: Edmund Husserl, *Idées directrices pour une phénoménologie et une philosophie phénoménologique pures, Tome I: Introduction générale à la phénoménologie pure*, trans. Paul Ricoeur (Paris: Gallimard, 1950).

<sup>60</sup> Namely, what Husserl designates as: *originär gebende Anschauung* (the originary givenness of intuition; *une intuition donatrice originaire*).

<sup>61</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), pp. xv, 491–495.



pre-reflexive, and pre-objective (subjective) bodily functions and limbs in flesh. Heidegger's spatiality is not mediated via a "body-subject" (*le corps propre*) and its multifarious forms of spacing-disclosures via corporeal kinaesthetic processes.<sup>62</sup> However, space is presupposed in the inherence of *Dasein* in the world by way of its lived (*vécu*; *Erlebnis*) spatiality. This ontological determination is articulated in Merleau-Ponty's thinking in terms of: *la prise [du corps propre] sur le monde*; namely the body-subject's *taking hold over the world*.<sup>63</sup> Space opens up the spheres of possibilities for the surge of a reliable sense of trusting the worldliness of being; insofar that the lived/living body (*le corps vivant vécu*; *Leib*) is what lets us inhabit a *world*. It is the embodied experience that engrains us in the world of life as an ecological environment that our bodies as living beings grew accustomed to inhabit through the course of evolution way before our cerebral and neurological systems evolved into giving us the power of rational discourse. We dwell the earth through our embodiment and its affects, and not simply and solely by way of grasping our being via abstract and calculative reckoning. Emotions and the flesh are the earthly anchors of our worldliness.

Heidegger's laconic confession in the lecture *Zeit und Sein* (1962), that: the attempt in *Sein und Zeit* (section 70) to derive spatiality from temporality (*Zeitlichkeit* [rather than *Temporalität*]) has been "untenable,"<sup>64</sup> reveals the pivotal aspect of rethinking space and place in his later thought. Heidegger proclaimed initially in *Sein und Zeit* that "the fact that space *shows itself in a world* does not tell us anything about its kind of *being*." On his view "the *being* of space" is not the same kind of *being* as that of the *res extensa* or the *res cogitans*. Consequently, he rejected the reduction of space to a geometrical *extensio*, as Descartes proclaimed, or to an objective absolute, like Newton argued, or to a relational quantifiable function, as Leibniz conjectured.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>62</sup> See: Rudolph Bernet, Iso Kern, and Eduard Marbach, *Introduction to Husserlian Phenomenology* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1993), esp. pp. 130–138.

<sup>63</sup> I have investigated this phenomenon in: Nader El-Bizri, "A Phenomenological Account of the 'Ontological Problem of Space'," *Existential Meletai-Sophias*, Vol. XII, Issue 3–4 (2002), pp. 345–364.

<sup>64</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Time and Being*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper, 1969), p. 23 (*Zeit und Sein* in: *Zur Sache des Denkens, Gesamtausgabe Band 14*).

<sup>65</sup> Descartes' notion of "space" consists of a quantity of *extension* that is shared by many extended things, and its existential distinction from spatial objects pertains to a mere act of mental abstraction. As for Leibniz, he conceived "space" as being a "relational order between coexistent things" (as for instance he noted in his *Fifth letter* to Samuel Clarke). His notion of "space" ultimately results from series of coexistent relational places, and is hence structured as an ordering situational mode of distancing. Consequently, a place (*situs*) is construed as being a fragment of geometrical *space*, which describes an invariable relation between the points of a given (extensional) configuration that is attributable to a physical object. Moreover, based on Newton's theory of mechanics, in a *scholium* incorporated between the sections on "Definitions" and the "Laws of Motion" of the *Principia Mathematica*: the *relative*, apparent, and common conception of space, is distinguished from the *absolute* (self-same/immovable), true, and mathematically quantified *space*. See also: René Descartes, *Discours de la méthode*, in *Œuvres de Descartes*, VI, eds. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery (Paris: Vrin, 1965); Gottfried W. Leibniz, *La Caractéristique géométrique*, ed. Javier Echeverria, trans. Marc Parmentier (Paris: Vrin, 1995).

Moreover, he doubted the Kantian positing of space as being a pure *a priori* subjective form of outer intuition;<sup>66</sup> and, in a critical turn in his “phenomenological” thinking, he also questioned the Husserlian claim that space is constituted by transcendental subjectivity in its kinaesthetic corporeal functions. Based on this, the decisive task in grasping the ontological bearings of the problem of spatiality lies in freeing up the question of the being of space from the narrowness of undifferentiated and random concepts of *being* (*Sein*; *Seyn*). Heidegger endeavoured to move the attempted clarification of the being of space in the direction of elucidating the question of the meaning, truth, and place of being.<sup>67</sup> Accordingly, he argued that the *being* of space would be best understood if *the question of being* (*Seinsfrage*) is itself addressed from the standpoint of the spatiality (*Räumlichkeit*) of *Dasein’s being-in-the-world* (*In-der-Welt-sein*).

Heidegger grasps *Dasein* as being spatial (*räumlich*) insofar that it manifests care (*Sorge*) in the way it comes across things and handles them. In this, it reveals a region (*Gegend*) that is founded on handiness (*Zuhandenheit*). *Dasein’s “making room”* (*Einräumen*) is not readily reducible to a quantifiable positioning, but rather grants a *leeway* (*Spielraum*) or a *clearing* (*Lichtung*) in the opened up region of useful and present worldly things, which are encountered in a directional *de-distancing* (*Ent-fernung*). The *making-present* of these things lets *space* itself *presence* by way of *making room* for it. However, this analysis seemed to remain determined from the viewpoint of the presupposition of the priority of *temporality* over *spatiality*. This recalls Merleau-Ponty’s conception of “*la chair du monde*” (“*flesh of the world*”), whereby the hands and the flesh undermine the positing of temporality as the comprehensive primordial (*ursprünglich*) horizon for the existential analytic of *Dasein*. This view is also confirmed by what Merleau-Ponty noted in his manuscript: *Le visible et l’invisible*, wherein the

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<sup>66</sup> According to Kant, space is not a general concept but is rather a necessary universal condition for experiencing. The *a priori* character of space is a pre-requisite for affirming the “universal” applicability of Euclidean geometry and its synthetic *a priori* (analytic) propositions. Space was grasped by Kant as being the *form* of outer-sense appearances, which acts as the subjective condition of sensibility that renders perception possible (*Kritik der reinen Vernunft*; A26, B42). Nonetheless, we do not encounter herein a refutation of the reality of space or of its visibility like what is attributable to George Berkeley’s immaterialism (as the latter argued in Sections 2–28 and 41–51 of his *Essay towards a New Theory of Vision* [1709], and in the associated Sections 43–44 of his *Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* [1710], along with the first dialogue of his *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* [1713] – *The Works of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne*, eds. Arthur A. Luce and Thomas E. Jessop, 9 vols. Edinburgh, 1948–1957). Kant rather affirms the phenomenal ground of spatiality as “the pure *a priori* form of outer intuition,” which underlies appearances and concepts (A24–5, B39–40), and is the source of synthetic *a priori* knowledge (A42, B60). Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Riga: Johann Friedrich Hartknoch, 1781); 1<sup>st</sup> ed. of 1781 as [A], 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. of 1787 as [B]: *Critique of Pure Reason*, “Transcendental Aesthetic,” Part I, Section 1.

<sup>67</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, *op. cit.*, Section 24.

experience of one's own flesh is pictured as being a prototype of *being*, and where the inherence of the body–subject (*corps propre*) in the world is synonymous with being *situated* (*être situé*).<sup>68</sup>

Heidegger gave more prominence up through the 1930s to time over space, perhaps due to a focus on Plato's *Sophist* more than on his reading of the *Timaeus*.<sup>69</sup> This aspect could have been avoided and would have been more in tune with his later emphasis on the equiprimordiality of space and time, if not even leaning toward the spatial by way of focusing on the place of being. This matter is best grasped in terms of Heidegger's own reflections on the notion of "*khôra*",<sup>70</sup> as it was ambiguously relegated to us by Plato (on the authority of the narrative of the Pythagorean astronomer Timaeus of Locri), it is said that: "*khôra* is a "third genus" (*triton*) besides being and becoming, which is in itself neither intelligible nor sensible (48E, 52A–B).<sup>71</sup> As a "receptacle" (*qua* recipient; *dekhomenon* and/or *hupodokhê*) this "boundless" *khôra* receives all becoming entities without taking on the character of what it contains. This *matrix* (moulding–stuff; mother; nurse of becoming) is amorphous and characterless (50B–51A); and, like the forms (*eidoi*), it is everlasting and admits not of destruction (52A–B).

In an endeavour to define "place" (*topos*), Aristotle reductively conjectured that Plato's "*khôra*" designated *prime matter*. However, this exegesis served more the purposes of the Aristotelian conception of place as a mode of "containment by envelopment," rather than resulting necessarily from a faithful and attentive reading of Plato's *Timaeus*. After all, Aristotle rejected the theories that posited *place* as being the form (*eidos*), the matter (*hylê*; partly following his own speculative definition of Plato's "*khôra*"), or the interval (*diastêma*) between the extremities of the body that it contains (*Physics*, IV, 212a 3–5).<sup>72</sup> He rather defined *topos* as: "the innermost primary surface–boundary of the containing body that is at rest, and is in contact with the outermost surface of the mobile body it contains" (*Physics*, IV, 212a 20–21). And, even though he affirmed that *topos* has the three

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<sup>68</sup> Didier Franck, *Heidegger et le problème de l'espace* (Paris: Minuit, 1986); Maurice Merleau–Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964); Merleau–Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, *op. cit.*, p. 291.

<sup>69</sup> I discussed this in the context of what I referred to as "*ontokhorology*": "ON KAI XΩPA", *art. cit.*

<sup>70</sup> Architectural theorists became fascinated with *khôra* (*chora*) since the 1980s in the context of Peter Eisenman's engagement with Derrida around Bernard Tschumi's design of the Parc de la Villette in Paris: Jacques Derrida and Peter Eisenman, *Chora L Works*, ed. Jeffrey Kipnis and Thomas Leeser (New York: Monacelli Press, 1997).

<sup>71</sup> Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. R. G. Bury, Loeb Classical Library, Vol. IX (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999).

<sup>72</sup> Aristotle, *Physics*, ed. W. David Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936).

dimensions of length, width and depth (*Physics*, IV, 209a 5), he seemed to indicate in his conception of spatiality by way of “containment” that a *place* is ultimately a two-dimensional “surface-limit” of “envelopment”.<sup>73</sup>

### EARTHLY PLACES AND BEYOND

Dwelling carries within its folds a particular attraction and rootedness in a place, a site, a locale, and in spatial things that admit the fourfold and install them. Dwelling also points to natural sites within the landscape, to specific architectural structure, architectonic settings, artworks, handcrafts that gather the fourfold. Dwelling reflects fundamental, subliminal, vital, and elemental “passions” for locality and earthiness as anchored in nature’s groundwork and upon the land, with its seasons, climate, geography, and topography.<sup>74</sup> This points to the situational character of the human condition as it unfolds within the vast network of life in its bios and cosmic systems; carving for itself a home by spacing its inhabitation and dwelling-place. Dwelling gains rootedness through ownership and labour; and, more intimately by cultivating the land, tending to the garden and the orchard, harvesting the field. However, humans also inhabit the forests, the heights of mountains, the depths of valleys, roam the deserts, sail upon the oceans, nest on trees, hibernate in caves, and take flight to retreats away from the polis. In the designed techno-scientific means of our age, our being-in-the-world reaches out beyond its terrestrial confines, with

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<sup>73</sup> The most poignant refutation of the Aristotelian definition of *topos* was accomplished through the geometrical conception of place (*al-makân*) by the Arab polymath: al-Hasan Ibn al-Haytham (Alhazen; d. [Cairo] after 1041 CE). In contesting the longstanding Aristotelian *physical* conception of *topos*, Ibn al-Haytham posited *al-makân* (place) as an “imagined [postulated] void” (*khalâ’ mutakhayyal*) whose existence, as an invariable geometric entity, is secured in the imagination. He moreover held that the “postulated void” *qua* “mathematical place” consisted of imagined immaterial distances that are between the opposite points of the surfaces surrounding it. Accordingly, the *place* of a given object is a “region of extension” that is defined by the distances between its points, and on which the distances of that object can be applied. This mathematical development found later affirmations in the history of science and philosophy in the conception of *place* as a *space*; namely, as in Descartes’ notion of “*extensio*” and Leibniz’s “*analysis situs*.” Ibn al-Haytham’s critical thesis was presented in his *Treatise on Place* (*Qawl fî al-makân*), which can itself be inscribed within an Apollonian-Archimedean tradition and not Platonism. For the Arabic critical edition and annotated French translation of this foundational tract (*Traité sur le lieu*) see: Roshdi Rashed, *Les mathématiques infinitésimales du IX<sup>e</sup> au XI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Vol. IV (London: al-Furqân Islamic Heritage Foundation, 2002), pp. 666–685. Refer also to: Nader El-Bizri, “In Defence of the Sovereignty of Philosophy: al-Baghdādî’s Critique of Ibn al-Haytham’s Geometrisation of Place”, *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 17 (2007), pp. 57–80; Nader El-Bizri, “Seeing Reality in Perspective: The ‘Art of Optics’ and the ‘Science of Painting,’” in *the Art of Science: From Perspective Drawing to Quantum Randomness*, eds. Rossella Lupacchini and Annarita Angelini (Dordrecht-Berlin: Springer, 2014), pp. 25–47.

<sup>74</sup> Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, “*De Patria Mea: The Passion for Place as the Thread Leading out of the Labyrinth of Life*”, *Analecta Husserliana* XLIV (1995), pp. 8–12.

moon-landings, an International Space Station, robotic probes on distant missions to Mars, etc. Dwelling is entwined with the universal play of the vital forces and energies of life, that transcend the mere localization and positioning within manufactured enclosures or housing units that are established through the calculative methods of the technical and functional production of the multiple spheres of societal spatial co-existence. Such rituals of life become at times saturated with life-transcending yearnings, projected unto imagined *sacral places*, hypothesized *paradisiacal localities*. These imaginings reflect the spacing-impulse to broaden the bounds of *territoriality*, to de-distance things and eliminate their physical-geographical-topological remoteness. The expansion of frontiers, which animates the spirit of economic development, of cultural discovery and geographic expedition, may also suggest the unfurling of aggression as it is associated with conquests, invasions, and the degrading policies of colonization or occupation, which get accomplished by way of forcible transgressions of boundaries. The spread of frontiers, which might indeed sustain aesthetic, moral, or even nobly-impassioned values, or that may result in beneficial practical/utilitarian functions, can furthermore veil tacit or pronounced sinister inclinations to act violently and greedily. Territoriality remains indeed a principal source of communal conflict and injustice; even though it may well offer, under restricted conditions, the possibilities of realizing the betterment of the societal production of space in architecture, urbanism, in finely planned landscaping (*pro bono publico*), and in delicately preserved ecosystems. It is moreover the case that in defending a Homeland, in what is perceived as the historical earth and soil of a people (of mortals: ancestors, contemporaries, and posterity as offspring), the patriotic-passion-for-place results at times in the occurrence of noble events of voluntary-self-sacrifice and heroism; however, it may also dialectically prompt, under certain circumstances, the emergence of devastating bellicose practices, particularly in the context of ruthless invasions and civil wars. While the *spreading*-spacing of frontiers might be violently exercised in the form of conquests, the shrinking behind fortified walls may at times point to the violence of apartheid and xenophobia, which express the modalities of a territorial *retreating*-spacing that also gets settled by way of effecting aggression. Territoriality may polemically solicit the dialectical interplay between peace and war, justice and injustice, the rule of law versus lawlessness.

Dwelling may also have its own labyrinthine expressions of imagined realms that are marked by anguish and hope, punishment and reward, fear and aspiration. Dwelling carries within its lived experiential folds the picturing of imagined localities that supposedly underpin some of our quotidian compartments, and that stretch beyond the spheres of perceptual spaces. The fields of perception and their horizons can thusly be hypothetically expanded through fictional imaginings and associated narratives.

Religion and theological discourses evoke in this context the images of heaven and hell, of *liminal* places of limbo and purgation; all intertwining embodied devotional rituals, with poetry, fables, and epistolary odes, be it in literature, the fine or performing arts. Such yearnings for the virtual and the imagined find further prolongations of their expressions in contemporary techno–scientific means of cybernetic and audio–visual media, and of projected cosmic simulations of extra–terrestrial journeys. The concrete quotidian reality of everydayness appears less real than the imagined and longed–for isthmuses at the interface with machines that challenge, command, overwhelm and seem to surround us from every side in our being–in–the–world. Such things do not gather the fourfold (earth–sky–mortals–divinities) as much as they more radically en–frame them. The en–framing of the essence of modern technology pictures also for us *topoi* of utopia, as purified and abstracted sanctuaries, or by setting actualized urbanization concrete localities that are marked by dystopia, angst, and torment. Such spaces turn us away from the earthiness of our lived–world, and solicit us to grasp our being as an existential burden of prolonged dissatisfactions, of encumbering labours, toil, trial, pain. Yearnings for “esoteric” places flourish “when the already constituted meanings fail to satisfy the passion for place”<sup>75</sup> (when attending to the meaning, truth, and place of being is forgotten). Escapism becomes an available mode of resisting socio–political, economic, and emotional inter–subjective hardships. Instead of revolution, political engagement, social activism, plain civil disobedience, some trans–natural virtual realms are imaginatively constructed in view of satisfying subliminal yearnings; and these spatial images are inspired on many occasions by handed down scriptural traditions, which influence the particulars of certain concrete everyday embodied comportments and practiced deeds or rituals. This takes place despite the merits of efficiency and smoothness that is granted to us by telecommunication. The “esoteric” place points to the space of soteriology, of eschatology, of promised salvation or redemptive deliverance, or seeking the *eskhaton* in apocalyptic ways. The yearning for the non–ordinary (the extraordinary) surpasses the concrete situational quotidian places in which the rooted–ness of our lived experiences (*le vécu*) finds its place in life on earth by way of our existence in flesh, here and now, through our physiology and sensorial kinaesthetic being–in–the–world. Albeit, imagination always soars beyond our earthbound passions, projecting from earth our very own being into what is perceived as unlimited horizons. Bearing testimony, our calling is to rethink dwelling anew.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Gary Backhaus, “Toward a Phenomenological Grounding of the Geographical Conception of Therapeutic Landscapes,” *Analecta Husserliana* LXXIX (2004), p. 767; Anna–Teresa Tymieniecka, “Preface,” *Analecta Husserliana* LXXVIII (2003), pp. 1–4.

<sup>76</sup> This article is dedicated *in memoriam* to the Polish–American phenomenologist Anna–Teresa Tymieniecka (1923–2014).



## ACTING IN SOFT FOCUS. THE STUDY OF ATTENTION IN THE ACTOR'S TRAINING

MIHAI FILIP ODANGIU\*

**ABSTRACT.** The following paper approaches the primordial role attention has in the actor's art. The author begins by mentioning the thorough study of the attentional mechanisms in Konstantin Stanislavski's theatrical system and applies the results of this study to a practical example taken from the work of a great actor and improviser, Robin Williams. Filip Odangiu's demonstration carries on by analyzing what he describes as the *attentional technique* specific to the actor's profession, a technique that involves the *circles of attention*, *affective attention*, *divided attention*, *observation* etc.

The author's declared goal is to gradually define the concept of *creative attention* and to present its practical application in the actors training. The study explores another key aspect in the actor's work: the *soft focus* state of the *body-mind unit*. In his conclusions, the author asserts that playing in the *soft focus* state, the actors are not escaping escape reality, but on the contrary, by reconstructing it, they are able to grasp it more acutely.

**Keywords:** *circles of attention, creative attention, soft focus, observation, target, acting, actor's training*

### 1. ROBIN WILLIAMS AND THE CIRCLES OF ATTENTION

Ladies and gentlemen, for the extent of four minutes, we will watch an actor's performance (*The speaker projects in front of the audience a short sequence from the television show "Inside the Actors Studio", hosted by James Lipton. In the shot, the actor Robin Williams does an improvisation using a scarf taken from an audience member.*<sup>1</sup>)

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<sup>1</sup> Thanks to William's acting talent, the scarf transforms its function, helping the actor to impersonate a whole gallery of representative characters, ranging from an Indian female film director or a Muslim woman, to a French chef or a rabbi etc.



Thank you. Two months have already passed since this actor chose not to act for us any longer, but, perhaps, for the residents of other dimensions. On August 11, the actor, comedian, stand-up artist Robin Williams killed himself in his home in – ironically – Paradise Cay. My choice of this fragment and of this actor is not accidental. I believe the example is very fit to my topic today, namely the primordial role attention has in the actor's art.

Robin Williams has been described as a “comic genius”, “impeccable improv performer” and many other things; but these classifications can barely grasp the complexity of his talent. Satire, parody are part from a genre whose construction is perhaps the most challenging: the comic genre. And comic invention relies first on observation, on the acuity of attention. By paraphrasing Camil Petrescu's famous say, “there's drama for every dash of lucidity, of awareness”, we could say that, in the Actor's case, “lucidity matches the expanse of comic genius”.

Theatre and the acting practice have always advanced the topic of Attention. There are various viewpoints on it. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in Russia, with Constantin Sergheevich Stanislavski, the study of acting withdrew from the field of empiricism and was approached with scientific instruments. Stanislavski, whose insights manage to stay remarkably topical, established the actor's obligation to train first his **external attention** and only then the **inner** one. Very precise correlations link the two. In his work – fundamental for the entire stage practice until today -, *An Actor's Work on Himself*, Stanislavski discusses the circles of external attention, by arranging them hierarchically. For their illustration, we will consider again, concisely, the improvisation we've just seen. *The small circle of attention* is restricted to Williams's body – “the instrument body”, to the shapes and movements he chooses to lend to his body and, thus, to be able to express his ideas. His self-control, his capacity to evoke images by bodily creation are remarkable and they hint to a flawless coordination of the means of expression. We also include here the way he controls his voice, its modulations, its changes, which are a perfect match for the purpose of the communication – metamorphoses in various characters. *The medium circle of attention* is how the actor manages to cover the immediately proximal space, the setting, the stage, the stage partner (the show host, mr James Lipton) and, most of all, the spectators in the first row. The most eloquent proof of *medium circle* control is that, at a point during the improv, without premeditation (we wonder), the actor picks a scarf from a spectator, to be able to continue his act. Finally, *the large circle of attention* includes the stage and the hall, the entire space and everyone included in it. Here, Williams completes the demonstration of his skill by the capacity to feel the entire audience, to communicate the vibration to the last rows, to monitor carefully, at the same time with the act, the audience's subtlest reactions. The reward is the enthusiastic participation of all the spectators in the actor's demonstration.

Intimately, in accordance with Stanislavski's theory, the *circles of external attention* are matched by *circles of inner attention*. Here, too, Robin Williams's art speaks. Thus, *the small circle* could be represented by how the "body-mind unit" (a cognitivist term prefigured by Eugenio Barba's "body-spirit" notion) works at Williams. I want to draw your attention on a brief moment of performance stop, when the actor seems to pause and think. He holds the scarf, folds it, his look is somewhat absent, nevertheless highly intense. You can feel that the body-mind thinks.<sup>2</sup> The idea rushes in and it is immediately taken over and used in the improvisation: the scarf movement suggest a car wash and, perhaps metaphorically, brain wash. *The medium circle of attention* could include the way in which the actor reprises and processes the information received from the circumstances, the spectators' reactions, and the links he operates between them and his massive stock of memories and images. Finally, *the large circle of inner attention* relates to the "great connections", the universal important topics approached and comically wrapped by Williams. Thus, we can identify references to a civilization that abandoned spiritualization, to the hollow form of religion and even to the fate of the comedian who is bound to entertain his audience at all costs.

The spectacular nature of this type of act (like Robin Williams's) also results from the fact that everything happens spontaneously, without prior preparation, given that the actor cannot know, for example, that a spectator would eventually provide precious props. Spontaneity, as suggested by Daniel Goleman, relates to bottom-up attentional processing. The unplanned character of the actor's improvisation is, however, the most enigmatic element of his art. And here's the secret: in fact, improvisation is never fully spontaneous. In a cognitivist approach, we could say the actors have "mental maps" of the improvisation. Perhaps a study would be interesting, which would approach the recurrence and the mental patterns contained by the improvisation canvases of the Renaissance commedia dell'arte actor and by those on which the contemporary stand-up artist relies.

Why have I chosen, for this topic, a stand-up comedy moment rather than a traditional show fragment which would include several actors and would rely on text? First, because the improvisation is the foundation of theater. Second, because one of the actor's supreme virtues is the capacity of "solitude in public" (see Stanislavski, David Zinder etc.), capacity to stay still, not to make anything on stage (apparently) and, nevertheless, to galvanize each and every spectator. Robin Williams is categorically placed at this level of the performance.

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<sup>2</sup> This act is illustrative of the "thinking in motion" idea borrowed by Eugenio Barba from John Blacking and described in *O canoe de hârtie. Tratat de antropologie teatrală*, translation from Italian and preface by Liliana Alexandrescu, Editura Unitext, Bucharest, 2003, p. 138.

## 2. DIVIDED ATTENTION, A MYTH

Some believe divided attention – involved by the stage action – is the most spectacular aspect of the performer’s actions: how to be at the same time focused on the text, on the character’s traits, on the director’s indications, on the partners, on the lighting, on the “audience’s temperature”? But a skilled circus juggler does wonderfully with a lot more difficult tasks, risking his life when he has to balance his body and legs on a racing horse, look at the cane balancing on his forehead and on which a large plate is spun. At the same time, he has to juggle three or four balls.

Dexterity in the management of divided attention, like athletic and acrobatic mastery, is an implicit requirement for the present-day actor; all these are only a preliminary level of the stage action. The actor, ideally an “athlete of the heart” (as Antonin Artaud said), must push things further. At the actor, we speak about *creative attention* (Stanislavski).

## 3. CREATIVE ATTENTION

What is “creative attention”? What is it made of?

The actor’s pedagogy acts paradoxically. It suggests concrete physical methods and techniques for a profession where the “leap in the void, blindfolded”<sup>3</sup> is constant and mandatory.

The images by which theatre prophets describe the actor’s creation, the performance, are not soothing: pyre, voyage, leap into the Unknown, labyrinth, tightrope walking above a precipice, blindfolded leap in the void, hunting a ubiquitous monster, the taming of a beast etc. All these relate to extreme situations. In an extreme situation, attention has a crucial role, most of the times. Reaction speed and efficiency can make a difference between life and death. Brain processes, required in such a context and known as bottom-up processing, ensure rapidity, intuition, impulsiveness.<sup>4</sup> We know that the development of attentional mechanisms occurred through decisions that targeted solutions to extreme situations – mainly, survival. Thus, the brain has evolved for millions of years. Nowadays, cognitive psychology confirms the existence of two semi-independent mental systems, of different ages, operating modes and tasks, but nonetheless complementary. Daniel Goleman calls them “the two minds”: the one that feels, *the emotional mind*, and

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<sup>3</sup> Mihai Măniuțiu, *Despre mască și iluzie*, Bucharest, Editura Humanitas, 2007, p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Daniel Goleman, *Focus. Motivația ascunsă a performanței*, transl. by Iustina Cojocaru and Bogdan Georgescu, Curtea Veche Publishing, Bucharest, 2013, p. 35.

the one that thinks, *the rational mind* (at the neocortex). The rational brain, it is said, appeared long after the so-called emotional brain.<sup>5</sup> We recall Stanislavski's words "...in art we cannot work with a cold heart. We require some degree of inner ardor and affective attention."<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the future actors must know and develop **affective attention**.

On the contrary, top-down mind is voluntary, in charge of analysis/self-analysis, planning and it is the heart of self-control, which, at times, can quiet down emotionally led impulses.<sup>7</sup> Reflexive attention, will power and deliberate choice are top-down; spontaneous attention, impulse and routine are bottom-up. Assimilating a technique, a text or the character, requires from the actor to have an *active attention*, at the expense of an energy use, many times pushed to exhaustion.

But, as shown by Goleman, the more you rehearse a new routine, the more it becomes mechanical practice and it is assimilated in the bottom-up brain circuits; in other words, it is automatized. **Repetition** is the activity that occupies most of the actor's time throughout his professional activity. Naturally, repetition is one of the most important pedagogic instruments in acting, of course adjusted to several purposes. There are some almost ritual rehearsals, in each class, repetitions of procedures such as "Threshold Crossing" or the "Physical Warm Up" and "Creative Warm Up", exercises that contribute to the learning and the automation of a series of expressive behaviors (self-learning mechanism). On the other hand, in an the exercise platform like "Move to Form – Repeat (Body Memory)", the purpose of the countless repetition of a movement is to refine the form, to remodel it, to reach a satisfactory result. Other exercises introduce the idea of "inner repetition" of the movement, in conditions of external stillness, an occasion to engage the "radiation and the transmission of energy" (Michael Chekhov), the Presence.

All the elementary, even the plainest actions we perform change when we are on stage, in front of an audience. This is why, on stage, you have to learn to walk once again, to move, to stand, to sit, (...) to be.<sup>8</sup> To be able to put aside the spectator (who supervises him, and thus could paralyze him), the actor should be captivated by what occurs on the stage. The actor needs an object for his attention. According to Stanislavski, **the small circle of attention** acts like a shield for the

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<sup>5</sup> Daniel Goleman, *Inteligența emoțională*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, transl. by Irina-Margareta Nistor, Curtea Veche Publishing, Bucharest, 2008, p. 37.

<sup>6</sup> Konstantin Sergheevici Stanislavski, *Munca actorului cu sine însuși*, vol. 1, transl. from Russian by Raluca Rădulescu, preface by Yuri Kordonski, Editura Nemira, Bucharest, 2013, p. 221.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel Goleman, *Focus. Motivația ascunsă a performanței*, p. 36.

<sup>8</sup> K.S. Stanislavski, *id.*, p.183.

actor, which could save him anytime he feels he disperses.<sup>9</sup>

*The outward* orientation of the attention is essential, according to Declan Donnellan, one of the most interesting theatrical scholars of our days. Inspired by Stanislavski, but going a lot farther, Donnellan structures a whole theory on the notion of **Target**. He warns the actor: “You never know what you do until you know on what/whom you exert that action. For the actor, any act must be conducted toward something/someone.” (The connection with the Stanislavski’s famous method of the physical actions<sup>10</sup> is obvious) Donnellan adds: “I CANNOT act only verbs, each verb must have a target (i.e. a direct or indirect object, a specific thing, seen or felt and, to some degree, necessary)” Examples: I warn *Rome*; I deceive *lady Capulet*; I open *the window*; I remember *my family* etc. You yourself can be the target: I reassure *myself*...”<sup>11</sup> Donnellan also says: “The actor cannot act ‘I am dying’ because there is no target. What can be acted is: I embrace death; I fight death; I mock death. I fight for my own life”.

We do not forget that the eye of the actor who looks and sees draws attention on it from the spectator and thus also draws his attention to the correct object of the gaze. The famous man of theatre and of letters Dario Fo, winner of the Nobel prize of literature (1997), assumes each spectator’s head includes a remote camera. The actor has to know to guide it, sending it the correct impulses, so that the spectator should change the ‘lenses’ and the ‘shooting’ angles. This complicated montage conducted in the spectator’s mind makes the stage action more precise, more alive and more interesting.<sup>12</sup>

The cognitive psychology expert Mielu Zlate offers a suggestive example that can describe the process by which an actor identifies the theatrical potential of a situation. Zlate refers to the hypothetical situation of the captain of a drifting ship, at night, on the sea.

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<sup>9</sup> “...in the small circle it’s easy ... to examine the smallest details of the objects within its circumference, live with the most intimate feelings and desires, carry out the most complicated actions, solve the most difficult problems, and analyze one’s feelings and thoughts, to establish close communication with another person, confide to him one’s most intimate thoughts, recall the past and dream of the future” (K.S. Stanislavski, *id.*, p.193).

<sup>10</sup> *The method of physical actions*, considered by many as K.S. Stanislavski’s most important contribution, focuses on the creation of the role based on the principle: through conscious technique toward the character’s subconscious. Based on a thorough analysis of the play and of the characters, we establish the “Main Theme” (end purpose described in the continuation of “I want to...”) and the “cross-action” (read thread of the action). The character’s intents, actions and replies are condensed and translated in physical actions, action verbs. (see K.S. Stanislavski, *Munca actorului*, chapter V, p. 552 et seq.).

<sup>11</sup> Declan Donnellan, *Actorul și Ținta. Reguli și instrumente pentru jocul teatral*, in Romanian by Saviana Stănescu and Ioana Ieronim, Editura Unitext, Bucharest, 2006, p. 27, 28.

<sup>12</sup> Eugenio Barba, *O canoe de hârtie. Tratat de antropologie teatrală*, p.188.

It's one thing that the captain simply sees the North Star and it's a completely different one to see it as being the North Star.<sup>13</sup> The two ways of "seeing" the star have different psychological and behavioral consequences. One of these, the one involved by the representation, is definitely superior to the other, because it is additional information input, useful in the process of knowledge. Likewise, the actor's observation is not dis-engaged; it is not a mere data record; instead, it is active perception that builds relationships, overlaps images, finds significations.<sup>14</sup>

The observation also relates to the processes of the imagination. If we accept the definition of psychologist Paul Popescu-Neveanu, according to whom, in the approach of imagination, "its combinational and transformative dynamism that leads to the appearance of new images" is primary, then we understand why observation is, at the actor, a way to arm his "stock" of images, source of subsequent stage inventions.

The complex relationship between the actor's attention and the spectator's leads to a very interesting study by Kieron P. O'Connor and Frederick Aardema<sup>15</sup> on the creation of a *possibilistic model of consciousness*. O'Connor and Aardema evoke the new approaches of the "active perception theory". These theories relate the sense of reality to the feeling of identity. The loss of one challenges the other. Active perception theory claims that the process involved in the imaginaries are the same with the perceptive ones; this allows us to see things either as they are or as they could be, depending on the analysis/interpretation of their features. An equivalence between the mental image and the visual perception relies on the hypothesis that both of them use the same psychological and physiological apparatus. Viola Spolin, one of the most prolific creators of games for actors' training, has a message that reverberates in her four hundred pages training method: "Train actors to handle theatrical reality not illusion."<sup>16</sup> Reality is defined by general consensus rather than by objective criteria, say O'Connor and Aardema. One way to understand how the sense of reality emerges and how tightly linked it is to the sense of identity is to

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<sup>13</sup> Mielu Zlate, *Psihologia mecanismelor cognitive*, Iași, Editura Polirom, 1999, p. 185.

<sup>14</sup> Max Reinhardt, the famous Austrian stage director, when he spoke about the world that stimulates his imagination, wrote "...I am surrounded by images. Imagine that, on the street, you are in a studio and the passers-by are characters in a play or in a film, they are not there by chance, they have purposes, intentions. What do they tell you?" As per the laws of memory, your capacity to recollect an image depends on how well you perceived it. Artistic sensitivity is educated through attention to detail and to specific things. By analyzing mnemonic systems, cognitive psychology draws surprising conclusions: "forgotten" information is not practically erased from the memory, it is merely "under-activated".

<sup>15</sup> Kieron P. O'Connor, Frederick Aardema, *The imagination: Cognitive, pre-cognitive and meta-cognitive aspects*, in *Consciousness and Cognition* no.14 (2005).

<sup>16</sup> Viola Spolin, *Improvisation for the Theater*, 3rd Ed., Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1999, p. 42.

see what happens when they are absent. The cases of those who, because of accidents, traumas, disorders etc. lost their sense of reality are described by a psychological condition called *derealization* or *depersonalization*. Therefore, O'Connor and Aardema conclude that the triggers of derealization are: "discontinuities in normal experience, a trauma, an accident or a sudden change in arousal or even perceptual incoherencies in the world (seeing something out of place) or dysfunctional self-awareness". Could theatre, as event-situation, contain all the aforementioned elements? The performance is an "extra-ordinary" space and time, within which "unordinary", even paradoxical images may appear, which could generate "sudden changes in arousal". Sometime, theatre can generate reception phenomena similar to *derealization*, thus become a condition for the institution of theatrical reality.

One of the most efficient ways of overcoming *derealization*, show the two aforementioned researchers, is to engage, to get involved in the reality, to hang onto anything that emerges on its territory. The solution is expressed imperatively: stop looking into your chasms, get your attention outside. Thus, behaving "as if" you were immersed in the reality counteracts the "as if" you were far from it. To persuade the spectator that the events on the stage are more real than life itself is one of the most challenging stakes for the actors.

#### 4. APPLICATIONS IN THE ACTOR'S TRAINING

Back to our topic, the resulting question concerns the way in which the student-actor can obtain *creative attention*.

Most of the actor's training methods favor attentional training. In fact, all of the games and exercises for actors include an attentional component, which adds to the awareness of the two fundamental categories of attention, the spontaneous ("bottom-up") attention and the voluntary ("top-down") one, cognitively speaking. Exercise of "sense update", of development of divided attention, of increase in the ability to observe, expressive techniques of directing the spectator's attention target the unveiling of one's own routines/automatisms and their "reformatting" toward a "stage ethos", a "double profile of the actor's energy".<sup>17</sup> In stage practice, ethos means the mastering of a psychological-physical technique, the adoption of work ethics, of specific mentality.

The practice of "creative imbalance" also relies on attention, more precisely on the alertness of senses put to use. In the actor's training, *creative imbalance* relates to a conditions required for the stimulation of creativity. The actors are often

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<sup>17</sup> Eugenio Barba, *O canoe de hârtie. Tratat de antropologie teatrală*, Editura Unitext, Bucharest, 2003, p. 100.

given tasks that are listed in such a way that, by inducing uncertainty, expectation, (obviously controlled) danger, they could generate an activation of all the attentional and creative resources. One of the training purposes is to educate, at the student, the ability to restrict temporarily the action of their own defense mechanisms (inner cause of hindrances) and to understand that the “Leap into the Unknown” is a condition to the manifestation of creativity. According to Stephen Nachmanovitch, David Zinder and others, creativity emerges only in times of imbalance. This can be obtained by avoiding the personal *comfort zone*. Viola Spolin encourages the teacher: “Always throw them off-balance”. Most of the improv themes include the risk component (“Danger Works”), and some exercises target it directly. For example, the cycle of cane exercises or “Who/What is on the other side?” exercise etc.; acting teachers always encourage their students: “Get out of your comfort zone!” or “Take a risk!”

*(at this point of the speech, two students are prompted to perform the “Mirror” exercise)*

## 5. ACTOR AS OBSERVER

Director Robert Cohen, professor at the University of California, Irvine, in one of the most captivating books on the actor’s training, *Acting Power*, believes that, although less ostentatious than the exchange of replies or the stage movement, the observation is “one of the most powerful stage actions that can be acted.” Cohen exemplifies his assertion through a simple exercised called “The Fisherman”<sup>18</sup>. The American teacher says that many of the problems and hindrances that appear in the acting of an episode will be overcome if the teacher/director suggest a shift of perspective to the actor/student, namely to image they act or say their reply as if they tried to “fish” something, not if as if they “stated” something. This subtle reversal of perspectives will make the actor, says Cohen, concentrate on the always present intentions rather than on motivations (past oriented) or on attitude.

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<sup>18</sup> “The role of a fisherman is a good exercise to test an actor’s ability to observe, because fishing is a subtle example of *feedback*. When asked to play a fisherman, any actor who knows something about fishing, will know how to put an imaginary hook on an imaginary line, cast the line into an imaginary river. In this exercise, what distinguishes the good actor is that, additionally, he will wait for the fish to bite! He will feel the imaginary tug of the line and will wait for its movements depending on the information received in the initiated situation. They now *want* to catch the fish! He will play an intention (to catch the fish) rather than a mere demonstration of fishing techniques. In his case, the situation is lived, not merely shown.” (Robert Cohen, *Puterea interpretării scenice. Introducere în arta actorului*, transl. by Eugen Wohl and Anca Măniuțiu, Cluj, Editura Casa Cărții de Știință, 2007, p. 82).



The fundamental notion on which Cohen's research relies is *feedback*. When two people talk to each other, a simple *feedback loop* is activated; through it, both of the participants are engaged in the sending and the reception of information. Such pieces of information make them adjust their behavior for the fulfilment of their own intentions and, sometimes, even change their intentions. The actor who approaches his character's situation approaches, therefore, his *feedback loop*. The actor who "lives his character's life", as said by Stanislavski, undertakes the character's interactions. (At the same time, the actor is caught in the *feedback loop* with his instrument).

The attitude of Cohen's "fisherman" does not differ from the "hunted hunter". The expression relates to an exercise in the method of David Zinder, direction and acting teacher at the Tel Aviv University. In the first part of the exercise, devised by Zinder, the actors are hunters. Their task is to find the "prey", get ready to attack and even perform the attack leap. In order to provide the participants greater freedom of imagination, the teacher does not describe or name the prey, naming it "something" or the "creature".

Among the many gains of this exercise, one is essential, namely reaching and practicing the *Zero Point*. The *Zero Point* relates to the "sats" used by Eugenio Barba, meaning "impulse" or "readiness"<sup>19</sup>. Meyerhold's work terminology includes a similar notion, "otkaz" (literally meaning "rejection"). At Viola Spolin and then at David Zinder, we find the multivalent phrase No Motion. This means what the actor can keep in a state of underactivation and potentiality shadowed someplace, ready to become active energy.<sup>20</sup> The *Zero Point* is characterized by dynamic stillness, a state of supreme vigilance: the body and the mind are ready for anything – the "body-mind unit" works optimally. That is when the actor is present. Paradoxically, this state of alertness is not total tension, but in accordance with the contrast law described by Yoshi Oida: "Ideally, the interior and the exterior should be contradictory. Look at a spinning top: when it wobbles about all over the place, it is spinning slowly. It is ready to fall over. When it is upright and fixed on a single spot, it is spinning extremely fast. On stage, your body is the same: when you are required to be calm or immobile, there is a huge inner dynamic. The reverse is also true. When you undertake strong or violent physical actions, you must retain a core of tranquility... This is a paradox..."

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<sup>19</sup> "In the language of our work it indicates, among other things, the moment in which one is ready to act, the instant which precedes the action, when all the energy is already there, ready to intervene, but as if suspended, still held in the fist, a tiger-butterfly about to take flight." (in Eugenio Barba, *O canoe de hârtie*, p. 72).

<sup>20</sup> David Zinder, *Body Voice Imagination: A Training for the Actor*, Second Edition, Routledge, New York, 2009, p.198.

Actors need to experience this duality. When you discover physical stillness, it is not total stillness; there is also an inner dynamism. When you discover physical dynamism, you must balance it with inner calm.”<sup>21</sup>

The actor’s self-observation, simultaneous with the conducted action (obviously, a metacognitive skill) is essential to the dynamics of an improvisational moment. The actor’s presence means a complex of actions, a blend of attitudes: withdrawal, standby, non-focused attention (“soft focus of awareness”), “intent listening”, peak energy intensity, a slowing down “at the inside”. This type of attentional attitude is one of the most complex aspects of the actor’s training.

## 6. ACTING IN SOFT FOCUS

Therefore, *creative attention* embraces several “categories” of attention, we could count, for example, under the *attentional technique* specific to the acting profession, which involves: the circles of attention, affective attention, divided attention, observation and so on and so forth. But these are not enough when we try to describe the quality of the actor’s attention during the improvisation. The moment of creation is a solitary moment of stability between structure and spontaneity, between discipline/technique and freedom. Experience tells me there is a connecting state among all the aforementioned types of attention: the *soft focus*.

Last year I was invited to conduct an acting workshop for people suffering from sight deficiency. I had worked with hearing deficient people, but I had never worked with blind people. When I started my preparations, I could see immediately the challenge of the task ahead. The series of techniques and exercises I had thought of initially was inapplicable in the given situation. I understood, however, that perhaps if I stopped looking at those with whom I was to work as if they were people deprived of an essential type of sensitivity and if I accepted that they hold, by compensation, increased modalities of perception, I would find the working solutions. By searching through the “treasure of activities” any acting teacher gathers, like a tireless squirrel, throughout his life, I was surprised to find that many training exercises and techniques include the recommendation to work with eyes closed (e.g., at Augusto Boal). Obviously, this indication targeted, by the deliberate closing of some channels, an openness to a greater, more inclusive type of attention.

Then I was able to recall a larger number of aspects in my own experience as an actor. For instance, I remembered that, when we worked with Ferruccio Soleri, one of the best known interpreters of Arlecchino’s masks, we felt “intimidated” by the

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<sup>21</sup> Yoshi, Oida, Marshall, Lorna, *Actorul invizibil*, transl. by Maia Teszler, Oradea, Editura ArtSpect, 2009, p. 17.

requirement of self-monitoring our body expression while wearing the mask. The famous and superb leather masks were unfortunately adjusted for only one face (as to the holes made for the eyes) and did not match another actor; practically, we were working blindfolded. Instead, we had to know/see, anytime, how our body looked from the outside, what it communicated, what his relationship was with the space and with the partners. The venerable Italian actor was having loads of fun when he saw how we struggled to “steal” with our eyes, through tiny holes, to adjust our posture or our position in space. Soleri would speak incessantly about the actor’s need to develop his “inner eye”.

I found the same work conditions later, when I worked with Izumi Ashizawa, an actress trained in traditional Japanese theatre and initiator of the Neo Noh trend<sup>22</sup>. This time, the Noh theatre mask was the occasion of an even more frustrating experience. Made from burnt porcelain, small, heavy, the mask had two tiny holes, instead of eyes, which allowed very little visibility. Therefore, in fact, the challenging Noh training took place often with our eyes closed. When open eyes were allowed, Izumi would ask the actors to “kill the look”. Of course, this opposed anything I knew about the actor’s look, deemed one of the most powerful means of expression in the European theatre.

Indications such as “kill the look”, “close your eyes and see yourself from the outside”, “try to develop a *third eye*” (as my acting teacher, actress and exceptional researcher Miriam Cuibus, would ask) or the notion of *soft focus*, which I found later, made me ask myself whether the actor’s technical attention is enough to this art and whether *attention to attention*, a degree of meta-attention, could be indispensable. At the same time, contrary to the general trend of opinion, could this self-observation increase the actor’s “presence” rather than damage it?

To understand *soft focus*, we need to read Declan Donnellan’s opinions on “the difficult choices” the actor has to contemplate: the idea of attention, as attitude superior to concentration. According to Donnellan, concentration invariably destroys attention. We cannot pay attention to something and concentrate on it at the same time. Attention means Target. If you concentrate intensely on another object or on another person, you will see them less and less, because you will see *how you want to see*. You need to “see” things as they are, to pay attention to them. The British director concludes that concentration removes virtual possibilities; therefore, we should prefer attention, because it leaves room for “anything” to appear, which stimulates creativity.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> The movement suggests the approach of classic European dramaturgy tragedies by means of expression specific to traditional Japanese theatre.

<sup>23</sup> In cognitive psychology, the removal of related possibilities is called “lateral inhibition”.

Basically, the notion of *soft focus*, read as technique involved in the actor's work, appears in David Zinder's method and also in *The Viewpoints Book* by Anne Bogart and Tina Landau<sup>24</sup>. Mainly, this is a technique of relaxation of the look, through which the field of view increases more than 180°; thus, the peripheral view becomes as efficient as the frontal view<sup>25</sup>. Once this technique is learnt by the body, we can later use it to understand the notion and to practice a "soft focus of the mind", meaning a paradoxical state that joins vigilance and mind relaxation required for the spontaneous manifestation of imagination. Therefore, *soft focus*, a middle state between perception and imaginary, is one of the modalities by which the actor exceed *derealization* and also subordinates it to his creative purposes.

*Soft focus* is the *look from outside* of the Buddhist Vedas, from where Grotowski, too, borrows the text "we are two. The bird who picks and the bird who looks one. The one will die, the one will live"<sup>26</sup>. Viola Spolin's system and the Viewpoints theories mention constantly the terms *Awareness* and *Evaluation*; Yoshi Oida talks about "fluid awareness".

These metaphors borrowed from the poetics of the actor's art relate to metacognitive knowledge, experience and monitoring. Cognitive monitoring is the capacity to do and to monitor at the same time an action, without hindering pulses of creativity. Theatrical exercises, games and activities help the participants acquire and use their metacognitive knowledge in a dramatic action; in other words, in the middle of an event, they allow the actor to select, to evaluate, to rectify and to drop, if necessary, dramatic tasks, purposes and strategies, depending on the relationship with his partners and with the energy of the performance. In spots, in team games, (it is said) sometimes some players have an exceptional ability to overview the execution and the dynamics of the game. What happens suggests an osmosis phenomenon, a fusion between the subject and his activity.

In *Free Play*, one of the most important books on improvisation, Stephen Nachmanovitch states: "For art to appear, we have to *disappear*."<sup>27</sup> Obviously, this does not mean the author's disappearance; it means the moment of creation

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<sup>24</sup> Anne Bogart, Tina Landau, *The Viewpoints Book: A Practical Guide to Viewpoints and Composition*. Theatre Communication Group, Inc. New York, 2006, pag 31.

<sup>25</sup> The "soft focus" related phenomenon was also emphasized by a series of experiments conducted by psychologists Moran and Desimore, who, in 1985, showed how by switching focus when sight is immobile, we can also process stimuli different from those present in the foveal zone, the most sensitive retinal zone.

<sup>26</sup> The text is also mentioned in C.G. Jung, relating to the psychological category of the double.

<sup>27</sup> Nachmanovitch, Stephen, *Free Play: Improvisation in Life and Art*, New York, Penguin-Tarcher, 1990. p. 51.

itself. Creative flow is compared by Nachmanovitch with our state when the senses are fully engaged in an event, such as a beam of light suddenly reflected by the soaking ground or a guitar chord heard at a window etc. In such a moment, says Nachmanovitch, the mind and the senses are briefly suppressed by experience. All the surrounding elements disappear, the self and the environment fuse. Attention and intention merge. We can see things *as they are* and yet we are able to lead them in the direction designed by us. In such moments, *we become what we do*, concludes Nachmanovitch<sup>28</sup>. The name given to this state of grace by sportsmen is “to be in the Zone”, to live a “flow”, would say Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi.

In theatre, these special moments, when “the bird of inspiration rests on the actor’s shoulder”, as described by Ariane Mnouchkine, become even more spectacular when the teacher/director intervenes in the actor’s act, without the latter’s interruption. There are two procedures of intervention/ “hot” guidance of the actor; they differ in their levels of proximity. **Sidecoaching** occurs through indications, impulses, loud observations made from a distance by the director and heard by the other actors. **Shadowing** involves the teacher’s/director’s presence on the stage; he flanks the actor while the latter executes his stage actions; the intervention takes place via a flow of whispered indications, at the pace and matching the tension of the developing dramatic event. Here, the teacher / director himself undergoes a transformation, because he has to place himself at the same level of energy, if not even higher, to be able to guide the act.<sup>29</sup>

The actor’s internalization of the director’s/coach’s voice, with no break in the creative flow, is not a mere effect of divided attention; instead, it is one of the most eloquent examples of the Encounter (the Meeting) that theater is. Against the laws of physics, we could say that, in those moments, the actor is simply present in several places at the same time: in the character’s world, where he can see the “Target”; on the stage, where he can feel the unfolding of the energy in the performance and in the acting partners and where he can even anticipate the flow of events; at the same time, he is in the “small circle of attention” and, finally, in contact with the audience’s “temperature”, he is circumscribed by the latter’s feedback loop.

Which is the ontological stand of the actor who reaches, during acting, the state of *soft focus*? Are actors different from non-actors, from those who watch them from the audience? Do they leave in a dream world? Or, on the contrary, are they more soundly anchored in the Present, in the Reality? I tend to agree

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<sup>28</sup> *Id.*

<sup>29</sup> Director Tadeusz Kantor established this method at the performance level.

with Natalie Depraz who sheds light on the direct relationship between the quality of our attention and the level of humanity.<sup>30</sup> The inspired actor is closer to his human essence.

The current opinion is that actors are privileged because they are given the chance to “escape” the prosaic daily existence. The actor’s work opposes this preconception. Actors do not want to escape reality; on the contrary, by reconstructing it, they are able to grasp it more acutely. They pay more attention to the Present and help the spectators do the same. The actor does not “put on an act” and does not dream when he speaks to us from his pyre, he is real.

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<sup>30</sup> “Dimension intime de notre humanité, l’attention n’a cessé d’être cultivée à l’aide de « techniques » variées destinées à l’attirer, à la maintenir ou, à rebours, à la relâcher, comme si nous sentions confusément que notre humanité en dépendait.” (Natalie Depraz, *Attention et vigilance. A la croisée de la phénoménologie et des sciences cognitives*, Presses Universitaires de France, Coll. « Epiméthée » 2013, p. 3).

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## LE FUTUR EST DANS LE PASSÉ : LA CONCEPTION ORIGINALE DU TEMPS AFRICAIN SELON JOHN MBITI

BAUVARIE MOUNGA \*

**ABSTRACT.** The Kenyan philosopher John Mbiti highlights an original concept of time through his works: *Religions et philosophie africaines* (1969) and *L'Eschatologie du Nouveau Testament en contexte africain : une étude de la rencontre de la théologie du Nouveau Testament et des concepts traditionnels africains* (1971). Indeed, he uses the concepts of Western philosophy to share with us the African apprehension of time. This paper assumes that the future is in the past in African societies. So it is for us to help in the understanding of this statement and see to what extent the thought of Mbiti can evolve work on philosophy and particularly African philosophy. In this perspective, our paper will be structured in four parts: the specificities of the African, the analysis of the three time dimensions, the criticism vis-à-vis the Mbiti's study and attempts of improvement and reformulation thought the Kenyan philosopher.

**Keywords:** *time; Africa; Mbiti, John; eschatology; New Testament.*

### INTRODUCTION

Toujours présent au quotidien, le temps est naturellement un concept clef de la vie humaine. Il nous permet de réaliser nos objectifs, mais il nous manque parfois ou nous assaille, bref on comprend qu'il est important de s'y intéresser. C'est à cette tâche que s'est adonné le philosophe kenyan John Mbiti notamment à travers ses œuvres : *Religions et philosophie africaines* (1969)<sup>1</sup> et *L'Eschatologie du Nouveau Testament en contexte africain : une étude de la rencontre de la théologie du Nouveau Testament et des concepts traditionnels africains* (1971). Mbiti a surtout mis un accent sur l'appréhension africaine du temps. Aussi soutient-il (1990 : 14) que ses analyses ont pour but de fournir *la clef pour parvenir à une compréhension des religions africaines et de la philosophie africaine*. C'est ainsi qu'il met en exergue une réinscription originale du temps africain. Les analyses faites par Mbiti, on s'en doute, ont suscité beaucoup de réactions dans le monde philosophique et même au-delà. Les intérêts majeurs d'une telle

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<sup>1</sup> Cet ouvrage a été réédité plusieurs fois et nous avons utilisé plusieurs éditions dans cet article. Kwasi Wiredu (1991 : 90) affirme que c'est un ouvrage qui est considéré à certains endroits comme un classique la philosophie africaine.



étude sont qu'elle a permis la déconstruction de certaines interprétations occidentales du Nouveau Testament. L'étude de Mbiti apporte également une contribution franche au développement de l'Afrique. A cet effet, Monu Uwodi (2003 : 26) déclare : *Pour notre part, nous sommes convaincus que la notion du temps de l'Afrique traditionnelle, telle que Mbiti l'a décrite, aide à comprendre la situation socio-politique de l'Afrique actuelle. Elle nous aide à voir clairement pourquoi ce refuge dans le passé.* L'étude de Mbiti peut donc aider l'Afrique à sortir de la situation présente qui est confuse. Le présent article part de l'hypothèse que le futur est dans le passé dans les sociétés africaines. Un tel raisonnement cependant entraîne tout de suite les interrogations suivantes : quelles sont les caractéristiques du temps africain ? Comment ce temps est-il appréhendé en Afrique traditionnelle ? Pourquoi Mbiti déclare-t-il qu'il n'y a pas de futur ? Cette conception est-elle sensée ? Quelles sont les reproches formulés à l'égard de cette pensée ? Peut-on reformuler autrement la pensée de Mbiti ? Autant de questions auxquelles nous essayerons d'apporter des réponses tout au long de notre article en nous intéressant tour à tour aux spécificités du temps africain, à l'analyse des trois dimensions temporelles, aux critiques émises vis-à-vis de l'étude de Mbiti et aux tentatives d'amélioration et de reformulation de la pensée du philosophe kenyan.

## I. LES CARACTÉRISTIQUES DU TEMPS AFRICAIN

Le temps africain, selon Mbiti, se caractérise essentiellement par le fait qu'il est expérimenté, cyclique et collectif.

### I.1. UN TEMPS VÉCU

Le temps africain n'est pas abstrait, mathématique ; il est lié aux événements, il est une expérience subjective. C'est un événement qui donne de l'importance au temps, sinon ce dernier demeure une entité indifférente, incolore. Dans cette lancée, on ne peut pas parler de temps perdu, gaspillé comme en Occident où le temps est mécanique. A en croire Mbiti, il n'y a pas de marqueurs de rythme, et donc rien à gaspiller ou épargner. Mbiti (1969 : 17) explique que *le temps est simplement un ensemble d'événements qui se sont produits, qui sont en train de se produire ou qui doivent immédiatement se produire.* Le philosophe kenyan prend ainsi l'exemple du taxi-brousse, du bus ou du car qui ne partira pas à une heure de la journée précise et non négociable, mais quand il sera plein, quand il aura à son bord suffisamment de passagers pour rentabiliser le coût du voyage. De même, une réunion ne débutera vraiment que quand les gens seront là, mais pas avant. C'est l'arrivée des personnes attendues qui déclenchera le début de la réunion et non un moment lié à un repère temporel. On le constate, le temps est *estampillé*<sup>2</sup> par l'événement.

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<sup>2</sup> Kagamé, Alexis, « Aperception empirique du temps et conception de l'histoire dans la pensée bantoue », in, *Les Cultures et le temps*, Presses de l'UNESCO, Paris, Payot, 1975, pp.103-133, p.115.

Mbiti révèle que dans les sociétés traditionnelles africaines, les heures, les jours, les mois sont indiqués par des événements précis. De ce fait, il prend l'exemple d'un peuple ougandais nommé Nkore pour qui, 16 heures se traduit par *akasheshe*, c'est-à-dire l'heure à laquelle on traite des vaches ; 13 heures renvoie à *baaza aha maziba* c'est-à-dire l'heure à laquelle l'eau est tirée du puits. Tous ces événements ne se produisent pas nécessairement à la même heure, ils ne sont que des indications.

On retrouve ce même principe avec les mois, ils sont dénommés en référence à des phénomènes naturels, c'est le cas du peuple Latuka au Soudan. Mbiti (1969 : 21) déclare que le mois de février est appelé *laissez les creuser*, renvoyant ainsi au fait que c'est le temps de se préparer à planter puisque la saison pluvieuse arrive. Juin est connu sous le nom de *sale bouche* parce que c'est le temps où la récolte, notamment celle du maïs bat son plein. Et tout naturellement, la bouche des enfants est sale à force de manger à longueur de journée. Juillet est appelé *herbes sèches* représentant la fin des pluies et le commencement du durcissement de la terre qui entraîne le flétrissement des herbes. Août, quant à lui, est connu sous le nom de *graines sucrées* puisque c'est la récolte et on mange des graines sucrées. Le mois d'Octobre est *le soleil* puisque le soleil justement est très chaud à ce moment. Décembre est appelé *donne de l'eau à ton oncle* dans la mesure où durant cette période, l'eau se fait rare et les gens ont rapidement soif. Les différents mois renvoient à des événements connus et vécus qui rythment le long de l'année. Dans le même ordre d'idées, Ekeke (2011 : 15) souligne qu'en Afrique traditionnelle, l'identification d'un mois est *basée sur des événements ou des phénomènes naturels et non sur une durée mathématique*. C'est pourquoi le mois en Afrique pourrait durer jusqu'à 25 à 35 jours en fonction de l'événement qui indique le mois. Manga Bekombo<sup>3</sup> reprend cette idée, en insistant sur le fait que le temps en Afrique renferme la dimension du vécu, ce dernier pris dans le sens de l'appréhension subjective et de l'observation participante. Dans les sociétés traditionnelles, insiste-t-il, le temps est incommensurable et appréhendé par des repères naturels, mais sans faire l'objet d'aucune mesure. Ce qui compte c'est la réalisation de l'événement qui ne correspond pas forcément de façon identique au mois tel que conçu en Occident. Puisque le temps en Afrique n'est pas très exact, cela entraîne parfois le fait que beaucoup de personnes ne connaissent pas la date véritable de leur date de naissance, car leurs parents ont pris appui sur des événements naturels ou sur la saison agricole. Ainsi, de nos jours, dans des coins reculés de l'Afrique ou chez des personnes d'un certain âge, l'acte de naissance affiche très souvent la mention *né vers* dans la mesure où personne n'est sûr de la date exacte de celui à qui appartient l'acte. On retrouve cet état de chose chez plusieurs présidents africains, vu qu'ils ont un certain âge. C'est le

<sup>3</sup> Manga Bekombo, « Vieillesse, culture et société en Afrique », in, *Vieillir en Afrique*, Paris, P.U.F., 1994, PP.113-128.

cas par exemple du président ougandais Yuweri Museveni qui déclare que sa naissance était associée à deux événements : une campagne de vaccination contre la peste bovine et la mort d'un roi.<sup>4</sup>

En outre en Afrique traditionnelle, la vie de l'homme est marquée par des événements importants tels que la naissance, la puberté, les rites traditionnels, le mariage, l'achat d'une parcelle de terre. Un homme n'est pas considéré comme un être humain véritable tant qu'il n'a pas traversé tous ces événements. C'est parce que, comme le note Ekeke (2011 : 15), *la vie d'un Africain est remplie d'événements. Ces processus initiatiques sont ce qui révèle son âge et par extension son temps sur cette terre. Voilà donc les événements cruciaux qu'un Africain se doit de remplir pour que sa vie ait un sens.*

On l'aura compris, le temps africain tel que décrit par John Mbiti est appris subjectivement et ne peut pas être mesuré et manipulé comme le temps objectif de l'Occident. Il se démarque également par le fait qu'il est répétitif.

## **1.2. UN TEMPS CYCLIQUE**

Le temps africain n'est pas linéaire, il est formé par l'expérience du rythme du jour, des saisons. Le temps est répété dans des cycles avec un rythme sans fin. Mbiti (1969 : 21) précise, à cet effet, qu'

en dehors de l'estimation de l'année, le concept du temps africain est silencieux et indifférent. Les gens espèrent que les années viennent et vont dans un rythme sans fin comme le jour et la nuit et comme le réveil et le coucher de la lune. Ils attendent les événements de la saison pluvieuse, le fait de planter, la récolte, la saison sèche, la saison pluvieuse encore, le fait de planter encore et ainsi de suite pour toujours.

Ainsi, on a l'impression qu'il y a un ordre continu qui gouverne l'univers. Ekeopara (2005 : 63) approuve Mbiti en indiquant que *les saisons de l'année se répètent dans un cycle éternel*. La saison agricole commence avec la saison pluvieuse et s'achève avec la saison sèche. L'attitude à l'égard de cette réalité n'est pas de la contrôler, mais de s'y soumettre. Il n'est pas question d'arrêter quoi que ce soit, mais juste de se préparer à une répétition sempiternelle. Dans une telle conception, le temps n'est pas limité, il est plutôt une ressource abondante dans la mesure où lorsque quelque chose ne se produit pas, il n'y a juste rien à faire, surtout si les autres membres de la communauté en font autant.

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<sup>4</sup> Museveni, Y., *Sowing the mustard seed. The struggle for freedom and democracy in Uganda*, Londres/Basington, Macmillan, 1997, p.1.

### **I.3. UN TEMPS COLLECTIF**

Dans les sociétés africaines, le temps est lié à des événements certes, mais il faut préciser à des événements importants pour l'individu et la société. Cette dernière représente une communion et non une disposition d'individus. Le temps a donc une importance quand il est vécu par toute une communauté et non par un individu. C'est sans doute pourquoi Mbiti (1990 : 106) déclare que *je suis parce que nous sommes, et puisque nous sommes, je suis*. Dans la même lancée que le philosophe kenyan, Masolo (1994 : 59) explique :

ceci est peut-être la différence clef entre quelques aspects de la pensée africaine et de la métaphysique scholastique. Tandis que l'idée scholastique de la substantialité de l'étant (« in se, non alio ») est fondée sur une conception statique de cet étant, quelques exemples de pensée africaine mettent l'accent sur quelque chose d'autre que ce « se-isme » de l'étant. En effet, ils se concentrent sur l'être [au sens actif : "be-ing"] de l'existence, sur le mode ou la nature de cet « être » ["to be"] des étants, sur leur catégorie communautaire comme des choses qui existent « ensemble » et, dès lors, manifestent d'autres aspects de ce rapport outre leurs « se-ismes » individuels.

En Afrique, les individus vivent donc en communion et la conception du temps obéit également à cette façon de voir les choses.<sup>5</sup> Dans ces conditions, chaque individu n'accomplit pas les choses à son rythme, mais à celui établi par la communauté, d'où parfois la lenteur observée par les Occidentaux. Les propos suivants de Gary Warner<sup>6</sup> résument bien cet état de chose :

Dans la société traditionnelle africaine, le temps se mesure en fonction des événements ou des phénomènes qui ont une signification pour l'individu et pour sa communauté. L'individu vit l'expérience du temps en partie à travers sa propre expérience mais aussi en partie à travers l'expérience de sa société qui s'étend à plusieurs générations avant la naissance de l'individu.

Cela revient à dire que l'individu dirige sa vie en prenant appui sur le temps tel que perçu par la communauté.

Le temps africain, selon Mbiti, a trois grandes caractéristiques : il est expérimenté, cyclique et lié à la communauté. Ces spécificités se démarquent de celles de du temps dit occidental. Nous nous demandons alors s'il en est de même de l'appréhension des trois dimensions du temps par les Africains.

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<sup>5</sup> Plusieurs auteurs reprennent cette pensée de Mbiti. C'est le cas par exemple de Charles Larson (1973 : 115) qui cite le philosophe kenyan : *Dans la vie traditionnelle, l'individu n'existe pas ni ne peut exister si ce n'est que collectivement (...). Tout ce qui peut arriver à l'individu arrive au groupe, et tout ce qui arrive à tout le groupe arrive à l'individu (...).*

<sup>6</sup> Warner, Gary, « Technique dramatique et affirmation culturelle dans le théâtre de Bernard Dadié », in, Ethiopiques n°32, *revue socialiste de culture négro-africaine*, nouvelle série, 1<sup>er</sup> trimestre, 1983, E :/[Ethiopiennes-Revues négro-africaines de littérature et de philosophie.].htm #nh16

## II. ANALYSE DES TROIS DIMENSIONS DU TEMPS

Les trois dimensions temporelles correspondent au passé, présent et au futur. Le terme de *dimension* confirme la nature essentiellement humaine du temps, car cela ne s'applique pas au temps lui-même, mais à un sujet humain : c'est toujours le passé, le présent ou l'avenir d'un sujet. Nous allons donc tenter de dégager les analyses que Mbiti fait des trois dimensions temporelles des Africains.

### II.1. UN PRÉSENT PLURIDIMENSIONNEL

Le philosophe kenyan nomme le présent *sasa* qui est un mot souahéli. Mbiti (1969 : 22) le distingue du présent tel qu'appréhendé en Occident par le fait qu'il est pluridimensionnel. Le présent dans le temps africain possède *son propre bref futur, un présent dynamique et un passé expérimenté*. Il se différencie ainsi du présent occidental dans la mesure où ce dernier ne représente que le *maintenant*, c'est-à-dire un point unidimensionnel sur la *ligne* du temps. Cela revient à dire que le présent occidental est assez furtif, instantané tel un éclair ; à peine se produit-il qu'il fait déjà partie du passé. C'est sans doute l'une des raisons pour lesquelles Augustin<sup>7</sup> affirme *qu'on ne peut pas à proprement parler affirmer que le temps existe, sauf dans le sens où il tend à la non-existence*. Ceci étant essentiellement dû à la brièveté du *maintenant*. Mbiti pendant ce temps soutient que le présent, chez les Africains est plutôt dynamique et étendu. De plus, il repose sur un long passé qui lui sert de base.

### II.2. UN PASSÉ RÉPÉTITIF SERVANT DE BASE AU PRÉSENT

Le temps est un phénomène à deux dimensions dans les sociétés africaines traditionnelles selon Mbiti : un long passé et un présent. Puisque le temps est cyclique, le présent consiste donc en la répétition de ce qui a été fait auparavant. Le philosophe kenyan (1990 : 16) soutient, dans ces conditions, que *le temps "recule" au lieu "d'avancer"*. On assiste juste à une imitation du passé. Par exemple, lorsque les fermiers conservent les semences pour la saison suivante, ils suivent le rythme et les techniques hérités des ancêtres afin d'assurer la saison prochaine. Selon cette vision, le regard de l'Africain traditionnel se porte sur le passé et l'on peut dire que pour lui le temps marche à reculons reliant le présent au passé dans la mesure où l'individu est intégré de façon organique à l'expérience et à l'histoire collectives.

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<sup>7</sup> Augustin, *Les Confessions*, trad. angl. par H. Chadwick, New York, Oxford University Press, 1991, 11.14.

Par ailleurs, les personnes qui décèdent ne sont pas considérées comme étant mortes. C'est dans ce sens que Mbiti (1969 : 25) appelle un défunt *un mort-vivant* puisque bien que mort physiquement, il vit à présent dans la mémoire de ceux qui l'ont connu et il est commémoré par sa famille à travers des cérémonies telles que les funérailles, le culte des crânes. Et pour que la mémoire du défunt soit éternelle, son nom est attribué aux générations futures.

Ainsi, un mort ne décède pas vraiment en Afrique, c'est juste ses fonctions biologiques qui cessent de fonctionner, il fait son entrée dans le *zamani* (passé en souahéli). Philipp Rosemann (1998 : 301) précise que pour Mbiti, le *zamani* est *la mémoire des personnes dont les noms sont devenus « vides », comme c'est le cas des noms figurant dans de longues généalogies. Zamani est essentiellement un temps mythique.*

En Afrique traditionnelle, les ancêtres décédés, représentant le passé, ont un rôle prépondérant, car ils continuent à intervenir dans la vie de leurs descendants et à maintenir les traditions qu'ils avaient eux-mêmes établies. Entre temps, les vivants décèdent un à un, rejoignent les ancêtres et deviennent eux-mêmes une partie du passé. Frantz Fanon (1976 : 162) pense que ce regard rétrospectif effectuée non pas une idéalisation du passé, à la recherche d'un paradis illusoire, mais plutôt un acte dynamique *dans l'intention d'ouvrir l'avenir, d'inviter à l'action, de fonder l'espoir.* On a donc l'impression que ce sont des choses passées qui constituent le futur. Est-ce à dire, de ce fait que le futur se trouve dans le passé dans les sociétés traditionnelles africaines ?

### **II.3.- UN FUTUR INEXISTANT**

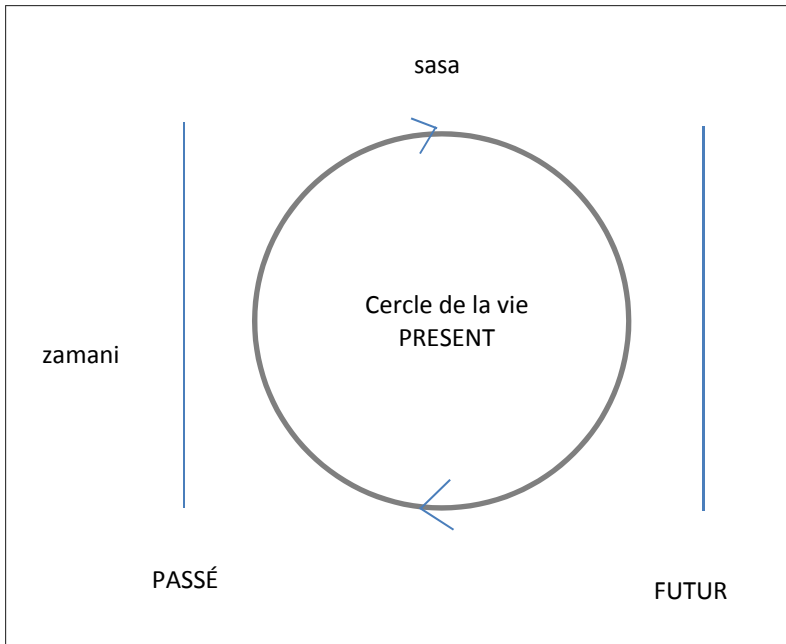
Pour Mbiti (1972 : 26), un futur lointain, sans lien avec la vie actuelle n'a pas de sens pour l'Africain traditionnel.

Le futur est virtuellement absent parce que les éléments qui s'y trouvent ne se sont pas encore produits, ils ne se sont pas encore réalisés et ainsi ne constituent pas encore le temps. Si néanmoins les événements futurs sont certains d'être réalisés ou s'ils sont dans ceux qui étaient programmés dans le mouvement naturel des choses, ils constituent alors le temps potentiel et non pas du temps actuel. Ce qui se passe maintenant révèle sans doute le futur, mais une fois qu'un événement est réalisé, il n'est plus dans le futur, il est dans le présent et le passé.

Dans cette perspective, à en croire Mbiti, l'Africain ne connaît pratiquement pas de futur, surtout au sens occidental où le futur est associé à l'idée d'un développement téléologique débouchant, selon les diverses idéologies, sur un âge d'or ou sur la fin du monde présent suivie d'un autre monde à venir. Mbiti précise que l'on peut parler de

futur dans la société traditionnelle africaine uniquement pour une courte projection de deux ans. De ce fait, l'Africain n'arrive à prévoir que ce qui est inévitable ou un événement dont la réalisation est très imminente. Il n'arrive pas à se projeter dans un avenir lointain puisque pour lui, cela n'a aucun lien avec le présent, il n'arrive pas à se couper de ses habitudes héritées du passé. C'est la raison pour laquelle le futur paraît inexistant.

Après avoir présenté l'essentiel de la pensée de John Mbiti, nous allons essayer de synthétiser le temps africain selon le philosophe kenyan à travers le schéma suivant emprunté à Philipp Rosemann (1998 : 301).



A travers ce diagramme, on voit bien que le temps est circulaire et très basé sur le présent. Aux extrémités se trouvent le passé et le futur. Le passé (*zamani*) est répétitif et sert de base au présent. Le futur, quant à lui, a également un faible lien avec la vie actuelle et est presque inexistant. Cette conception du temps dans les sociétés africaines selon John Mbiti ne va pas sans des critiques d'autres penseurs qu'ils soient africains ou non.

### III. LES CRITIQUES DU CONCEPT DU TEMPS AFRICAIN DE MBITI

John Mbiti (1969 : 16), lui-même fait preuve d'humilité en déclarant que ses analyses philosophiques sur le concept du temps africain ne sont ni plus ni moins qu'une tentative innovatrice qui appelle à des recherches et discussions futures. Parmi les reproches formulés à l'égard de la pensée de Mbiti, on note surtout celles qui concernent des arguments avancés peu vérifiables, des thèses contradictoires et la généralisation de sa pensée.

#### III.1. DES ARGUMENTS PEU VÉRIFIABLES ET FIABLES

Plusieurs penseurs reprochent à Mbiti d'avancer des arguments peu vérifiables qui sont difficiles à prouver. Déjà la documentation du philosophe kenyan est pointée du doigt<sup>8</sup> pour sa maigreur, et ce genre d'étude ne peut aboutir qu'à des analyses peu profondes. Makinde<sup>9</sup> ajoute que pour que l'étude de Mbiti soit plus crédible, il devait y inclure une analyse critique qui puisse conduire à une synthèse corrective sur la nature du temps.

Mbiti déclare que le temps africain est bidimensionnel composé du passé et du présent. Cette thèse est pourtant réfutée par Louis Vincent Thomas<sup>10</sup>. Ce dernier note chez les Diola, un peuple sénégalais, trois dimensions du temps. D'abord le présent (*wa badye, wa mandona, tinak-taka munye*), c'est avant tout ce qui a lieu en ce moment ou encore ce qui est. Il constitue la limite théorique du futur s'instituant comme passé. Ensuite le passé (*wa hudye*) c'est ce qui a eu lieu. C'est ce qui est fait, qui est dans le domaine du réalisé et est à la fois hérédité et mémoire, c'est-à-dire les coutumes et les traditions. Enfin, l'avenir (*wa bilému, wa wata kadiom*), c'est ce qui viendra, ce qui est sur le point de se faire, c'est lui qui recèle l'indétermination de toute existence virtuelle.

Par ailleurs, Mbiti soutient que le temps africain est toujours vécu, expérimenté, lié à des événements. Philipp White (2003 : 191) fait remarquer que

cette conception du temps comme inséparable de la perception des phénomènes se retrouve dans les calendriers dits phénoménologiques. Ceux-ci avaient la fonction d'enregistrer les éléments d'une période donnée par contraste avec les calendriers numérogiques conventionnels.

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<sup>8</sup> Rosemann (1998 : 300), Masolo (1994 :103-104).

<sup>9</sup> Makinde, M., Akin, « Of chance philosophy and obsolete philosophy: some anti-scientific features of African (traditional) thought, in *Second order (new series): An African journal of philosophy*, vol.1, n°1, jan.1988, PP.8-15).

<sup>10</sup> Thomas, Louis Vincent, « Temps, mythe et histoire en Afrique de l'Ouest », in, *revue Présence africaine*, n°39, 4<sup>e</sup> trimestre, 1961, PP.12-58.



Seulement, voilà, Walter Ong<sup>11</sup> explique que la conception phénoménologique du temps n'est pas spécifique à l'Afrique dans la mesure où elle constitue une des caractéristiques majeures des cultures orales.

Les critiques à l'égard de la pensée de Mbiti ne s'arrêtent pas aux arguments peu vérifiables et fiables, elles s'étendent aux thèses contradictoires.

### **III.2. DES THÈSES CONTRADICTOIRES**

Plusieurs auteurs pointent du doigt des thèses discordantes de John Mbiti. Ainsi, Gyekyé (1975 : 86-94) et Masolo (1994 : 111) soulignent le fait que Mbiti déclare que les Africains croient en Dieu. Or, le fait d'être croyant implique l'idée d'infinitude, de ce fait, nier le futur serait d'une absurdité logique. Dans cette perspective, ces deux auteurs relèvent que l'on ne peut pas croire en Dieu et ne pas penser à l'avenir. Ils estiment alors la thèse de Mbiti absurde.

Parker English, quant à lui, fait remarquer que Mbiti n'est pas toujours clair à propos du statut du temps et des événements au futur<sup>12</sup>. A cet effet, English (2006 : 55) soutient que

les Africains ont trois dimensions du temps comme les Occidentaux. La différence fondamentale est que pour les Occidentaux, le futur s'étend plus que chez l'Africain traditionnel. Bien sûr, aucun événement futur n'existe actuellement comme le présent le fait ou le passé l'a fait, ni pour les Occidentaux, ni pour les Africains traditionnels.

Ce qu'English essaye de faire comprendre est que Mbiti déclare clairement qu'en Afrique traditionnelle, le futur n'est pas envisagé au-delà de deux ans. Cela revient à dire que le futur existe quand même si on s'en tient à ses propos. Il trouve donc paradoxal que le philosophe kenyan dise en même temps que le futur est inexistant chez les Africains. Pour lui, Mbiti dit une chose et son contraire.

Les critiques sur le concept du temps africain de Mbiti concernent aussi la généralisation de ses affirmations.

### **III.3. LA GÉNÉRALISATION DE LA PÉNSEE**

Des auteurs reprochent à Mbiti le fait d'étendre sa pensée à toute l'Afrique alors qu'il ne s'agit que d'une partie. Segun Gbadegesin (1991 : 22) pense que les analyses de Mbiti sont tout simplement *un compte rendu du monde du point de vue communautaire sans une tentative d'évaluation* de ce dernier. En fait, beaucoup pensent

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<sup>11</sup> Ong, Walter, *Orality and literacy: the technologizing of the word*, Merthuen & Co. Ltd, 1982, PP.31-33, 46-49, 66-67, 76-77.

<sup>12</sup> Voir également Nicolas Rescher (2003 : 348). Il pense également que la thèse de Mbiti sur le futur est contradictoire, car selon lui, cela signifierait que les Africains sont incapables de concevoir une connaissance transcendantale du monde.

que le philosophe kenyan aurait dû faire une étude beaucoup plus approfondie en s'intéressant par exemple à toutes les parties du continent africain. Or, on a l'impression qu'il a fait une généralisation à partir de quelques peuples seulement. C'est pourquoi la scientificité de son étude est pointée du doigt.

Nous avons tour à tour exposé la pensée de Mbiti et les reproches formulés à l'endroit de cette dernière. Plusieurs interrogations suscitent notre intérêt à ce niveau du présent travail. Faut-il rejeter totalement la pensée du philosophe kenyan ? Ou alors les critiques formulées sont-elles véritablement insensées ? Ne faut-il pas plutôt voir dans quelle mesure faire progresser la pensée du temps tel qu'appréhendé par les Africains en prenant en compte les avis des uns et des autres et bien plus encore ?

#### **IV. DES TENTATIVES D'AMÉLIORATION ET DE REFORMULATION DE LA PENSÉE DE MBITI**

Nous allons tenter d'apporter notre modeste contribution à l'analyse du temps, plus particulièrement du temps en Afrique telle qu'examinée par John Mbiti. En nous appuyant sur les critiques faites au philosophe kenyan, nous essayerons de reformuler sa pensée en y apportant des suggestions que nous espérons constructives.

##### **IV.1. LE TEMPS AFRICAIN : MANQUE DE DISCIPLINE**

Si les Africains ont dans leur langue le concept du futur, s'ils en ont conscience, il faut souligner toutefois que c'est peut-être leur façon d'appréhender le temps qui pose problème. Contrairement à ce que l'on peut voir en Occident, le temps en Afrique semble ne pas avoir une grande importance, un sens significatif, alors qu'aucun être humain ne peut s'y soustraire. Comme le dit Michael Kelly<sup>13</sup>, *le temps envahit toute la sphère mondaine de la vie humaine : on y fait des plans, on se souvient, on se dépêche, on s'attarde, on endure. Toutes ces activités et dispositions présupposent, sous peine de perdre toute leur signification, un certain sens du temps.* Cependant, on observe qu'en Afrique, il est employé de façon indisciplinée. Tout se passe comme si les individus peuvent accomplir les choses quand ils le veulent. C'est sans doute pourquoi Edward Hall (1959 : 10) déclare qu'*on commence quand les choses sont prêtes*. Mbiti s'appuie certainement sur ce constat pour estimer que le temps en Afrique est répétitif et lié aux événements. Car, les traditions, les habitudes ancestrales demeurent alors que les choses ont bien changé. Dahl Oyvind<sup>14</sup> soutient fermement qu'en Afrique,

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<sup>13</sup> Michael R. Kelly, « Quand l'esprit « dit » le temps : la conscience du temps chez Aristote, Augustin et Husserl », *Methodos* [En ligne], 9 | 2009, mis en ligne le 10 février 2009, consulté le 01 juillet 2014. URL : <http://methodos.revues.org/2243> ; DOI : 10.4000/methodos.2243

<sup>14</sup> Dahl, Oyvind, « Quand le futur vient de derrière : le concept malgache de temps et d'ordre du monde et conséquences pour le transfert de technologie », in *Colloque pour chercheurs en sciences sociales et économiques sur "les changements sociaux dans la région du Vakinankarata"*, Antsirabe 6-9 Avril 1992, Antananarivo, Trano Printy Loterana.

toute action ou tout événement aura sa durée propre, une forme et un rythme propres qui ne peuvent pas être adaptés à une structure extérieure homogène. Mais si toute chose à sa durée propre, il sera difficile d'intégrer différentes activités au sein d'un même cadre de travail, et de prédire que les choses vont se produire à un moment précis. Il n'y a pas de délais à respecter, pas de date limite ;

On aura compris que le temps en Afrique est appréhendé de manière très désordonnée et qu'il est difficile, voire impossible de bâtir une société constructive de cette façon. George Kinoti (1994 : 29) va dans le même sens et estime que *la quantité de perte économique subie par le continent à cause des gens, surtout des hommes, qui fainéantisent seulement, est incalculable*. Le temps linéaire et mécanique de l'Occident permet d'avoir une société mieux structurée et développée. Nous remarquons que les analyses de Mbiti, au fond, ne sont pas fausses, mais c'est la façon de les présenter qui attise peut-être des critiques.

Si les Africains ont du mal à avoir une discipline temporelle, il est évident qu'il leur sera difficile d'élaborer des projets à long terme.

#### **IV.2. LE TEMPS AFRICAIN : MANQUE DE PROJET A LONG TERME**

L'Africain a du mal à se projeter dans un futur lointain, mais cela ne signifie pas que le futur n'existe pas dans les sociétés africaines. Peut-être Mbiti a-t-il été un peu excessif. C'est clair qu'il y a un manque de prévoyance, d'investissement à long terme sur tous les plans en Afrique. Il n'y a qu'à voir comment les Etats Africains sont gérés : sans planification dans tous les secteurs. Mbiti (1970 : 29-30) estime à cet effet :

Dans les sociétés africaines, il n'y a pas un concept d'histoire allant de 'l'avant' vers une apogée future. ... Ainsi les Africains 'ne croient pas au progrès', l'idée que le développement des activités humaines et des objectifs vont d'un degré bas à un degré élevé. Les gens ne planifient pas le futur et ne construisent non plus virtuellement des châteaux.

Cela revient donc à dire que les Africains ne prennent pas le temps de construire dans la durée. C'est pourquoi il est difficile de se développer. On le voit au niveau du nombre d'accouchements, de l'éducation, du sport, des infrastructures, bref sur tous les plans. Dahl Oyvind<sup>15</sup> explique que

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<sup>15</sup> Dahl, Oyvind, Ibid.

beaucoup d'agents de développement se plaignent des magasiniers et des vendeurs qui ne réalimentent jamais les stocks avant qu'ils ne soient à court de pièces détachées, de médicaments, ou autres. Les nouveaux articles ne seront commandés que lorsqu'il ne reste plus rien. On fait rarement de provision pour l'avenir.

Etant donné que le futur ne peut être concrètement vécu, il ne peut être pensé et connu. En vivant dans le passé, l'Africain reproduit continuellement les mêmes traditions, les mêmes solutions aux problèmes et les mêmes intelligences non évolutives. Pour Alain Kiyindou (2009 : 138),

ce constat entérine l'idée selon laquelle le sous-développement de la plupart des pays du sud, s'expliquerait par leur rattachement à la tradition, car le regard rivé au passé ne peut jamais entraîner le développement économique dans la mesure où il ignore la prévoyance, l'épargne, l'accumulation des richesses et l'esprit risqué de conquête, de l'incertitude et de l'inconnu du futur<sup>16</sup>.

Le futur existe dans le temps africain, il est juste mal appréhendé, notamment en ce qui concerne des ambitions et des planifications très lointaines. Cependant, nous nous demandons ce qui peut bien être à l'origine de cette façon de voir les choses.

#### **IV.3. TEMPS AFRICAIN ET RELIGIOSITÉ : LA CROYANCE DE L'IMPUISSANCE DE L'HOMME FACE A SON FUTUR ET SON DESTIN**

Les Africains sont des êtres profondément religieux<sup>17</sup> et cette façon d'être agit bien évidemment sur la manière dont ils perçoivent le temps. Mbiti (1970 : 19) souligne à juste titre que *pour l'Africain, c'est Dieu qui est le garant de son futur, il ne peut pas prévoir ce qui le dépasse*. Il y a donc une croyance au fatalisme. Dans les sociétés africaines traditionnelles, Les gens ne voient pas l'utilité de faire des prévisions pour leur vie, car c'est Dieu qui décide. Dans la même lancée, Daniel Etounga-Manguelle (2000 : 73-74) déclare : *on délègue aux sorciers et aux devins la responsabilité de résoudre ses problèmes, renonçant ainsi à sa propre responsabilité rationnelle*. Les Africains préfèrent investir chez les voyants et chez Dieu. Seuls ces êtres peuvent changer leur vie, pensent-ils. Ils ne croient pas en leur propre capacité à pouvoir faire bouger les choses. Dans ces

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<sup>16</sup> Ngoma Mbinda, développe la même idée dans « Conscience du temps et progrès économique de l'Afrique », in, *Temps et développement dans la pensée de l'Afrique subsaharienne*, Rodopi Amsterdam, 1998, pp.103-115.

<sup>17</sup> Sur la religiosité des Africains, nous pouvons citer A.C. Leonard (1966 : 429) : *la religion de ces natifs [les Africains] est leur existence et leur existence est leur religion. [...] L'entière organisation de leur vie commune est si entrelacée avec cela qu'ils ne peuvent s'en défaire. Comme les Hindous, ils mangent religieusement, boivent religieusement et chantent religieusement*. Ezeanya (1980 : 324), quant à lui, estime qu'en Afrique, *la vie est la religion, et la religion est la vie*.

conditions, cela ne sert à rien de se donner à fond pour quoi que ce soit. Mbiti (1970 : 20) pense que les Africains ont leur propre ontologie, mais c'est une ontologie religieuse. Cette croyance en Dieu et en l'animisme<sup>18</sup> empêche les Africains d'envisager un futur lointain parce qu'ils se disent par exemple que pour réussir dans la vie, c'est le fait de Dieu ou des ancêtres, du coup on verra facilement des parents avoir dix enfants sans un sou en poche. Ils justifieront leur acte par le fait que n'importe quel enfant peut réussir dans la vie si Dieu le veut vraiment et par ailleurs, mieux vaut avoir beaucoup d'enfants, car on ne sait pas sur qui les bénédictions de Dieu jetteront leur dévolu. Il sera alors difficile de leur faire entendre raison par exemple que l'éducation d'un enfant nécessite d'énormes sacrifices et ne repose pas seulement sur de la chance ou la bénédiction de Dieu ou des voyants.

En outre, il faut savoir se projeter dans le futur et non se cantonner à la vie quotidienne. Pour Kwasi Wiredu (1996 : 20), cette façon de voir les choses est limitée à *la vérité prétendue à l'instant ; la vérité telle que nous la voyons ici et maintenant*. L'Africain devrait donc se détacher de cette façon cyclique de voir le temps, car de cette manière on dirait que le futur se trouve dans le passé puisqu'il n'y a aucun renouvellement, aucune projection dans un futur lointain.

## CONCLUSION

Le présent article avait pour but d'analyser le concept du temps africain selon John Mbiti et surtout de voir dans quelle mesure le raisonnement selon lequel le futur est dans le passé dans les sociétés traditionnelles africaines peut se vérifier. Pour cela, nous avons dû nous appesantir respectivement sur, les caractéristiques du temps africain, l'appréhension des trois dimensions du temps, les critiques de la pensée de Mbiti et les tentatives de reformulation de cette dernière. Enfin de compte, nous pensons qu'il est peut-être exagéré de dire que l'Africain ne connaît pas de futur. Cependant, il y a beaucoup d'éléments qui ont amené Mbiti à s'exprimer de la sorte. Nous estimons que les Africains appréhendent le futur, mais ils le font d'une manière étrange, insolite d'où les dommages, les ravages que l'on constate au quotidien au sein des sociétés africaines. Il est clair qu'il y a un problème, et il

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<sup>18</sup> Les Africains croient en Dieu certes, mais ils pratiquent aussi le culte des crânes, car les ancêtres jouent un très grand rôle en Afrique. Leur volonté doit être absolument respectée. Du fait de la sorcellerie, les Africains consultent également beaucoup des marabouts pour diverses raisons, notamment pour se protéger des sorciers ou pour provoquer la chance, car, seule une bonne planification du temps ne suffit pas à bien gérer sa vie ou la société. Ainsi, la plupart des Africains sont à la fois chrétiens ou musulmans et animistes. Ce sont ces aspects qui régissent la vie. Or Mbiti (1971 : 57) déclare que *les concepts traditionnels africains ne sont pas orientés vers le futur mais vers le passé*.

serait grand temps que les uns et les autres se ressaisissent et prennent conscience pour faire avancer les choses. Car un homme qui projette son avenir dans le passé ne peut pas avancer.

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## BETWEEN NIHILISM AND ANARCHISM (A PHILOSOPHICAL POEM BY GHERASIM LUCA)

ȘTEFAN BOLEA\*

**ABSTRACT.** In this paper we provide a new solution to the nihilist dilemma of non-being's precedence over being. Starting from proponents of nihilism like Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Nietzsche and Emil Cioran, we move to the anti-systemic "war machine" of Romanian-French poet Gherasim Luca, who, inspired by anarchistic theoreticians and Symbolist poets, asserted that only direct and concrete action could harass and sabotage the hegemonic power. His poem, *Tragedies Which Are Meant To Happen* is not only an important text of Romanian surrealist poetry, but also a page of the modern history of anarchistic philosophy.

**Keywords:** *anarchism, nihilism, surrealism, systemic anomaly, transgression, philosophy of poetry.*

*„Gherasim Luca est un grand poète  
parmi les plus grands : il a inventé  
un prodigieux bégaiement, le sien.”  
(Gilles Deleuze)*

### SCHOPENHAUER, NIETZSCHE AND CIORAN ABOUT THE 'NIHILIST DILEMA'

The preliminary point of our study can be named, after Milan Kundera, *the unbearable pain of existence*:

An ancient legend recounts how King Midas hunted long in the forest for the wise Silenus, companion of Dionysos, but failed to catch him. When Silenus has finally fallen into his hands, the King asks what is the best and most excellent thing for human beings. Stiff and unmoving, the daemon remains silent until, forced by the King to speak, he finally breaks out in shrill laughter and says: 'Wretched, ephemeral race, children of chance and tribulation, why do you force me to tell you the very thing which it would be most profitable for you not to hear? The very best thing is utterly beyond your reach not to have been born, not to be, to be nothing. However, the second best thing for you is: to die soon.'<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy And Other Writings*, ed. Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs, trans. by Ronald Speirs, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007, pp. 22-23.



This fragment from *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) summarizes the functioning principle of nihilism. If life equals pain, the anesthesia of death has a positive value. The first aspect of the "very best thing" is "not to have been born", which is equivalent to never having entered the pre-being uterus. The second is "not to be": this is the synthetic expression of not-being. To place "not to be" above "to be" is to forever blame the values of life. If this had been the case, Hamlet's existential monologue would never have taken place. Moreover, from the perspective of "not to be" [*nicht zu sein*], birth is the only Schopenhauerian "crime" and death the sole salvation. "Not to be" generates Gnostic imperatives and Cioranian commandments: not to generate, not to create under all circumstances (if "to live is to die", then to give birth is to sentence to sufferance and cruel torment.) The third aspect is "to be nothing" (from *nicht zu sein* to *nichts zu sein* or from not-being to nothingness). One could argue that the *being of nothing* is, before establishing itself as an ontological statement, a theological revelation. It probably sends us to the beginning of the *Genesis* ("And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep", Gen 1:2), which clearly shows that the eons *before* the Big Bang have a nihilistic sacramental value.

However, the "second best thing" is "to die soon" [*bald zu sterben*]. From a nihilist perspective, death is salutary if it comes right away, because existence has its charms (called by the Indians *Maya*), which can lure one and transform him into a servant. Moreover, the *adiaphoria* (the Stoic and Nietzschean word for indifference) of non-existence is to be preferred from a – so called – rationalist reasoning: because as long as one is alive, he is forced to endure – almost ceaseless – pain. Let us pay attention: Silenus tells us that it is most unprofitable for us *to know* the cursed essence of existence. Cioran adhered to the severe proclamation of the "consciousness as doom" [*Bewusstsein als Verhängnis*], the Bible also asserted that "ignorance is a bliss": "For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow" (Ecc. 1, 18). Once we become aware that pain is the root of living, anxiety will poison our joy. Consciousness is a malady but had we chosen to stay on the path of ignorance, we would have been incarcerated till today in Eden, where we were prisoners of "natural necessity" (Hegel): we would have remained forever beasts.

Starting from the precedence of nonbeing over being, from the *unbearable pain of existence*, one can imagine at least three attitudes. The first one is represented by Schopenhauer and Cioran, who deny life and emphasize renunciation, the "burning" of the will, the eternal sleep of Nirvana. The second attitude belongs to the late Nietzsche (1880-1889), who transgresses the nihilist revelation from *The Birth Of Tragedy*: "Life is a nightmare I won't fear! It is also a beautiful dream, let's keep on dreaming!" With all its arbitrary, with all its contingency, with all the *misery*, we have to pass the test of eternal return, we have to live this life as we were doomed to repeat it for infinity.

Have you ever said Yes to a single joy? O my friends, then you said Yes too to *all* woe. All things are entangled, ensnared, enamored; if ever you wanted one thing twice, if every you said, 'You please me, happiness! Abide, moment' then you wanted *all* back. All anew, all eternally, all entangled, ensnared, enamored – oh, then you *loved* the world. Eternal ones, love it eternally and evermore; and to woe too, you say: go, but return! *For all joy wants eternity.*<sup>2</sup>

From the *no* declared to existence ("the very best thing is ... not to be") we move on to an *yes* uttered precisely to *the unbearable pain of existence*, we are transported from passive nihilism to anti-nihilism. Nietzsche suggests that only an overman (a metaphor for the human being in the pursuit of excellence) can accept a living seemingly synonymous with sufferance. How should we understand this Nietzschean idea from an existential point of view? How do we absorb it in our lives? The nihilist dilemma is practically a conflict between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche: if Schopenhauer chose non-existence over existence, Nietzsche argues that life, despite all its emptiness, meaninglessness and disorder, despite its *identity with pain*, is more valuable than death. Nietzsche's argument goes beyond common sense and logic, an argument fit for the overman, who is the "being of overcoming".

### FROM NIHILISM TO ANARCHISM

One can see that there can be another way, a third attitude, a third solution of the nihilist aporia, of the intuition of the nightmarish character of life. It is the way of Lautréamont, Max Stirner, Bakunin and the Romanian-French poet Gherasim Luca. Lautréamont observed:

Let my war against man go on for eternity, since each recognizes his own degradation in the other ... since we are both mortal enemies. Whether I am destined to win a disastrous victory or to succumb, the struggle will be good: I alone against mankind.<sup>3</sup>

To fight against mankind is to fight against God: we remember the ethics of the samurai who *fights a losing battle*<sup>4</sup> against an immensely powerful enemy. Existence is a *losing battle*, because it is synonymous with disintegration („life is a process of breaking down”<sup>5</sup>), decay and humiliation and because it ends in total and

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<sup>2</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, Viking Press, New York, 1982, p. 435.

<sup>3</sup> Comte de Lautréamont, *Maldoror and Poems*, trans. by Paul Knight, Penguin Books, London, 1978, 4, 1, Kindle edition.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Wicks, *Modern French Philosophy. From Existentialism to Postmodernism*, Oneworld, Oxford, 2003, pp. 65-78.

<sup>5</sup> F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Crack-Up*, ed. Edmund Wilson, New Directions, New York, 2009, p. 69.

absolute obliteration. Nevertheless, Lautréamont teaches us that we must fight even if humanity and/or divinity is against us. We observe that the *third path*, which moves on from nihilism to anarchism, asserts that the solution to the aporia of nonexistence is *not* the Buddhist-Schopenhauerian renunciation, nor the superhuman Nietzschean transgression (which applies only individually and heroically). The solution might be the war declaration, the creation of the war machine, the making of the systemic anomaly capable of displacing and sabotaging the hegemonic power.

A declaration which brilliantly synthesizes the philosophy of systemic anomaly that harasses the hegemonic power is the call to arms against all the masters:

It would be foolish to assert that there is no power above mine. Only the attitude that I take toward it will be quite another than that of the religious age: I shall be the *enemy* of every higher power, while religion teaches us to make it our friend and be humble toward it.<sup>6</sup>

If Christianity and common sense pleaded for surrender when outnumbered, if all the philosophers bending before the almighty system preached in fact submission, Lautréamont and Luca would launch a counter-attack against hegemonic repression. The anarchist position claims that the one who refuses to fight is a lowly creature who does not deserve salvation: "Remember! There is no more empty nor detestable creature in nature than the man who runs away from his demon."<sup>7</sup>

If the principle of anarchism asserted the call to arms against a superior opponent (or the creation of a war machine that must harass the hegemonic power), the most intimate essence of anarchism is provided by the message of a *creative destruction*: "Let us ... trust the eternal Spirit which destroys and annihilates only because it is the unfathomable and eternal source of all life. The passion for destruction is a creative passion, too!"<sup>8</sup> We could probably say that through anarchism nihilism becomes *pre-anti-nihilism*, nihilism becoming a propaedeutics for its own destruction. In this line of argument, destruction is the *creation before creation*. To quote Nietzsche, "only as creators can we destroy!"<sup>9</sup> The third way, the third solution to the nihilist impasse, is, therefore, a fight against mankind, more exactly a fight against our own humanity (Lautréamont), a fight against the Master (Stirner) and a pleading for creative destruction (Bakunin).

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<sup>6</sup> Max Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*, ed. David Leopold, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000, p. 165.

<sup>7</sup> *The Heart of Darkness* (1993), directed by Nicolas Roeg, script by Benedict Fitzgerald, after a novel by Joseph Conrad.

<sup>8</sup> Sam Dolgoff (Ed.), *Bakunin on Anarchy*, Vintage Books, New York, 1971, p. 57.

<sup>9</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, ed. Bernard Williams, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff and Adrain del Caro, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001, p. 70.

### GHERASIM LUCA'S ANARCHISTIC MANIFESTO

This triple tendency is found in Gherasim Luca's poetical manifesto, *Tragedii cari vor trebui să se întâmple* [*Tragedies Which Are Meant To Happen*], published in 1933. The poem is constructed on the foremost Romantic – and then Symbolist – antithesis between I and the others, which precludes the staging of an "appetite for destruction".

my fingers shivering like poplars, short as bullets/ squeezed firmly the woman's white neck/ like ancient poets were squeezing in their custom love fits for nature/ flowers – sheep – field and stars/ the poets from today, the poets with fingers shivering like poplars and short as/ bullets/ have each at home a woman's white neck which must be strangled/.<sup>10</sup>

The atmosphere of this poem reminds us of Rimbaud's declaration "I took arms against justice"<sup>11</sup> [*Je me suis armé contre la justice*] from the beginning of *A Season in Hell*. Luca's war machine invests in "fingers ... short like/ *bullets*" and in "pockets ... containing *stones* of all sizes" (italics ours). The ancient poets wrote about "flowers, sheep, field and stars", executing a sort of "pastoral masturbation" – the libido of the Surreal poetry moved, however, in the territory of strangulation. Crime (as a metaphor for separation, as declaration of independence) is the origin of modern poetry: it is a "crime", for instance, to separate from one's parents as a teenager, just the same as the contempt of Romantic love, the "hurting of Beauty" (Rimbaud), and "the strangulation of the woman's white neck" are all "crimes".

We must ask: why is the modern poet a criminal? Why "flowers, sheep, field and stars" are neither necessary nor sufficient anymore? Why does he take arms and strangles with "shivering" and "bullet-like" fingers? Maybe because the separation of the assassin, who breaks from the pattern of likeness, creates a sort of post-human individual, who can no longer find satisfaction in the existing culture and civilization, in the "narrow" concept of "humanity" (if overman were a post-human, man would be many times sub-human) and, therefore, invents another *path*, transgressive and anarchic, beyond the opiate of passive nihilism or the ecstasy of anti-nihilism, a path dedicated to the war against man and his creator and directed towards the mystic and aesthetics of destruction.

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<sup>10</sup> Gherasim Luca, *Inventatorul iubirii și alte scrieri* [*The Inventor of Love and Other Writings*], ed. Ion Pop, Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 2003, pp. 90-91 (translation mine).

<sup>11</sup> Arthur Rimbaud, *Rimbaud Complete*, ed. and trans. Wyatt Mason, Modern Library, New York, 2003, p. 195.

The assuming of the poet's criminality brings along a feeling of power and the awareness of freedom: "I am free", "Now that we are free ..." A new contrast is built between "us", "the poets from today" and the others, the ordinary people, who will always choose – to remind a dilemma presented by Dostoyevsky – happiness instead of freedom.

At the same time other men began walking on the great boulevards of the city/ they have white fingers, fat like pieces of bacon, they keep the fingers in their pockets/ stuffed with the last picture of the girlfriend and a snotty handkerchief.

Luca's attack against the others, the representatives of mediocrity, conformism and – one could infer – consumerism, has three stages:

a) Their spirit is flabby and greasy ("fingers, fat like pieces of bacon"), while the spirit of the modern poets is straight and vertical; the others are serial products who rather express sub-humanity, they are "dead souls" living in incubator of self-unawareness;

b) If the poets from today are criminals and assassins, if they have strangled sentimentality and romantic love, the others are prisoners and servants of Eros ("their pockets/ stuffed with the last picture of the girlfriend");

c) Next to the picture of the beloved one, we have the "snotty handkerchief," which has one or two meanings: love is a "duel of salivas", "milking" its "absolute from the misery of the glands"<sup>12</sup>. Moreover, "the snotty handkerchief" becomes the coat of arms of the dehumanized others.

From a psychoanalytical perspective, this monstrous presentation of the alterity, having "fingers like pieces of bacon" and being replaced by "a snotty handkerchief" symbolizes Luca's anxiety toward the others (that anxiety which is the root of all anger) and his compensating contempt. The others could be a projection of the inferior side of the poet's personality, a projection of his shadow, which must be accepted and integrated in order for the writer to evolve. A similar manifestation is to be found in Nietzsche who both fears and loathes the shadows [*umbræ*] of the overman: the last man, the dwarf and the ugliest man. Gherasim Luca's separation with his (near) Romantic and misanthropic traits shows how hard it is – almost impossible – to see yourself in the other.

The poets from today, the poets with fingers shivering like poplars and short as/ bullets/ the poets with pockets containing stones of all sizes/ must know that the single difficulty is the smashing of the first window of the great boulevards/ because all the other windows will smash by themselves/ just as it is enough to extinguish the first star and all the others will be themselves extinguished.

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<sup>12</sup> E.M. Cioran, *A Short History of Decay*, trans. Richard Howard, Arcade Books, New York, 1972, p. 36.

One might remember here Bakunin's plea for the creative destruction. The step from persona to individuation (or in Heidegger's terms, from they-self to authenticity) consists in the "smashing of the first window". The shop window, a metaphor for consumerism, capitalism, system and also for our own reflection – a double, a shadow – is an obstacle in the way of our liberation. (Self)creation deprived of (self)destruction is only a sham.

I want to apologize for the star comparison, poets,/ it's only a memory from another time/ ... the poets from today, the poets with fingers shivering like poplars and short as/ bullets/ may throw their stones at the star comparison/ it will probably be the first window smashed/ and all the other windows will smash by themselves./

To "smash" the window, to pierce the heart of the system, we must once and for all give up the "pastoral masturbation", the "old times/ when I was ecstatic about blooming trees and I used to faint at every sunrise." The first smashed window, the one which opens the path from impersonality to individuality, from bad faith to authenticity, from destruction to creation, is the "strangling" of the star comparison. Luca's poem starts with the assassination of sentimental love and finishes with the assassination of a certain pastoral and cosmological language, which – needless to say – coincides with the obliteration of a certain being mode, a distinct ontic dimension. The beloved one must die, the language must disappear, the man from today must be annihilated. What is left? Maybe only the "smile that surveys annihilated landscapes"<sup>13</sup>, the *Vorlust* of apocalypse experienced from Planet Melancholia<sup>14</sup>.

Gherasim Luca chooses the third solution to the nihilist clash between nonexistence and existence, the path that goes from nihilism to anarchism. If Schopenhauer, the young Nietzsche and Cioran were mesmerized by the passive nihilism of renunciation, by the "European Buddhism", the sleep of Nirvana, if the older Nietzsche chose the "creation beyond himself", which signifies the transgression of the over-man toward anti-nihilism, Luca – along the proponents of anarchism and surrealism – directs his poem to the more practical and concrete war against the hegemonic power and the corrupted human being, pleading for the purity, beauty and creativity of destruction.

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>14</sup> *Melancholia* (2011), directed and written by Lars von Trier.



## LA REPRESENTATION DE DIEU CHEZ LES ENFANTS. UNE APPROCHE THEORETIQUE

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**RESUMÉE.** La recherche de l'image de Dieu à travers les dessins des enfants a été introduite en 1944 par Harms. Il a mis en exergue le facteur cognitif. Plus tard, en 1996, Hanisch a mis l'accent sur l'éducation religieuse. En 1999, Landy a évoqué le facteur culturel et en 2000, Klein a mis l'accent sur les différences des genres. Enfin, en 2009, Brandt et ses collaborateurs ont proposé une recherche de l'image de Dieu chez les enfants en tenant compte de ces quatre facteurs énoncés ci-dessus. Les principaux axes de cet article seront: l'introduction de la psychologie sociale du développement cognitif; la présentation des caractéristiques cognitives chez les enfants par la prise en compte de l'évolution du dessin chez l'enfant; l'analyse des étapes du développement religieux et les premières recherches sur l'image de Dieu chez l'enfant.

**Mots clés :** *Dieu, développement cognitif, enfants, religion.*

**ABSTRACT.** The search for the image of God through the children's drawings was introduced in 1944 by Harms. He highlighted the cognitive factor. Later, in 1996, Hanisch focused on religious education. In 1999, Landy spoke of the cultural factor and 2000, Klein focused on gender differences. Finally, in 2009, Brandt and colleagues proposed a search for the image of God in children taking into account the four factors set out above. The main focus of this article will be the introduction of social psychology of cognitive development; the presentation of the cognitive characteristics of children by taking into account the evolution of the drawing in children; analysis of the stages of religious development and early research on the image of God in children.

**Keywords:** *God, cognitive development, children, religion.*

### La provocation de la psychologie sociale du développement cognitif

Emergée autour des années 70, la psychologie sociale du développement cognitif, l'axe théorique de cette recherche, a comme objet d'étude la construction sociale des représentations. Ce modèle explicatif intègre les variables sociales, en

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tant qu'éléments constitutifs et les variables psychologiques, dans un schéma où on associe le sujet individuel et l'autre (les autres) et les objets. Le but des recherches menées dans le domaine de la psychologie sociale du développement est de montrer comment les enfants s'approprient, de manière progressive, les connaissances basiques de leur milieu social, ainsi que les mécanismes à travers lesquels les facteurs sociaux concourent à modeler leur processus cognitif.

L'enfant devient, dès sa naissance, un être social. Ses premiers contacts avec le milieu sont notamment de nature sociale que physique ; ses capacités données (de se nourrir, de pleurer, de réclamer et de sentir un contact physique) préparent le terrain de ses futures interactions avec les autres. Même si la conscience de l'existence de divers phénomènes sociaux n'apparaît que graduellement, durant l'âge de l'enfance et de l'adolescence, et parfois durant la vie d'adulte, la petite enfance représente toutefois la période cruciale dans l'élaboration des connaissances et des règles sociales. L'évolution considérable du mécanisme cognitif de l'enfant entraîne également l'évolution significative de la compréhension du monde social, malgré le fait que l'évolution de la cognition sociale ne se réalise pas selon les mêmes règles de la cognition du monde physique, non-social.

Flavell<sup>1,2</sup> propose un modèle de la construction de la réflexion sociale fondé sur trois concepts: l'existence, le besoin et l'inférence. Ce modèle permet d'identifier les grandes lignes du développement de la cognition sociale chez l'enfant. Dans un premier temps, il s'agit du développement de la connaissance et de la conscience de la grande diversité d'objets sociocognitifs auxquels nous pouvons réfléchir (l'existence). Ensuite, il est nécessaire un nouveau progrès cognitif pour connaître « pourquoi » et « quand » est utile de faire une inférence sociale (le besoin). Il est nécessaire également d'acquérir des habilités cognitives pertinentes pour interpréter le sens des comportements sociaux (l'inférence). La capacité opératoire et la quantité d'information disponible constituent deux éléments indispensables de la qualité des interférences ; et l'accomplissement de l'interférence ne développe pas automatiquement la présence de l'existence et du besoin.

Le développement des habilités de communication procure à l'enfant une force d'expression de plus en plus différenciée des sentiments, des désirs, des besoins, etc. Au centre de son évolution sociale se retrouve le processus fondamental de faire la différence : entre soi-même et les autres, entre les êtres humains et les objets physiques, entre les personnes connues et les inconnus, etc. La capacité de différencier constitue le support de la construction de la vie sociale, et ce processus continue tout au long du développement de l'être humain.

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<sup>1</sup> Flavell J., *Cognitive development*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice Hall. 1985

<sup>2</sup> Flavell J., Green F.L., Flavell, E.R., "Young children's ability to differentiate appearance-reality" in *Child Development*, nr. 60, (1989), pp.201-213

## LES ETAPES DU DEVELOPPEMENT RELIGIEUX

L'étude la plus connue concernant le développement de la foi chez les individus au cours de leur vie est celle de Fowler, qui a réalisé un nombre de 359 entretiens avec des personnes de tous les âges. Fowler a précisé que les caractéristiques du développement de la foi religieuse s'organisent, au cours de la vie humaine, en six étapes<sup>3</sup>:

1. *la foi intuitive projective*, correspond à la petite enfance ;
2. *la foi mythique littérale*, concerne les enfants en âge scolaire ; ceux-ci font recours à des histoires et à des mythes pour se représenter le divin ;
3. *la foi synthétique conventionnelle*, se manifeste vers l'adolescence. Cette foi serait comparable à une idéologie et pourrait influencer la construction même de l'identité de l'adolescent ;
4. *la foi individualisante réflexive de l'âge adulte*, représente notamment une représentation du monde, en perdant ainsi son caractère d'idéologie ;
5. *la foi conjonctive*, naît en rapport avec le milieu de vie. La personne parvient à intégrer une sorte de souplesse dans la manière de se consolider elle-même en relation avec l'autre ;
6. *la foi universelle*, ne touche que très peu de personnes adultes. Elle serait caractérisée par une communion totale avec Dieu et un grand amour pour l'autre.

En visant la relation de la personne avec le divin ainsi que son impact sur le développement moral de l'individu, en 1991, Oser, Gmünder et Ridez ont interprété les six étapes énumérées ci-dessus en employant la méthode des dilemmes courantes. Le résultat de leur recherche, porté sur une population européenne, se résume ainsi<sup>4,5</sup>:

1. « Deus ex machina » - Dieu est tout puissant, et l'enfant invoque la dépendance au divin ;
2. « do ut des » - c'est le stade du marchandage ; l'enfant cherche à influencer la volonté de Dieu par un culte de la prière ;
3. « le déisme » - c'est le stade de l'autonomie ; une personne qui atteint ce stade pense qu'il est impossible d'exercer une influence sur Dieu ;

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<sup>3</sup> Fowler, J.W. *Stages of faith*, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981

<sup>4</sup> Oser, F., Gmünder, P. & Ridez, *L'homme, son développement religieux : Etude de structuralisme génétique*. Paris : Cerf., 1991

<sup>5</sup> Oser, Fritz K., Scarlett, W. George & Bucher, Anton, "Religious and spiritual development throughout the life span". In William Damon et Richard M. Lerner (Eds.). *Handbook of child psychology: theoretical models of human development* (pp. 942-998). New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2006

4. « le plan du salut » - la personne demeure responsable de ses actes et Dieu pourrait uniquement donner un sens à l'événement qui va lui arriver ;
5. « l'intersubjectivité » - la personne vit en communion avec Dieu ;
6. « la solidarité universelle » - la transcendance et l'immanence se compénètrent et rendent ainsi possible une solidarité universelle.

Les trois premières étapes correspondent à celles du développement cognitif de l'enfant, et elles pourraient être regardées comme de véritables stades dans le sens habituel en psychologie génétique. En revanche, les trois dernières étapes, concernent des personnes adultes, étant ainsi susceptibles d'être remises en question, notamment du fait que l'on juge certains traits comme caractéristiques d'un « stade final », un modèle d'aboutissement vers lequel convergeraient les développements individuels<sup>6</sup>.

Les études menées par Paul Gmünder en 1991 démontrent que la personne croyante franchit diverses étapes dans le développement de sa foi en Dieu. Selon l'âge, les étapes présentées ne sont pas franchies automatiquement. Il arrive que certaines personnes progressent dans leur vie spirituelle parfois de manière très rapide; en revanche, d'autres personnes parviennent à l'âge adulte avec une foi infantile. À chaque stade du développement religieux, nous pourrions identifier une image ou un visage de Dieu qui influence l'acte de l'écoute.

Nous analysons ensuite les différents visages de Dieu dans la perspective de Gmünder<sup>7</sup> :

1. *Dieu marionnettiste* (correspond à l'âge de 6 à 8 ans). Les enfants conçoivent Dieu comme celui qui nous protège, qui nous apporte la santé ou la maladie, la joie ou le désespoir, les épreuves ou le succès. Il faudrait accomplir sans cesse sa volonté par peur de briser notre relation avec Lui. C'est le Dieu marionnettiste qui nous manipule comme des marionnettes. On risque ainsi de pratiquer l'écoute de la peur!
2. *Dieu donnant-donnant* (correspond à l'âge de 9 à 11 ans). Les enfants comprennent qu'on pourrait influencer la volonté de Dieu par des prières, par des sacrifices et par l'obéissance de règles religieuses. A condition qu'on se soucie de Dieu et qu'on surmonte toutes les épreuves qu'il nous envoie, il nous chérira comme un père aimant et confiant; nous connaissons ainsi le bonheur, la santé et le succès. Dans cette interprétation on essaie d'acheter Dieu.

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<sup>6</sup> Brandt P.-Y., Kagata Spitteler Y., Gillieron Paléologue C., "La représentation de Dieu : Comment les enfants japonais dessinent Dieu", in *Archives de Psychologie*, 74 (290-291), (2009), pp. 171-203

<sup>7</sup> Oser, F., Gmünder, P. & Ridez, *op.cit.*, 1991

3. *Dieu lointain*. L'image de Dieu lointain pourrait surgir à partir de l'âge de 12 à 14 ans. Nous supposons qu'à cet âge-là nous sommes entièrement responsables de notre propre vie et de tout ce qui nous entoure. La liberté, le sens des événements, l'espérance sont des données qui dépendent de notre décision personnelle. En revanche, Dieu représente une donnée en dehors de l'agir humain. Autrement dit, l'être humain et Dieu sont très séparés; ce sont deux entités sans relation aucune. L'écoute est alors en panne.
4. *Dieu présent dans le dialogue interpersonnel*. Ce n'est que vers l'âge de 15 à 17 ans, la période au cours de laquelle la « gang » est importante, qu'on vit une ouverture vers Dieu, grâce à l'expérience des relations plus authentiques avec les autres. C'est l'apprentissage des relations d'amitié ou d'amour. Dans le dialogue interpersonnel, on fait l'expérience d'un Dieu qui nous fait signe à travers l'autre. C'est l'étape de la vie où les jeunes apprennent à faire confiance et à trouver un juste équilibre entre s'exprimer et écouter.
5. *Dieu co-créateur*. C'est idéalement à l'âge adulte qu'on puisse découvrir le visage de Dieu co-créateur. On devient adulte dans la foi, en développant une relation personnelle avec Dieu, marquée par l'écoute et par la parole. On partage ainsi avec Dieu ses joies et ses peines. De même, on écoute ce qu'il pourrait nous inspirer pour trouver ainsi des solutions et faire face aux défis de la vie. Dieu n'est plus celui qui est la cause de tout et qui nous manipule comme des marionnettes. Au contraire, Dieu nous crée à son image en faisant de nous des êtres capables de créer à leur tour. Avec Dieu, nous sommes co-créateurs, car nous faisons des choix libres pour construire un monde meilleur.

En 1964 Goldman, intéressé plus particulièrement par les enfants, décrit trois périodes dans le développement du concept de Dieu chez eux, au moyen d'un test élaboré à partir d'histoires tirées de la Bible, ainsi que de dessins recueillis auprès des enfants et des adolescents. Il démontre que, chez les enfants chrétiens âgés de cinq à neuf ans, Dieu est un personnage anthropomorphe, qui possède des pouvoirs magiques et qui vit au ciel. Lors de cette première période, il est parfois difficile de faire une distinction nette entre Dieu et Jésus. Goldman situe une deuxième période entre neuf et douze ans, où les enfants considèrent Dieu comme une personne ayant des attributs surnaturels, pouvant faire ce que les êtres humains ne le peuvent pas ; par exemple Dieu entend toutes les pensées des gens. Dans la troisième période, qui concerne les enfants âgés de plus de treize ans, Dieu est représenté dans des termes symboliques et abstraits<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Goldman, R., "Researches in religions thinking" in *Educational Research*, no 6, (1964), pp 139-145

En 1984, Nye et Carlson réalisent leurs travaux en partant des théories du développement cognitif élaborées par Piaget<sup>9</sup>. Ils ont interrogé 180 enfants âgés de cinq à seize ans, appartenant à trois religions ou confessions différentes (protestante, catholique et juive) et qui suivaient un enseignement religieux. Les expérimentateurs ont leur posé des questions sur Dieu, sur son apparence, sur son habitat, sur sa famille, etc. Les réponses des enfants ont été classées sur la base de leur degré d'abstraction, avec deux niveaux : le niveau *concret* (représenté par des réponses telles que « cheveux bruns, yeux bleus ») et le niveau *abstrait* (« personne ne sait, personne ne l'a jamais vu »). Les auteurs ont conclu ainsi que le niveau d'abstraction des réponses des enfants augmente en général avec l'âge.

### **LES PREMIERES RECHERCHES SUR L'IMAGE DE DIEU CHEZ L'ENFANT ET LES RECHERCHES ACTUELLES**

L'image de Dieu représente l'un des items culturels les plus stables, tant au niveau individuel que collectif. Elle sert en tant que modèle et source d'informations, ainsi que d'instrument de régularisation et d'organisation de la conduite.

A l'heure actuelle les recherches effectuées sur les représentations de Dieu sont fort variées d'un point de vue méthodologique, mais, de façon globale, elles s'appuient sur les méthodes verbales : des questionnaires, des entretiens, des listes d'adjectifs pour décrire Dieu, des associations libres, etc. Les images picturales de Dieu ont fait l'objet d'un nombre assez limité de recherches psychologiques. L'emploi des dessins dans la représentation de Dieu trouve ses origines aux Etats Unies où en 1944 Ernest Harms recueille les dessins à plus de 5000 enfants âgés de trois à quatorze ans.<sup>10</sup> A partir de ces dessins il établit les stades du développement religieux.

Harms a donné comme consigne aux enfants de dessiner Dieu, soit l'être le plus important qui existe. Les données recueillies représentent des dessins appartenant à 800 enfants âgés de trois à six ans, à 800 enfants âgés de sept à douze ans et à plus de 4000 enfants âgés de plus de douze ans. A ces trois groupes d'âge correspondent autant de stades du développement religieux. Dans le premier stade, « le stade du conte de fées », on observe une très grande uniformité de dessins. Très souvent, Dieu est représenté par un portrait de roi ou de père, vivant dans une maison qui se trouve sur un nuage. Dans le deuxième stade, « le stade réaliste », les enfants dessinent un portrait de Dieu moins fantaisiste et plus sobre. On remarque une apparition des symboles religieux, la croix par exemple. Dieu est représenté

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<sup>9</sup> Nye, C.W. & Carlson, J.S., "The development of the concept of God in children" in *Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 145(1), (1984), pp. 37-142

<sup>10</sup> Harms, H., "The development of religious experience in children" in *American Journal of Sociology*, no. 50, (1944), pp.112-122

par une figure humaine, par exemple un père, mais il est également représenté par des images d'ange. Le troisième stade est appelé « le stade individualiste ». On observe ici une plus grande variété de dessins. Les images sont créatives, mystiques et abstraites. En effet, les enfants sont en capacité de lier la représentation de Dieu à leur propre histoire et leurs images deviennent ainsi beaucoup plus personnelles.

En 1996, juste après la chute du Mur de Berlin, Helmut Hanisch reprend la technique du dessin pour étudier les représentations de Dieu auprès de deux mille enfants allemands âgés de 7 à 16 ans<sup>11</sup>. Hanisch, constate avec étonnement qu'il y a davantage de représentations anthropomorphiques de Dieu parmi les enfants qui proviennent de l'Allemagne postcommuniste que de ceux qui proviennent de l'Allemagne de l'Ouest. Selon Barret l'éducation religieuse dans les écoles de l'Allemagne de l'Ouest diminue les représentations de Dieu, en l'associant à un prototype d'agent international qui est celui de l'être humain - Barrett, 2001). Il saisit cette occasion historique pour comparer les représentations des enfants qui ont évolué dans un environnement religieux et idéologique très différent, dans l'Allemagne de l'Est (ex RDA) et dans l'Allemagne de l'Ouest. Les résultats de son étude lui permettent de conclure à une différence, au niveau du développement des images de Dieu, entre les enfants qui ont reçu un enseignement religieux et ceux qui n'en ont pas eu. A Leipzig, la grande majorité d'enfants âgés de plus de 12 ans n'avaient pas reçu d'éducation religieuse et dessinaient un Dieu anthropomorphique comme le font les enfants en bas âge. Selon Brandt 90% de représentations anthropomorphiques appartiennent aux enfants âgés de moins de douze ans et plus de 75% aux enfants âgés de douze à seize ans.

Les études menées par les Harms et Hanisch montrent que la représentation de Dieu varie selon l'âge des enfants, et également que le passage d'une image anthropomorphique à une image non anthropomorphique ne dépend pas uniquement de l'âge des sujets.

Pitts a étudié l'impact des différentes dénominations chrétiennes sur le type d'image de Dieu. Il a découvert que les enfants issus de familles Mormones dessinent davantage d'images anthropomorphes de Dieu, tandis que les enfants appartenant à l'Eglise luthérienne et catholique produisent plus d'images inspirées par la Bible ou encore de différents symboles religieux conventionnels pour leur milieu. Les images les plus abstraites de Dieu ont été produites par des enfants issus du milieu unitarien. Ladd & McIntosh n'ont pas trouvé de différences significatives dans l'utilisation de symboles pour exprimer l'idée de Dieu chez les enfants issus de huit dénominations chrétiennes. En ce qui concerne le facteur de l'âge, on observe la même tendance développementale<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> Hanisch, H., *Die zeichnerische Entwicklung des Gottesbildes bei Kindern und Jugendlichen*. Stuttgart/Leipzig: Calwer/Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1996

<sup>12</sup> Ladd, K. L. & McIntosh, D. N., *Meaning, God, and prayer: Physical and metaphysical aspects of social support*. *Mental Health, Religion and Culture*, 11, 2008, pp. 23-38

Robert Landy, psychotérapeute américain, dans son livre *How we see God and why it matters* paru en 1999 a recueilli 700 représentations du divin dessinées par des enfants du monde entier, âgés de quatre à douze ans. L'auteur n'a malheureusement pas précisé la méthodologie utilisée, mais son étude avait été menée pour montrer la façon dont les enfants de tous les continents se représentaient Dieu selon leur appartenance culturelle.

En revanche, Deconchy a utilisé des associations libres (verbales) pour étudier l'image de Dieu chez les enfants catholiques<sup>13</sup>. Le chercheur a constaté que les enfants de moins de onze ans apportent des associations anthropomorphes tandis que les enfants plus âgés utilisent des associations plus abstraites et plus vagues. Barrett et Keil (1996) ont montré dans leur étude que même les adultes utilisent implicitement un concept anthropomorphe de Dieu bien qu'ils connaissent et expriment un autre concept de Dieu théologiquement plus correct<sup>14</sup>.

En 2009, Brandt et ses collaborateurs ont proposé une recherche de l'image de Dieu chez les enfants, afin de valoriser les résultats proposés par les travaux précédents. Ainsi, ils ont repris le recueil des dessins qui représentaient Dieu, réalisés par des enfants japonais. Ils ont mis en exergue les quatre facteurs qui déterminent la représentation de Dieu: le facteur de développement, le genre de l'enfant, le facteur culturel ainsi que l'éducation religieuse. Ensuite, l'équipe du Professeur Brandt a décidé de recueillir des dessins réalisés par des enfants appartenant à un autre contexte culturel : la Suisse, la Russie (Saint-Pétersbourg et la Sibérie, la Bouriatie), le Japon.

En 2009 Brandt et all ont étudié l'influence de la culture sur la représentation de Dieu chez les enfants japonais, âgés de 7 à 14 ans, qui suivaient leurs études dans des écoles bouddhistes ou publiques<sup>15</sup>. Les chercheurs ont découvert, comme dans l'étude de Hanisch, que l'éducation religieuse (le bouddhisme), favorise la production des représentations non anthropomorphiques chez les enfants plus âgés.

Le premier ouvrage publié en 2010 par l'équipe ISSCR a eu comme point de départ cette base de données et a mis en exergue l'influence de ces quatre facteurs évoqués auparavant. La stratégie des enfants appartenant à un certain contexte culturel s'accorde avec les modalités de représentation prêtées à d'autres contextes très différents. Un travail de comparaison de cette base de données est en cours. Les résultats partiels de l'analyse de ces dessins, réalisée par plus de 100 descripteurs qui

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<sup>13</sup> Deconchy, Jean-Pierre, *Structure génétique de l'idée de Dieu chez des catholiques français : garçons et filles de 8 à 16 ans*. Bruxelles, Lumen Vitae, 1967

<sup>14</sup> Barrett, J. L. & Keil, F. C., "Conceptualizing a nonnatural entity; anthropomorphism in God concepts" in *Cognitive Psychology*, 31, (1996), pp. 219-247

<sup>15</sup> Brandt P.-Y., Kagata Spitteler Y., Gillieron Paléologue C., "La représentation de Dieu : Comment les enfants japonais dessinent Dieu", in *Archives de Psychologie*, 74 (290-291), (2009), pp. 171-203

emploient la méthode statistique, ont été présentés en août 2010, à la Conférence Internationale à Bari. Afin de réaliser une analyse numérisée de ces données, cette base fait dorénavant partie d'Unil-Project « Digital Humanities ».

## CONCLUSION

Même si les enfants font partie d'une communauté religieuse ou d'une communauté ou les représentations du Dieu ne sont pas valorisées, il est évident que les enfants ont des idées sur liées a Dieu et qui résultent de leur relations avec les parents<sup>16</sup>. La relation enfant-parent est la clé qui détermine les enfants d'avoir une image se Dieu caresseur, puissant, amoureux ou un Dieu qui puni ou distant.

Les besoins spirituels des enfants sont bien attachés aux besoins socio-émotionnels (amour, confiance, etc.) qui constituent la base d'un attachement qui conforte l'enfant et qui lui assure le bon développement de la personnalité.

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<sup>16</sup> Roehlkepartain, E.C., King Wagener L., Benson P.L., P.E., *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence*, Sage Publication, 2005, pp.200-201



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## ETHICAL ASPECTS IN TREATING ADOLESCENTS WITH CHRONIC DISEASE

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**ABSTRACT.** Chronic disease during the period of adolescence demands a lot of specific issues due to the particular psychological, physical and social development of this stage. Patient-doctor relationship, communication, medical consultation, information, sharing an uncomfortable diagnosis with parents or involving the family in the treatment should be carefully approached. Privacy, confidentiality and informed consent are ethical aspects that must be also taken into consideration. The management of the chronic disease during adolescence becomes a great challenge to the medical team. The practice of adolescence medicine is always a challenge to resolve ethical dilemmas.

**Keywords:** *adolescent, chronic disease, ethics;*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Chronic disease is a long-lasting condition that can be controlled but not cured; the term is applied if the condition lasts for more than three months. In the United States, chronic disease is the leading cause of death and disabilities being responsible for 70% of all deaths per year.

Chronic disease and disabilities are topics that produce a lot of controversies in our aging society. The ethical dimensions in case of chronic illness and chronic care must be ethically and philosophically analyzed. Concepts like patient's rights, autonomy and best interest need to be revised in order to treat the patient with dignity and justice.<sup>1</sup>

There are many issues involved in the definition of chronic health conditions. Some of them are referring to duration, age of onset (congenital or acquired), limitation of age appropriate activity, visibility, expected survival, mobility, physiological functioning, cognition, emotional/social impairment, sensory functioning, communication impairment, course and uncertainty.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jennings, B., Callahan, D., Caplan, A. L. (1988). *Ethical challenges of chronic illness*. Hastings Center Report, 18(1), pp.1-16

<sup>2</sup> Suris, J.C., Parera, N.P., Puig, C. (1996). Chronic illness and emotional distress in adolescence. *Journal of Adolescent Health*. 19(2), pp. 153-156.

## 2. CHRONIC DISEASE IN ADOLESCENCE

One quarter of all people living in the world is between the ages of 10 and 24 years. The World Health Organization (2014) defines adolescents as those people between 10 and 19 years of age. The great majority of adolescents are, therefore, included in the age-based definition of “child”, adopted by the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, as a person under the age of 18 years. Other overlapping terms used are *youth* (defined by the United Nations as 15–24 years) and *young people* (10–24 years), a term used by WHO and others to combine adolescents and youth.

Adolescence is a specific period with psychological, emotional, developmental, healthy and social needs. In most of the developed countries, the gap between childhood and adulthood is growing longer because people are more focused on education and training. Family or social aspects are postponed responsibilities for a later decade of their life. The effects of the chronic illness are influencing all aspects of the adolescent life.

Among in-school adolescent, the rate of chronic disease is around 10%. Rate is surely higher if mental and physical disabilities are also taken into consideration. Globally, higher rates are among males, rural residents; poverty, a lower social and educational level are also important variables.<sup>3</sup>

Dealing with chronic disease in case of adolescent is a great challenge not only for the medical team but also for family members. Due to irreversible changes of the body and mind and the unique transformation from childhood to adulthood, the chronic illness has a great impact on bio-psycho-social development of the patient. The treatment of the disease, the prevention of ill health and the promotion of healthy behaviors are taking place on an unstable territory where physical, psychological and social changes are happening very rapidly. The creation of adolescent medicine as a subspecialty was imposed and not many countries have specific clinics who adequately meet the standards that these patients deserve.<sup>4</sup>

## 3. IMPORTANT FACTORS IN TREATING ADOLESCENTS: COMMUNICATION, MEDICAL EXAMINATION AND SHARING DIAGNOSTIC

Treating adolescents with chronic disease is a challenging process. During the long lasting treatment of a patient with a chronic disease, several types of relationships are changing between doctor and patient: if the diagnostic is identified at

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<sup>3</sup> Idem, pp.153-156.

<sup>4</sup> Michaud, P.P., Suris, J.C., Viner, R. (2004). The Adolescent with chronic condition. Part II: healthcare provision. *Arch Dis Child*, 89, pp. 943-949.

an early age, this relationship passes over a lot of changes and dilemmas. Starting with a paternalistic approach, continuing with a balanced one and finishing in an autonomous way, the interaction between them is traversing years of changes through the developmental stages of the childhood to adulthood. The physical transformation is subject to changes due to the natural process of growth but also limited by the chronic disease. The emotional and psychological development is tumultuously prevented by disease's effects (low self-esteem, introversion, self-isolation, low confidence in their capacities etc). The patient has irreversible and sometimes quickly changes; meanwhile treatment and medical team should continue and adapt to the situation.

Teenagers with chronic disease develop preferences and priorities regarding health care (starting with the hospital image and ending with particularities of the doctor-patient relationship). Studies prove that even the design of the hospital is important for the adolescent.<sup>5</sup>

Doctor-patient relationship is a very important factor in treating adolescents and many studies proved the real therapeutically effect of this connection, mentioning consequences near to placebo effect.<sup>6</sup> Even if the relation should respect the privacy, the examination of a person under 18 should be done in the context of the family. Doctor's skills are very important for creating a trustful relationship and it is up to the pediatrician to create the best shape and the most comfortable atmosphere for both patient and family.

Most of the protocol suggests that doctor should alternate the communication (seeing the family together with the patient, than seeing the patient alone and ending with communicating with all of them, again. Communicating to parents alone after consulting/interviewing the adolescent should be always avoided for not losing the patient's trust. For teenagers, physician trust and respect have the highest rating, followed by patient power and control and then caring and closeness in the patient-doctor relationship.<sup>7</sup>

Because during adolescence people start to explore unhealthy behaviors and keep these practices away from parent's view, doctor should give the change and encourage the patient to disclose these behaviors in order to have a complete image of their impact on adolescent's chronic disease. For example, regular smoking rates rise from 1% at 11 years to 24% at 15 years, and over 90% of adult smokers began smoking

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<sup>5</sup> Ullan, A.M., Belver, M.H., Fernandez, E., Serrano, I., Delgado, J., Herrero, C. (2012). Hospital Designs for Patients of Different Ages Preferences of Hospitalized Adolescents, Nonhospitalized Adolescents, Parents, and Clinical Staff. *Environment and Behavior*, 44 (5), pp. 668-694.

<sup>6</sup> Di Blasi, Z., Harkness, E., Ernst, E., Georgiou, A., Kleijnen, J. (2001). Influence of context effects on health outcomes: a systematic review. *Lancet*, 357(9258), pp. 757-762.

<sup>7</sup> Britto, M. T., DeVellis, R. F., Hornung, R. W., DeFries, G. H., Atherton, H. D. & Slap, G. B. (2004). Health care preferences and priorities of adolescents with chronic illnesses. *Pediatrics*, 114(5), pp. 1272-1280.

during their teenage years. Other behaviors should also be taken into consideration: alcohol, sexual activity and contraception, pregnancy, drugs. It is important to get used to ask questions in a specific way to an adolescent so he/she can be easily mention the true answers. The *HEADS* questions are referring to Home life, Education, Activities, Driving, Drugs, Diet, Sex, Sleep and Suicide.<sup>8</sup>

Professional conversation between patients and doctors shapes diagnosis, initiates therapy and must establishes a caring relationship. The degree to which these activities are successful depends, in large part, on the communication and interpersonal skills of the physician.<sup>9</sup> They usually prefer communication the diagnostic directly to them rather than to their parents. Younger adolescents are more interested in keeping confidentiality of their health information, and adolescents with chronic illnesses are more interested in involving parents in their care than are adolescents without chronic illnesses.<sup>10</sup> Teens seem to mistrust physicians because of their previous experiences of being accompanied to the doctor by parents. Family physicians that are interesting in creating a trustful relationship with their adolescent patients should begin while patients are still children, talk directly to the child, rather than exclusively to the parent, and see the child in privacy for portions of each visit.<sup>11</sup>

Adolescence is a sensitive age, where the corporal image is very important and usually influences by a subjective evaluation. Frequently worried about the physical aspect, the teenagers are appreciating privacy and intimacy. Adolescents value all aspects of privacy and most of them are thinking about their physical safety during physical examinations, as well as their visibility to others. Studies proved that they are more comfortable when examinations are performed by female rather than male providers.<sup>12</sup> 50% of girls prefer a female provider and 23% boys prefer a male provider.

The study of Kappahn et al<sup>13</sup> shows that during examination younger girls usually want a parent present, while younger boys had no preference. Girls with a female physician are more likely to have private time and only 50–60% had spoken privately with their doctor.

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<sup>8</sup> Segal, T. (2008). Adolescence: What the cystic fibrosis team needs to know. *J R Soc Med*, 101, pp. 15–27.

<sup>9</sup> Duffy, F.D., Gordon, G.H., Whelan, G., Cole-Kelly, K., Frankel, R., Buffone, N., Lofton, S., Wallace, M., Goode, L., Langdon, L. (2004). Assessing competence in communication and interpersonal skills: the Kalamazoo II report. *Acad Med*, 79(6), pp. 495-507.

<sup>10</sup> Klostermann, B.K., Slap, G.B., Nebrig, D.M., Tivorsak, T.L., Britto, M.T. (2005). Earning trust and losing it: adolescents' views on trusting physicians. *J Fam Pract*, 54, pp. 679–687.

<sup>11</sup> Cogswell, B.E. (1985). Cultivating the trust of adolescent patients. *Fam Med*. 17(6), pp. 254-258.

<sup>12</sup> Britto, M. T., Tyvorsak, T. & Slap, G. B. (2010). Adolescents' Needs for Health Care Privacy. *Pediatrics*, 126(6), pp. 1469-1476.

<sup>13</sup> Kappahn, C.J., Wilson, K.M., Klein, J.D. (1999). Adolescent girls' and boys' preferences for provider gender and confidentiality in their healthcare. *J Adolesc Health*, 25, pp. 131–142.

This gender difference in dealing with chronic disease is frequently explored by studies.<sup>14</sup> Suris studied the emotional distress and the suicidal thought among adolescents with and without chronic illness. The study identifies a significantly greater proportion of females with chronic illness who reported emotional problems, feeling in a bad mood, feeling sad, believing nothing amused them, having suicidal thoughts, expressing depressive symptomatology and having personal problems needing professional help. In contrast, no significant group differences were found for males in non-chronic illness group and chronic illness group. No gender differences were found regarding recent contact with a mental health specialist.

The right to be examined with no present parent depends on the country. Legally speaking, patient under 18 is not supposed to be examined without a caregiver's approval. In UK, for example, 16-18 years old patients can consent to treatment but cannot refuse life-saving treatment. The legal criteria for competence usually require the ability to give informed consent and understand the benefits and risks of treatment or non-treatment.<sup>15</sup>

The ethical approach of the doctor should balance the beneficence and autonomy in the benefit of each individual patient. Ending with the paternalist model (appropriate to the doctor-little patient relationship) and the independent model expected by the adolescent, the physician should fulfill a lot of criteria (all legal) who generate dilemma: the right to confidentiality is one of the fundamental rights of the patient. But, on the sliding scale of the adolescent maturity, the child's decisions override the parents.<sup>16</sup> Who's in charge of the decision: should doctor respect the patient's decision (anyway, it is the obligation to respect the teenager's privacy and confidentiality increases as is the maturity increase) are parents should come first? Apart this difficulty of deciding who's decision is first, doctor is falling into another dilemma: is he having a paternalist mode by adopting his role of benefactor or he's an external figure in order to empower the patient and to guide him to his own decision?

A special issue regarding chronic illness in adolescence regards compliance. Non-compliance is an often unrecognized or frustrating reality, which physicians find difficult to accept or deal with. Possible determinants of adolescents' level of compliance may be divided into demographic factors, patient and family characteristics, aspects of the illness and treatment regimen, and quality of the patient-doctor relationship. Compliance should be viewed as a reflexion of the experience of chronic illness as well as the expression of specific adolescent developmental issues.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Suris, *op.cit.* pp.153-157.

<sup>15</sup> Segal, *op.cit.* pp. 15-27

<sup>16</sup> Pavilanis, A.V. (1989). Ethical Questions in Adolescent Contraception. *Can Fam Physician*, 35, pp. 1317-1320.

<sup>17</sup> Alvin, P., Rey, C., Frappier, J.Y. (1995). Compliance thérapeutique chez l'adolescent malade chronique. *Archives de pédiatrie*, 2(9), pp. 874-882.

Adolescents with chronic conditions had lower emotional well-being scores, worried more about dying soon and about school or future work, and had poorer body image.<sup>18</sup> (Wolman et al, 1994) The consequences of their disease have great impact on their lives and also their family's lives.<sup>19</sup> The noncompliance among patients (especially teenagers) is a major problem. Studies are describing that noncompliance is inversely related to survival and that patient characteristics may be predictive of compliance under certain circumstances.<sup>20</sup>

Maintaining informational privacy (keeping information confidential) are the most salient to the adolescents. Younger adolescents are usually concerned with information being disclosed to others, whereas older adolescents worried more about information being disclosed to parents. Other privacy aspects (psychological, social, and physical) are also important. To protect psychological privacy, adolescents are cautious about revealing sensitive information for fear of being judged by providers.

The clinician should be careful not to be judgmental or scolding because this may rapidly close down communication. Sometimes the patient gains therapeutic benefit just from venting concerns in a safe environment with a caring clinician.<sup>21</sup> To protect social privacy, adolescences are reluctant to talk with unfamiliar or multiple providers and they don't not want to discuss issues that they perceived as unrelated to their health care.<sup>22</sup>

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Treating adolescents with chronic disease is a challenge to the medical team. The effects of the illness are determined by the irreversible changes of the patient in all aspects of his profile (psychological, physical and social) and influenced by the patient's family support. Adolescence medicine is attempted by the unique relationship between doctor and patient always submitted to various ethical dilemmas.

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<sup>18</sup> Wolman, C., Resnick, M. D., Harris, L. J., Blum, R. W. (1994). *Emotional well-being among adolescents with and without chronic conditions*. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 15(3), pp. 199-204

<sup>19</sup> Iorga, M. Starcea, M., Munteanu., M., Sztankovszky, L.Z. (2014). Psychological and social problems of children with kidney chronic disease. *European Journal of Science and Theology*. 10 (1). pp. 179-188.

<sup>20</sup> Wiedebusch, S. Konrad, M. Foppe, H. Reichwald-Klugger, E. Schaefer, F. Schreiber, V. Muthny, F.A. (2010). Health-related quality of life, psychosocial strains, and coping in parents of children with chronic renal failure *Pediatric Nephrology*, 25(8), pp. 1477-1485.

<sup>21</sup> Teutsch, C., (2003). Patient-doctor communication. *Med Clin North Am*. 87(5), pp. 1115-1145.

<sup>22</sup> Britto (2010), *idem*, pp. 1469-1476.

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