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CONTENT – SOMMAIRE – INHALT – CUPRINS

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DES IMAGES ATTAQUEES :
LA SOUPE SUR LES TABLEAUX
ET LE DECLIN DE LA CONTEMPLATION

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ABSTRACT. In 2022, two cans of tomato soup were thrown over Van Gogh's *Sunflowers* at the National Gallery in London by two climate activists. The aim of this paper is not to explain the motives behind the protest in terms of environmental activism, but to address the implications of this phenomenon for the status of artistic images in our time. The protest in question is one of the many symptoms of the fact that images associated with a pure state of gaze have become morally dubious due to a certain moralistic turn in contemporary discourses on art. Consequently, what seems to be lost in today's movements of moralizing aesthetics, whether in art or in environmental activism, is not only the "aura" of an artwork, but also the idea that the contemplation of beauty in and for itself would provide a foundation for humans' moral vocation. In a gaseous state of art (Y. Michaud) in which the transient *effects* of things are more important than their *essence*, the moralistic tendencies combined with the lack of moral foundations can no longer conceive of the ethical effects of images without explicit moral content, thus calling for a new form of heteronomy in art.

Keywords: Kantian aesthetics, ethics, contemplation, natural beauty, autonomy of art, environmental activism.

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*La destruction d'une œuvre d'art a pour nous toujours
quelque chose de l'ordre du sacrilège religieux.*
Hans-Georg Gadamer, « *L'actualité du beau : l'art comme jeu, symbole et fête* »[2]

1. Au-delà de la contemplation

On peut aisément constater qu'aujourd'hui, les images qui maintiennent le spectateur dans un état contemplatif sont devenues profondément suspectes. Par contemplation j'entends, en un premier sens, une relation spécifique entre le regard et l'objet regardé, régie par un principe d'autonomie et d'autotélie de l'image, qui est ainsi dissociée de toute fonction pratique ou instrumentale. Bien évidemment, le déclin de la contemplation est principalement dû à toutes les pratiques artistiques qui, du performance *Rhythm 0* de Marina Abramović au *Blind Bite* de Paul Neagu, pour ne citer que deux exemples, ont conduit à des attitudes complètement éloignées de la contemplation désintéressée. Pourtant, le public agressant librement le corps d'une artiste ou mangeant une œuvre d'art comestible n'est pas la seule forme artistique participative dans laquelle l'art est délibérément plongé afin de remplacer la contemplation. Ce qui change, ce ne sont pas seulement les attitudes à l'égard de l'art, mais aussi le contenu de l'art lui-même et les manières critiques de le juger. Selon Carole Talon-Hugon, on assiste aujourd'hui à un nouveau tournant moralisateur dans l'art, qui tend à remplacer la doctrine dominante de « l'art pour l'art » des modernes, les libertés artistiques et le formalisme par de nouvelles formes d'art engagé, voire militant, en suivant l'agenda des nouvelles expositions ou des festivals de cinéma[3]. Comme le montrent, à titre d'exemple, le film *I, Daniel Blake* de Ken Loach en 2016, les installations de l'artiste Adel Abdessemed ou les expositions de peinture organisées à la suite de la guerre en Ukraine en 2022, l'art se préoccupe de plus en plus des causes éthiques, politiques et sociétales du monde : la pauvreté, la guerre, la crise des migrants, la cause décoloniale, le SIDA, le racisme, les minorités, le féminisme, la violence, le réchauffement climatique et ainsi de suite. Il n'est pas question ici de juger la légitimité des causes sociétales ou éthiques qui substituent une nouvelle forme d'hétéronomie artistique à l'ancienne autonomie de l'art en soumettant les pratiques artistiques à des critères d'évaluation extra-esthétiques.

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[2] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Gesammelte Werke*, Band 8, *Ästhetik und Poetik I: Kunst als Aussage*, Tübingen, J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1993, p. 124.

[3] Carole Talon-Hugon, *L'art sous contrôle : nouvel agenda sociétal et censures militantes*, Paris, P.U.F., 2019.

Dans la plupart des cas, à l'exception des formes notables de censure ou de boycott, c'est l'art lui-même qui semble décider d'abandonner son autonomie en se mettant au service des différentes causes politiques ou éthiques. Mais si l'on revient à l'histoire de l'art moderne, il ne faut pas se tromper sur le prétendu primat de la forme sur le contenu, qui a souvent accompagné le devenir autonome de l'art, dans la mesure où le contenu même des tableaux tels que *Guernica* ou le *Massacre en Corée* de Picasso ne serait pas moins important que leur forme. Ce que je veux suivre ici n'est pas la manière dont un artiste décide de donner un contenu moral explicite à une forme d'art ou de soumettre son œuvre à des jugements extra-esthétiques, en raison de convictions personnelles ou des doctrines telles que le pacifisme ou le communisme de Picasso. Ce qui est encore plus problématique aujourd'hui, c'est que les actions de contestation *non artistiques* s'opposent à l'art tout court au nom de la vie par une forme de substitution : en prenant pour cible symbolique une œuvre d'art autonome, la contestation vise en fait l'attitude contemplative du public. C'est ce que nous montre un événement choquant survenu à la National Gallery de Londres le 14 octobre 2022.

Deux militants écologistes ont aspergé de soupe à la tomate les *Tournesols* de Van Gogh avant de prononcer le message : « Qu'est-ce qui vaut le plus ? L'art ou la vie ? ». En tant que geste symbolique, l'attaque n'a pas endommagé le tableau, puisqu'il était protégé par une vitre, mais elle a interrompu, en revanche, la contemplation publique de la toile. Sans doute serait-il exagéré de conclure qu'un tel incident annonce un déclin de la contemplation esthétique toute entière, même si le geste s'est multiplié tout au long de l'année 2022 dans d'autres galeries et musées d'Europe, où d'autres activistes de tel ou tel mouvement écologiste ont symboliquement attaqué de manière similaire des tableaux tels que les paysages de Constable ou de Monet. Que dit, alors, cette série d'actions sur la manière dont la fonction éthique des images est perçue aujourd'hui ? Pourquoi quelqu'un considère-t-il qu'une attaque, même purement symbolique, contre un chef-d'œuvre serait un moyen de protestation approprié ? Pour répondre à cette question, il faut déterminer si cette nouvelle forme de contestation porte vraiment sur l'art lui-même, ce qui n'est pas, d'ailleurs, très évident. Il serait tentant de qualifier ce geste d'immature, de barbare ou de fanatique, et de l'inclure dans la série des actes de vandalisme gratuits visant des cibles aléatoires dont la valeur culturelle est ignorée par les militants. En effet, le geste est à peine classifiable. D'une part, il semble appartenir aux actes typiques des militants dont le but est simplement d'attirer l'attention sur une cause par un geste quelconque, comme c'est le cas avec l'interruption d'un match de football, le blocage d'une autoroute ou l'attaque contre le siège d'une institution de l'état.

D'autre part, ce geste s'accompagne, pourtant, d'une déclaration sur l'art qui fait que la cible ne semble plus aléatoire : la vie vaut plus que l'art, donc la préservation de la nature et de la vie doit avoir la priorité sur la préservation des tableaux dans une galerie. L'attaque affirme ainsi par des moyens non artistiques ce que l'art a souvent cherché à affirmer sur lui-même : la séparation de l'art et de la vie, à savoir le fait que les valeurs de l'art ne dépendent pas des valeurs de la vie, mais seulement de l'art lui-même.

2. *Happening* et substitution

Il faut à nouveau s'interroger sur le caractère non artistique de ces moyens de contestation. Ce qui les rend non artistiques, c'est précisément leur apparente opposition à l'art, et non le vandalisme en soi. C'est, donc, précisément le critère de la présence ou de l'absence d'une *intention* artistique qui permet de distinguer ce qui est de l'art de ce qui ne l'est pas dans le cas de deux objets ou gestes identiques[4]. Pour renverser le prétendu primat de l'art sur la vie, il est donc nécessaire que les militants ne fassent pas de leur geste un art. Mais, si le message des deux militantes n'avait pas explicitement indiqué qu'elles plaçaient la vie au-dessus de l'art, en se situant ainsi en dehors de l'art lui-même, rien d'autre dans leur geste n'aurait exclu l'appartenance de l'événement à la sphère d'un *happening* artistique. En tant qu'art, le geste aurait signifié la rencontre de la transgression représentée par un acte de vandalisme (fût-il symbolique) et d'une forme d'art moralisateur destiné à attirer l'attention sur une cause extra-artistique. D'une part, rien n'empêche de penser à des formes d'art contemporain dont le contenu serait la crise climatique ou la pauvreté. De l'autre, le vandalisme est déjà familier au monde de l'art en tant que forme artistique en soi, comme ce fut le cas avec le *happening* de l'artiste Pierre Pinoncelli qui a uriné dans une copie de l'urinoir de Duchamp avant de la martelé dans le but de revitaliser le fameux readymade face à la perte de sa force de provocation. Bien que l'art transgressif et l'art moralisateur semblent s'opposer de la même manière que la contestation des normes s'oppose à la soumission à un principe moral, il n'est pas impossible d'identifier un art à la fois transgressif et engagé, qui vise à faire d'un geste choquant un moyen de protestation plus puissant contre la réalité qu'il remet en cause. C'est ce que nous montre une image telle que *Red Flag* de l'artiste Judy Chicago : bien qu'il s'agisse d'une transgression par rapport au tabou des sécrétions corporelles, l'image d'un

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4   Voir Arthur C. Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Common Place. A Philosophy of Art*, Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, Harvard University Press, 1981.

tampon taché de sang menstruel est également un art engagé qui proteste contre la façon dont l'art et la société ont privé les femmes d'images de leurs expériences typiques telles que l'accouchement ou la menstruation.

C'est, pourtant, à l'autre extrême que l'on trouve des attaques contre des œuvres d'art commises par des individus excentriques et solitaires dont les motivations restent en dehors de tout mouvement de pensée cohérent. Ce qui rend l'attaque des militantes écologistes contre le tableau de Van Gogh si difficile à classer, c'est précisément le fait qu'elle se situe à mi-chemin. Ni *performance* délibérément artistique, ni acte de pure vandalisme commis par un individu excentrique et solitaire, l'attaque des deux militants contre le tableau de Van Gogh ne se confond ni avec une révolution immanente au monde de l'art, ni avec l'utilisation par l'éco-fanatisme des moyens de protestation arbitraires, puérils ou barbares dans le seul but d'attirer l'attention d'un public quelconque. Le fait que la soupe à la tomate n'ait pas détruit le tableau mais interrompu sa contemplation est une manière de remettre en cause la contemplation désintéressée plutôt que la raison d'être d'une toile peinte par un artiste. La situation semble être l'inverse de celle de l'attentat contre Charlie Hebdo. Alors que les terroristes ont physiquement pris pour cible des êtres humaines tout en niant le droit à l'existence d'un dessin caricatural diffusé dans le système médiatique, les militantes écologistes de Londres ont symboliquement pris pour cible l'original d'un tableau en s'attaquant en fait à l'attitude contemplative d'un public qui apprécie la nature peinte par Van Gogh et ignore en même temps la vraie nature vivante qui souffre. Il n'est pas indifférent que le geste des activistes ait été immédiatement associé à un précédent historique tout aussi célèbre : la toile de la *Vénus au miroir* réalisée par Velázquez, vandalisée au hachoir en 1914 par la suffragette Mary Richardson à la même National Gallery de Londres. Il devient alors évident que l'attaque n'est pas une question d'objet, mais de regard : bien entendu, ce n'est pas la nature ou la femme qui sont les objets de l'attaque des écologistes et des féministes, mais, tout au contraire, la manière de lier le regard du spectateur à l'objet regardé dans un état de pure contemplation.

Il s'agit, semble-t-il, d'un acte substitutif de l'image et du réel au sens donné à cette notion par Horst Bredekamp : l'image est traitée comme un corps réel, et le corps comme une représentation visuelle à travers un acte de substitution qui, dans ses diverses manifestations, s'est avéré soit productif, soit destructif[5]. Mais pour que la substitution fonctionne, il doit y avoir une sorte de correspondance entre le spectateur et l'objet du regard que l'on attaque par cette substitution même. Le regard humain contemplant une nature morte, tout comme le regard masculin

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[5] Horst Bredekamp, *Theorie des Bildakts. Frankfurter Adorno-Vorlesungen 2007*, Berlin, Suhrkamp, 2010, p. 173.

portant sur le nu féminin, semble plutôt constituer les termes d'une opposition ontique irréductible entre la nature du regardeur et celle de l'objet du regard. Pour l'histoire des mentalités habituées aux oppositions binaires, l'opposition entre l'homme et la nature semble, bien évidemment, aussi radicale que celle entre l'homme et la femme. Et pourtant, un acte substitutif qui s'attaque à l'image en prenant, en effet, pour cible le réel ne consiste pas seulement à heurter la sensibilité réelle du spectateur face à une beauté visuelle quelconque qui se trouve abîmée. L'acte substitutif est d'autant plus efficace qu'il existe une identification spécifique entre le spectateur et l'objet visible du regard. C'est pour cela qu'une de ses formes historiques les plus caractéristiques et les plus efficaces fut, comme le rappelle Bredekamp, la tradition juridique des punitions par l'image : cela ne signifie pas une violence aveugle et arbitraire dans le domaine des images, mais le fait qu'au fil des siècles, la justice a opéré précisément cette substitution entre l'image d'un accusé et sa personne réelle, en appliquant une punition symbolique à la représentation visuelle du coupable, à savoir son portrait, en l'absence du corps du condamné qui aurait dû être exécuté physiquement[6].

Dans le cas du portrait, le rapport de représentation qui permet l'identification mutuelle et la substitution du corps et de l'image semble, bien entendu, plus évident. Mais pour que l'attaque symbolique contre la belle nature peinte par Van Gogh vise effectivement le public de la galerie, il faut que le geste des militantes implique aussi une substitution. Là encore, on peut supposer que l'attaque contre le tableau n'est qu'un élément de la logique de contestation propre aux moyens arbitraires de contestation visant à heurter les sensibilités et à bouleverser les habitudes de la vie bourgeoise, comme dans le cas de l'interruption d'un match ou du blocage d'une autoroute par des militants écologistes. Et pourtant, il n'est pas indifférent que la force disruptive de l'incident ait ciblé une préoccupation particulière du public qui lie le regard du spectateur à l'objet regardé dans un rapport de contemplation. L'attaque démontre *a contrario* un rapport éthique que la contemplation introduit dans l'art par le biais d'une autre substitution et que l'attaque dénonce comme indifférence des spectateurs à la vraie nature qui souffre. Il faut se rappeler ce que signifie la contemplation de la belle nature dont le caractère désintéressé est ainsi mis en question. Il faut également rappeler que le lien entre une certaine idée de la contemplation esthétique et une certaine idée de l'autonomie de l'œuvre d'art est avant tout un constat historique.

Puisque je me propose de traiter précisément l'attaque contre une image de l'art moderne, ce n'est pas un hasard si je choisis de parler de ce qui a constitué le fondement théorique de la plus grande partie de l'art moderne : l'autonomie, le

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[6] *Ibidem*, pp. 197-198.

formalisme, « l'art pour l'art », l'art qui semble avoir rompu l'ancien lien entre le beau et l'utile. C'est pourquoi le retour à la théorie kantienne de la beauté n'est pas simplement une tentative désuète de retour au paradis perdu de l'esthétique spéculative. Il s'agit de révéler l'arrière-plan théorique qui précède et annonce l'art moderne, d'une part, et le rapport moderne à l'art et à la beauté, de l'autre. Pour que l'œuvre d'art ait pour seule finalité la beauté, et pour que la beauté soit une question de pure forme, la beauté doit être séparée des valeurs du bien moral ou de l'agréable sensoriel. La contemplation serait donc cet état d'appréciation de la beauté que, selon un exemple donné par Kant, l'on ne peut identifier dans le cas de l'appréciation d'un palais qu'à deux conditions : que le spectateur ne juge pas le palais selon le critère du confort de l'habitation et qu'il soit indifférent, dans son jugement esthétique, à l'immoralité des riches qui ont construit le palais aux dépens du labeur des pauvres[7].

3. Consensus et différend

En un premier sens, la contemplation est une façon de transformer l'œuvre d'art en objet esthétique au sens indiqué par Mikel Dufrenne dans sa *Phénoménologie de l'expérience esthétique*, c'est-à-dire par l'hommage d'une attention adéquate qui laisse l'œuvre s'accomplir de manière sensible : c'est en tant qu'objet esthétique que l'œuvre d'art est perçue pour elle-même, dans la plénitude de son être et de sa splendeur sensible[8]. Mais la contemplation ne se réduit point aux simples conventions institutionnelles liées à la pure contingence sociale d'une règle concernant la manière adéquate de regarder dans le périmètre du musée. Il n'est pas indifférent que Dufrenne identifie l'effet spécifique de l'œuvre d'art sur le spectateur précisément à la constitution d'un public d'art en tant que communauté de goût[9]. Afin de déterminer la nature de ce public, il convient de reprendre précisément la différence kantienne entre la simple unanimité empirique et contingente d'un public quelconque et l'universalité subjective du jugement de goût qui témoigne davantage d'une nécessité idéale de la satisfaction esthétique que l'on ne retrouve nulle part ailleurs dans l'expérience. En effet, Kant soutient à cet égard que la nécessité qui lie la beauté à la satisfaction du sujet ne peut point être déduite de l'universalité de l'expérience entendue comme « parfaite unanimité des jugements prononcés sur

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[7] Emmanuel Kant, *Critique de la faculté de juger*, Paris, Flammarion, 2015, §2, pp. 182-183.

[8] Mikel Dufrenne, *Phénoménologie de l'expérience esthétique*, tome 1, *L'objet esthétique*, Paris, P.U.F., 1953, pp. 11-20.

[9] *Ibidem*, pp. 98-104.

la beauté d'un certain objet », à la fois parce que les preuves de l'expérience peuvent s'avérer insuffisantes et parce que le concept d'une telle nécessité ne peut nullement résulter d'un jugement empirique[10]. En d'autres mots, il n'est pas nécessaire d'interroger les autres en attendant la confirmation de leurs préférences pour prétendre que le jugement portant sur la beauté vaut pour tous les sujets possibles et attend leur adhésion sans même concevoir le contraire.

Par sa nature sociale et militante, le geste des activistes de la National Gallery ne fait en réalité que mettre en question la contingence sociale du consensus empirique du public du musée sur la beauté de la nature peinte, qui cacherait, en revanche, le manque de consensus sur la souffrance de la vie humaine et de la nature en tant qu'environnement réel. Cette rupture du consensus empirique ne semble donc pas porter atteinte à l'universalité d'une communauté idéale du goût : pas besoin de prendre en compte l'attitude des militants qui ont attaqué un tableau pour savoir ce qu'est la satisfaction nécessaire et universelle liée à la beauté. Et pourtant, le consensus empirique autour du beau n'est rien d'autre que la *trace* d'un public universel[11] qui fait que le témoin, fût-il solitaire, de la beauté des formes se multiplie à l'infini, selon l'universalité subjective de son jugement de goût, dans une communauté idéale qui partage la même satisfaction esthétique. On retrouve ici, bien sûr, le noyau dur de toute la théorie kantienne du beau et du goût, fondée sur un projet universaliste moderne qui cherche à expliquer le beau à partir d'un sujet universel et l'universalité du goût à partir de la prétention d'un accord intersubjectif qui n'émane pas d'un simple consensus empirique, voire contingent, issu des circonstances sociales, mais qui trouve néanmoins un « signe » dans un tel consensus.

L'attaque contre le tableau ne peut manquer de surprendre, précisément parce qu'elle va à l'encontre d'un consensus auquel nous nous sommes habitués sans risquer d'être trop souvent trompés. L'effet de choc provoqué par l'outrage commis par les militants est alors similaire à celui décrit par David Hume dans son essai intitulé *La norme du goût* : malgré la diversité et la relativité évidentes des goûts, il existe un consensus durable, bien qu'empirique, sur la valeur des grandes œuvres d'art de l'humanité, de sorte que si l'on comparait l'œuvre de Milton à celle d'Ogilby, on risquerait d'avancer une énormité aussi étonnante que si l'on comparait un océan

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[10] Emmanuel Kant, *Critique de la faculté de juger*, *op. cit.*, §18, p. 217.

[11] C'est précisément ce que souligne Luc Ferry pour contredire les interprétations qui ne voyaient dans l'idée kantienne de sens commun qu'une Idée de communauté idéale, fragile et infiniment différée, sans aucune trace dans un consensus factuel. Selon Ferry, le sens commun ne se confond ni avec un consensus purement empirique, ni avec une Idée purement abstraite, dénuée de toute trace symbolique. C'est pourquoi il y a une *discussion* en matière de goût et une critique d'art. Voir Luc Ferry, *Homo aestheticus : l'invention du goût à l'âge démocratique*, Paris, Grasset & Fasquelle, 1990, pp. 138-140.

à une flaque d'eau[12]. L'attaque contre un tableau qui fait l'objet d'un consensus empirique évident de la part du public du musée semble établir une forme inouïe et choquante de *dissensus*. Or, pour qu'il y ait de *dissensus*, il faut que l'acte qui l'établit fasse obstacle au consensus préexistant. Il est donc nécessaire de déterminer quel type de consensus est ainsi dissous. Il s'agit vraisemblablement du consensus empirique des amateurs de la beauté artistique qu'aux yeux de Kant lui-même (peu importe ici qu'il parlait davantage de la beauté naturelle) était le signe faible, symbolique, mais non négligeable de l'Idée d'un sens commun :

> L'unanimité, aussi parfaite que possible, de tous les temps et de tous les peuples à l'égard du sentiment lié à la représentation de certains objets : tel est le critérium empirique, faible assurément et à peine suffisant pour nourrir une conjecture, qui conduit à dériver le goût, ainsi garanti par des exemples, du principe, profondément caché et commun à tous les hommes, de l'accord qui doit exister entre eux dans la façon dont ils jugent et apprécient les formes sous lesquelles des objets leur sont donnés.[13]

Bien évidemment, s'attaquer à un tel consensus par un geste aussi choquant, ce n'est pas démontrer un choix esthétique différent, mais affirmer une attitude contestataire. Ce qui importe, cependant, ce n'est pas la violence du geste lui-même, mais le fait qu'il se situe en dehors d'un tel consensus. La présence des activistes dans le musée semble faire disparaitre précisément la trace empirique de toute universalité en fournissant un contre-exemple, comme l'argument du cygne noir qui réfutait la généralisation concernant la couleur des cygnes. Et pourtant, il faut rappeler cela : ce qui distinguait l'approche de Kant de toute théorie empiriste, c'était précisément le fait que l'universalité subjective du beau ne reposait pas sur la généralisation des résultats d'une enquête empirique portant sur les diverses préférences esthétiques. D'une part, le consensus empirique du public des musées sur la beauté telle que celle des *Tournesols* de Van Gogh invite vraiment à réfléchir à l'universalité du goût. De l'autre, les deux formes d'unanimité ne se confondent point chez Kant, d'où le rapport transcendantal de la satisfaction portée au beau au jeu universel des facultés de l'âme et non aux préférences sociales dominantes en tant que sources *a posteriori* d'une « mode » esthétique. Kant affirme à cet égard que, même si le goût peut certes être cultivé par les exemples fournis par la culture, une centaine d'opinions contraires ne peuvent changer un jugement de goût, ni constituer le facteur déterminant d'une telle préférence esthétique[14].

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[12] David Hume, *Selected Essays*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 137.

[13] Emmanuel Kant, *Critique de la faculté de juger*, *op. cit.*, §17, p. 211.

[14] *Ibidem*, §33, p. 268.

Cependant, le fait de voir une peinture vandalisée touche la sensibilité du public pour autant que l'attaque contre le chef-d'œuvre constitue une offense portée au consensus et à l'humanité elle-même. La différence, semble-t-il, tient au fait que l'âge moderne du consensus a été remplacé par l'âge postmoderne du différend. Il est sans doute vrai que Kant trouverait dans la postmodernité beaucoup moins de traces empiriques pour nourrir la réflexion sur l'universalité du goût, fût-elle non empirique ou transcendantale. Mais la différence n'est pas celle entre un consensus esthétique et son effacement à l'âge de l'incommensurabilité des jeux de langage ou des passages à l'acte radicaux. Il ne s'agit pas d'une multiplicité infinie de perspectives particulières ou ultra-individualistes qui constituerait la ruine du sujet universel ou du goût. L'attaque contre le tableau est liée en effet à l'appel à un autre consensus, portant sur l'état de la planète et la crise climatique. Ce qui n'est pas tout à fait évident, c'est précisément le fait que, au lieu de s'attaquer à la raison d'être de l'art en général, ces formes de contestation et de revendication écologiste utilisent l'art en lui attribuant des fonctions incompatibles avec son autotélie. Le *dissensus* que produit l'attaque contre le tableau, c'est donc la contestation d'un consensus par l'opposition d'un autre consensus. Plus que la forme violente du vandalisme, ce qui importe maintenant, c'est que contempler le tableau et l'attaquer tout en épargnant son existence physique sont deux manières différentes d'établir un certain consensus social sur l'art. C'est ainsi que l'on peut expliquer le choc provoqué par une attitude autre que la contemplation du tableau. Le différend en question n'est pas la divergence entre celui qui déclare que le tableau est beau et celui qui affirme le contraire, mais entre ceux qui voient dans la beauté du tableau deux fonctions différentes. Il ne s'agit pas, alors, du choc provoqué par la comparaison entre Milton et Ogilby que Hume présentait à titre d'exemple lorsqu'il montrait comment une opinion extravagante pouvait défier de manière ridicule et déraisonnable le consensus des critiques ou des experts en littérature et, plus généralement, en art. Ce différend recouvre, en revanche, deux légitimités différentes, au sens où il existe deux visions différentes sur les légitimités mêmes de l'art. Cela n'a rien de nouveau. Le différend consiste, d'une part, à contempler l'autotélie de la beauté de l'art et, de l'autre, à lier cette beauté à des valeurs extra-esthétiques.

J'insisterai dans ce qui suit sur l'hypothèse selon laquelle, malgré les apparences, les attaques des activistes dans les musées d'art appartiennent à une vision spécifique de la légitimité de l'art qu'elles avancent par un rapport orageux aux œuvres au lieu de se contenter de contester toute légitimité artistique : c'est ce que nous montrera le cas du musée qui a choisi lui-même de reprendre à son compte la rhétorique des activistes en transformant ses œuvres en moyens d'expression visuelle d'un discours sans paroles sur le réchauffement climatique. La collision des deux formes possibles de consensus est la collision de deux types

de procédures concernant les œuvres d'art. Il convient de rappeler l'hypothèse de Mikel Dufrenne selon laquelle l'expérience esthétique elle-même serait une invention récente : c'est pourquoi le public que l'œuvre d'art rassemble autour d'elle ne se confond pas, selon Dufrenne, avec la communauté vivante des individus[15]. L'argument tient au fait que l'art perçu pour lui-même est une invention historique plutôt récente (Dufrenne rappelle d'ailleurs que la doctrine de l'art pour l'art est une idée nouvelle) : le public incarne une communauté spéciale dont le regard porté sur l'art doit libérer les œuvres de l'hétéronomie des valeurs communautaires qui les asservissaient à des fonctions religieuses, morales ou sociales. En ce sens, le véritable public du musée est une communauté spécifique qui ne se forme qu'avec la contemplation des œuvres. Pour Dufrenne, cela ne signifie pas l'impossibilité pour l'œuvre de véhiculer un message au-delà du simple goût de l'art. La vraie différence, c'est que la communauté du public d'art n'est pas une communauté préexistante[16]. Il convient de rappeler les raisons profondes pour lesquelles Kant affirmait le primat de la beauté naturelle sur la beauté de l'art : ce n'est que dans le premier cas que l'absence d'intention d'une nature innocente dans la production de belles apparences peut donner à l'homme une idée de sa vocation au sein de la nature sans que cette confirmation ne vienne – comme c'est le cas, en revanche, avec l'art – de l'homme lui-même[17]. On peut donc reprendre un tel argument quant au rapport du public à l'art : c'est seulement parce que la communauté du public d'art n'est constituée que par l'art lui-même que le message de l'art apparaît plus libre qu'il ne l'est en réalité. Il ne semble pas provenir des valeurs d'une communauté préexistante, mais de la pure autonomie de cette altérité apparente de l'œuvre qui, en tant que produit d'un génie, prend l'apparence libre de la nature. On voit donc bien l'opposition entre une communauté construite autour de l'œuvre en tant que public et la communauté préexistante des activistes qui voudraient inscrire à la surface de l'œuvre le message des valeurs de la vie. Tel est le sens du différend en tant que collision entre deux formes de communauté auxquelles correspond un consensus intérieur concernant les valeurs de la beauté, dans un cas, et du bien moral, dans l'autre. Mais, malgré ce que suggère la rhétorique des activistes eux-mêmes, il serait erroné d'opposer la communauté esthétique de la beauté formelle à la communauté écologiste du bien moral et social pour en déduire la simple indifférence de l'autonomie de l'art à l'endroit de toute démarche éthique.

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[15] Mikel Dufrenne, *Phénoménologie de l'expérience esthétique*, tome 1, *L'objet esthétique*, *op. cit.*, pp. 97-105.

[16] *Ibidem*, p. 104.

[17] Voir Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Gesammelte Werke*, Band I, *Hermeneutik I: Wahrheit und Methode. Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik*, Tübingen, J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1990, pp. 56-57.

Ce schéma perpétuerait la vieille opposition entre un art pour l'art désormais remis en question et un art engagé qui mêle à nouveau le beau aux valeurs des formes de vie. D'un côté, le *dissensus* n'est donc pas simplement la contestation d'un consensus, mais la collision de deux formes différentes de consensus, l'un concernant l'art, l'autre la cause environnementale. Mais de l'autre côté, le *dissensus* réside dans l'esthétique elle-même : c'est précisément ce que nous dit la théorie de Jacques Rancière sur le régime esthétique (voire moderne) de l'art. La politique de l'art à l'âge de l'esthétique tient, selon Rancière, au fait que l'esthétique suspend les séparations entre la matière et la forme, entre l'intelligence active et la sensibilité passive. Le sens commun esthétique est alors lui-même dissensuel dans la mesure où il touche au découpage que constitue ce « partage du sensible », et non au simple caractère politique ou moral des sujets de l'art[18]. Cette théorie nous dit en somme qu'il n'y a pas de conflit entre l'art engagé et l'art pour l'art, entre la politisation de l'art et son autonomie. C'est la pure forme de l'autosuffisance de l'œuvre qui peut être convertie en nouvelles formes de vie. Par conséquent, le « tournant éthique de l'esthétique » renvoie, selon Rancière, aux deux politiques de l'esthétique elle-même qui partent d'un noyau commun liant l'autonomie de l'art à la promesse d'une nouvelle communauté émancipée[19]. Alors que la politique utopique de la transformation de la vie par l'art veut supprimer l'art lui-même en le transformant en une forme concrète de vie sociale, comme fut le cas avec le constructivisme russe, l'alternative de la forme résistante de l'art voit la nature subversive de l'art précisément dans son caractère apolitique et autonome. C'est la logique apparemment paradoxale de cet argument qui revient aujourd'hui sous une forme différente. La doctrine selon laquelle l'art est subversif pour autant qu'il n'a pas de fonction politique répondait au contexte dans lequel l'art était considéré comme le moteur privilégié d'un changement social radical. L'argument de l'art délivré de tout contenu moralisateur répond aujourd'hui à une nouvelle demande concernant la fonction moralisatrice de l'art indépendamment des grandes doctrines révolutionnaires qui l'ont politisé dans le passé : il ne faut pas reprocher à l'art de ne pas être moralisateur, tout comme il ne faut pas lui demander d'être politique. Alors que l'art était subversif en ce qu'il était apolitique, il est également éthique en ce qu'il n'a pas de contenu moral donné. Si c'est l'autonomie qui rend l'art transparent aux formes de vie sociales et humaines, c'est parce que cette autonomie est le reflet de l'autodétermination humaine.

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[18] Jacques Rancière, *Malaise dans l'esthétique*, Paris, Galilée, 2004, pp. 36-37.
[19] *Ibidem*, pp. 168-169.

4. L'éthique de l'esthétique

La question de l'acte substitutif se pose à nouveau. La contemplation n'est, en ce sens, ni le simple regard désintéressé porté sur les œuvres d'art ou les beautés naturelles, ni la *theoria* des anciens par laquelle l'activité humaine s'ajustait à l'ordre cosmique du monde. La contemplation est en elle-même une propédeutique de l'éthique qui opère précisément cette substitution permettant au spectateur d'identifier dans l'altérité d'une image sa propre destination morale. C'est la théorie kantienne du sublime qui nous montre cela : comment l'homme peut-il ressentir le sublime d'une nature déchaînée et hostile à son être sensible ? C'est parce que le sublime consiste aussi en une substitution : puisque tout ce qui semble grand ou puissant dans la nature est néanmoins petit ou faible par rapport aux Idées de la raison de l'homme, le spectateur met en fait le respect de la nature dite sublime à la place du respect des Idées morales de sa propre humanité :

> Ainsi le sentiment du sublime dans la nature correspond-il à un respect pour notre propre destination – respect que, par une certaine subreption (substitution d'un respect pour l'objet au respect pour l'Idée de l'humanité en nous comme sujets), nous témoignons à un objet de la nature qui nous rend en quelque sorte intuitionnable la supériorité de la destination rationnelle de nos pouvoirs de connaître sur le pouvoir le plus grand de la sensibilité.[20]

Sans doute cette substitution vaut-elle pour une expérience sublime qui diffère, par sa nature dynamique, de la contemplation calme de la beauté. Mais la question de la destination éthique du spectateur, que le sublime introduit ainsi par l'*inadéquation* de la nature sensible aux Idées suprasensibles, est également présente dans le cas de la beauté précisément par la *concordance* entre la beauté de la nature et la satisfaction désintéressée ressentie devant elle :

> Ainsi, tout comme imagination et *entendement*, dans le jugement appréciant le beau, produisaient à la faveur de leur union une finalité subjective des facultés de l'esprit, de même ici imagination et *raison* produisent à travers leur conflit une telle finalité, à savoir un sentiment selon lequel nous possédons une *raison* pure autonome.[21]

La finalité subjective attribuée aux belles formes de la nature, bien qu'opposées à l'absence de forme de la nature sublime, est précisément la trace, voire le signe ou l'indice visible de la destination suprême de l'humanité elle-même par cet

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[20] Emmanuel Kant, *Critique de la faculté de juger*, *op. cit.*, §27, p. 239.
[21] *Ibidem*, §27, pp. 240-241.

accord même de la nature et des facultés de l'esprit[22]. Il n'est pas indifférent que Kant fasse du beau un sentiment propre à l'homme, à la différence du bien moral qui s'applique aux êtres rationnels en général. Puisque le beau qui plaît sans intérêt diffère à la fois de l'agréable ressenti par les sens et du bien visé par la raison, le lien entre la beauté et le bien moral n'est que *symbolique* : étant donné que la beauté n'est ni une sensation agréable des sens, ni une fin *réelle* de la nature qui *imposerait* à l'homme l'appréciation de sa beauté, le jugement de goût est autonome par rapport à l'hétéronomie des lois de l'expérience *tout comme* la raison pratique est libre lorsqu'elle se donne à elle-même la loi morale[23]. Le projet kantien indique ainsi que l'esthétique en tant qu'expérience de la beauté constitue un passage harmonieux vers l'éthique. C'est pour cela que le regard porté sur la beauté d'une nature morte est en même temps un regard tourné vers soi. Le conflit entre le public du musée et les activistes qui ont attaqué le tableau de Van Gogh n'est donc pas un conflit entre l'esthétique et l'éthique, mais entre deux manières différentes d'introduire la question éthique dans l'esthétique. Ce que le modèle kantien semble nous montrer, c'est que l'analogie de l'esthétique et de l'éthique ne saurait être que la correspondance formelle entre deux formes d'autonomie des facultés de l'âme dont la législation renvoie à une dimension suprasensible du sujet. Le scandale autour de l'attaque contre le tableau est caractéristique de la différence entre la forme et le contenu de l'analogie éthico-esthétique. L'image doit-elle être morale dans son contenu pour être morale dans son effet ? Comment l'art peut-il véhiculer des concepts et des sentiments moraux ?

Pour répondre à cette question en suivant toujours l'approche kantienne, il faut considérer l'antithèse suivante. On peut objecter à juste titre que Kant lui-même, bien qu'il sépare le beau de l'agréable ou du bien, ne prétend pas pour autant que l'art, en tant que belle représentation d'un objet, serait séparé de toute signification morale en constituant une pure question de forme. Le jugement de goût ne porte pas sur la valeur morale de l'existence de son objet (comme le montre l'exemple du palais donné par Kant au début de l'Analytique du beau), mais il a néanmoins une affinité avec le sentiment moral en général, comme je l'ai indiqué, d'ailleurs, plus haut. Ce qu'il faut plutôt établir, c'est si cette signification morale est une question de *contenu* de l'art ou simplement une question d'*effet* : pourquoi Kant, au paragraphe §42 de la *Critique de la faculté de juger*, attribue-t-il à l'intérêt pour la contemplation de la beauté naturelle un caractère *moral* « par affinité », bien que la nature parle par le « langage chiffré » des formes de la coloration et des tons et non par les mots d'un discours moral ? Tout d'abord, selon cette antithèse, il ne faut pas se tromper sur le prétendu formalisme défendu par Kant dans le domaine

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[22] *Ibidem*, §42, pp. 285-287.
[23] *Ibidem*, §§58-59, pp. 338-342.

des beaux-arts. Selon un constat simple, l'art auquel Kant pense n'est sûrement pas l'« art pour l'art » du XIXᵉ siècle, mais plutôt un art qui, au XVIIIᵉ siècle, se caractérisait encore très souvent par un contenu moral, voire des intentions moralisatrices, comme les gravures de William Hogarth ou les peintures de Jean-Baptiste Greuze. On pourrait même y ajouter les vers naïfs ou pathétiques de Frédéric le Grand que Kant lui-même cite en tenant le roi de Prusse pour un poète de génie selon un goût évidemment douteux. Kant, il est vrai, décrit comment le poète peut parler d'idées telles que la vie et la mort, le bien et le mal et ainsi de suite, et son analyse comparative de la valeur des différents arts est loin d'être purement esthétique.

Hans-Georg Gadamer a raison de noter que le formalisme artistique qui voudrait affirmer la priorité de la pure perception formelle sur le contenu sémantique des œuvres ne peut pas invoquer Kant comme son précurseur : lorsque Kant parle de pure forme à propos du beau et des beaux-arts, il n'oppose pas cette forme au contenu ou à la signification des œuvres, mais à la matière purement sensorielle visée par les sens[24]. En disant que l'œuvre d'art donne beaucoup à penser en disposant l'esprit aux Idées, Kant est sûrement conscient de ce que Gadamer réitère dans des termes plus explicites : l'art ne doit pas seulement *plaire* en tant que simple élément décoratif, comme dans le cas des dessins à la grecque, des arabesques ou des ornements des papiers peints que Kant lui-même donne en exemple afin de définir la beauté vague ou libre qui échappe à la détermination intellectuelle d'un concept de ce que l'objet devrait être ; l'art doit aussi *élever* l'esprit[25]. Pour le reste, Gadamer a raison de suggérer que ce serait une erreur fatale d'expliquer les beaux-arts et la beauté naturelle en supposant que ce type de beauté libre serait l'objet le plus approprié d'un jugement de goût[26].

Il est donc surprenant que Kant conclue la « Critique de la faculté de juger esthétique » en disant que le goût « est au fond un pouvoir d'appréciation de l'incarnation sensible des Idées morales »[27]. Mais comme les idées morales de la raison ne peuvent, par définition, posséder une réalité démontrable dans une intuition sensible adéquate, la beauté de la nature ou de l'art ne peut éveiller ces idées dans l'esprit que par le biais d'une analogie de la réflexion. Il n'est pas indifférent que Kant fasse du génie non seulement un créateur de beauté artistique, mais aussi une faculté des idées esthétiques : une représentation de l'imagination à laquelle ne

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[24] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Gesammelte Werke*, Band 1, *Hermeneutik I: Wahrheit und Methode. Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik, op. cit.*, pp. 97-98.

[25] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Gesammelte Werke*, Band 8, *Ästhetik und Poetik I: Kunst als Aussage*, Tübingen, J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1993, p. 199.

[26] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Gesammelte Werke*, Band 1, *Hermeneutik I: Wahrheit und Methode. Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik, op. cit.*, p. 50.

[27] Emmanuel Kant, *Critique de la faculté de juger, op. cit.*, §60, p. 345.

correspond aucun concept déterminé fait alors qu'une multitude de représentations approximatives sont pensées afin de raviver un concept auquel, en tant qu'idée de la raison, aucune intuition déterminée ne correspond autrement.

C'est grâce à cette liberté de l'imagination dans son jeu avec l'entendement que l'on trouve dans l'expérience du beau en général que l'art du génie répond à l'aspiration que les idées indémontrables de la raison trouvent, par l'analogie de la réflexion, une forme de présentation symbolique sensible. Et c'est aussi grâce à cette liberté de l'imagination dans la contemplation esthétique que l'idée morale n'est pas *imposée* de manière didactique ou discursive. La beauté « donne beaucoup à penser » précisément dans la mesure où l'imagination n'est pas simplement contrainte de subordonner la représentation à un concept déterminé, mais, comme dans le cas de la poésie, elle offre une richesse de connotations supplémentaires qui débordent et élargissent esthétiquement les limites du concept donné et, par conséquent, débordent également la nature qui fournit la matière de l'expérience[28]. Cela veut dire que Kant ne réduit pas l'art à un simple discours didactique ou à une série de prescriptions morales en tant qu'expressions élaborées d'une intention explicite. De ce point de vue, la force morale de l'art est une question d'*effet* sur le pouvoir intérieur des libres associations dans l'esprit plutôt que de *contenu* donné, ne serait-ce que parce qu'une idée morale de la raison ne peut être intuitionnée de manière directe dans la réalité sensible d'une œuvre ou de la belle nature.

Gadamer a raison de noter une affinité entre le génie en tant que principe de la création artistique et l'intérêt intellectuel se rapportant au beau, que Kant associe à la beauté naturelle[29]. La belle nature elle-même peut raviver les idées morales, alors que le génie est cette faculté qui donne à l'art l'apparence d'une spontanéité naturelle par laquelle l'intention artistique prend la forme d'une absence d'intention. Mais comment Kant revient-il sur la beauté de la nature ? Même s'il affirme que, dans les beaux-arts, « l'essentiel réside dans la forme », il indique ensuite que cette forme s'oppose non pas au contenu des œuvres – comme le suggérerait, en revanche, un certain formalisme artistique – mais à la simple jouissance liée à l'attrait ou à l'émotion que procure la matière des sensations. D'où le paragraphe suivant, particulièrement révélateur :

> Quand les beaux-arts ne sont pas, de près ou de loin, associés à des Idées morales, qui seules apportent avec elles une satisfaction trouvant en elle-même sa consistance, tel est leur destin ultime. Ils ne servent dès lors que de distraction – ce dont on a

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[28] *Ibidem*, §49, pp. 300-303.

[29] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Gesammelte Werke*, Band 8, *Ästhetik und Poetik I: Kunst als Aussage*, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

d'autant plus besoin qu'on s'en sert pour dissiper l'insatisfaction que l'esprit a de lui-même en se rendant ainsi toujours plus inutile et mécontent de soi. D'une façon générale, ce sont les beautés de la nature qui s'accordent le plus avec l'intention première de l'art, quand on est dès l'enfance accoutumé à les observer, à les apprécier et à les admirer.[30]

Si le génie donne à l'œuvre en tant que produit d'une intention humaine l'apparence plaisante d'une absence naturelle d'intention, alors l'effet de l'art qui semble présenter par la liberté de l'imagination l'« indice » des Idées morales qu'elle éveille dans l'esprit du spectateur semble beaucoup moins artificiel que le simple produit d'une technique. L'effet de l'art est d'autant plus efficace qu'il ne semble pas avoir été cherché par la simple application des règles scolaires trop évidentes. Comme l'observe Luc Ferry, la théorie kantienne du génie, qui nous montre, en somme, que la beauté, fût-elle artistique, doit toujours comporter quelque chose de naturel, est la manière dont Kant dépasse l'alternative de l'art qui imite la nature sous la forme d'une simple illusion décevante et de celui qui poursuit consciemment une fin visant la satisfaction du spectateur[31]. Et pourtant, c'est Kant lui-même qui s'est attardé sur ce dilemme lorsque, associant l'intérêt intellectuel se rapportant au beau uniquement à la beauté de la nature, il a suggéré la supériorité de celle-ci sur la beauté de l'art.

En effet, il peut sembler assez naïf de la part de Kant de considérer que la réflexion sur la forme de la coloration et des tons dans la nature correspond à des idées morales – telles que l'innocence, le courage ou le sublime – vers lesquelles la nature elle-même semble souvent tourner l'esprit[32]. Mais la raison de ce constat apparemment banal est beaucoup plus profonde qu'il n'y paraît. C'est précisément la nature, à laquelle la raison porte ainsi un intérêt, qui offre le signe ou l'indice de la conciliation imprévisible et libre entre ses produits et les facultés de l'esprit. Si la nature offre une promesse, quoique chiffrée ou symbolique, de la réalisation des idées morales de la raison, l'intérêt de l'esprit se rapportant à la belle nature n'est que le signe de cette disposition éthique. Mais, contrairement à une morale inculquée par des prescriptions didactiques artificiellement produites, l'intérêt moral pour la beauté ne peut venir que de l'accord libre, indépendant et imprévisible que procure l'absence d'intention d'une nature « artistique » qui donne néanmoins l'apparence d'une intention s'adressant à l'esprit par sa finalité subjective sans fin. C'est pourquoi Gadamer a raison de suggérer que le concept de génie est analogue à l'intérêt

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[30] Emmanuel Kant, *Critique de la faculté de juger*, *op. cit.*, §52, p. 313.

[31] Luc Ferry, *Homo aestheticus : l'invention du goût à l'âge démocratique*, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

[32] Emmanuel Kant, *Critique de la faculté de juger*, *op. cit.*, §42, p. 287.

intellectuel se rapportant à la beauté naturelle. Pour que l'accord entre la belle image artistique et la satisfaction ressentie par l'esprit ne soit pas forcé, l'intention artistique doit se présenter sous l'apparence de la non-intention d'un art « naturel » du génie. Comme le remarque Luc Ferry, la beauté artistique est l'analogue de la beauté naturelle en ce qu'elle promet une réalisation symbolique des idées de la raison à travers les « idées esthétiques » du génie qui, contrairement aux prescriptions didactiques, ne proviennent pas de la simple application mimétique des règles explicites et préétablies[33].

C'est ainsi que l'effet moral demeure indéterminé dans son contenu : la contemplation de la belle nature qui éveille le sentiment moral d'une humanité réunie par le goût ne détermine pas le contenu des prescriptions morales spécifiques afin de raviver les idées morales. Le sentiment éthique de l'image demeure ce qu'il est, à savoir un sentiment d'appartenance à une communauté qui, du commandement chrétien « Aime et fais ce que tu veux » à l'impératif catégorique kantien, n'est pas réglée par une prescription déterminée concernant des manières concrètes d'agir moralement. Puisque la beauté ne renvoie pas à la nature de l'objet, mais à un sentiment du sujet supposé commun à tous les autres sujets, le public du goût semble donc se constituer comme communauté s'identifiant sous la forme du goût, tout comme sous la forme de l'amour chrétien ou de la raison pratique, et non sous la forme d'un objet ou d'une manière particulière d'agir. C'est pourquoi le modèle de la belle nature est significatif : précisément parce que la beauté naturelle peut éveiller en l'homme un sentiment moral sans imposer des prescriptions morales particulières, l'expérience esthétique de la nature ou celle de l'art qui comporte un élément de spontanéité naturelle en tant que trait d'un génie constitue un fondement de la vocation éthique qui « fait immédiatement sens pour autrui »[34].

À ce modèle s'opposent les tendances moralisatrices qui ne peuvent plus concevoir les effets éthiques des images sans sujets moraux explicites. On remplace ainsi la communauté d'un public constitué autour de l'œuvre d'art par une communauté spécifique qui précède l'œuvre et lui impose le contenu de son propre intérêt pratique. Une peinture aspergée de soupe à la tomate n'est pas une contestation de l'image, mais de son autotélie, dans la mesure où l'attaque soumet l'œuvre à des fins qui lui sont extérieures, en créant à nouveau, par ce supplément même qui est le geste par rapport au tableau, une forme spécifique d'image moralisatrice, à savoir celle d'une œuvre dont l'autonomie est sacrifiée au nom d'une cause sociétale ou environnementale. Bien évidemment, le problème n'est pas nouveau, car la réflexion sur l'art a conçu de diverses manières l'ancienne relation entre plaire

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[33] Luc Ferry, *Homo aestheticus : l'invention du goût à l'âge démocratique*, *op. cit.*, pp. 178-179.
[34] *Ibidem*, p. 179.

et instruire, entre *placere* et *docere*, entre le beau et l'utile, qui a longtemps constitué un lien indissoluble en tant que tâche des œuvres. La question est de savoir si plaire et instruire découlent d'un seul et même contenu, comme la représentation de la belle nature dans les paysages attaqués par les activistes. La nature qui plaît dans les beaux tableaux des peintres peut-elle instruire seulement par son image ?

L'attaque des activistes ne porte pas un jugement moral sur l'art : le fait qu'un art pour l'art ne soit pas moralement instructif ne signifie pas pour autant qu'il fasse le contraire, c'est-à-dire qu'il ait un contenu immoral. On peut donc distinguer l'attaque des activistes de la simple censure d'un art dont le contenu est jugé immoral. C'est pourquoi la violence symbolique du geste s'apparente à un paradoxe : au lieu de contester l'art tout court, le geste ajoute à l'art un élément qui relève d'une forme d'enseignement éthique qui fait défaut à l'art lui-même.

Or, ce qui semble disparaître dans les mouvements actuels, de l'attaque contre les tableaux aux nouvelles formes d'art engagé, c'est précisément l'idée que la contemplation de la beauté de la nature constituerait en soi un fondement de la destination morale de l'homme. Mais cela ne découle pas tant de l'ignorance que d'une vision spécifique du monde : l'homme est-il toujours la fin ultime et suprême de la nature ? Avant que les tableaux des musées européens ne soient attaqués à la soupe par des activistes radicaux dans le but d'en perturber la contemplation désintéressée, l'esthétique environnementale elle-même montrait que le modèle « pittoresque » de l'expérience de la nature était devenu problématique, car il était la trace d'anthropocentrisme inhérent à l'idée d'une nature destinée à être regardé par l'homme[35]. S'agit-il alors de juger éthiquement la condition même de la production des images de la belle nature vouée à la contemplation ? Tout comme les formes engagées d'esthétique environnementale, l'attaque des activistes radicaux contre la nature peinte n'est pas une façon de nier tout rapport à la beauté de la nature. Les deux activistes du mouvement *Last Generation* qui ont jeté de la purée sur un paysage de Monet dans un musée de Potsdam en octobre 2022 ont rappelé précisément cela : Monet aimait une nature qui est aujourd'hui en état de dégradation, donc il serait absurde de se préoccuper des dommages symboliques causés à l'*image* de la nature au lieu de se préoccuper de la destruction de la nature réelle. En effet, l'attaque contre l'image artistique a donné naissance à une nouvelle image, celle du tableau aspergé de soupe ou de purée et flanqué des deux activistes qui semblent remettre en cause l'autotélie du chef-d'œuvre dans un *happening* qui choque par sa violence symbolique. Mais parce que la cible de leur geste était précisément l'attitude du public à l'égard de la vie et de l'état du monde, les activistes ont plutôt *utilisé* le

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[35] Voir Allen Carlson, *Aesthetics and the Environment. The Appreciation of Nature, Art and Architecture*, London & New York, Routledge, 2000, pp. 11-12.

tableau en y ajoutant l'élément supplémentaire de leur *happening*. Cela ne signifie pas pour autant qu'ils auraient profité de la notoriété du tableau pour rendre leur geste également célèbre.

Le tournant moralisateur que Carole Talon-Hugon souligne à juste titre consiste dans ce cas à remplacer l'autotélie de l'art des images par une nouvelle valeur d'usage qui lui est imposée. Ce n'est pas l'intention de l'artiste ou le contenu de l'œuvre qui rend l'art moral dans tous ces cas, mais le fait que la relation entre le regard et l'image est régie par un principe autre que celui de la contemplation désintéressée. Si la beauté dépend à nouveau des valeurs du bien, de la vérité ou de l'agréable, le regard porté sur la beauté des formes devient *intéressé* par l'existence de ce qu'il regarde. Cela ne veut pas dire que l'attaque contre le tableau a suscité un réel intérêt du public pour l'état physique de l'œuvre, mais que l'œuvre elle-même, dans le contexte du performance écologiste, a été forcée à « parler » de la réalité dont elle ne témoignait que par son apparence. Étant donné que le contenu même de l'art ne peut plus être modifié, la seule façon de le faire parler d'une cause écologiste est une intervention extérieure qui s'ajoute à l'œuvre comme une sorte de supplément. La relation entre plaire et instruire relève donc des sources différentes. L'image du tableau symboliquement vandalisé parle d'une cause qui cherche à *instruire* précisément dans la mesure où l'œuvre aspergée de soupe ne peut plus *plaire* tout simplement.

5. L'œuvre d'art et son supplément

Trois autres exemples semblent mieux étayer ce constat. En octobre 2022, lors d'une exposition consacrée à Picasso à Melbourne, deux activistes ont collé leurs mains sur la vitre protégeant le célèbre *Massacre en Corée* afin d'alerter sur le fait que le déséquilibre climatique conduit précisément à la famine et à la guerre que le tableau de Picasso lui-même dépeint. Il ne s'agit plus de contester le primat de la préservation de l'art sur la préservation de la vie, mais d'emprunter à l'œuvre d'art un message tel que la dénonciation de la violence, qui devient en même temps le contenu d'un discours non artistique sur la réalité contemporaine.

Alors qu'il semblait être perçu comme l'ennemi symbolique de la cause environnementale, l'art est devenu son allié ambigu. Mais cette ambiguïté réside dans le fait que, de plus en plus souvent, l'art ne semble pouvoir efficacement parler de causes extérieures qu'en présence d'un tel supplément extra-artistique. D'où l'étrange stratégie d'un musée qui, en réponse aux attaques des militants écologistes contre les tableaux, a rendu la logique de ces gestes immanente à un monde de l'art rallié à la cause écologiste par des moyens plus modérés. En 2023, le musée Leopold de

Vienne a accroché de travers une série de tableaux incluant des paysages de Schiele, de Klimt et de Courbet dans le cadre d'un projet intitulé « Quelques degrés de plus ». Les degrés d'inclinaison des toiles étaient censés correspondre de manière symbolique aux degrés du réchauffement climatique afin de suggérer le danger menaçant la beauté naturelle qui avait inspiré les paysages associés à l'émergence du modernisme esthétique. Cette stratégie est une version modérée d'une action plus radicale : en juillet 2022, deux activistes ont couvert un paysage rural idyllique de John Constable à la National Gallery de Londres d'une image représentant le même paysage détruit par l'action de l'homme contemporain. Cet « acte d'image » n'est, donc, plus une substitution entre l'attaque contre l'œuvre et l'attaque contre l'attitude des spectateurs, mais une substitution entre les moyens et les fins : la belle nature n'est plus le moyen en vue d'une œuvre qui serait une fin en soi ; c'est l'œuvre qui devient un moyen par rapport à la nature qu'il faut sauver. L'autotélie des images est attaquée de deux manières : d'une part, en s'attaquant à l'attitude contemplative qui lui est associée et qui admire la forme de la nature sans s'intéresser à son existence ; d'autre part, en transformant la belle image, en tant que finalité de l'art, en moyen d'une cause environnementale.

Le fait que le tableau soit considéré indifféremment comme une œuvre d'art et comme une image à la fois n'est pas un hasard. En ce sens, l'assimilation de l'œuvre d'art à l'image n'est que l'effet d'une époque où la multiplication technique de l'image d'une œuvre conduit à l'indistinction entre les produits de l'art et les autres produits culturels médiatiques et au mélange de la fonction artistique et des autres fonctions possibles. On peut dire que c'est précisément l'ère des simulacres qui a sauvé les peintures d'une forme de vandalisme *effectif*. L'attaque à la hache de Mary Richardson, au début du XXe siècle, contre le tableau de Velázquez a fait en sorte que la protestation soit inscrite sur la toile du tableau lui-même, où les traces de l'attaque sont restées jusqu'à la restauration de l'œuvre. En revanche, les traces des attaques de 2022 sont restées inscrites dans les réseaux médiatiques qui les ont diffusées grâce à la multiplication des images, sans pour autant rester inscrites de manière réelle sur la surface des tableaux. Ce qui a été communiqué de cette manière, c'est un statut spécifique de l'œuvre d'art en tant qu'image reproduite dans les médias, où elle n'apparaît que comme partie d'une image plus large contenant des activistes environnementaux et leur message exprimé par les moyens de la communication visuelle. L'œuvre d'art apparaît comme une image de la belle nature à laquelle s'ajoute le message écologiste concernant la nature en tant que modèle de l'œuvre. Le problème qui pèse sur l'œuvre est, donc, la question de savoir comment nous créons des images de notre environnement naturel. Quelle est l'*image* la plus adéquate à son objet : celle de la nature idyllique d'un paysage rural peint par

Constable ou celle de la nature menacée par les actions industrielles de l'homme contemporain ? Le geste des activistes qui ont collé une affiche de la nature menacée sur l'image de la nature illustrée par le paysage de Constable trahissait précisément l'interchangeabilité en termes de statut des deux images en tant qu'images : selon cette vision, le paysage de Constable « parle » de la nature, en tant que sa copie, d'une manière qui n'est pas, par rapport à la cause environnementale d'aujourd'hui, aussi efficace que son supplément visuel, à savoir l'affiche de l'image de la nature détruite.

Le geste des activistes, qui fait que l'image de l'œuvre d'art se multiplie dans les médias, s'inscrit dans la logique de la reproductibilité technique des images qui aboutit exactement au phénomène annoncé par Walter Benjamin, qui voyait déjà dans l'accentuation de la reproductibilité mécanisée de l'œuvre d'art la perte, bien que tardivement perçue, de « l'illusion de son autonomie » :

> De même qu'aux âges préhistoriques, l'œuvre d'art, par le poids absolu de sa valeur rituelle, fut en premier lieu un instrument de magie dont on n'admit que plus tard le caractère artistique, de même de nos jours, par le poids absolu de sa valeur d'exposition, elle devient une création à fonctions entièrement nouvelles – parmi lesquelles la fonction pour nous la plus familière, la fonction artistique, se distingue en ce qu'elle sera sans doute reconnue plus tard accessoire.[36]

Jacques Rancière reproche à juste titre à la théorie de Benjamin l'erreur de déduire l'unicité de l'œuvre d'art et de l'« aura » qui lui est associée de l'ancienne valeur rituelle des images. Ce que Rancière appelle « le régime éthique des images », illustré par le discours platonicien sur les copies légitimes et les simulacres illusoires, mais aussi par le service religieux en tant que destination des images des dieux liées à l'*ethos* d'une communauté, est un régime historique dans lequel l'Art n'est pas encore identifié comme tel parce qu'il n'est pas encore individualisé[37]. En ce qui concerne, d'ailleurs, l'élévation de l'œuvre d'art au rang d'objet esthétique perçu dans la plénitude de sa présence sensible, voir une statue dans un musée au lieu de la voir dans un temple apparaît désormais comme une rupture qui fait de l'expérience esthétique elle-même une invention récente et nouvelle plutôt que le devenir profane de l'ancien usage rituel des œuvres d'art. Cependant, la célèbre analyse de Benjamin nous montre quelque chose de pertinent en ce qui concerne le destin de la contemplation des images.

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[36] Walter Benjamin, « L'œuvre d'art à l'époque de sa reproduction mécanisée », *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung, Herausgegeben im Auftrag des Instituts für Sozialforschung von Max Horkheimer*, Jahrgang V/1936, Paris, Félix Alcan, 1937, p. 46.

[37] Jacques Rancière, *Le partage du sensible : esthétique et politique*, Paris, La fabrique-éditions, 2000, p. 74.

D'une part, la reproduction mécanisée permet à l'art de s'émanciper des vestiges des fonctions rituelles et du vieux culte de sa distance et de son unicité. D'autre part, l'augmentation (fortement accentuée, selon Benjamin, à l'époque de la reproduction mécanisée) de la valeur d'exposition des œuvres au détriment de leur ancienne valeur cultuelle montre exactement à quel point l'expérience de l'aura de l'œuvre d'art et le culte profane de l'unicité de sa beauté sont historiquement fragiles. L'« illusion » de l'autonomie « profane » de l'art et la contemplation qu'on lui associe se situeraient en effet entre l'ancienne prédominance de la fonction rituelle et les nouvelles fonctions sociales et politiques des œuvres d'art :

> [D]ès l'instant où le critère d'authenticité cesse d'être applicable à la production artistique, l'ensemble de la fonction sociale de l'art se trouve renversé. À son fond rituel doit se substituer un fond constitué par une pratique autre : la politique.[38]

En fait, l'œuvre d'art perçue dans son unicité est ce qui émerge d'un flux historique contenant comme points extrêmes les images sacrées du régime rituel et les images profanes de la production médiatique et de la culture marchande. C'est pour cela que la prééminence de la fonction la plus caractéristique de l'œuvre d'art, à savoir la fonction artistique, est paradoxalement si fragile que Benjamin lui-même, dans le fragment que j'ai cité plus haut, la voyait déjà dépassée par d'autres fonctions dans le contexte de la reproduction mécanisée des œuvres. Le geste des activistes s'inscrit aussi dans la logique de la disparition de l'aura de l'œuvre, mais pas dans le sens d'un manque de respect envers l'art que l'indignité de l'attaque pourrait suggérer par son opposition à toute valeur de « culte ». Le *performance* des activistes s'appuie sur la reproduction technologique de l'image sans pour autant se présenter comme un art. Le fait que la disparition d'un événement physique aussi éphémère soit compensée par son enregistrement photographique et filmique permet la diffusion du message indépendamment de la présence physique des spectateurs. Or, tout comme la violence transgressive, l'utilisation du document photographique comme supplément est également familière à l'art lui-même, comme le montrent les œuvres d'art éphémères ou éloignées dans l'espace, telles que celles du mouvement *land art*, dont l'existence n'est souvent attestée que par la photographie.

Il n'est pas surprenant que ce soit précisément l'élément artistique concret qui passe au second plan : selon un constat simple, la photographie d'une œuvre d'art originale et unique ne produira pas une nouvelle œuvre d'art originale et unique sur la surface de la photographie. Mais l'unicité de l'œuvre, bien qu'affaiblie du point de vue de son importance, subsiste à travers ce processus même. La reproduction

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[38] Walter Benjamin, « L'œuvre d'art à l'époque de sa reproduction mécanisée », *op. cit.*, p. 45.

technique est destinée, dans ces cas, à fournir à l'œuvre d'art un certain supplément tout en dévoilant une carence originelle. Ce que le document photographique d'une œuvre du *land art* contient d'artistique, c'est l'objet lui-même en tant que contenu réel de l'image, dont il compense les limites temporelles et spatiales en construisant une forme de présence distanciée qui substitue la présence de l'objet artistique original à son image documentaire tout en évoquant cette unicité éloignée.

La mise en scène des attaques contre les tableaux n'a pas d'autre fonction *artistique* que celle déjà contenue dans les tableaux transformés en cibles. L'image médiatique qui transforme le tableau en moyen de communication visuelle d'un message environnemental ou social quelconque est en même temps un supplément qui prétend combler le « défaut » de l'œuvre elle-même, à savoir le fait qu'elle ne peut pas parler par elle-même de la crise de la nature dont la beauté l'inspire pourtant. De même que l'original n'est présent dans la reproduction que sous une forme distanciée, comme différent de lui-même, l'autonomie de l'œuvre d'art est présente dans l'image de la protestation sous la forme politisée qui la convertit en son contraire en prenant l'autotélie de l'art pour moyen de communication politique.

L'œuvre d'art disparaît derrière l'image dans la mesure où la saturation visuelle de la production des images conduit à l'hyper-développement de sa valeur d'exposition au détriment de cette aura que Walter Benjamin identifiait comme écho de la valeur cultuelle de l'œuvre. Mais cela ne signifie pas, dans ce cas, que la présence de l'œuvre d'art en tant qu'original devient non essentielle. Cela signifie plutôt que l'œuvre est considérée comme dépourvue de la capacité d'interpeller le spectateur par un message qui lui est propre en l'absence de ce supplément – destiné à être reproduit en tant qu'image – qui parle en son nom en imposant ses fonctions spécifiques. Faire ce constat n'est pas prôner un retour à une forme d'art rituel et encore moins à la valeur de culte que la propagande totalitaire pourrait attribuer à certaines formes d'art : en ce sens, le régime rituel ou éthique des images, comme l'a indiqué également Rancière, est un régime dans lequel l'art lui-même n'est pas encore individualisé. Ce qui s'avère fragile, ce n'est pas la fonction rituelle de l'art, qui peut toujours se camoufler dans une nouvelle fonction politique ou sociale, mais précisément son autonomie destinée à protéger la puissance intrinsèque de l'œuvre d'art de l'interférence de tout message transcendant par rapport à son mode d'être esthétique. Mais cette interférence se produit précisément parce que, contrairement à l'analogie éthique-esthétique kantienne, le public du tournant moralisateur et du nouvel art engagé ne peut plus voir dans l'esthétique de l'art une véritable promesse éthique en l'absence des messages moraux explicites.

L'œuvre d'art elle-même redevient une *image* de la nature, jugée en tant que copie secondaire selon la prééminence de son modèle. Cela signifie que l'augmentation quantitative des images entraîne un changement qualitatif inversé qui relève précisément de l'inconsistance des images et de leur pouvoir ambigu à la fois. C'est pour cette raison que les activistes se demandent : pourquoi le monde se préoccupe-t-il davantage de l'image de la nature que de la nature réelle ?

Conclusions

Du geste d'asperger un tableau dans une galerie à la stratégie du musée lui-même de véhiculer un message écologiste à travers la position des tableaux sur les murs, toutes ces stratégies frappent, dans des proportions variables, le public parce qu'elles semblent toucher, d'une manière ou d'une autre, à l'autonomie même des œuvres d'art autrefois destinées à une pure et calme contemplation. Alors que l'ancien lien entre plaire et instruire nous montre, bien sûr, que l'association de l'art aux critères du jugement moral n'est point un phénomène nouveau, la manière d'utiliser l'art, dans tous ces cas, comme instrument d'un message social ou moral bouleverse précisément la relation entre plaire et instruire, entre le beau et l'utile. Le problème moral des images n'est pas, dans ces cas, la capacité d'instruire par le plaisir, même si la rhétorique des activistes peut rappeler la beauté de la nature comme argument quasi-esthétique pour sa protection. D'une part, l'art pour l'art ne se réalise qu'au prix de la séparation entre plaire et instruire. De l'autre, ce que les cas évoqués ci-dessus démontrent, ce n'est pas une façon de relier à nouveau la capacité d'instruire à la capacité de plaire. Le but d'instruire ne semble plus relever intrinsèquement de l'art, ni utiliser ses moyens plaisants : il repose soit sur un violent déplaisir, à savoir l'image vandalisée, soit, au moins, sur la modification subliminale de la satisfaction esthétique, comme dans le cas des tableaux accrochés de travers.

La même question se pose à nouveau : la nature qui plaît dans les beaux paysages des peintres peut-elle instruire seulement par son image ? La réponse est ambiguë, car elle renvoie à ce supplément comme à une sorte de *parergon* que le message écologiste ou moralisateur ajoute à l'œuvre dans un but équivoque. Cette ambiguïté réside dans la nature même de ce *parergon* qui n'est ni complètement extérieur ni complètement intérieur à l'œuvre[39]. D'une part, le geste des activistes en tant que « *parergon* » détruit la satisfaction esthétique face à une image temporairement vandalisée. D'autre part, le contexte même créé par le musée qui

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[39] Voir Jacques Derrida, *La vérité en peinture*, Paris, Flammarion, 1978, p. 14.

a déplacé de plusieurs degrés la position du tableau par rapport à l'axe du spectateur, tout comme le geste de vandalisme qui rappelle également la beauté de la nature menacée, ajoute à l'image une force moralisatrice dont elle est intrinsèquement dépourvue.

Il est vrai que toutes ces actions reposent sur l'efficacité des images artistiques et sur le sentiment public de forte appréciation qu'elles suscitent. Mais, en même temps, ces actions voient dans les images un manque ou une insuffisance précisément parce qu'elles n'y voient plus la plénitude de leur présence sensible qui porte en elle la promesse éthique de l'humanité. Ce phénomène peut s'expliquer de deux manières. D'abord, parce qu'il cherche à remplacer le plaisir par le déplaisir, selon une stratégie qui n'est pas étrangère à l'art récent non plus, au sens où les transgressions artistiques se sont longtemps manifestées sous la forme d'une esthétique négative du choc et de la violence. Mais la stratégie qui consiste à chercher des « suppléments » aux œuvres d'art dans des gestes ou dans des manières insolites de les présenter est une manière de « vaporiser » l'art à l'heure où les *effets* sont devenus plus importants que l'*essence* de l'art[40]. Puis, les effets mêmes sont conçus d'une manière différente par rapport à leur genèse. Un nouvel engagement moral de l'art pourrait signifier que l'on ne conçoit les effets éthiques des images que comme le résultat des sujets explicitement moraux. Ceci conduit à oublier que l'analogie éthico-esthétique signifie avant tout une correspondance dans la *forme* de la réflexion des deux expériences possibles, plutôt que dans leur *contenu* concret. La beauté n'est qu'un symbole de la moralité en ce qu'elle signifie l'autonomie d'un jugement issu d'un sujet libre, capable de se donner à lui-même la loi morale, quel que soit son contenu circonstanciel. Si le monde contemporain cherche à remplacer de plus en plus toute forme symbolique par des formes de vie effectives, alors le régime éthique concerne désormais des manières concrètes d'agir moralement, et non une condition éthique en soi. L'art ne peut donc plus être un symbole de la condition éthique, mais une aide effective à son application. Mais en ce qui concerne l'art, la substitution d'un lien formel entre l'esthétique et l'éthique par un lien visant leur contenu commun peut conduire à l'asservissement de l'art à toutes les morales provisoires possibles.

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[40] *Cf.* Yves Michaud, *« L'art, c'est bien fini ». Essai sur l'hyper-esthétique et les atmosphères*, Paris, Gallimard, 2021.

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OTIUM VS. *NEGOTIUM* AS THE FOUNDATION
OF THE CONCEPT OF SOLITUDE IN PETRARCH'S
PHILOSOPHICAL WORKS

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ABSTRACT. The concept of solitude, as elaborated by Petrarch in the treatise *De vita solitaria*, develops on the antagonistic structure of the concepts *otium* and *negotium*. These, in turn, contain notions and intellectual approaches found both in Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages, which attribute to loneliness a special dynamism by joining it with several other concepts such as: will, freedom and friendship. Each historical stage has a specific approach to the notions of *otium* and *negotium*, and in this sense Petrarch's contribution can be considered significant, even if not entirely new, because he attempts a plenary approach to the idea of solitude.

Keywords: solitude, leisure, self-knowledge, liberal arts, friendship]

Introduction

The term *otium* has a long, ambivalent history, with definitions ranging from inactivity that encourages vice, to a state that cultivates intellectual or spiritual gifts for the attainment of virtue. The idea of leisure still refers to the idea of a withdrawal or avoidance of daily mundane concerns (or *negotium*) and involvement in cultural activities. The concept of *otium* holds a privileged place in several works of Petrarch, whose passion for antiquity contributed significantly to the reintegration

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of the ideals of antiquity into later developed Western cultures. Before becoming famous for his love poems, by writing the work *Rerum Vulgarium fragmenta*, Petrarch gained a reputation in Europe as a humanist, moralist and Latin poet. The existence of over one hundred and twenty manuscripts of *De vita solitaria* testifies to the popularity of both the subject and its author.

The work *De vita solitaria* brings to the fore a speech which, at the level of the thematic approach, presents two perspectives on solitude. The first part of the treaty takes in considering the advantages, from an intellectual point of view, of retreating into solitude, and the second raises a question related to the legitimacy of such isolation, which annuls the claims of socialization and allow the pursuit of the highest peaks of happiness. Those two parts are not entirely distinct, in the first there are also ideological and conceptual intersections, which indicate the exit or overcoming of moral convention from contemporaneity and sends towards a new cultural stage of self-awareness. In the history of moral philosophy, starting from Plato, can be identified brief eulogies about the place of solitude or the places that give man the privilege of solitude, but in his work, Petrarch makes it a purpose in itself to talk about solitude. In this regard, the author presents us with a double notion of solitude: on the one hand, a solitude of the mind - immersion in inner thought and reflection and, on the other hand, the solitude acquired from the environmental point of view, that Ciceronian retreat giver of inner peace. At the same time Petrarch in his elaboration and inspired by Augustine adopts a reduction of classes of complex notions to a basic picture of two people with contrary habits, one being *occupatus* and the other *solitarius*, thus making a heuristic device of the kind: *quod in illis vides, in cuntis existimo*.

Res novas on an old subject

Addressing to a wide audience, Petrarch characterizes the term *otium* as *leisure* defined by simple habits, self-control, closeness to nature, careful study, reflection, writing and friendship. Fully aware of the ambiguity of the term, Petrarch rejects the idea that leisure must give rise to laziness, passion or vice. In the passage comprising the dedication at the beginning of the series *De vita solitaria*, he quotes a statement from Cato, addressed to Cicero, that the usage of leisure time is a matter of great importance: "non minus otii quam negotii rationem Claris ingeniis ac Magnis le habendam"[2]. Knowing that a person's manifestation is limited by his own tendencies and habits, Petrarch carefully creates his vision of *otium* in

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[2] Petrarch extracted this statement from *Pro cn. Plancio*, 27.66.

accordance with his own character, talent and ambitions: "Id michi quoque si vel pro ingenii mediocritate, vel pro non mediocri glorie cupiditate—si tamen hanc nondum freno animi ac ratione perdomui —providendum est, quid primum prestare nitar, nisi ut sicut ego a negotiis, sic ab otio meo procul absit inertia?"[3]

De vita solitaria carries on a tradition of the notion of *otium* that originates in ancient Greece. Aristotle, for example, considered that spending free time is an opportunity to acquire virtue capable of bringing personal happiness that society can also benefit from.[4] Intellectual work, which has its own intrinsic value, can prepare the individual for productive involvement in society, but leisure, which involves amusements, games, shows, theater and festivals, is incompatible with Aristotle's liberal ideal. In Roman society, with its traditions of duty and public service, *otium* frequently implies idleness, luxury, and voluptuousness. However, the retreat into exile of some prominent figures of Stoicism, such as Cicero and Seneca, forced them to look for justifications for a retired life, developing the idea of dignified rest (*otium cum dignitate*). Although the Christian world inherited the Roman suspicion of *otium*, associating it with the sin of *acedia*, some Christian writers make *otium* an occasion to serve God through contemplation, while *negotium* would mean *good deeds*. Petrarch's view of leisure in a withdrawn manner, as it appears in *De vita solitaria*, was partly inspired by his earlier experience at Vaucluse where he enjoyed both leisure and friendship alongside Bishop of Cavaillon, Philippe de Cabassola. His approach is based mainly on classical sources, hence a strong secular and masculine character. However, he also emphasizes the desire to follow his own path and to be inspired by the thoughts of the moment:

> "In hoc autem tractatu magna ex parte solius experientie ducatum habui, nec alium ducem querens nec oblatum admissurus, liberiore quidem gressu quanquam fortassis incautius sequor animum meum quam aliena vestigia. Plura ergo audies ab his qui vel plura sunt experti, vel ab expertis acceperunt. A me ninc audies quod occurrit ex tempore."[5]

Claiming these visions as derivatives of his personal experience, Petrarch apparently takes a less formal, non-didactic position of one who presents his unchiseled thoughts, in their natural form, for the benefit of a few close friends. The goal pursued by Petrarch is not, however, an eminently private one or a strictly religious or philosophical one in a noble manner, as certain interpretations indicate, nor from the category of ideals in search of a universal rule. A close examination of Petrarch's use of the term *otium* throughout the treatise *De vita solitaria* is revealing.

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[3] Petrarch, *The life of solitude*, trad. Jacob Zaitlin, University of Illinois Press, 1924, p. 99.

[4] See Aristotle, *Politics*, VII, 9 and *Nicomachean Ethics*, X, 7.

[5] Petrarch, *The life of solitude*, trad. Jacob Zaitlin, Editura University of Illinois Press, 1924, p. 106.

The teaching that the author presents here is somewhat eclectic, but one that will transform approaches to leisure into a secluded place that allows man to meditate on his own choices. Although he deals with another variant of capitalizing on leisure in *De otio religioso*, admiring his brother Gherrard for choosing the path of the monk, Petrarch does not seem to have considered a religious vocation as far as he was concerned.

Leisure is activity, states Susanna Barsella[6] in her study about the treaty *De otio religioso* referring to a work (*opus*) to be accomplished, and not a mere state of emptiness and suspension in waiting for future bliss. Petrarch's interest in *Agite otium*, which suggests a synthesis of both meanings of "otium," is visible not only in the title of *De otio religioso* but also in its opening metaphor, in which monastic activity appears as the earthly mirror of angelic alacrity.

Also, although he was preoccupied with the political and religious issues of his time, having connections with persons in power, ecclesiastical dignitaries and other writers, and enjoying a public role as a poet and scholar, Petrarch also enjoyed a life of study, reflection and literary creation, especially in the variant of retreat in the heart of nature. As a result, he acquired a property outside Avignon in Vaucluse near the Sorgue River sometime in 1337 after climbing Mount Ventoux with Gherardo, a climb that inspired the famous letter in which he scrutinizes his own preoccupation with worldly affairs, a theme continued in the work *Secretum*. He began writing the treatise *De vita solitaria* during his third retreat to this place, between the end of 1345 and 1347. As Armando Maggi emphasized, slightly expanding the perspective stated here, in an article included in volume *Petrarch - A Critical Guide to the Complete Works*[7], *De vita solitaria* lies at the core of Petrarch's thought. For Petrarch solitude does not mean isolation, which he identifies with the love experience for Laura, but rather intimate dialogue with a friend who pursues the same intellectual and spiritual ideals. Dialogue is a key concept in Petrarch's "new" solitude.

Maggi explains that the physical or symbolic presence of the friend merges the two seemingly opposite facets of Petrarch's solitude: its religious character that recalls the monastic experience and the classical *otium* (leisure). And to sustain this argument he brings to the fore the fact that Petrarch argues that if a human being's life is in a constant dialogue with Christ, who lives in the deepest recesses of our soul, a friend symbolizes both the neighbor in the Christian sense, that is, the other through whom Christ presents himself to us, and the intellectual's special interlocutor, as the Latin philosophers Cicero and Seneca recommend.

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[6] Barsella, Susanna, "A humanistic approach to religious solitude". In *Petrarch: A Critical Guide to the Complete Works,* Kirkham - Maggi, The University of Chicago Press, 2009, p. 202.

[7] Maggi, Armando, "You will be my solitude". In *Petrarch: A Critical Guide to the Complete Works,* Kirkham - Maggi, The University of Chicago Press, 2009, pp. 179-195.

Through an amalgam of classical and Christian positions, *De vita solitaria* conveys a mixed message regarding the solitary life, even though Petrarch claims to be writing *res novas* on an old subject. In this writing Petrarch distances himself from the Christian mystical tradition or what Radcliff-Umstead calls "mystical humanism". In this treatise, his humanism draws attention to life in the world, to the value of the individual, and to the classical writings as a standard of conduct and achievement. Emphasizing a refined form of the worldly, Petrarch creates a model of leisure adapted to an elite, who have acquired their education by learning from the great classical writers and can thus aspire beyond the physical, moral and intellectual limitations of the "vulgar crowd", towards a secularized and in some places non-religious ethos. Petrarch addresses in his treatise to a select circle of readers, including Bishop Philippe de Cabassola:

> "…posse tibi res meas, pater optime, placere, que ut paucis placeant laboro, quando, ut vides, sepe res novas tracto durasque et rigidas, peregrinasque sententias et ab omnia moderantis vulgi sensibus atque auribus abhorrentes. Si indoctis ergo non placeo, nichil est quod querar: habeo quod optavi, bonam de ingenio meo spem."[8]

The structure developed around the notion of *otium*, both through the approach of Christian dogma and through the main ideas found in classical literature, lays the foundation for a behavior that privileges the ideals of antiquity, without excluding the approaches of the Christian faith. Petrarch does not pretend that his advice suits everyone, not even the audience to whom it is entirely addressed. On a note full of apparent modesty, Petrarch points out that he is not giving general rules beyond the nature of his own observation, and that each person should guide his life according to his individual experience and nature. In opposition to the negative opinions regarding the concept of *otium*, Petrarch argues in favor of it because the solitude associated with creation was often the basis of civilizing achievements. And viewed in this way, free time becomes a workshop for creation, literary or philosophical reflection, suitable only for those dedicated to the field of letters:

> "Sunt enim quibus solitaria vita morete gravior sit et mortem allatura videatur. Quod precipue literarum ignaris evenire solet, quibus si confabulator desit, quid secum, quid ve cum libris loqui valeant non habent, itaque muti sunt."[9]

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[8]   Petrarch, idem, p. 97.
[9]   Ibidem, p. 131.

Thus, his audience includes only those interested in acquiring virtue through study: "Neque enim ego aliis quam literarum și virtutum studiosis loquor; Reliuis salubre consilium nullum habeo, nisi ut ante omnia vit mutent; Tum de loci oportunitate videbimus."[10] Although exceptional intellectual gifts are not required, observance of God's laws and rationality are essential: "Quodque nulli mediocriter erudito vetitum est, cogitando saltem legendoque placidis fotum curis et rerum vinculis explicitum animum habere, Deo et rationi subditum, cetera liberum; corpus quoque gravi iugo eductum animoque soli ser viens…"[11]This concern for establishing the importance of the rational approach in determining the right conduct is also found in other treatises, such as *Secretum* and *De remediis.* Charles Trinkaus, in the analysis he makes in the volume *The poet as philosopher*[12], considers that Petrarch does not see his own moral concern as being built on the opposition between the pagan position and the one found in Christian doctrine, as is the case with many theologians of the Middle Ages:

> "Thus Petrarch, with all the inadequacies and defects of his knowledge of classical philosophy, manages to intuit and to adapt to the needs of his own religion and age perhaps antiquity's greatest moral insight – the idea of self-sufficiency or *autarkeia.* In a sintetic way, Petrarch was able to unify opposing schools of philosophy, and even Sophists, rhetors and philosophers, through the writings of Cicero and Seneca. […] Petrarch himself thus became a paradigm for posterity and thereby guided the transformations of late medieval culture into that of Renaissance."[13]

And at the base of this synthesis, Petrarch places the interpretation he gives to the concept of *otium*, which, through the demonstration found in the treatise *De vita solitaria*, establishes the conditions for the coexistence of some doctrines often seen as competing, something made possible by their common goal in becoming human in general, respectively its elevation beyond the mortal status, because by correctly assuming leisure and through involvement in creative work, immortality can be achieved.

Otium must be associated with the liberal arts

The objects of leisure include the service of God, the development of the intellect, the attainment of virtue, and the acquisition of fame through writing; each individual can pursue either just one or more of these goals. Always emphasizing

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[10] Petrarch, Idem, p. 162.

[11] Ibidem, p. 166.

[12] Trinkaus, Charles, *The poet as philosopher: Petrarch and the formation of Renaissance consciousness,* Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1979.

[13] Ibidem, pp. 25-26.

the correct use of reason, the leisure proposed by Petrarch involves, above all, the training of the intellect. Arguing in favor of spending leisure time in a scholarly manner, Petrarch cites Cicero, who proclaims the sweetness found in *otio literato*, and Seneca, author of the famous phrase *otium sine literis mors est*. It also touches on the meaning of the Aristotelian statement that the arts have their origin in leisure time, and that leisure time (skolé) is a necessary experience for the man involved in politics. To support the idea that literary achievement and fame are worthy goals, Petrarch discusses Plotinus' conception and classification of virtue into four categories. Although the so-called purgatorial virtues, peculiar to those who enjoy both leisure and philosophy, stand above the political virtues, yet they do not reach the level of those practiced by minds completely freed from human passions and focused on divinity. However, literary pursuits are worthy because they come from this fourth and highest category, that is, the exemplary virtues that exist only in the mind of God. In this way, Petrarch justifies a pattern of *otium* that reflects his own abilities and preferences.

If one hopes to gain fame through literary endeavors, during leisure time, one must avoid both idleness and involvement in worldly affairs. Like his predecessors, Petrarch contrasts the terms *otium* and *negotium*, while promoting the paradoxical notion of leisure through work. At the beginning of the treatise *De vita solitaria*, the author makes a comparison between his leisure activities and those of the good and hard-working Virgilian farmer, who reaps while he sows. He tells Philippe: "Accedit qoud ex more institutoque meo veteri, nunc in rure tou positus, ut frugum ceteri sic egotibi dicimas otii debere videor primitiasque vigiliarum."[14] Being fully aware of the traditional perspective of the concept de *otium*, as a source of vice, Petrarch emphasizes the possibility that leisure can become particularly fruitful from an intellectual point of view, with effects both on individual moral behavior and on the good found at the level of society. Of course, the typology of leisure thought by Petrarch does not resemble the modern meaning of the idea of recreation; rather, it envisions the development of an intellectually enriching time that proposes a moderate and useful study program focused on exercises in self-discipline, study, discussion, and writing. The advantages that Petrarch associates with respite, from an individual perspective, are contained in the following passage: "Nec me tu vacui recessus et silentium delectant, quam que in otium etlibertas habitat…" Freedom is a vital benefit of solitude, which makes it possible to break away from the turbulence of urban life and the habits of the crowd to achieve that serene and orderly *otium* which perfects the intellect, restores the body, harmonizes the soul,

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[14] Petrarch, idem, p. 99.

stimulates virtuous behavior and inspires valuable writing. Although the poet admits that a person with good habits can have leisure even in a crowded city, he naturally supports the leisure found in the silence of nature. In this argumentative approach, Petrarch appeals, on the one hand, to Quintilian's authority to refute the argument that literature and virtue cannot be learned or practiced in solitude without good teachers, and on the other hand, he contradicts Quintilian to the effect that rural beauty would turn the mind to mindless pleasures. Petrarch's predilection for rural spaces, where forests and places with running water are found, is part of another affiliation with the world of Latin antiquity and the bucolic landscapes as described by Cicero or Virgil. And to connect his practices to the Christian tradition, Petrarch compares his own literary experiences with those of Saint Bernard:

> "Solebat enim dicere: omnes se quas sciret literas, quarum nescio an alius sua etate copiosior fuerit, in silvis et in agris didicisse, non hominum disciplinis sed meditando et orando, nec se ullos unquam magistros habuisse preter quercus et fagos. Quod ideo libenter refero, quia siquid et michi nosse datum esset, idem de me vere dicere vellem, et nisi fallor possem."[15]

Unlike the inhabitants of the city, preoccupied with the gratification of their own senses and burdened with material things, the man who retires to peace is filled with peace and master of his appetite and passions, ready to devote himself to the highest studies. For this reason, Petrarch clearly admires Horace's statement (from Epistles 1.7.36) that he values the peaceful freedom of the countryside above all the wealth of Arabia. Based on the auctoritas of Horace, Petrarch deauthorizes urban writers, and even more, as Kark Enekel[16] affirms that Petrarch's location of the writer as being outside of towns is a highly ideological statement. He seems to deeply disagree with the whole development of intellectual life from the twelfth century up to the middle of the fourteenth century. It includes a firm stand, *inter alia*, against scholastic philosophy and theology, Aristotelianism, medicine and physics, jurisprudence, university education in general, lawyers and notaries, teachers at grammar schools, secretaries and other administrators of towns, the mendicant orders, teachers and preachers alike, and vernacular literature. Furthermore, it also included an ideological statement against Avignon as the place of the papal curia. This means that Petrarch, as an author, locates himself deliberately outside of those intellectual mainstream developments.

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[15] Petrarch, idem, p. 224.

[16] Enekel, Karl, "Petrarch's constructions of the sacred solitary place in 'De vita solitaria' and other writings". In *Solitudo. Spaces, places, and times of solitude in Late Medieval and Early Modern Cultures,* Eneke-Gottler, Brill, Leiden-Boston, 2018, p. 34.

In the Book 2 of the treaty *De vita solitaria* we find a long list of famous people who come to support Petrarch's view of solitude by making the same choice themselves, but also the careful and diverse selection of characters, contributes to Petrarch's demonstration that the practice of solitude is universal. While the list of the great solitaries is predominantly Christians, by a ratio of about two to one, a contextual analysis shows that the term *otium*, which appears in about fifteen significant passages in Book 2, it is only rarely associated with biblical characters or Christians. The use of the term *otium* in these *exempla* remains consistent with Petrarch's understanding of the use of the term by his favorite Roman authors. The references to *otium* in Book 2 reveal to the reader Plotinus, Horace, Seneca, Cicero, and the two Scipios alongside Moses, Elijah, Elisha, Saint Ambrose, Peterus Damianus, and Petrarch himself, as those solitaries who truly touch in state of *otium*.

This apparent balance between Christians and pagans is misleading, as Petrarch discusses biblical figures and church fathers in the classical terms of the concept of leisure, or presents them, without much elaboration, to justify a life devoted to leisure, in a manner that follows to propose it to the bishop of Cavaillon. *De vita solitaria* describes Ambrose as a follower of Cicero, who emulated the elder Scipio's concept of productive leisure in the company of friends. He characterizes Peterus Damianus' *otium* as a necessary addition to his dynamic life, including his ecclesiastical responsibilities and theological pursuits. Similarly, Celestine, who, by abdicating the papacy, brought about Dante's condemnation to the Inferno, receives Petrarch's appreciation as a seeker of leisure, whose retreat is followed by a miracle that gives him divine approval of his choice regarding leisure and to the detriment of ecclesiastical honors. Among the Roman philosophers and political leaders, the most important practitioners of *otium* are Seneca and Cicero. Petrarch claims that Seneca, whose reputation as a Roman senator endangered him and exiled him to Corsica, remembers his solitude with great affection: "illam otiose exilii ignominiam presenti occupate glorie haud immerito anteponit." Although Petrarch depicts Seneca enjoying the freedom of his philosophical studies, he also finds his Roman customs too harsh. Cicero, who had also been sent into exile, practices leisure in a variant that fits better with the model thought by Petrarch. The preference for the manner of practicing *otium* in the Ciceronian sense is also justified by his achievements: the establishment of an academy, the complex work consisting of treatises on rhetoric, politics, religion and philosophy, and also the development of his own Stoic theory convincingly arguing that virtue is a good in itself. Admiring Cicero's many writings, not only for their substance, but also for their beauty and eloquence, Petrarch concludes that the *otium* enhanced his great achievements: "Non colligo singula; ex his enim vides, ut amator ille urbis et fori et amata oderit et literatam solitudinem

rebus omnibus anteponat".[17] Enlarging the sphere of his own perception of the idea of solitude, Petrarch states that both good friends and good books are indispensable. Books can provide relaxation, consolation, counsel, knowledge, and lessons in eloquence and style; they can also present ideas useful in debates and alternatives that provoke careful reasoning. With a sense of humor, Petrarch notes that while books don't require food, drink, or much space, they instead provide recurring and immeasurable benefits. Yet the right friends, he reminds us, offer the pleasures inherent in human nature found in conversation and in each other's company: "Admitto et in solitudinem amicos, dulce genus de quo multa premisimus, sine quibus truncam ac debilitatam vitam, et quasi luminibus captam puto".[18]

And so, through leisure, life becomes a valuable one, dedicated to studies and friendship, both of which are inspired by the liberal arts. To answer those who might argue that the active life of the *negotium* is superior to that of the *otium*, he asserts, with some irony, that he has yet to see any of his contemporaries successfully contribute to the public welfare. In his view, those who devote themselves exclusively to public service risk losing control over their own lives, minds or hearts. In the admonition at the end of *De vita solitaria*, Petrarch calls upon Philippe to join him in leisure in a fit and virtuous manner that can add brightness to both private and public life. "Tibi, pater, si te ipsum, tua si bona noveris, nichil deest quod gratam solitudinem et dulce otium possit efficere."[19] The leisure conceptualized by Petrarch can find its fulfillment especially in rural areas: "locum et libertati et quieti et otio et scientie et virtuti".[20] Those who are truly capable of reaching the highest level of experiencing *otium* are those who can find pleasure in the midst of nature, among forests, mountains, meadows, or streams, where they can devote themselves to liberal studies. However, it also does not exclude occasional physical activities such as farming, hunting or fishing, as long as the goal is moderate exercise rather than agitation or waste. In this ensemble governed by nature and moderation, prayer and introspection complete the ritual of becoming the man who chose to capitalize on leisure through creation. Man in such seclusion "ad naturam respicit, hanc ut ducem ut parentem sequitur".[21]

With echoes from the writings of Cicero and Horace, Petrarch's concept of *otium* is a way of life closely linked to the ethics of moderation, respect for the rules of nature, and a deep sense of responsibility for the development of the intellect and creative faculties. It is a life unalived by idleness, anxiety, or undue interest in

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[17] Petrarch, idem, p. 279.
[18] Ibidem, p. 291.
[19] Ibidem, p. 293.
[20] Ibidem, p. 299.
[21] Ibidem, p. 90.

material things; rather it is one devoted to thinking and writing. This vision of free time allows the individual to become more himself, more human, more creative and wiser. This apparent narrowing of perspective of living a secluded life becomes, intellectually, an expansion in the best sense. Even if Petrarch's withdrawn man does not get involved politically or militarily - like a Cicero or a Scipio - he does not withdraw from the rest of the world either. By including his friends, he has already begun to create a small community that can have a positive influence on the outside world, for which he serves as an example. Even if Petrarch does not always succeed in reconciling the tension between Christian and classical mentality, he nevertheless undoes a certain medieval habit of mind by refusing to despise this world for the sake of the next and also by refusing to neglect the intellectual aspect of the spirit. In this way, he gives an impetus to the secularization of the European values that underlie the Renaissance.

Conclusion

Petrarch offers a new vision to the valorization of personal experience in relation to the already existing theorizations. In this respect, he not only enters into debate with his sources, especially classical writers, when their ideas do not conform to his ideal, but also embarks on the path of knowledge, taking into account his own talents, preferences, experiences and thoughts. Thus, at the end of the treatise he emphasizes that his ideas are the product of a person who remains in the pose of the student and the researcher: "Hec ergo non diffinitor, sed scrutator vestigatorque tractaverim".[22] As a last thought we can mention that in *De vita solitaria*, Petrarch clearly seeks the spiritual but secular vision of a free time organized around the idea of literary creation, as it would later be elaborated by Montaigne, Rousseau, Marx, Cardinal Newman and Josep Pieper, in whose works leisure is described as that power to transcend the boundaries of the world of work and reach the superman, the life-giving existential forces that revive and renew us before we return to our daily work. Only in genuine time does a gate open to freedom. In free time truly human values are saved and preserved. With Petrarch, the ethos of *otium* involves a transformation of the purpose of everyday life into one involving self-knowledge and the cultivation of individual talents.

The inherent tension between public action and solitary contemplation pushes the ideal of *otium* away from the Platonic and Aristotelian view that leisure has a predominantly communal purpose with a significant contribution to the individual.

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[22] Petrarch, idem, p. 315.

This imaginative adventure of spending time depicted by Petrarch allows individuals, in a private, not necessarily contemplative, and religious or philosophical sense, to devote time to the cultivation of virtues, thus tending to a higher life of mind and spirit. Although the purpose of the Petrarchan *otium* cannot be reduced to the theme of gaining self-confidence, this concept includes the individualism and humanistic naturalism also characteristic of the Renaissance.

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CONFLICTS WITH NOVELTY: INTELLIGIBILITY CRISIS AND THE CASE OF THE YUGOSLAV NARRATIVE

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ABSTRACT. This paper deals with the notion of intelligibility crisis in terms of conflict and harmony. Namely, we will analyze the notion of intelligibility from MacIntyre's philosophical opus and apply it to the historical case. Intelligibility, according to MacIntyre, is the notion which provides us with contextual meaning and embeds our actions with sense within the specific tradition. Intelligibility crisis is the term that is coined to provide a descriptive account of the phenomenon when we cannot connect ourselves with a new social context in which we find ourselves in. To further elaborate on this and apply it onto an example, we shall use the historical case of the Yugoslavian nation. We will provide analysis between three different contextual narratives – pre-Yugoslav narrative, Yugoslav narrative, and post-Yugoslav narrative. After applying the notion of intelligibility crisis onto this historical case study, we will notice how people of one social narrative lose intelligibility by going into another social narrative. Furthermore, we shall consider the notions of conflicts and harmony as those that are connected to intelligibility. The main argument from the descriptive state of things which was offered would be the following – conflicting sentiments arise when we are not in harmony with the narrative within which we have attained intelligibility.

Keywords: intelligibility crisis, Yugoslavia, social narratives, meaning, conflicts, harmony

1.0. Setting up the Stage: Social Narratives, Narratives of the Self, and Intelligibility

The main purpose of this paper is to expand on the theory of intelligibility that is derived from MacIntyre's philosophical opus and apply it in a specific context.

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By doing this, we will look at the notions such as conflict and harmony in a specific light. However, before doing that, a conceptual stage needs to be set; the one which will provide the necessary premises upon which this claim stands upon. The two biggest premises are the social narrativity thesis and the psychological narrativity thesis (or the thesis of narrative self-constitution).

Generally, the narrativity approach is relatively novel in the philosophical investigation of the social and psychological phenomena. Anthony Rudd, for example, notes the following:

> Over the last two or three decades, various philosophers, including MacIntyre, Taylor and Ricoeur (as well as psychologists, sociologists, theologians, and others) have argued that the notion of narrative has a central role to play in our thinking about personal identity and about ethics.[2]

Firstly, the social narrativity thesis states that the data that we operate with, our beliefs, values, attitudes come from the complex infrastructure of context which is embedded within one society. It holds a claim that our social lives are a part of an overall narrative and that this narrative is an ontological condition of our social lives.[3] This infrastructure is exhibited in the form of a narrative in which the members of that society are a part of. Therefore, one of the central claims of the social narrativity thesis is that the meaning is exclusively derived from the narrative context which we are a part of. This derivation theory is called narrative hermeneutics. In short, a view of narrative hermeneutics states that the narratives are necessarily politically and socially induced and that, in accordance with that, individuals find themselves deciphering meaning within that world.[4]

The second premise is that of the narrativity self-constitution thesis. The claim of this thesis is that the conception of the self is inherently narrative.[5] That is to say – when we think about the question of "who am I?", we initially find an answer in a story of our lives in relational terms. Our social identity is constituted by us being a member of a specific group of people that share the same narrative within the given context[6], and our personal identity as the bearers of experience.

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[2] A. Rudd, *Kierkegaard, MacIntyre and Narrative Unity—Reply to Lippitt* in *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy*, vol.50, no.5, 2007., p. 541.

[3] M. R. Sommers, G. D. Gibson, *Reclaiming the Epistemological Other: Narrative and the Social Constitution of Identity* in *Social Theory and Politics of Identity*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1993., p. 38.

[4] H. Meretoja, *The Ethics of Storytelling: Narrative Hermeneutics, History and the Possible*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2018., p. 50.

[5] M. Schechtman, *The Narrative Self* in *The Oxford Handbook of the Self*, 2011, p. 395.

[6] M. R. Sommers, *The Narrative Constitution of Identity: Relational and Network Approach* in *Theory and Society vol. 24, no. 5*, 1994., p. 606.

The philosopher who championed this view is surely Paul Ricoeur, however, it expands to the more recent debates led by Maria Schechtman, Alasdair MacIntyre, Daniel Dennett, and Charles Taylor. Despite the differences in their approaches, all these philosophers share the view that our sense of self is not static or fixed, but rather is continually shaped and re-shaped through our ongoing interactions with others and the larger social context. This view has important implications for understanding how we come to understand ourselves and our place in the world, as well as how we relate to others and engage in ethical decision-making. For example, a person X is a child of parents X1 and X2, a friend of X3 and X4, a musician, a footballer, a person who went through experience Z1, Z2, Z3 etc. All these factors constitute a narrative identity of a person X.

This would be the roughest sketch of the two premises that were offered. The stage is set for the notion of intelligibility to enter the picture. In MacIntyre's terms, intelligibility refers to the idea that our actions and practices are only meaningful within a certain tradition or narrative.[7] According to MacIntyre's concept of intelligibility, practices and their significance are closely tied to the traditions in which they are executed. The job of a phrenologist, for example, was once considered important as it studied the size and shape of skulls to determine personality traits and intellectual capabilities. However, as science progressed, the practice of phrenology lost its importance and would now be considered irrational. Similarly, the job of a scribe, such as a sofer copying the Bible, was once essential before the invention of the printing press but is now meaningless in our technologically advanced world. Our actions and tendencies are only intelligible within the context of the social tradition or narrative in which we are situated. This idea is foreshadowed in the beginning of MacIntyre's "After Virtue" and is further developed in the second part of the book. In short, according to MacIntyre, our beliefs, intentions, actions, strivings, goals, values etc. are shaped by the social narrative and they only make sense within the borders of that social narrative.[8] This is what he believes that intelligibility is – the dependence of our self-constitution on the social narrative that embeds us.

Thus, the framework that is needed has been established. Social narrativity thesis is used as the external source of our embeddedness; psychological narrativity thesis states that we form our conception of *the self* in accordance with the relational approach and the stories that we tell ourselves; and, finally, intelligibility thesis states that there is a clear dependency between our actions, beliefs, intentions, values etc.[9] are meaningful only under the social framework under which they have

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[7] A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, Notre Dame Press, Indiana., 1981., p. 206.

[8] *Ibid.* p. 208.

[9] We can also take these attributes as the basics of our self-constitution.

been formed. Let us, therefore, apply these concepts onto a concrete case. This will enable us to make an argument that intelligibility/intelligibility crisis is an important part of how we perceive ourselves living in harmony or living in conflict.

2.0. Describing Intelligibility Crisis: A Case Study of Yugoslavia

I would like to start this chapter with a purely practical example which leads from what we have talked about in the previous sub-chapter. We will explore one historical case study in order to provide the implications of what will be called the intelligibility crisis. This example will portray the conditions of changing one social structure, or a social narrative and the effects of it on the individuals who have been formed under it. The content of this project will rest on the premises of the social and personal narrativity thesis and their correlation within the notion of the intelligibility crisis. We have mentioned intelligibility as one of the key concepts, meaning, respectively, that our actions and thoughts make sense within the boundaries of one social narrative. Intelligibility, in this project, as we have established, means that a subject is making sense of the social status around him/her and acting/thinking in such a way that makes sense to do within that social status. Intelligibility crisis, in this sense, will be shown as a discontinuation of that coherency. As an example, I will use the case of former Yugoslavia and provide sufficient evidence why the intelligibility crisis was especially relevant in that situation. Afterwards, I will explore intelligibility crisis through the lens of nostalgia and show its political and moral relevance.

Therefore, for the sake of an example, we will consider someone who grew up in the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. He/she has been encumbered by one social and political system, or a narrative. Assuming that the model we have provided in the first sub-chapter works, this person has formed his/her *self* by deriving meaning from the social context in which he/she found him/herself to be a part of, through the process of narrative hermeneutics. This leads us to connect the narrative notion of *the self* with the social narrative in which *the self* was formed. The person who has been raised in Yugoslavia considers him/herself to be a part of the community which has social structures, rules, norms etc. that are unique to it. Yugoslavia has been a unity of autonomous areas, an alliance between nations which have shared an economic and political unity.[10] Let us consider a Yugoslav narrative as N2. To fulfill the requirement of portraying the social change, we will take three narratives into consideration – pre-Yugoslav narrative, Yugoslav narrative, and post-Yugoslav narrative.

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[10] A. Finlan, *The Collapse of Yugoslavia 1991-99*, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, 2004., p. 13.

Yugoslavia is the key denominator in this relation, and it would be of major importance to describe the Yugoslav project. The idea of the unified project of the southern Slavs has been in the making through the years before its formation. The notion of creating this project also brought a fresh air of freedom for the countries at hand, since they have been under the influence of the forces such as Austria-Hungary and Ottoman Empire. Dejan Djokić stresses that the creation of this state was not only reasonable, but maybe the only choice the given countries could have made after the First World War.[11] That is to say, the idea of many intellectual and political circles (both Serbian, Bosnian, Croatian and Slovenian)[12] has achieved its actualization after the First World War in the form of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians (which would later become Yugoslavia). Decades of intellectual endeavors have made it possible for the general public to accept the idea of a unified project. As Marie-Janine Calic rightfully observes, the public has been made nationally conscious by both horizontal and vertical cultural mobilization.[13] For it to be achievable, Austria-Hungary and Ottoman Empire needed to lose their power over the mentioned countries, and this was the consequence which arose after the First World War. Therefore, there was a need for national freedom and unity, as well as practical and economic benefit of working together after the time of war. The Yugoslav narrative was a construct of those who were craving national freedom that was not coerced by higher powers.

The major importance lies in the idea of national unity being created and constituted, since it needed to be based on a specific social narrative which provided means for the people to accept living under these conditions. To understand this, we need to refer back to the singular nationalist sentiments that were always lurking in the shadows of Yugoslavia. Vesna Pešić argues that Yugoslavia was never able to accommodate multiple nationalistic ideologies which were especially fueled after World War II.[14] Three nationalistic ideologies are notable in this picture and, as John R. Lampe rightfully highlights, those are of Serbian nationalism, Croatian nationalism, and Yugoslav nationalism.[15] Prior to the official birth of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, there was a strong ideological battle in the particular nations. On the one hand, we had a strong idea of a nation, a community which is constituted

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[11] D. Djokić, *Vek Jugoslavije: Kako i Zašto su Srbi, Hrvati i Slovenci Stvorili Zajedničku Državu* in *Tragovi vol. 2, no. 1,* 2018., p. 30.

[12] *Ibid.* p. 32-34.

[13] M. Calic, *A History of Yugoslavia,* Purdue University Press, Indiana, 2019., p. 40.

[14] V. Pešić, *Serbian Nationalism and the Origins of the Yugoslav Crisis*, United States Institute of Peace, Washington, 1996., p. 3.

[15] J. R. Lampe, *The Failure of Yugoslav National Idea* in *Studies in East European Thought*, Springer, 1994., p. 71-72.

on the grounds of the shared past. Stressing the importance of the past is absolutely the key and we will soon see why that is the case. Opposite to this idea, there were, as Charles Jelavich call them, idealists who believed that Slavic people should overcome their differences and rise above the factors which have divided them within one unified state.[16] Sociologically speaking, Serbian and Croatian nationalism were a political reality in the nineteenth century. This political sentiment of nationalism was deeply encoded in the past and has never been confronted with absolute honesty. Serbian nationalism was exactly this, a force from the past, originating in the idea of a medieval times in which Serbia was a great nation.[17]

Also, it is worthy to note the importance of the historical battle that being presented in the nationalist narrative. Serbia, according to the nationalist picture, has always battled against the foreign forces and has, through the battle of virtue and glory, overcame all obstacles. The same thing can be said in regard to the Croatian nationalism. According to Davorka Matić, the root of the Croatian nationalism is in the medieval "nation Croatica", an idea used to build foundation for the notion of the Croatian political nation.[18] These sentiments were carried by the political parties such as the National Party (Narodna stranka) and the Party of Rights (Stranka prava).[19] So, keeping that in mind, we will call this pre-Yugoslav narrative N1; a narrative based on the political affiliation with the particular states.

During the period of N2, citizens born and raised in the former Yugoslavia mostly have a different sentiment linked to their political deliberation. As the time went on, the idea of unity became so powerful with public opinion being completely swayed by the idea of the Yugoslav nation. This is the third nationalist sentiment mentioned before, the Yugoslav one. Aleksa Djilas notes that the values based on non-alignment (or to be precise, alignment to Yugoslavia) have held the country together and have been at the center of keeping it unified.[20] This idea of unity and shared practices is the bases that the "neighbors" used to form an idea of one nation under the banner of Yugoslavia.

N3 would describe a narrative which is post-Yugoslav. There were multiple reasons why Yugoslavia, as a project, didn't work. The underlying economical

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[16] C. Jelavich, *Serbian Nationalism and the Question of Union with Croatia in the Nineteenth Century* in *Balkan Studies,* Thessaloniki, 1961., p. 1.

[17] P. J. Cohen, *Serbia's Secret War: Propaganda and the Deceit of History*, Texas A&M University Press, Texas, 1996., p. 136.

[18] D. Matić, *Is Nationalism Really That Bad? The Case of Croatia* in *Democratic Transition in Croatia: Value Transformation, Education & Media*, Texas A&M University, Texas, 2007., p. 327.

[19] *Ibid*. p. 327.

[20] A. Djilas, *Tito's Last Secret: How Did He Keep the Yugoslavs Together?* In *Foreign Affairs* vol. 74, no. 4, Council of Foreign Relations, 1995., p. 121.

inefficiencies, the piling of costs, the problem of getting new foreign investors, the rise of unemployment, etc. has shaken the former nation of Yugoslavia.[21] When the economic state of one nation starts to falter, the civil disappointment follows. It was not long before the trust in the very institutions started to weaken and the game of blaming one another began. During the 1980s, as one might imagine, the narrative started shifting back towards the detachment of the nations and the pro-Serbian and pro-Croatian ideal.[22] The craving for dominance, the need for the detachment, the longing for the past greatness has culminated during the beginning of the 1990s when the bloody Balkan wars happened, and the violent fall of Yugoslavia occurred.

What does this show; what does this tell us? From this very broad portrayal of the history of Yugoslavia we have tried to illustrate the short time span of the drastic social and political changes. Let us now try to formalize what was happening and how the theory given in the previous chapters can be of service to our cause. Formalization can go as it follows - social narratives, as stated, will be referred to as N1 (pre-Yugoslav narrative), N2 (Yugoslav narrative) and N3 (post-Yugoslav narrative). The people that constitute the social order N1 will be referred to as P1, and the same goes for P2 and P3. Since the social narrative shapes personal narratives, the emphasis must be put on the role of the people.

By addressing the people of a given narrative structure, I am assuming the connection between the social narrative and the narrative constitution of *the self*. Since *the self*, as we have stated, is formed under the social narrative which is formative for *the self*. In this sense, those who are Px are *the selves* formed under the social narrative Nx.

Of course, it is safe to assume that this is based on a broad generalization since we also need to embrace a plurality of ways of life. As stated earlier, in N1 there have been groups of people who were striving for unification of the nations and those who were striving for conservation of power. Noting this might be obvious, but it needs to be addressed. Every narrative tends to shape various people who are assessing it from a specific standpoint. Some of them are against it, while some of them affirm it. The means for affirmation or negation can be various and are often located in the form of one's life. To repeat the previous claim in this context, when I talk about Px being related to Nx, it is said that Px has been shaped by Nx. Also, I am taking Px as a group of people withholding the dominant public opinion of the given narrative. Therefore, when I talk about P1, it is referring to the people

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[21] S. P. Ramet, *Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to the Fall of Milošević,* Westview Press, Colorado, 2002., p.49.

[22] *Ibid.* p. 52.

who have been raised in a narrative that is strictly nationalist and it is by no means saying that there was no plurality of opinions.

Now, let us continue to talk about the relation between N1, N2, N3, and P1, P2 and P3. What happened in the first place, when the Yugoslav nation appeared, was that N1 has shifted into N2. Yet, P1 has not shifted into P2; P2 were the new generations being raised by P1. The problem arises here – you take one group of people with specific sentiments and ways of life and throw them into the new social order. Let us also assume that this new social order was more just, and the institutions were operating under the premise of equal consideration of interests. It takes both parts of the equation for the narrative to function, there needs to be an equilibrium between Px and Nx. If there is no such a thing, Px will feel thrown into the unknown, new world and, most likely, they will long for the world that they have been a part of. This is what intelligibility crisis is, a sense of disorientation in one narrative. Actions and beliefs that we held before do not seem intelligible with the new context and we feel a sense of loss, anger, intense dislike, or rage.

There are still practices and meanings transferring from one narrative to another, as James Connelly notes[23]. One of the replies would be that these practices and meanings transform their intelligibility to the wider context. P1 who is working in the bureaucracy institution does not feel that his/her efforts are having the same designatum in N1 and N2. The motive changes, in N1, the goal was promoting welfare in the national borders, while in N2, it is to promote the unified good. The consequences of this individual practice might lead to an unequal reception of people. A good example (and certainly the one of contemporary importance) might be racism in the USA law enforcement institutions. The police brutality against the people of color resulted in the formation of the BLM international social movement in 2013 which went out to organize massive protests in the 2020 following the brutal killing of George Floyd.[24] Considering the data studies, people of color are 2.5x more likely to be killed by the police than white people.[25] Surely, we cannot simplify institutional racism and claim that there is only one factor contributing to it. Steven O. Roberts and Michael Rizzo find that there are seven factors contributing to the institutional racism in the USA.[26] First two factors are quite

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[23] J. Connelly, *Reasoning Through Crisis, Incommensurability and Belief* in *Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique* XXI-2, 2016., p. 9.

[24] Brittanica.com, *Black Lives Matter*, site: https://www.britannica.com/topic/Black-Lives-Matter accessed: 29.03.2022.

[25] Nature.com, *What Data Say About Police Brutality and Racial Bias – And Which Reforms Might Work*, site: https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-01846-z accessed: 29.03.2023.

[26] News.stanford.edu, *Stanford Psychologist Identifies Seven Factors that Contribute to American Racism*, site: https://news.stanford.edu/2020/06/09/seven-factors-contributing-american-racism/ accessed: 29.03.2023.

important – categories and the factions.[27] The first factor leads us to correlate ourselves with specific groups while the second factor triggers the sentiment of loyalty towards that group. Now, this invokes a feeling of pride for one nation or, in this instance, one race. There have also been multiple links between patriotic nationalism and white racism. Donna Goldstein and Kira Hall take a step further and deduce that this feeling is intensified by the nostalgic sentiments of once a great nation residing in the mid-twentieth century.[28] When we combine these factors, you have institutional injustice committed against those who do not fit into the categories of belonging. Some police officers working for the law enforcement institution are providing less care for those who do not fit into their groups towards which they have loyalty, nor with which they share the collective, nostalgic dream.

The same can be said for P1 shifting into N2. Now they have to live in a narrative with the people with whom they do not share this sense of belonging nor the sense of unified past. This feeling was, arguably, a constant sentiment that has plagued Yugoslavia. Now, when we introduce P2 into the picture, the situation becomes much more chaotic. We can differentiate between P2' and P2''. P2' refers to those individuals who have been shaped in N2 and find themselves to be national residents of Yugoslavia. P2'' are those who have been shaped in N2 as well, however, they still retain the strong sense of national belonging to the nationality which was linked with the pre-Yugoslav narrative. N3 happened because of the invocation of the sentiments that were held by P2'', awakening the past and feeding of the nostalgic feeling of the times that have passed. Neo-nationalism has swayed those that were idealizing the past and has opened the ideological battle which resulted in one of the most horrible wars since World War 2. N3, in this sense, is the new N1 while N2 has perished. In N3 we have P2 and P3, some of those who, yet again long for the past, and the ones who are affirming the present. Yet again we have the intelligibility crisis of those coming from N2. P2'' have achieved the goal of nationalization, however, the investigation shows that most of them are not happy with how the things turned out and that the majority of the ex-Yugoslav citizens think that the break-up did more harm than good.[29] P2' are considered Yugonostalgics, people that have longing towards the fallen state.[30]

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[27] *Ibid.*

[28] D. M. Goldstein, K. Hall, *Postelection surrealism and nostalgic racism in the hands of Donald Trump* in *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 7, no.1, 2017., p. 402.

[29] E. Keating, Z. Ritter, news.gallup.com, *Many in Balkans Still See More Harm from Yugoslavia Breakdown*, site: https://news.gallup.com/poll/210866/balkans-harm-yugoslavia-breakup.aspx accessed: 30.03.2023.

[30] N. Chushak*, Yugonostalgic against All Odds: Nostalgia for Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia among Young Leftist Activists in Contemporary Serbia*, PhD thesis in *School of Social and Political Science*, University of Melbourne, 2013., p. 3.

Now, let us sum up the description given in this sub-chapter. The notion of the intelligibility crisis was described in the example of the Yugoslav narrative. We have compared the Yugoslav narrative to the post-Yugoslav and the pre-Yugoslav narrative in order to show the drastic change in how we perceive social reality. I have tried to argue that one reason in the sea of reasons for the fall of Yugoslavia was in the exploitation of the past narrative. The Yugoslav narrative was compared to the pre-Yugoslav narrative while the second one has been animated by the invocation of the sentiment of nostalgia. I have also argued that in the post-Yugoslav narrative nostalgia still remains.

However, this time, the nostalgia is not the pre-Yugoslav one, but a Yugoslav one. This nostalgia is a product of the world not making sense to us anymore and us being unable to find ourselves intelligible within the new structure of meaning. Apart from the narrative we have had an as example, countless others still stand. Many of the conservative strivings are explained by this intelligibility crisis. In this sense, many of the newer political problems and concerns make little to no sense to the people that have been embedded within the narrative of the old. The problems of the 2000s are not the same as the problems in the 1980s. The problems in 2022 are not the same as the problems we were facing in the early 2000s etc. Race issues, gender issues, and many forms of minority issues that certain groups of people are concerned with at this very moment become meaningless or are downplayed by those who have been shaped under the narrative which had their own set of problems. This has an immense impact on the overall consensus and on political choices themselves.

This is what I call an intelligibility crisis – a crisis occurring when those who have been formed as themselves under one social narrative do not find meaning in another social narrative.

3.0. Harmony and Conflict Explained from the Dichotomy of Intelligibility and Intelligibility Crisis

How do we define harmony and conflict within the boundaries of this project? Surely, these terms can mean various things when applied to various examples. This project, however, deals with the social realm or, to be more exact, relationship between the social and the individual. In this regard, I will follow Stephen Wright's and Gamze Baray's aspect of conflict and harmony; that is to say, I will use the term conflict to describe the negative intergroup relations while I will use the term harmony to describe the intergroup cohesion.[31] The reason why the

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[31] S. C. Wright, G. Baray, *Models of Social Change in Social Psychology: Collective Action or Prejudice*

aspect of intergroup relations concerning conflict and harmony should be obvious. The three social narratives that we have established are directly related to the intergroup relations that share different narrative views.

Now, what I would like to argue is the following – the more we have intelligibility within one society, the more we will be in harmony with it. And vice versa, the less intelligibility there is within a society, we have further chances for conflict. The second claim is easily visible on the examples that have been provided, however, when it comes to harmony, it is a premise which is taken as a hypothetical implication from the analysis of conflict. The step that needs to be taken at this point is to return to the given examples and provide a claim.

Coming back to the previous examples, we have N1, N2 and N3; pre-Yugoslav, Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav narrative. Due to the rapid change in the social environment and the constant fragmentation of societal strivings and goals, a huge intelligibility crisis occurred. Those who were molded in society N1, did not feel like society N2 affirmed their beliefs, values, and attitudes; and the same thing goes with N2 and N3. By pinpointing the fact of rapid change and loss of intelligibility, we see the effects on social cohesion and intergroup relations. Furthermore, if we follow MacIntyre's view on intelligibility, we see it as a necessary constitute of the common good since it connects individual practices to the overall social narrative.[32] In short, what I want to argue for here is that without intelligibility, there cannot be a unified striving towards some form of common good. Without this striving, social cohesion and intergroup relations deteriorate. David Schiefer and Jolanda van der Noll claim that the orientation towards the common good is the essential component of social cohesion.[33]

On the other hand, the similar claim is argued for by many political theorists; the claim that without shared values and affirmed identities, social cohesion does not work.[34] Therefore, without the clear and coherent infrastructure of beliefs, values, and attitudes that we derive from the social narrative upon which we ground a specific account of good, we feel like we are in a state of crisis in correlation with the society in which we live. In this sense, I believe that the hypothesis which claims that intelligibility is an essential factor for intergroup relations has been set.

So, to summarize, I am using the term harmony to describe an aspect of intergroup relations which is a cohesive one. On the other hand, conflict is a term

Rejection? Conflict or Harmony? in *Beyond Prejudice: Extending the Social Psychology of Conflict, Inequality and Social Change*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2012., p. 227.

[32] A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, Notre Dame Press, Indiana. 1981., p. 201.

[33] D. Schiefer, J. van der Noll, *The Essentials of Social Cohesion: A Literature Review* in *Social Indicators Research*, vol. 132, 2017., p. 589.

[34] K. N. Breidahl, N. Holtug, K. Kogshoj, *Do shared values promote social cohesion? If so, which? Evidence from Denmark*, in *European Political Science Review* vol. 10, no. 1, 2018., p. 98.

that I use to describe negative intergroup relations. N1, N2, and N3 have been plagued by conflicts, resulting in a strained and troubled relationship among those that belong to these narratives. If one narrative state of affairs were a consistent one, the intelligibility crises would not arise, and we would have more social cohesion. In the midst of it all, if a person who is born and raised within the Yugoslav narrative shifts him/herself into another narrative in a rapid way, the intelligibility that he/she had with the older narrative shatters and he/she is dealing with intelligibility crisis. Now, by having this, he/she does not share the same intelligibility as the person who is a member of N3 narrative, or post-Yugoslav one. By not having the same set of common goals in the overall structure of society, the intergroup relations are fragmented, and conflict arises. Steven L. Burg argues that in Yugoslavia, there have been little to no agreements on the borders of the territories, on the national questions etc. which bred inter-national hostility and led to many internal conflicts.[35] By not addressing the problems which were intelligible to N1, they were brought into the social narrative N2 and, therefore, caused the intelligibility crises of those who were a part of N1. As we have noted, N1 was a social narrative which has rested on the questions of national identity of a particular state while N2 was a social narrative of a unified national identity. The narrative identity of a person X who is a part of N1 and the narrative identity of a person Y who is a part of N2 are directly in conflict with each other. Therefore, harmony as intergroup cohesion was thrown out of the picture, and we were left with a conflictual environment. And, yet the same thing can be said going from N2 to N3.

In this respect, I am arguing for the following – intelligibility is an important part of intergroup relations. By using the terms such as conflict and harmony in direct correlation with the case of intergroup relations, I have tried to elaborate on the point that harmony has an important aspect of individuals being intelligible to their own social narrative while, at the same time, conflict arises (in this respect only) once the social narrative has become foreign and the individuals from the previous narrative start clashing with the individuals who were/are formed under the newer narrative.

4.0. Conclusion

We have started this paper with two opening premises – the one on social narrativity thesis and the one on the psychological narrativity thesis. Intelligibility is a term that is of key importance in this paper, and it was introduced after the

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[35] S. L. Burg, *Conflict and Cohesion in Socialist Yugoslavia: Political Decision Making Since 1966*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1983., p. 19.

introduction of the two premises, since it is closely linked and dependent on them. Afterwards, the goal was to apply intelligibility and intelligibility crisis onto a particular example. The case of Yugoslavia was very convenient, and it has allowed us to test out our terminological framework. Finally, by providing the theoretical basis as well as giving a historical example, the stage was set to provide a main argument for this paper which is exploring the relationship between harmony-conflict and intelligibility-intelligibility crisis. I have tried to argue for the fact that, if we consider harmony as a descriptive account of positive intergroup relations, and if we consider conflict as the opposite, we can introduce intelligibility into the picture. That is to say, intelligibility is an important aspect of intergroup cohesion and, by having a strong sense of intelligibility between the individuals and the social narrative within which they are shaped, we have a harmonious relation. On the other hand, intelligibility crisis arises when the individuals do not share the same set of values, beliefs, and attitudes with the social narrative within which they are found to be a part of and, therefore, do not find harmony with the individuals embedded with the narrative they are not a part of, neither the social narrative itself. Finally, by providing this claim, we have connected the notions of intelligibility with harmony and intelligibility crisis with conflict.

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THE JOY OF KNOWLEDGE PUT INTO PRACTICE.
THE COSMOTECHNICAL VIEW ON ACQUIRING KNOWLEDGE IN ANCIENT CHINA

András Áron IVÁCSON [1]

ABSTRACT. Classical Chinese thought slowly formed from the 9th century BCE onward through the Spring and Autumn era but reached its pivotal point during the so-called Warring States era (5th to 2nd centuries BCE). According to historical records, during these three hundred years more than four hundred wars of different scales raged across the Chinese world. These wars brought with them their own consequences like famines and abject poverty, terrible inequality and disillusionment. An intellectual history forming in these conditions understandably and inevitably was influenced by these conditions. In this context, the Hong Kong philosopher Yuk Hui presents his thesis of "cosmotechnics", the view that merely understanding the world is not enough, it is paramount to change it for the betterment of people's lives. This is the theoretical underpinning of much of classical Chinese thought, according to Yuk Hui, and therefore also for the drive to acquire knowledge. Thus, one unique aspect of classical Chinese thought is its interminable insistence on how man's every action must have a reason beyond that action itself and any sort of philosophizing that does not lead to practice in changing the environment for the good of the people inhabiting it, is a wasted and useless thought. Therefore, there are a number of words and concepts related to the acquisition of knowledge in Classical and modern Chinese, like "learning" 學, "teaching" 教, "discussion" 論, "argumentation" 辯, and so on, but all these are encompassed within "the way" 道, specifically the "correct way of doing a thing", i.e.: actual practice, rather than mere thought alone. I aim to present several examples of this from remote Chinese antiquity and classical Chinese thought within the framework of what I term "cosmotechnical joy" stemming from making people's lives better.

Keywords: China, philosophy, thought, knowledge, pragmatism, Confucianism, Daoism, legalism

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Contextual framework for the fundamental view of acquisition of knowledge in classical Chinese thought

Throughout classical Chinese thought there are a number of concepts relating to knowledge that might be familiar to most of us working within the field of philosophy, but the over-arching conceptual framework they are embedded into is quite different from the western canon of philosophy. This alone should compel us to engage with it in a serious manner, rather than just set it aside claiming it is not philosophy, but a mere set of pre-philosophical bits of wisdom, which itself in turn is looked down upon as a series of diluted and pithy statements not worthy of our serious philosophical gaze.[2] In the following pages I aim to present various aspects of classical Chinese thought relating to the acquisition of knowledge that set it aside from our well known western canon, but not to its detriment, on the contrary, to its advantage. What I aim to show is that classical Chinese thought is not pre-philosophical as it is often derided, but rather post-philosophical: it does not merely think for the sake of thinking, but in order that practice might flow naturally from thought - and especially that it may change the world for the better for those inhabiting it.

A very detailed analysis of certain differences and their origins between western and Chinese philosophical systems - bearing in mind that neither of these two are monolithic wholes without inner variation - can be traced to how we view each of these systems. Jin Yuelin 金岳霖 in his text titled *Chinese philosophy*[3] points out that often times in western academia people view Indian philosophy as otherworldly (来世), Greek philosophy as unwordly (出世) and Chinese philosophy as worldly (入世)[4]. These are specific terms in Chinese, the first one pertaining to Indian philosophy in his analysis meaning it deals with the next life, the second with regards to Greek philosophy pertains to appearing in the world as in Plato's ideal world appearing in the concrete world we live in, and finally the one pertaining to Chinese philosophy meaning to go into the world, but with the caveat that into a secular world, experiencing the real world. As he further clarifies this is seen as a negative, as he puts it: "*Chinese philosophy sticks to the kernel of its subject*"[5], because, again as he puts it: "*it is never propelled by the instruments of thinking*

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[2] On this point see: Bryan W. Van Norden: *Taking back philosophy - a multicultural manifesto*, Columbia University Press, NY, 2017., specifically pages 12 through 38.

[3] See: Jin Yuelin: *Chinese Philosophy*, in: *Dao, Nature and Man*, Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, Beijing, 2019.

[4] See: Jin Yuelin, quoted above, 2019, p. 2.

[5] Ibid.

either into the dizzying heights of systematic speculation or into the depth of a labyrinth of elaborate barrenness."[6] He also makes of point to emphasize that for most of western academia, Chinese philosophy merely consists of Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism[7]. This is then ironic on two counts: first in that Chinese philosophy is much more complex to those in the know and second in that Buddhism is an Indian school of philosophy and was later imported into China. There is one more point he makes I find important to detail, that is: the three above mentioned schools of philosophy are not taken into consideration as such either because they are merely seen as religions, which is explicitly incorrect with regards to Confucianism, and semi-incorrect with regards to Daoism, but also because not even Buddhism is merely a religion without any philosophical baggage.[8]

The Hong Kong philosopher Yuk Hui 許煜 claims that the main difference in how western philosophy and Chinese thought approaches the world around them is that while in the western canon the main tendency of analysis always ever was cosmology, i.e. the explanation of the world around us, in Chinese philosophy it always ever was cosmotechnics.[9] According to Yuk Hui, cosmotechnics (cosmos+tekhné) is the view that the world is the totality around us as we experience it and the main thrust of philosophy and the acquisition of knowledge should be to change the world to the benefit of all those inhabiting it. This already sets out the main point of my paper: in Chinese thought the acquisition of knowledge is not happenstance, does not merely exist for the joy of the person acquiring said knowledge, but by default has a goal that goes beyond the person of the one acquiring knowledge. Acquiring knowledge happens because the one possessing knowledge has a moral obligation to change the world for the betterment of the lives of everyone around them, preferably for the betterment of "all under Heaven" or 天下, who may lack the knowledge necessary to manifest this change.

Yuk Hui uses a parallel argument to prove his point. According to him, in ancient Greek mythology the point of the myth of Prometheus demonstrates that the Gods punish Prometheus exactly because by giving humans the ability to make fire, Prometheus dared to change the world so ordered by the Gods. In this worldview, changing the world seen as perfectly ordered by the Gods, is an irredeemable offense against the Gods themselves. On the other side of the planet, in Chinese mythology, one of the greatest mythical heroes is the person named Yu, the

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6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
9 See Yuk Hui: *The questions concerning technology in China: an essay in cosmotechnics*, Urbanomic, Falmouth, 2017.

Great 大禹. He is seen as one of the greatest early rulers of China, founder of the Xia dynasty 夏朝, and as an outstanding moral character. Traditional Chinese historiography puts the Xia dynasty between 2070 and 1600 BCE, therefore the personage of Yu, the Great is semi-legendary. He is most well-known for introducing the knowledge of flood controls to the Chinese people in the story titled "Yu, the Great, controls the floods" or 大禹治水. According to the story Yu did not use magic to control the floods, but rather had a complex system of irrigation canals built that diverted the floodwaters into fields and rice terraces, therefore not only nullifying the negative effects of the floods, but also using the power of water to help the peasantry save their crops. Therefore, Yu the Great not only changed the course of the world, but he did so in order to curtail the famines and other disasters that followed in the wake of multiple flood seasons.

In Yuk Hui's view it is central to the idea of cosmotechnics that some sort of actually existing technology is used to change the current state of affairs, rather than just being explained away through wonderous heroes and magic. Yu, the Great, did not merely snap his fingers and made the floodwater disappear, but rather used the technology of irrigation canals, dams and dykes to divert water away from where it was not needed to where it actually was needed. Not only that, but according to the legend, while working on this system, Yu, the Great, actually lived with the workers, shared their lives, took part in their joys and sorrows while directing the flood, rather than just being a larger than life hero who has little interest in their actual lives.[10] This is the cosmotechnical view: the one who possesses knowledge the people at large lack sharers their lives, therefore knows their hardships and struggles, so he felt the moral obligation of changing the world in a way that benefits all who share their lives in that world. The acquisition of knowledge is only ever legitimate as far is it is implemented for the betterment of people's lives that share the world with the one who possesses knowledge that can change the world. This is an extremely positive and anti-individualist conception of knowledge that I came to not only deeply love throughout my studies in Chinese thought, but also deeply respect in the most explicit sense of the word respect.

From this we can understand why the word 道 (dao) became such a central aspect of all Chinese thought in the classical era. 道 is often translated into English as "the Way" and most often related to Daoism, but in truth all the various schools

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[10] For the story of Yu, the Great, controlling the floodwaters see: 戴逸 (Dai Yi); 龔書鐸 (Gōng Shūduó) (2003). 中國通史. 史前 夏 商 西周 [History of China. Illustrated student edition], 智能教育出版社, Xianggang, 2003. For a similar parallel reading with ancient Greek myths see: Lu, Xing: *Rhetoric in ancient China, fifth to third century, B.C.E.: a comparison with classical Greek rhetoric,* University of South Carolina Press Publishing, Columbia, 1998, pp. 46-47.

of Chinese thought reference it in more ways than one and always according to their different understanding. For this reason, the word is often more correctly translated as "the correct way of doing this or that thing". Doing is the central concept there, for the word 道 has two elements in constructing its meaning: 辶 carrying the meaning of "to walk" and 首 carrying the meaning "head". Thus, the most basic meaning of the word is looking in the direction one is walking: thought and action having the same end goal. This is why it is often rendered as "the way" or "the correct way of doing something", which only comes from thought and action being unitary.[11] This is an absolutely central concept in Chinese thought: any philosophy from which practice does not flow for the betterment of the people's lives is absolutely meaningless and useless verbalism. Throughout my PhD research I constantly encountered this line of reasoning most especially, but not limited to the Legalist school of thought or 法家.

Studying a question as opposed to merely thinking of it

Let us now turn our gaze to certain particular instances of this throughout classical Chinese thought. Even though Confucianism or 儒家, "the school of the literati", isn't the only school of thought in China, it is often thought of in that way in the west.[12] So let us take it as our point of departure. The central work of Confucianism has been the so-called *Analects of Confucius,* the 論語. The very first lines of the work collecting the supposed sayings and arguments of Confucius, or Kong Zi 孔子, as he was known, are thus: 子曰：學而時習之，不亦說乎 or "*Is it not a delight, said the Master, to acquire knowledge and put it into practice?*"[13] Here we already see that joy is not simply linked with studying, but explicitly with

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[11] This is such a far-reaching aspect of Chinese thought that from the earliest known records and such early scriptures as the Book of Changes 易經, the origin of which is lost to the mist of the earliest eras of Chinese antiquity, it leads as far as Wang Yangming 王陽明 declaring in the 15th century that "thought and action are one" 知行合一. This does not mean that they are the same, but that they are two aspects of the same whole. Essentially, Wang is declaring that theory and practice are one, an incredibly revolutionary thought for the 15th century.

[12] A simple glance at non-scholarly books on non-European forms of philosophy can attest to this with Daoism being the only other Chinese school of thought mentioned, if ever. I am discounting Buddhism here, since Buddhism is an Indian school of thought that arrived in China around the 4th century AD with Chan Buddhism being the first local variation on it. For scholarly articles dealing with this topic see for instance: Paul R. Goldin: *Those who do not know, speak: translation of Laozi by people who do not know Chinese*, in: *After Confucius: Studies in Early Chinese philosophy*, University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu, 2005, pp. 119-135.

[13] See: Xu Yuanchong: *Thus spoke the Master*, China Intercontinental Press, Beijing, 2019, p. 9.

applying what one has studied. Let's see another part of the *Analects* to further clarify this aspect: 子曰：吾嘗終日不食，終夜不寢，以思，無益，不如學也 or "*Once, said the Master, I spent a whole day and a whole night in thinking, without eating and sleeping. I got no result and found it better to learn.*"[14] The implication here is exactly that "pure thought" or 思 is just that, while studying or 學 is something that has a chance at a practice, at being implemented and used in a very concrete and material sense. This is why he states that he should have been studying something instead or 不如學也. This statement can also be translated as "it was not as good as studying" or "not as useful" as studying if we contrast it with the statement that pure thought is 無益 or "useless".

The *Analects* are full of similar thoughts with regards to knowledge, but it is important to note that thought is not simply a negative term, for Kong Zi also notes: 子曰：學而不思則罔，思而不學則殆 or "*To learn without thinking, said the Master, risks to be blind, while to think without learning risks to be impractical*"[15]. Without going into all the details, what again we see here is that it is learning and study that takes the leading role, not merely thought, exactly because it is learning that carries within it the seed of practice. This is also the reasons why thought without learning is perilous: either because it errs or because it becomes useless.[16] Anyone can think whatever they may, but study is much more rigorous, systematic and always aiming at practice, rather than just flights of fancy.

This can also be seen in the Confucian insistence that personal conduct, i.e., the practical application of correct thought, of the ruler heavily influences the entirety of people under his rulership: 其身正，不令而行；其身不正，雖令不從 or "*An upright ruler, the Master said, will be obeyed though he gives no order. If he is not upright, he will not be obeyed though he gives orders.*"[17] Thus we see that the application of knowledge learned influences the entirety of the state and its harmony. Merely thinking, but not practicing what may come of thinking is completely useless, since people cannot read minds, but only action: this is why the personal conduct of the elite is so important for Confucianism.

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[14] See: Xu Yuanchong: *Thus spoke the Master*, China Intercontinental Press, Beijing, 2019, pp. 109.

[15] See: Xu Yuanchong: *Thus spoke the Master*, China Intercontinental Press, Beijing, 2019, p. 16.

[16] This ought to be read in parallel with the famous anecdote of the above mentioned Wang Yangming who according to legend at the age of 16 sat in front of a bamboo stalk for seven days trying to meditate on it to gain understanding, but failed, therefore leading to the conclusion that pure thought is not enough to gain knowledge and one must rigorously study. For the life of Wang Yangming, who is undoubtedly one of the most interesting figures of Chinese intellectual thought, see: Dong Ping: *Historical background of Wang Yangming's philosophy of mind*, Springer, NY, 2020, especially chapter 1, pp. 30-33.

[17] See: Xu Yuanchong: *Thus spoke the Master*, China Intercontinental Press, Beijing, 2019, p. 89.

Knowledge without limits

Daoism is a very interesting and very complicated set of philosophies, religious views and political thoughts. There is no way to reconcile every single aspect of it without any contradictions - and this is what makes it so interesting, yet to many readers of it also so uncomfortable.[18] One of the most basic Daoist tenets is that 吾生也有涯，而知也無涯 from the *Zhuangzi* 《莊子》 most often translated as "*Man's life has limits, yet knowledge is limitless*".[19] As most people probably know, the central tenet of Daoism is that the totality of reality is always ever incomprehensible for the human mind. This is what is meant by those famous lines of the *Daode Jing* 《道德經》：道可道，非常道，名可名，非常名 or *"The way that can be spoken of is not the constant way, the name that can be named, is not the constant name"*[20]. The classic translation can also be rendered as "the path that can be walked is not the eternal path" for 道 in this sentence structure is first a noun and then a verb. What is important to note that there is no value component in this statement: it merely conveys the idea that the correct way of reality may never be known to human thought. This of course stems from man's life being limited, while knowledge is limitless. This is also seen in the same passage of the Daode Jing at the very end where it is stated: 玄之又玄，眾妙之門 often translated as *"mystery within every mystery, the gateway of the manifold secrets"*[21]. In other words: whatever knowledge we may gain will merely open up new contradictions to be solved later. This is all interesting, but where does practice come into play in the Daoist philosophy on knowledge?

In the chapter titled Xu Wugui of the *Zhuangzi* 《莊子》 we read a story of the Yellow Emperor 黃帝, one of the most important semi-mythical rulers of ancient

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[18] For a wonderful essay on Daoism absolutely shattering the commonly held views on it see: Paul R. Goldin: *Those who don't know speak - translations of the Laozi by people who do not know Chinese*, in : Paul R. Goldin: *After Confucius: Studies in Early Chinese Philosophy*, University of Hawai'i, Honolulu, 2005, pp. 119-135. The closing remarks of the essay are especially pertinent to the topic of this essay: "The Daode Jing is old; it is alien; it is Chinese; and it is difficult. These are the recalcitrant facts that too many readers seem disinclined to accept. Instead, they seek out the most facile translations and consume insipid approximations of the original. This phenomenon must be attributable at least in part to intellectual laziness. The public is not obliged to restrict itself to academic monographs, but readers still have a responsibility to investigate the merit of a translation before adopting it. Little research is necessary to discover that there is more to Daoism than 'letting events take their course' and that the scary political overtones cannot be disregarded as the detritus of imaginary interpolators. Like any profound work of philosophy, the Daode Jing is dangerous. We do it no justice by pretending that it is easy to swallow. Chinese philosophy made simple is no longer Chinese philosophy."

[19] See *Zhuangzi*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1999, p. 43.

[20] See: Lao Tzu: *Tao te Ching*, Penguin Books, London, 2009, p. 3.

[21] Ibid.

China, starting out on a journey with his entourage. On the way they get lost - which is in and of itself philosophically significant, although we cannot go into these details here - and they encounter a young stable boy tending to some horses grazing the field. Through their discussions they realize that the young boy is in truth a sage. So, the Yellow Emperor starts asking him about the correct way of governance, but at first the young lad is reluctant to answer, but on further pressing from the Yellow Emperor, he finally says: 亦奚以異乎牧馬者哉？亦去其害馬者而已矣 or "*What difference could there be between ordering all under Heaven and tending to the horses? One needs only to get rid of all that is harmful to the horses.*"[22] The correct way of governance is a type of knowledge, yet as we see here again, that knowledge entails not merely knowing, but also putting that knowledge into practice, in this case: getting rid of everything that is harmful to the horses.[23]

Law is the expression of taking care of the people

The Legalist school is one of the most unjustly maligned schools of classical Chinese thought. Because they were in several, but not all aspects almost a complete antithesis of Confucianism and the latter won the ideological, but not the practical battle, for two millennia Legalism was attacked and slandered at every turn. Despite this, it was also used at every turn and especially at every critical junction of Chinese history due to its practical and domineering nature which was a very useful set of skills when the establishing of strict social order was needed during times of crises. The views of the legalists with regards to knowledge were likewise influenced by this domineering pragmatism in every conceivable way.

Although there are absolutely amazing figures within the history of Legalism, from Han Fei to Wang Anshi[24] and beyond, we shall only take a look at certain views

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[22] See Wang Rongpei's translation in: *Zhuangzi*, Foreign Language Press, Beijing, 1999, p. 415.

[23] We have no chance of going into the finer details of the political philosophy espoused here. Suffice is to say that this single thought can dispel all the "well, actually Daoism is the first libertarian philosophy in history" myths and further down we will see another similar thought. In truth Daoist political thought is so far removed from any sort of libertarianism, that they cannot even see each other, let alone be on the same page. The political undertones of Daoism, to my experience, at least to those who understand them, seem to be the most alarming aspects of Daoist thought. For more on this, see my paper: *No enlightenment for you! Western misunderstandings of Daoism imply a deeper misunderstanding of Chinese history in general* in: Rozália Klára Bakó (ed.) and Gizela Horváth (ed.): *Argumentor 7: Error*, Partium Press, Oradea, 2022, pp. 191-205. For a detailed description of the life and rites of early Daoist communities in China see: Terry F. Kleeman: *Celestial Masters History and Ritual in Early Daoist Communities*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2016.

[24] My insistence on counting Wang Anshi 王安石 among the legalists seems to garner controversy, but the majority of the second chapter of my PhD aims, among other things, to prove that Wang

of knowledge found in the *Book of Lord Shang* 《商君書》. The Book of Lord Shang is traditionally attributed to Shang Yang 商鞅 chief minister (相) of the state of Qin during the Warring States era, but it is unknown what parts of the book he actually wrote, if any at all.[25] He, or the reformers the book attributed to him are based on, unleashed a series of political, economic and social reforms that strengthened Qin so much that by 221 BCE it conquered all the other warring states and unified China for the first time in its long history.

A series of views on knowledge come right at the beginning of the book which is presented as a debate between Shang Yang and a number of Confucian scholars that supposedly took place in the presence of the king of Qin.[26] Despite this we can read through and glimpse what legalists might have thought about issues like knowledge, since Shang Yang is often remembered as the arch-legalist - and depending on who you ask, either a bloodthirsty villain who dispossessed the aristocracy or a reformer with a grand vision tirelessly working for the good of the common people.

One of the things we read in this first chapter titled "Reform of Law" or 《更法》 is: 是以聖人苟可以強國，不法其故；苟可以利民，不循其禮 or "*Therefore a sage, if he is able to strengthen the state thereby, does not model himself on antiquity, and if he is able to benefit the people thereby, does not adhere to the established rites.*"[27] From this we already know that in the legalist conception of knowledge, pragmatism comes first: if you have set out a goal for you, which is the strengthening of the state[28] in this case, you ought not to be limited by ancient rites,

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Anshi in his thought and especially his actions was a staunch legalist who only called himself a Confucian because there was no other way he could function within the bureaucracy of the Song dynasty. Even compared to other dynasties the Song might be called a "reactionary Confucianism" in its ideology, despite all the absolutely mind-blowing scientific, philosophical and literary breakthroughs achieved, like the movable printing type, a good four hundred years before Guttenberg, for instance. Bi Sheng 畢升 between 1041 and 1048 created a movable type using an amalgam made from clay and glue hardened through baking which created a material similar to porcelain. This of course is a mere follow up to the first printed book in history being the *Diamond sutra* dating to around year 868 during the Tang dynasty.

[25] For the textual history of the Book of Lord Shang, see Yuri Pines: *The Book of Lord Shang: Apologetics of State Power in Early China*, Columbia University Press, NY, 2017, especially pp. 25-59.

[26] This debate most probably never took place in this form. Primary sources on the life of Shang Yang, like the *Records of the Grand Historian* 《史記》 by Sima Qian 司馬遷 do not record any such debate taking place, but rather only three times Shang Yang went before the king to petition his reforms. For more information on this see Yuri Pines quoted above.

[27] See *The Book of Lord Shang*, The Commercial Press, Beijing, 2006, p. 7.

[28] In the legalist conception of state, the only legitimate state is that which takes care of the needs of the largest masses of people, especially the farming population. Viewed from this angle, the legalist insistence on strengthening the state becomes a much more moral and a lot less cynical point of departure than most people are willing to give legalists credit for.

customs and traditions, but only concern yourself with solving the contradiction at hand. Likewise, if you can benefit people, you need not adhere to rites - this is a direct attack on the Confucian insistence of following the rites set out in the *Book of Rites* 《禮記》. A similar thought is expressed not long after, when in this supposed debate Shang Yang states: 故知者作法，而愚者制焉。賢者更禮，而不肖者拘焉。拘禮之人不足與言事，制法之人不足與論變 or

> *Therefore, a wise man creates laws, but a foolish man is controlled by them; a man of talent reforms rites, but a worthless man is enslaved by them. With a man who is enslaved by rites, it is not worth while to speak about matters; with a man who is controlled by laws, it is not worthwhile to discuss reform.*[29]

Again, we see a tireless pragmatism here: both rites and laws can be reformed as the times need and anyone who is confined by either laws or rites is not even worthy of discussion. Again, we see how the problem presented to us and its possible solutions is what is important and not sacred rites or unmovable laws, not even any sort of joy derived from possessing knowledge. This is exactly why the Book of Lord Shang ultimately states in this chapter: 法者所以愛民也 or "*Law is the expression of taking care of the people*". Whatever the sage or wise man does, he so does to benefit the people through the practice and implementation of his knowledge in whatever field the problem necessitates.

Due to constraints of length we cannot analyze other classics of Legalism like the *Hanfeizi* 《韓非子》 here, no matter how much they would improve this small text, but in that book it is a recurring theme that those wise men who acquire knowledge and hide away from the world in caves and ravines for spiritual practice selfishly keeping their knowledge to themselves are one of the so-called "five vermin" 五蠹 of the state: completely useless, selfish and loathsome people, as well as the author(s) outright saying that 忘民不可謂仁義 or "*He who does not take note of the [conditions of the] people cannot be called benevolent and righteous.*"[30] We can however mention a point made in the book with regards to problems of applying practical knowledge into practice. In the *Hanfeizi* there is an entire chapter usually translated as *Solitary indignation*, the original title being 《孤憤》. The entire chapter deals with people who have amassed knowledge, but instead of striving to apply that knowledge to better their surroundings, they set up in caves, forests, secluded hermit spots and have nothing but cynical contempt for the world. The very first lines of the chapter go as follows:

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[29] See *The Book of Lord Shang*, The Commercial Press, Beijing, 2006, p. 11.
[30] See: *Hanfeizi*, The Commercial Press, Beijing, 2018, p. 1511.

"Men well versed in principles of tact are always far seeing and clearly observing. For, if not clearly observing, they cannot discern selfishness. Men able to uphold the law are always decisive and straightforward. For, if not straightforward, they cannot correct crookedness."[31]

In the above context of opposing "sages" that having amassed knowledge seclude themselves in caves and forests cynically attacking the world while refusing to work to change it, what we see here again is that seeing far and observing clearly, as well as being decisive and straightforward, is useful only insofar it is put into practice. These men well versed in tact are not so for the sake of being well versed in tact, but so that they can discern - and combat - selfishness, and they are not decisive and straightforward for the sake of being so and so, but so that they can correct crookedness. This applies even to "esoteric" schools like Daoism too, where the arguably not too practical or pragmatic knowledge pertaining to "always being in tune with nature" is not learned for merely the sake of being in tune with nature, considering just how vague and esoteric this might sound on first thought, but much rather because that knowledge helps one determine the place of everything and everyone, including oneself, in the world which knowledge then leads to social harmony.[32] In the classical forms of Chinese thought, especially in the pre-Qin period, meaning up to the 2nd century BCE, this is such an overriding feature that it dwarfs all others, but heavily influences all further schools of thought as well.[33] It is so prevalent that up to this day exists a chengyu type of Chinese proverb that is based on the title and essence of the chapter mentioned above from the *Hanfeizi*: 憤世嫉俗, meaning "to be cynical and detest the world and its ways, but refuse to engage in making it better."[34] Whether abstract and esoteric or concrete and pragmatic, all forms of knowledge ought to be put to not merely practice, but the practice of making the world better for those who inhabit it. My point here being that all throughout classical Chinese thought, but especially in legalism, knowledge for its own sake is viewed as detestable cynicism and escapism even by the most "esoteric" of schools of thought.

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[31] Original text is the following: 知術之士，必遠見而明察，不明察，不能燭私；能法之士，必強毅而勁直，不勁直，不能矯奸。See: *Hanfeizi*, The Commercial Press, Beijing, 2018, p. 1998.

[32] For this see *Zhuangzi*, Hunan People's Publishing House, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1999, specifically p. 550. For further clarification on this, see Terry F. Kleeman's book referenced above.

[33] For a heavily resourced compendium on this, see Wing Tsit-Chan: *Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*, Princeton University Press, NJ, 1963 as well as Xiao Jiefu and Li Jinquan: *An Outline History of Chinese Philosophy I & II,* Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, Beijing, 2008.

[34] An interesting point here on the further life of this thought is that even today a cynic or a misanthrope in Chinese is often called a 憤世嫉俗者, one who cynically detests the world and its customs, but refuses to engage in improving either.

Conclusion

Although this essay is nowhere near comprehensive with regards to its topic, I aimed to show two things: 1.) in classical Chinese thought acquiring of knowledge is always hinged upon its eventual and inevitable implementation into practice with the moral aim of benefiting society or the entire world at large and 2.) that classical Chinese thought is not pre-philosophical, but post-philosophical where thought and practice are inseparably linked going as far as seeing the two as one. What I presented here is but a mere glimpse of this immense topic that cuts through Chinese intellectual thought like a sharp sword from its earliest days to its newest contemporary developments[35].

This is also the reason I claim on the other hand that Karl Marx's dictum that hitherto we have merely analyzed the world, but the point is to change it, wasn't anything novel in China when Marxist works were first translated into Chinese. Yuk Hui's demonstration of cosmotechnics and the points I raised here, as well as innumerable ones that didn't have place in this essay, irrefutably prove this point: the main thrust of Chinese thought from antiquity to today always ever was to change the world to benefit those that are inhabiting the world. This can most prominently be seen in Legalism where no sacred rite, no man-made law, no custom, no tradition is deterrent enough in the face of wanting to benefit the largest masses of people. This was the aim with which Shang Yang destroyed old customs of privilege of the aristocracy in the 4th century BCE thereby giving land to the peasantry and using law to suppress the merchant class, the same reason Sang Hongyang 桑弘羊 advocated state monopoly on the production of salt, iron and wine[36] during the 1st century BCE, and likewise the same reason for the politico-economic reforms of Wang Anshi in the 11th century for dispossessing the aristocracy, abolishing the corvée and creating state institutions for supervising economic life and controlling large magnates.[37] In all of these instances we see that knowledge is never truly a goal in itself, but mainly a tool for a larger goal beyond possessing knowledge.

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[35] Some contemporary thinkers further clarifying this point are: Liang Qichao in *History of Chinese political thought* (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co, NY, 1930), Hu Jichuang in *A concise history of Chinese economic thought* (Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 2009), Shen Fuwei in *Cultural flow between China and the outside world throughout history* (Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 2009), Feng Youlan in *A short history of Chinese philosophy* (Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, Beijing, 2015), Jin Yuelin in *Dao, Nature and Man* (Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, Beijing, 2019), as well as for instance the Mainland New Confucianism movement spearheaded by Jiang Qing in *A Confucian Constitutional Order: How China's ancient past can shape its political future* (Princeton University Press, Princeton China, Beijing, 2012) along with the aforementioned Yuk Hui.

[36] See: *Discourse on Salt and Iron: a debate on state control of commerce and industry in ancient China*, University of California, Oakland, 1931.

[37] For a richly detailed description of all these and many other interesting aspects of Chinese economic thought, see Hu Jichuang: *A concise history of Chinese economic thought*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 2009.

That larger goal is always benefiting the people in the most mundane and concrete sense, without flowery words, without excessive theories that only the wisest of men may comprehend, without moral grandstanding that only the most saintly may be able to reach. In this conception of knowledge joy does not come merely from knowing, but from applying your knowledge for the betterment of the lives of those around you. This leads as far as the last imperial dynasty of China, the Qing, during which a certain official, poet and calligrapher by the name of Zheng Xie 鄭燮 penned the following lines:

> When I hear the rustles of bamboo leaves outside my study,
> I feel it is the wails of hungry people.
> For petty county officials like us,
> Every concern for the people weighs in our hearts.[38]

There is no era of Chinese history where this argument would be missing and likewise no shortage of officials, thinkers (and doers), sages putting their knowledge into practice to ameliorate the hungry people wailing on the streets. Some of the most livid descriptions throughout both Chinese history and literature are concerned with such issues. One aspect of this is the aforementioned Wang Yangming's dictum that 知行合一 "knowing and doing as one", while another aspect is Fan Zhongyan holding the view that the ideal scholar-official is thus: 先天下之憂而憂，後天下之樂而樂 or "*They are the first to worry on the woes of all under Heaven, yet the last ones to enjoy its benefits*".

From the farthest removed antiquity to contemporary days, Chinese thought aimed at changing the world for the benefit of those who inhabit it, rather than just analyzing and understanding the world. I think this is an extremely admirable aim to have for an entire philosophical system even with its myriad schools and their internal and external contradictions. This I think warrants a much deeper and much more serious engagement with Chinese thought than most people and especially most academics are willing to do. Sinologist and philosopher Bryan W. Van Norden already laid the foundations for such an inquiry in his book *Taking back philosophy*[39] enumerating reason after reason why it is extremely limiting to philosophical thought that in most western educational systems "philosophy" consists merely of the western canon and nothing beyond. There is an entire world of philosophy beyond the western canon, and it would be high time familiarizing ourselves wasn't limited to individual projects, but rather systematic institution wide engagement with the outside world.

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[38] The original poem goes as such: 衙齋臥聽蕭蕭竹，疑是民間疾苦聲。些小吾曹州縣吏，一枝一葉總關情。 Translation by Foreign Languages Press as quoted by Xi Jinping in his speech titled *Be a Good County Party Secretary*, in: *Governance of China II*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 2017, p. 153.

[39] Bryan W. van Norden: *Taking back philosophy: a Multicultural Manifesto for Philosophy*, Columbia University Press, NY, 2017.

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THE ARTWORK AS A FORCE FIELD:
THEODOR W. ADORNO'S AESTHETIC CONFIGURATION OF ANTAGONISMS

Elettra VILLANI[1]

ABSTRACT. In this paper, my purpose is to take into serious consideration Adorno's explicit conception of the artwork as a force field. With this expression he intends to emphasize the inner constitution of the artwork as a movement of antagonistic tensions, a dynamic of elements that are not simply juxtaposed, but dialectically interacting with one another. In a similar configuration, the aesthetic experience of the artwork consists in letting their friction explode to its extreme, achieving a balance which remains nevertheless substantially precarious and inconclusive, ready to be immediately set in motion again. Thanks to the aesthetic trait of the force field, these tensions are brought to unity in a way that it does not suppress the enactment of antagonisms, but keeps their multiplicity alive: Homer's tale of Penelope as an allegory of art.

Keywords: Adorno – force field – antagonisms

> *Yet artworks distinguish themselves productively from the merely schematic exclusively by the element of the autonomy of their details; every authentic work is the result of centripetal and centrifugal forces.*
>
> THEODOR W. ADORNO

This paper intends to investigate the thought of one of the most prominent intellectuals of the twentieth century: Theodor W. Adorno. Mirroring his versatile genius, his production is vast, prolific and multidisciplinary: musicologist and composer,

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philosopher and sociologist, Adorno has given birth to some of the most significant works of the last century. Above all, the Frankfurt philosopher has made his mark in the domain of aesthetic research: indeed, the latter also represents the specific focus of the present study, which elects *Aesthetic Theory* as its pivotal text. Published posthumously in 1970, this unfinished masterpiece entails the most mature version of his aesthetic theory. However, Adorno's paratactic style and the work's challenging structure have significantly thwarted any effortless reception of the work itself.[2] And yet, among its rich complex of motifs, there is a precise topic which has always drawn scholars' undivided attention: Adorno's theory of the artwork.

Although the latter does not account for the entire scope of his aesthetic reflection, still it constitutes one of its central moments. Any attempt to map Adorno's question of the artwork in all its wholeness is bound to fail, since its ramifications innervate both the aesthetic and extra-aesthetic territory, articulating it through a constellation of strictly interrelated concepts. For this reason, my purpose is to limit the present analysis to a specific determination, which plays nonetheless a key role in Adorno's theory, namely his explicit conception of the artwork as a force field. Hence, the thesis of this paper intends to show that Adorno uses this expression to point to a very precise way of articulating antagonisms, which has direct consequences both on the inner structure of the artwork and on the general framework of Adorno's entire thought. In order to prove it, my argumentation will firstly offer a brief presentation (§1) of the context from which Adorno infers the value of aesthetic experience. After that, it will be taken into explicit account the image of the force field (§2) in all its complexity. Furthermore, in order to grasp the philosophical fruitfulness of that very metaphor, Adorno's reflection will be set in dialogue with the one of a philosopher seemingly distant from him, Arnold Berleant, who invokes the same image in his *The Aesthetic Field*, also published in 1970. Despite the undeniable adoption of different languages, of different paradigms of thought, of different philosophical traditions, the parallel development of still so similar theses allows to formulate a reading of Adorno's aesthetic theory unusual for sure, but extremely stimulating (§3). The last paragraph (§4) will then conclude.

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[2] Particularly slow and problematic was the reception of Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* in English-speaking countries, and above all in the United States. Among the many reasons one might adduce, the effective resistance of his language toward being translated should be considered quite relevant. See S. W. Nicholsen, "Toward a More Adequate Reception of Adorno's "Aesthetic Theory": Configurational Form in Adorno's Aesthetic Writings," in *Cultural Critique*, 1991, No. 18 p. 33; M. Jay, *Adorno*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (MA), 1984, p. 12.

1. Thought, Society, Aesthetics

The question of the artwork seems to be deeply intertwined with Adorno's piercing diagnosis of what he deems to be today's severe experiential pauperization, that is to say an ongoing historical process because of which «[t]he marrow of experience has been sucked out»[3]. That the latter has been dying out is according to Adorno index of a more generalized crisis of modern life: for him, the modern world is marked primarily by a deformation in the structure of experience, that he describes indeed with terms such as "withered" or "restricted" experience.[4] In Adorno's opinion, such an impoverished context is related to the rampant domination of a reason that has become incapable of reflecting critically upon itself, reaching as a result its sedimentation into a purely instrumental rationality. Thereby, thinking and knowing have come to correspond to merely identification and classification operations, whose object must be then shaped to conform to the principle of universal iterability. To this end, any particular quality is expunged: by working under the strict logic of quantification, the means-end rationality tends to eliminate qualities and to transform them into measurable definitions. What remains then is nothing more than effectively quantifiable and, therefore, perfectly manipulable matter.[5] Hence, if it wants to prevail as a system, this hypertrophied ratio has to absorb everything that differs from it. Except that, as Adorno's harsh criticism points out, by giving course to its identity impulse, that is to say by making everything real conceptually assimilable, thinking resolves itself into an empty tautological mechanism.[6] In other words, by ferociously colonising its otherness, the thought has actually ended up damaging itself as well. Briefly, in order to eliminate any roughness that might affect its well-oiled gear, the sclerotic form of rationality proceeds with the removal of the qualitative. However, «a thinking in which we do not think qualitatively is already emasculated and at odds with itself»[7].

Thus, in order to reach its goal, the totalizing system of domination relies on a specific epistemological tool: the synthesis. At a closer look, it is not the synthetic moment in itself that constitutes Adorno's polemical target, but rather the way in which it is applied. Out of «the horror of the diffuse»[8] and out of the

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[3] T. W. Adorno, *Aesthetic theory*, translated, edited by Robert Hullot-Kentor, Continuum, London/New York, 2002, p. 31.

[4] R. Foster, *Adorno. The Recovery of Experience*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 2007, p. 3.

[5] J. Daniels, *Figurations of Nature in Kant and Adorno*, doctoral dissertation, Faculty of the James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University, 2021, p. 71.

[6] Adorno expresses this idea on several occasions, among which for example: T. W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, translated by E. B. Ashton, Routledge, London/New York, 2004, pp. 54; 184.

[7] *Ivi*, p. 43.

[8] Ibid., p. 158.

desire to tame it, the identifying thought brings the multiplicity to unity through a violent and coercive implementation of the synthetic process. This means that the latter proceeds by integrating and assimilating the single impulses completely into the immanence of the spiritual unity, without thus recognizing them in their otherness and heterogeneity. However, in its pursuit of universal identity, thinking closes itself in a logical absolutism, which dwells in an ossified abstractness that has lost any vital contact with concretion.

Nonetheless, such mutilation process towards the different does not occur just in the realm of pure thinking. On the contrary, according to Adorno, this coercion to identification finds its homologous counterpart in the social reality too: «[t]he identifying principle of the subject is itself the internalized principle of society»[9]. Thereby, Adorno stresses the pervasiveness of this degenerated form of rationality that penetrates all dimensions of life, thus the social totality as well, which has turned into a fully administered world.[10] Consequently, as a domain not spared from the ratio's all-encompassing lust for domination, even in the administered world the intransigence of the reified spirit towards everything that is not immediately subsumable in it runs rampant, raging against the individual himself. The process of alienation and reification that the latter undergoes deprives him of every instinct that threatens to escape control and serial planning: after that, all that remains are neutralized and replaceable beings, perfectly integrated into conceptual schemes.[11] Thereby, the modern fossilization of human spontaneity and freedom helps fuel the fixation of social conventions in an apparently immutable *status quo*.

In short, the prevailing suppression of the qualitative, of the diffuse, of the non-subsumable in favour of a deadly and indistinctive homologation leads to a substantial neglect of what is non-conceptual, material, concrete: namely to a general anaesthetization, that determines the abovementioned experiential impoverishment. For such reason, many scholars have identified Adorno's conception of the aesthetic experience as a privileged laboratory where a certain renewal of the experience *tout court* could be indeed possible.[12] The aesthetic would become the stage for

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[9] Ibid., p. 241.

[10] M. J. Thompson, "Adorno's Reception of Weber and Lukács," in P. E. Gordon, E. Hammer, M. Pensky (ed. by), *A Companion to Adorno*, Wiley Blackwell, Hoboken, 2020, p. 224.

[11] M. Horkheimer, T. W. Adorno, *Dialectic of enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2002, p. 149.

[12] Cf. for example, M. Jay, "Is experience still in crisis? Reflections on a Frankfurt School Lament," in T. Hunh (ed. by), *The Cambridge Companion to Adorno*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004, p.139. Or, similarly, see Kurt Lenk, who, with clear reference to the aesthetic object as the authentic work of art, attributes to the latter the «capacity to generate experiences not yet regulated by the system of the administered world» in K. Lenk, "Zur methodik der Kunstsoziologie", in P. Bürger (ed. by), *Seminar: Literatur- und Kunstsoziologie*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a. M., 1978, p. 64.

that genuine experience of otherness, which is recognized as such and not traced back to the principle of identity. By rescuing the qualitative from the quantitative; the dissonant from the harmonious; what is different as opposed to that which conforms, Adorno's aesthetic theory grows into a crucial part and parcel of his critical theory. This is why Adorno's aesthetic experience must be understood in close connection with the social whole, which includes, as we have seen, the social organization of life itself and the philosophical paradigms that emerge out of that said life.[13]

Nevertheless, the aesthetic object *par excellence*, where all those threads come to an actually meaningful interweaving, is the artwork. The specific trait that is now under consideration does not concern a particular work of art, but the work of art as such. More precisely, I would like to focus on the very character that for Adorno helps authentic art to fulfil its critical function as the ultimate instance of resistance against the dominant principle of reality. Hence, I am referring here to Adorno's explicit determination of the artwork as a force field, which appears multiple times throughout *Aesthetic Theory* as well as in several other works of his[14].

2. The aesthetic image of the force field

In truth, to be accurate, Adorno's philosophical interest towards the metaphor of the force field (*Kraftfeld*) is not a novelty in the tradition of modern German thought: already Benjamin had discerned its potential and theorized it in a way not so distant from Adorno's one.[15] In spite of this, however, the latter has elaborated a personal and, under many aspects, original version of it. To offer then a general but still effective definition of Adorno's notion of force field, I turn to Martin Jay's

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Analogously, Stephen Eric Bronner states that «[t]he question of whether metaphysical experience is still possible, which animates *Negative Dialectic* receives its answer in *Aesthetic Theory* where experience is preserved in the work of art» in S. E. Bronner, *Of Critical Theory and its Theorists*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1994, p. 193.

[13] J. Daniels, *Figurations of Nature in Kant and Adorno*, cit., p. 20.

[14] See, for example, the two essays, *Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951)* e *Valery Proust Museum*, in T. W. Adorno, *Prisms*, transl. in Eng. S. Weber Nicholsen and S. Weber, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1997, pp. respectively 166, 184.

[15] That the meaning Benjamin attributes to the force field does not significantly differ from the one that, as we will see, Adorno elaborated can be glimpsed in the following quote: «Every historical state of affairs presented dialectically polarizes and becomes a force field in which the conflict between fore- and after-history plays itself out», in W. Benjamin, "N [Re the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Practice]" in W. Benjamin, *Philosophy, History, Aesthetics*, ed. Gary Smith, The University Chicago Press, Chicago, 1989, p. 60.

largely agreeable formulation, according to which the force field would suggest «a nontotalized juxtaposition of changing elements, a dynamic interplay of attractions and aversions, without a generative first principle, common denominator, or inherent essence»[16]. At a closer look, however, beside that image, Adorno employs another suggestive expression, once again borrowed from Benjamin, namely the constellation.

At first glance, the two concepts seem to share the one and the same meaning, that is to convey a non-identifying configuration of different moments and of the relations that are established among them. And yet, a certain distinction is no less perceivable. On the one hand, the constellation tends to point out the non-coercive modality of an articulation of elements, which does not obey the violence of an all-encompassing identity, but conversely lets otherness and difference shine. For this reason, Adorno often associates it to his speculative proceeding[17], which consists of fragments, that are endowed with their own light, but, when brought together, they illuminate each other, giving rise to further forms and therefore further meanings, like stars gathered in constellations. On the other hand, though, the image of the force field strongly places the emphasis on the tensive and contrasting nature of impulses that defies any harmonious integration. As a matter of fact, as we shall see, Adorno gives an account of the conflictual instances that artworks intrinsically are by summoning up the analogy with the force field. Still, on a more general basis, Adorno does use both metaphors to remark the relational dimension that allows to keep the dynamic among multiple moments alive, preventing thus their deadly and conclusive ossification in an abstract universal. Thereby, the result is not a crude relativism of diffuse factors without a solid complex, but a dialectical model of an unfolding that simultaneously satisfies the request of stringency without deriving it, however, from empty conventions. This is clearly explained by Adorno's conception of aesthetics as concerned with «the dynamic relation of the universal and the particular, which does not impute the universal to the particular externally but seeks it rather in the force fields of the particular itself»[18].

To provide a concrete exemplification of the logic that the artwork as force field expresses, I will closely analyse how Adorno conceives the artwork's inner structure, keeping nonetheless very well in mind his hostility toward the moment

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[16] M. Jay, *Force fields: between intellectual history and cultural critique*, Routledge, London/New York, 2013, p. 2.

[17] According to Adorno's intentions, *Aesthetic Theory* itself should have been composed through the constellative modality, where in Adorno's words its argumentative structure «must assemble the whole out of a series of partial complexes that are, so to speak, of equal weight and concentrically arranged all on the same level; their constellation, not their succession, must yield the idea» in R. Tiedemann, G. Adorno, "Editors' afterword", in T. W. Adorno, *Aesthetic theory*, cit., p. 364.

[18] T. W. Adorno, *Aesthetic theory*, cit., p. 351.

of triumphantly smooth reconciliation that traditionally fulfils a dialectical process. On closer examination, no matter whether it is a piece of music, a poem or a painting, Adorno still identifies within the work several couples of contrasting moments that inform its internal configuration: autonomy and *fait social*, mimesis and rationality, expression and construction, spiritual and sensual, just to mention some examples. More specifically, it is worth noting that all conceptual pairs are unfolded in a way that responds to the necessity of grasping the so-called processual character of the artwork. By that Adorno means the only adequate modality of experiencing the latter, namely as something immanently living and, thus, never static, that pursues «the enactment of antagonisms that each work necessarily has in itself»[19]. Accordingly, its inner processuality and liveness negate any analytic approach in the sense of a surgical dismemberment in isolated components: in doing so, the artwork would be inevitably reduced to a dead and meaningless conglomerate[20] of interchangeable and qualitatively neutral elements.

To avoid such reified attitude towards the artistic creation, Adorno strongly suggests an aesthetic experience of it, which finds its specificity not only in perceiving the artworks' constitutive conflictuality, but also in letting it explode. Through an aesthetic gaze, they «become force fields of their antagonisms; otherwise, the encapsuled forces would simply run parallel to each other or dissipate»[21]. In that regard, the aesthetic comportment offers a fruitful alternative to the ever-sameness of the administered world as well as to the unproductive immediacy of the diffuse. Therefore, the aesthetic image of the force field captures the relational interplay of attractions and aversions within the work, but it does not try to solve it in favour of either pole. The antagonistic dynamic must be brought to the extreme of its friction, because precisely in the climax of its enactment Adorno believes to rescue an authentic experiential content. As a matter of fact, today's generalized context of blindness has inhibited our capacity to truly experience the unfolding of tensions, by overwhelming us with ready-made solutions that conceal unresolved or violently resolved attritions behind the *façade* of a fake harmony.

This is why for Adorno the key point of the matter does not lie in the resolutive polarization towards one of the pair's contrasting moments. In this respect, his approach deviates from the Hegelian one: even before Adorno, Hegel had already recognized the value of the tensive component, but in its propaedeutic function to the final result. Consequently, as Adorno puts it, the smooth harmonic

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[19] Ibid., p. 176.

[20] A. Eusterschulte, „Zur Theorie des Kunstwerks", in A. Eusterschulte, S. Tränkle, (edited by), *Theodor. W. Adorno: Ästhetische Theorie*, De Gruyter, Berlin/Boston, 2021, p. 173.

[21] T. W. Adorno, *Aesthetic theory*, cit., p. 176.

identity that he reaches actually nullifies the instance of tension itself.[22] If the artwork is then something living that needs to be experienced in its essential processuality, the annihilation of tension that occurs in the pacified balance provokes the consequent loss of the artwork as well. So much so that Adorno identifies the criterion to determine the aesthetic value of artworks neither in the total absorption of one pole in the other, nor in a stable equalization, but just in «the profundity with which they carry out the tension»[23] among the elements that inform them. Accordingly, the use of the image of the force field becomes decisively pregnant since it figuratively recalls the stage, the arena, where the tensive enactment takes place, rather than its final static result.

Nevertheless, as already mentioned, «the antagonistic content of aesthetic experience»[24] does not end up in dissipating the single impulses, either. This means that there has to be some kind of unifying moment that as a centripetal force brings all the artwork's details together, giving them meaning and distinguishing them from a vacuous indifference.[25] In that respect, the artwork indeed owns a synthetic moment that, however, does not coincide with any harmonisation or suppression of tensions.[26] Conversely, only through the exacerbation of their friction, Adorno affirms that it is then possible to achieve balance: a balance which remains nonetheless substantially precarious and inconclusive, ready to be immediately set in motion again. The specifically aesthetic instance that connotes the artwork as a force field avoids the fatal disintegration of the latter by articulating the longing for unity that emerges right from its own components. The aesthetic synthesis merges such pulsions into a material unity, which is itself only a moment: the abovementioned centripetal force is contrasted by a centrifugal one that equally stems from the same manifold that sought to be unified.[27]

Therefore, authentic artworks dwell in a constantly fragile balance, without ever being able to secure it once and for all: «Homer's tale of Penelope, who in the evening unraveled what she had accomplished during the day, is a self-unconscious allegory of art»[28]. Thereby, it comes to expression the processual nature that Adorno attributes to genuine art, namely that enduring dynamic that arises from the aesthetic awareness of the impossibility of a smooth identity of the one and the many. For this reason, the artwork accumulates its inner conflictual forces and lets

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[22] Ibid., p. 46.
[23] Ibid., p. 99.
[24] Ibid., p. 291.
[25] Ibid., p. 303.
[26] A. Eusterschulte, „Zur Theorie des Kunstwerks", cit., p. 174.
[27] T. W. Adorno, *Aesthetic theory*, cit., p. 186.
[28] Ivi.

them enact in their full intensity, grasping the non-conclusiveness of the movement itself, since «the work is at once the quintessence of relations of tension and the attempt to dissolve them»[29].

And yet, the tension that vivifies the artworks takes on a decisive critical value since it mirrors the external one. With Adorno's words, «[t]he unresolved antagonisms of reality»[30] penetrate through the mediation of the aesthetic form into art. This means that «[t]he tensions are not copied but rather form the work»[31]. Thus, by positing the antagonistic situation as a totality, artworks perform their own gesture of rebellion[32], namely they expose the actual irreconcilability of social conflicts, unmasking the illusion perpetrated by the dominant system, which instead assumes them to be happily resolved. However, in order not to betray its utopian character, «[p]aradoxically, art must testify to the unreconciled and at the same time envision its reconciliation»[33]. In this respect then, the interplay of centrifugal and centripetal forces, no less than the image of the force field, concurs precisely to render the sense of an aesthetic configuration that allows art to synthesize its moments without suffocating them in dictatorial identity. Once again, it comes down to a unity *sui generis*: one that as soon as it «becomes stable, it is already lost»[34].

3. Adorno and Berleant: a dialogue attempt

To conclude this study, I intend to shortly set in dialogue Adorno's account of the force field with Arnold Berleant's ground-breaking book, *The Aesthetic Field*. Of course, it is undeniable that the two philosophers diverge in many aspects: language, philosophical tradition, paradigm of thought. Nevertheless, there do are some unexpected convergences that motivate what I believe to be a speculatively fruitful interaction between the two. Among such proximities, I could mention a mutual background in music, which has deeply influenced their own way of thinking[35];

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[29] Ibid., p. 292.

[30] Ibid., p. 6.

[31] Ibid., p. 324.

[32] P. E. Gordon, "Universal and particular," in A. Eusterschulte, S. Tränkle, (ed. by), *Theodor. W. Adorno: Ästhetische Theorie*, cit., p. 194.

[33] T. W. Adorno, *Aesthetic theory*, cit., p. 168.

[34] Ibid., p. 187.

[35] Beyond the purely biographical fact, such a proximity to music common to the two becomes particularly interesting when it relates to their thoughts. That is, in both cases, music seems to influence their way of philosophising. If Adorno states that, on the basis of Schoenberg's experience with traditional music,

the temporal closeness of their respective works that I am commenting on; finally, a certain attention towards John Dewey's thought[36]. Anyway, the very core of this suggested parallelism concerns the metaphor of the field, which in both cases directly involves the aesthetic.

Since Adorno's account has been sufficiently analysed, I will now very briefly introduce Berleant's main argumentation on the matter. The guiding concept of his work is of course the idea that art could be best understood as a complex field consisting of a number of interdependent factors, namely as an aesthetic field. In Berleant's opinion, the latter consists of several ubiquitous features such as artist, art object, appreciator, and performer, which are inseparably interconnected in our experience of art, but also influenced by the ambient's biological, social, historical, cultural, technological forces.[37] So much so that the reason that motivates his relying on the metaphor of the aesthetic field is a constitutive partiality of every notion of art that isolates and absolutizes any of the abovementioned factors: in order to fully grasp art, one has to make reference «to the total situation in which the objects, activities, and experiences of art occur, a setting which includes all these *denotata* and more»[38] that act together in a creative interplay. Due to the ubiquitousness of this experiential invariants, Berleant claims that art is not a separate kind of experience. Accordingly, he rejects the seclusion of art from life and from the full scope of human activities: the aesthetic is rather a specific mode in which experience may occur. Furthermore, such unity of experience implies a replacement of the traditionally passive and contemplative quality of aesthetic perception, in favour of an active attention, an involvement of the participant in the aesthetic field: the so-called aesthetic engagement.[39]

«instead of reducing philosophy to categories, one would in a sense have to compose it first» (T. W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, cit., p. 33); Berleant makes explicit on several occasions the actual correspondence between some of his philosophical notions and his musical experience. This occurs, for example, in the elaboration of the concept of the aesthetic field as a field of interdependent factors that precisely reflects the musical context. Cf. A. Berleant, *The music in my philosophy*, in "ASA Newsletter," 2012, 32.3.

[36] Berleant's interest in Dewey's philosophy is not at all surprising, given the former's speculative engagement with pragmatism, whereas claiming such an interest on the part of Adorno may appear quite disorienting. And yet, unlike Horkheimer's harsh aversion to Dewey's thought, in *Aesthetic Theory* Adorno explicitly names him twice in a tone that is anything but critical. Cf. T. W. Adorno, *Aesthetic theory*, cit., pp. 335; 353.

[37] A. Berleant, *The Aesthetic Field. A Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*, Cybereditions, 2000, pp. 5-6.

[38] Ibid., p. 50.

[39] Ibid., p. 51.

Although presented in a nutshell, Berleant's approach shows significant differences from Adorno's one, and yet, we are still able to identify some common traits that directly concern the aesthetic itself and the aesthetic meaningfulness of the image of the force field. In fact, what stands out from the two accounts even in their discrepancies is the acknowledgement of a particular adequacy of that metaphor to express some central aspects of the aesthetic: the relational and the performative ones. Hence, both philosophers regard the field as a pregnant configuration where the intrinsic relational instance of the aesthetic clearly emerges. In light of the previous considerations, it is evident that articulating interrelations has become a decisive trait of contemporary theorizations of the aesthetic, especially if this articulation occurs in a way that allows a continuous and reciprocal interaction between elements that are not thereby fixed into solitary atoms. With Berleant's words: «the aesthetic field is not a combination of separate elements but a single whole»[40].

Moreover, the emphasis that both Adorno and Berleant place on the specific mode that the aesthetic experience appoints amidst the full spectrum of human experience invokes the relevance of a component of the aesthetic that is markedly performative rather than thematic. In other words, the force field enables to bring the attention on the peculiar modality through which the aesthetic operates among many vectors, instead of focusing only on their thematic and substantialist specifications. The risk they imply is to define the aesthetic on grounds of elements that surely belong to it and yet, once hypostatized, deform it. Thereby, it follows that the dynamic tensions that constitute the aesthetic in its operativity become static juxtapositions between mutually exclusive fixed poles.[41] It is precisely in that sense that Berleant affirms that he is «deliberately attempting to see the aesthetic qualitatively rather than substantively»[42], which means that he privileges an adjectival and adverbial use of the term "aesthetic", making the operative nature of the aesthetic field strikingly stand out. Not so differently, Adorno states that aesthetics is deeply invested in the construction of nexuses, in the way one moment calls up the next,[43] which is well visible in his conception of the force field, through which Adorno too enhances that same operative trait of the aesthetic. Therefore, all things considered, it is not without reason that between Adorno and Berleant a certain dialogue can indeed be developed, of which on this occasion I have offered just a simple glimpse. Notwithstanding, it is my firm belief that it does have significant potential, above all regarding a possible reading of Adorno's aesthetic theory that could inaugurate studies on its as yet uninvestigated aspects.

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[40] A. Berleant, "Objects into Persons: The Way to Social Aesthetics," in *Espes*, 6.2 (2017), p. 11.

[41] G. Matteucci, "The aesthetic field: Arnold Berleant's philosophy as a new understanding of experience," in *Popular Inquiry*, 1/2022, p. 119.

[42] A. Berleant, *The Aesthetic Field*, cit., p. 87.

[43] Cf. for example T. W. Adorno, *Aesthetic theory*, cit., pp. 359; 290.

4. The sign of the aesthetic in contemporary thought

As has been shown, this paper has placed its undivided attention on the metaphor of the force field. In particular, it was my intention to enhance the relevance of what Ayon Maharaj has called Adorno's «key move»[44], namely his conception of the artwork as an active field of forces, an image that best expresses the artwork's tensive and processual nature. In this regard, one should not underestimate Adorno's tendency of illustrating concepts through images and metaphors. Such is the case of the artwork, which is associated to the force field as well as to «[t]he phenomenon of fireworks»[45]. Nonetheless, the same could apply also to Adorno's characterization of philosophy itself, whose labor is exemplified by Sisyphus' fatigue[46]. Such figurative – in the sense of *bildliche* – definitions allow Adorno to avoid the rigid conceptual sedimentation of standard logic. In this sense, as we have seen, the force field exhibits artwork's processual character as the enactment of its antagonisms by letting them free to explode. Without ossifying the conflictuality on either contrasting moment, the aesthetic trait that permeates that image enables us to truly experience the unfolding of tensions again.

Perceiving the experiential content that accumulates along the conflictual movement marks a breach in the generalized context of substantial anaesthetization, which conversely dulls it through a deadly harmonisation. Hence, the aesthetic seems to possess a strong critical value that emerges in its capacity of articulating and displaying nexuses, which accounts for a meaningful modality of being, other than that of universal iterability. It is of the utmost interest then that such a capacity to exhibit interplays is also the peculiar feature that Berleant attributes to the aesthetic, himself using the same metaphor of the field. To conclude then, my paper aimed to show the importance of Adorno's recourse to the analogy of the force field as a modality of unfolding antagonisms, without suffocating them in a deadly harmonisation. In such context, what may seem to have just an aesthetic meaning has, conversely, a crucial impact on the extra-aesthetic situation and, therefore, on the more general ambition of Adorno's thought. In the antagonisms that the artworks as force fields aesthetically enact, society and art find their fundamental relation and, with that, the latter's critical potential too: «that of an unreconciled reality that nevertheless wants reconciliation»[47].

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[44] A. Maharaj, *The dialectics of aesthetic agency: revaluating German aesthetics from Kant to Adorno*, Bloomsbury, London, 2013, p. 163.

[45] T. W. Adorno, *Aesthetic theory*, cit., p. 81.

[46] See for example, ibid., p. 258.

[47] Ibid., p. 291.

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PHENOMENOLOGY AFTER DECONSTRUCTION:
VOICE AND PHENOMENON AS A PROLEGOMENON
TO HUSSERL'S GENETIC METHOD

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ABSTRACT. Reading *Voice and Phenomenon* from a phenomenological perspective, this paper argues that the book is an internal criticism of Husserlian phenomenology that, among other things, can serve as an introduction to Husserl's genetic method. Derrida's most powerful arguments are delivered by turning the Cartesian method of *Logical Investigations* and *Ideas I* to Husserl's inquiries into time-consciousness; as such, it is a phenomenological criticism through and through. An analysis of Husserl's later manuscripts and lectures published posthumously shows that driven by what Derrida calls the radicality of intuitionism, Husserl has developed a genetic phenomenological method that breaks free from the metaphysics of presence and arrived at a conception of meaning and language that is similar to Derrida's.

Keywords: genetic phenomenology; Edmund Husserl; Jacques Derrida; *Voice and Phenomenon*

To say the phenomenological and deconstructive camps are in conflict with each other is an understatement. Just like phenomenologists see deconstructive thinkers' treatment of Husserl as attempting at a "disenfranchisement of both his theory and his method" (Welton, *TOH* 1), one must be "bold enough to defend [Husserl]" within the deconstructive circle (Brough 503). However, not only did Derrida confess in his final years that "from the point of view of Husserl's fifth *Cartesian Meditation* I remain a strict phenomenologist" ("HJR" 72), even in *Voice and*

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Phenomenon, one of the ground zeroes for this mutual hostility, we are warned that "what is at issue is not to turn back away from transcendental phenomenology […]. In this way we have just designated the primary intention – and the distant horizon – of the present essay" (Derrida, *VP* 39). Taking a phenomenological perspective, the present essay examines the primary intention of *Voice and Phenomenon* as well as its fulfillment, and explores, from the vantage point of hindsight, what was a distant horizon for Derrida. In more concrete terms, I will argue that *Voice and Phenomenon* is, among other things, an internal critique of Husserl's phenomenological method that received an anachronic reply in the form of genetic phenomenology. In doing so, I wish to do justice both to Derrida's rigor and to Husserl's relevance, qualities that have been dissimulated by their apparent clash. The two projects required for this paper – a close analysis of Derrida's strategy of argumentation in *Voice and Phenomenon* and a lucid summary of Husserl's genetic method – have been taken care of by renowned scholars of Derrida and Husserl respectively. Thus, the contribution I make with this paper is limited to bridging the two pieces into a harmonious whole.

I shall begin with the help of Leonard Lawlor, whose introduction to his new translation of *Voice and Phenomenon* analyzes the strategy of argument in the book. I will emphasize that Derrida's most powerful points are delivered by turning Husserl's specific phenomenological inquiries against his general method, and hence it is a phenomenological critique through and through. Focusing on the development of Derrida's deconstructive endeavor, however, Lawlor ignores how Husserl offered a solution to the tension within phenomenology that motivated deconstruction. Similarly, when Donn Welton claims in his account of genetic phenomenology that the genetic method shows "a certain depth to [Husserl's] transcendental analysis that deconstructive thinkers believe impossible" (Welton *TOH* 10), he is himself blind to how *Voice and Phenomenon* acknowledges, makes use of, and asks for more of this depth. What the two scholars bracketed in their works will be restored or supplemented, depending on the reader's point of view, when the other half of our paper portrays genetic phenomenology encapsulated in Welton's *The Origins of Meaning* and "The Systematicity of Husserl's Transcendental Philosophy: From Static to Genetic Method" as a reply to – not a refutation of – Derrida's invitation to go beyond the metaphysics of presence.

Derrida's Invitation

Derrida observes that there is a tension between two major motives within phenomenology: "the purity of formalism and the radicality of intuitionism" (*VP* 14). Combine this with the reminder not to turn back away from phenomenology, and

we arrive at the educated guess that *Voice and Phenomena* operates by turning Husserl's radical intuitionism against his pure formalism. Since it is well known that *Voice and Phenomenon* deconstructs the metaphysics of presence, our conjecture is verified if we can prove that (1) the formalist part of phenomenology exemplified in the first *Logical Investigation* is a symptom of metaphysics of presence and that (2) deconstruction is a practice of phenomenology's radical intuitionism.

The first task is relatively easy. As Lawlor points out, the first *Logical Investigation* valorizes "expression" over "indication" because "[e]xpression seems to present, while indication, an indicative sign, merely manifests something absent" (xiii). This is reinforced by Husserl's use of interior monologue as the way to pure expression (Lawlor xviii), or better still, by the (in)famous "principle of all principles" that Husserl puts forward in *Ideas I*:

> *that every originary presentive intuition is a legitimizing source of cognition, that everything originarily* (so to speak, in its "personal" actuality) *offered* to us *in "intuition" is to be accepted simply as what it is presented as being,* but also *only within the limits in which it is presented there* (44, emphasis Husserl's).

According to this principle, the legitimizing power of evidence expires once we transgress its self-presence by introducing anything that is not offered in presentive intuition. Nothing screams "metaphysics of presence" louder than this.

Derrida's argumentation in *Voice and Phenomena* is neatly generalized by Lawlor as a "[demonstration] of the lack of cognitive foundation, that is, the lack of self-presence, for the security of the metaphysical decision" (xviii). We shall summarize it here by combining chapters 5 and 6 to reveal that its sole driving force is the radical intuitionism of phenomenology.[2] Basically, Derrida argues that there is no such thing as pure self-evidence even in interior monologue because within "the blink of an eye" during which we speak to ourselves there is already a temporal gap between the I who starts speaking and the I who listen to what I spoke via retention of phonetic forms, which thanks to temporization have become "repeatable to infinity and therefore beyond the acts of expression taking place right now" (Lawlor, "Translator's Introduction" xxii). The "last court of appeal" (Derrida, *VP* 8) for this argument is §16 of *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*,

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[2] We skip earlier chapters because they are what Lawlor categorizes in *Derrida and Husserl* as "phenomenological critique" in contrast to the so-called "super-phenomenological critique" that characterizes chapters 5 and 6 (32).

where Husserl calls retention a "non-perception" (Lawlor, "Translator's Introduction" xxi). Since retention is operative in every act of presentation, it is entailed that there is no such thing as "originary presentive intuition" *simpliciter* required by the principle of principles of the metaphysics of presence.

Derrida never hides his indebtedness to Husserl, or as Lawlor puts it, perhaps all of Derrida's thought flows from an insight in the fifth *Cartesian Meditation*, namely, "the experience of others (what he calls '*Fremderfahrung*,' the experience of the alien) is always mediated by a *Vergegenwärtigung*, a presentification, which keeps the interior life of others necessarily hidden from me" ("Translator's Introduction" xxiii). According to Lawlor, what Derrida adds to this insight is to reveal that this "non-presence" pervades all experience (xxiii), or in other words, Derrida pushes the radical intuitionism of phenomenology to the extreme at the cost of its formalism.

This attitude is reminiscent of how Husserl places Descartes in the history of philosophy, namely, as one who takes a decisive step (*First Philosophy* 60) yet fails "to lay hold of the genuine sense of [his] discovery" (66). In fact, we can assert that with deconstruction Derrida was trying to repeat what Husserl did to Descartes with phenomenology, "a neo-Cartesianism [... that rejects] nearly all the well-known doctrinal contents of the Cartesian philosophy" (Husserl, *CM* 1). A crucial difference between the two cases, however, is that unlike the historical distance that furnishes Husserl with the benefit of hindsight, the mere decades dividing Husserl and Derrida imply that Lawlor's verdict that "phenomenology is a movement *toward* the outside of metaphysics" ("Translator's Introduction" xxvi, emphasis Lawlor's) – without ever breaking free from it – could be premature. The rest of this paper aims to prove that this is indeed the case.

Husserl's Reply

One of the biggest difficulties in studying Husserl is that, as the philosopher himself complained, "the greatest part of my work is stuck in my manuscripts [...]. Perhaps I am working, with all the humanly possible expenditure of energy, only for my posthumous works" (Welton *TOH* 221-2). This is reflected in *Voice and Phenomenon*, where the enormous gap between *Ideas I* and *The Crisis* was occupied by *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness* alone, a book that, ironically, only contains texts written before the publication of *Ideas I*. In fact, had Derrida used *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time* that came out one year earlier than *Voice and Phenomenon* instead of the 1928 book edited by Heidegger (if only titularly), he would have found in many of the appendices that Husserl had

moved far beyond the simple remark of retention being "non-perception."[3] Similarly, not even once did Derrida mention in *Voice and Phenomenon* Husserl's genetic method, which we will argue – based on Welton's interpretation – *has moved outside* the metaphysics of presence.

As if anticipating Derrida's invitation to pay more attention to indication, Husserl writes in *Experience and Judgment* that the analysis of indication in *Logical Investigations* "already forms there the nucleus of genetic phenomenology" (74-75). In short, genetic phenomenology concerns the temporal element operative in all the structures laid bare by the static method, which is hinted at in *Ideas I* when Husserl remarks that the transcendental "absolute" that is brought about through phenomenological reduction is in fact not what is truly ultimate, but something that "has its primal source in what is ultimately and truly absolute" (193): time-consciousness. Motivated by this discovery, a phenomenologist rescinds two abstractions that enabled the reduction required by the Cartesian program, but instead of relapsing to the naivety of the natural attitude, she has at her disposal two new concepts. "Pure ego," the empty, formal pole of identity, becomes a concrete "monad" who acquires "habitualities" and is internally connected to others; the world, which was reduced into a counter-pole of consciousness, is now "reframed as a concrete horizon that has undergone a process of sedimentation in which past achievements have been deposited into its being" (Welton, "From Static to Genetic Method" 276).

Since Husserl's genetic inquiries are diverse and often exceed our current concern, we shall reserve our attention to how the genetic turn affects his doctrine of meaning. Welton summarizes Husserl's later account of the speech-act as follows:

> Speech, thought of as active synthesis, takes place against a passive context of an acquired language and prior established meanings fixed by a community of speakers, who, for their part, stake active claims of their own. Previously active constructions become sedimented and thus part of our sensibility; *our sense of things falls under their spell as well* ("From Static to Genetic Method" 281, emphasis ours).

This dynamic interplay between the passive and the active is close to what Derrida would call "trace," "arche-writing," etc. and suffices to refute his claim that "nothing [in *Logical Investigations*] was put back into question in a decisive way" (*VP* 3):

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[3] See 388-393, for example, for a meticulous account about the double intentionality involved in the analysis of time-consciousness. It should be noted that even this book covers only one of the three main stages in Husserl's decades-long grapple with time-consciousness.

meanings, instead of timeless, inhering entities that a solipsistic ego summons to announce pure presence, are inherited from the linguistic (and hence intersubjective) community and saturated with absence. However, given that Welton does not accompany this synopsis with quotes from Husserl's texts, it is possible (if only chronologically) that the above is but a Husserlian paraphrase of Derridean ideas. Fortunately, in *The Origins of Meaning* Welton does follow in detail Husserl's departure from the metaphysics of presence via the genetic method, which is piecemeal, incomplete, but at the same time determined and decisive. For the purpose of this investigation, we will borrow materials that Welton collects and rearrange them to delineate how later developments in Husserlian phenomenology amount to a decoupling of language and perception, the epitome of presentation.

Even in *Ideas I*, where Husserl attempts to limit the function of expression to lifting senses constituted in other kinds of intentional acts to the sphere of the conceptual (Welton, *TOM* 303) and conceives of language as a mere "garb of thought" (272), he already observes that "the level of meaning [*Bedeuten*] is not – and in principle is not – a kind of reduplication of the under-stratum" (303) and that "all concepts originate from experience, the universal [*allgemein*] as well as the particular […]. We must be ready to *change them* in conformity with it" (299, emphasis ours), which entail that meanings are neither timeless nor static. If this appears to be a case of Husserl's intuitionism nudging at his formalism unwittingly, then the notion of clarification (*Klärung*) thematized in *Ideas III* proves that he is well aware that meanings are open-ended, and as such they cannot ensure pure presence. Unlike explication that operates within the self-contained sphere of language, clarification seeks validity by turning meanings against perceptions, which, besides modifying existing meanings, allows for the creation of new meanings "either by a new juxtaposition of established signs or by finding new signs which meet the demands of the dialogue" (Welton, *TOM* 292). The realization of the heterogeneity between linguistic meaning and perceptual sense led to a genetic understanding of perception that Husserl developed in the 1920s, which is now available to the public in *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*. According to the genetic model, it is the "proto-apprehension" at the level of "hyletic constitution" that gives a series of senses for the subject to work on and thus founds apprehension "understood as a perception of the object" (235-6), not the subject's meaning-bestowing act turning *hyle* (formless sensual data) into a profile representing an object. Hence, genetic phenomenology is immune to the attack Derrida launches in Chapter Seven of *Voice and Phenomenon* with "the extreme case of a 'statement about perception'" (79): it acknowledges that "[n]ever will [the] structure [of language] be able to make with

intuition a 'unity of intimate merging' " (79), albeit it is achieved by a deeper understanding of perception instead of taking the Derridean route of considering language in itself.

In fact, the argument in *Voice and Phenomenon* is further weakened when we turn to Husserl's later meditations on language, specifically how he refined the distinction between expression and indication and thus retracted the metaphysical privilege of monologue. Contrary to Derrida's claim that the strict distinction between expression and indication remained intact throughout Husserl's career, the latter reflected on this issue between 1905 and 1908 (Welton, *TOM* 8) and reached the conclusion that expressions are not entities different from signs but "signs […] taken in abstraction from their indicating function" (300). Interior monologues, accordingly, are performed using language in abstraction from its communicative function, which is presupposed nevertheless given that "[t]hinking is performed at the very outset as linguistic" (Welton, *TOM* 276) and that "language is from the very outset intersubjective" (274). In *The Origin of Geometry*, Husserl puts forward the famous assertion:

> "[The] process of projecting and successfully realizing occurs, after all, purely within the subject of the inventor, [… yet] geometrical existence is not psychic existence; it does not exist as something personal within the personal sphere of consciousness; it is the existence of what is objectively there for "everyone" (for actual and possible geometers, or those who understand geometry) (*Crisis* 356).

If read in the light of the essential distinctions in *Logical Investigations*, this formulation does imply that geometric concepts are timeless entities that ground the metaphysics of presence, but now, having acquired some understanding of Husserl's genetic method, we can clearly see that the process of thinking within the subject should be taken as a linguistic process, and that geometrical existences are for everyone as linguistic meanings carried by signs, opinions that Derrida would not hesitate to subscribe to.

Let us recapitulate. Derrida's accusation of phenomenology as metaphysics of presence holds true when applied to the static method that undergirds *Logical Invitations* and *Ideas I*, but in lectures and manuscripts that remained unavailable to the public during Husserl's lifetime, a different method driven by the same impetus of radical intuitionism as *Voice and Phenomenon* quietly took shape and moved away from the metaphysics of presence, which Husserl failed to introduce systematically but was operative in his later works like *Cartesian Meditations* and *Crisis*. As Kortooms points out, Husserl has the (bad) habit of conducting analyses ahead of their current context (Kortooms 258), and it is in this sense that *Voice*

and Phenomenon serves as an excellent prolegomenon to Husserl's genetic phenomenology. Whether this conforms to Derrida's original intentions we are not sure, but the author is dead after all, and he is well aware of it.

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"MAKING PEACE WITH ONESELF": INTERNAL CONFLICT IN ADDICTIONS AND ITS "RESOLUTION" IN THERAPEUTIC GROUP INTERACTIONS

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ABSTRACT. Counselors and therapists on addictions and recovery from addictions are employing a variety of methods and techniques to break through the wall of denial and resistance. Accordingly, new methods of research are needed in order to describe and eventually understand the phenomenon of addictions and the ways of recovery from addictions. The paper attempts to define and describe the internal conflict and the way it is brought to the surface and "resolved" (processed and eventually transformed) in therapeutic group interactions. For that, we are using a phenomenological approach to conceptualize addiction in terms of connectedness and methods inspired by the analysis of interactions in order to document the transformative experience necessary for the recovery from addiction.

Keywords: addiction; recovery from addictions transformative experience; internal conflict; therapeutic group; phenomenological approach; analysis of interactions.

Regardless of the type of addiction, the conflict between the addict's moral values and behavior is central to the onset, progression, hitting bottom, creating the crisis for change, and recovery from addiction.

One of the pioneers was Vernon E. Johnson, made the first observations related to the determination of change and the orientation towards finding methods and techniques to break through the wall of denial and resistance, specific to the disease.

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One of the most surprising observations regarding the disease of alcoholism was "that alcoholism can only exist in the presence of a conflict between the moral values and the behavior of the drinker". Regardless of the socio-economic status, the disease causes all its victims to behave in a destructive and antisocial way. Some people, like sociopaths, who lack the awareness necessary for the appearance of conflict (have no feelings of guilt or shame) do not seem to suffer ("they do not care")[3].

Trying to understand addiction from humanistic and philosophical point of view, let's speak questions that are looking for an answer: Why do people affected by the disease wait so long to seek help? Why do they suffer for so long? It is not the purpose of this article to answer fully to these questions, but we will explore the importance of the conflict for the transformation process of the recovery from addiction, as it is revealed in the analyses of interaction.

People with addictions, although they suffer and feel the pain of inner conflict, are unable by willpower to break out of the vicious cycle of the abuse of alcohol or drugs - they get stuck in the "now of consumption".[4] When this internal conflict becomes too strong, the addict's chances of changing are very high. Counseling services, support groups, professionals, families use this crisis of the addict to motivate and direct him towards recovery. Therefore, there is a need to describe and understand the subjective experience of how people with addictions experience inner conflict and the ways in which the therapeutic group can process it. Therefore, in the present paper we will analyse the development of the inner conflict, the way the crisis occurs, and the intervention methods used in the method of group counseling in addictions, so that the wall of denial is lowered, and the addict can overcome the "mental fog" and eventually give up self-destructive behavior. Analysis of the behavior and emotions experienced by people with addictions has evolved from simple empirical analysis and clinical observation to a multitude of neurochemistry and neuroimaging studies that address the root of alcohol / drug use.[5] The phenomenon of recovery from addiction still needs to be adequately described, explained and conducted in an efficient way. How does the human self-regulatory mechanism work to manage "when enough is enough"? Is inner conflict such a mechanism? Does the others / the group have a role in driving people to

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[3] The book, written in 1973, became a point of reference in the treatment of addictions, through the well-known model of the "Feelings chart" – which explains the development of the relationship with alcohol – the way the person regulates his emotions and feelings using alcohol. It also explains how at some point this "regulation" no longer works and the internal, moral conflict of the alcoholic sets in, which is the premise for the start of recovery. (Johnson, 1973, p. 74)

[4] Copoeru, 2014.

[5] Miller and Toft, 1990.

change? How does addiction therapy, and especially the group therapy method, help bring about self-healing and people's determination to stop behaving against their own values?[6] described how the "strong therapeutic relation" and abstinence are so important in the success of the treatment and engagement of people in recovery.

Our approach brings together a phenomenological understanding of addiction, mainly based on the idea of "interrelatedness"[7] and tools imported from the analysis of interactions[8] in an attempt to describe the activity and effectivity of peer groups and counseling. All these phenomena were observed and studied in the practical activity of the addiction counseling center in Cluj-Napoca[9].

Our research started with a first focus group in which we analysed the determinants of change and the decision to enter recovery.[10] The research was also carried out in the same specialized addiction counselling centre, which employs the Minnesota Model[11]. The first focus group have been done with people in recovery in February 2022 with volunteers in the counselling centre. The recording of the support group with addicted persons dates from November 2022. In June 2023, the second focus group with professionals from different fields (sociology, linguistics, social work, psychology and theology) had the purpose to underline the factors of change, the dynamics of interaction in the group, the type of interaction and the discourse of the participants about change and dealing with the disease of addiction.[12]

In order to provide a more in-depth knowledge, we used a new research method, more precisely, the analysis of interactions in the recovery process. The analysis of interactions, presented in a previous exploratory study, with focus groups, will also provide us with evidence of how change occurs[13].

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[6] Flores focused attention to the "addictive personality" and with explicit connections developed between group therapy and AA. He suggests that both group psychotherapy and AA can be viewed as compatible and "holding environments," providing for a cohesive and safe community experience through which people can engage in self-examination while evolving at their own pace. (Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice, 1998, Vol. 2, No. 2,132-137) Flores, 1997.

[7] Copoeru, 2014.

[8] Fournel, 2018.

[9] Programul Sf. Dimitrie din cadrul Asociației Christiana, Cluj. www.sfdimitrie.ro.

[10] The research method used was the qualitative focus group. Data collection was taken from group interview, by video recording of the focus group and participatory neutral observation. We used qualitative content analysis from interactions in the group interview.

[11] This therapeutic model is considered to be the most effective therapy model (it addresses all aspects of a person's life: bio-psycho-socio and spiritual). (Woydyllo, 1997)

[12] Final results are not available yet.

[13] The results were presented in Varga and Copoeru, 2022.

1. What is conflict and how it develops in addictions

There is an inherent sense of conflict in virtually all descriptions of addiction. Coming from the Latin verb "confligo,-ĕre" = to fight, to fight with each other, with the substantive participle "conflictus", the term conflict is used to describe a range of emotional states of individuals, such as restlessness, hostility, resistance as well as all types of opposition and antagonistic interaction between individuals, including competition. Conflict is most often defined as a struggle regarding values, and which claims to achieve a status, the possession of power and resources. The effort becomes more intense in the absence of rules regarding their equitable distribution.[14]

Regarding the inner conflict, the existence of two instances of the self is assumed: the normative self (which knows what is good, right, which sets personal values) and the hedonic self (which values immediate pleasure, the easy way).

In the case of addiction, the pleasure and reward mechanism are activated by certain substances / behaviors and are acting as a court that orders: "I want more", "it's not enough". The brain of a person with addictions has become "hijacked" and pleasure (or the illusion of pleasure) prevails in the performance of any action[15]. In Husserl's terms, the willing ego is letting the affection arrive to it by letting itself be affected by something like an allure that gains dominance at a certain time.[16] In this way, the willing ego is turned to and "tempted" by the promises of a specific experience. St Maximus the Confessor addressed the same issue in terms of "ignorance" and "consent to sin"[17], as the person does not oppose with rational and logical decisions and actions to stop the effects of the drugs or behavior. The disease of the soul is the actual moral conflict, when people don't know what is good anymore and don't have a Divine power. The drug becomes the Higher Power.

As the anesthetic / euphoric effect of the substance passes, the person wakes up to reality and is gripped by negative feelings of shame, guilt, which are the basis of characterological conflict or moral conflict, between values and behavior.[18] This conflict will devour the spirit of the alcoholic in a way that nothing else can[19]: *"Hell, I'm a civil war".*[20]

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[14] Jeong, 2008.

[15] Inaba, 2014.

[16] Copoeru, 2014, p. 2.

[17] See St. Maximus: Chapters on Love, 34, Philokalia of the Holy Needs of Perfection, vol. 3.

[18] Johnson, 1973.

[19] Negru, 2012.

[20] Johnson, 1973, p. 77.

The continued controversy in accepting addiction as a disease versus addiction as a willful act, starting from intentional behavior, suggests that the person would not be affected by this conflict. Neurochemical evidence and brain imaging indicate how drugs change the nerve cell and the way information is transmitted, affecting the centers of the neocortex that are responsible for creating judgment and reasoning. Without turning the addicted person into a machine that responds to stimuli, without the capacity to intervene, we still ask the question how it is possible for a consuming person to cross and break any promise or moral principle that they believe in (e.g., a mother who will drinks the children's food money, a boy who will steal from his family to support his gambling).

Heather (2016) described addiction as akrasia[21] = "weakness of the will" - an ancient philosophical concept referring to acting against one's better judgment. Going in the direction of neuroscience, we understand that the mechanism of survival is hijacked in addiction, procurement and consumption being considered basic needs in survival, which are demanded to be satisfied, even until the death of the individual, who loses the ability to say NO, despite the negative consequences. For non-addicts, this behavior is total insanity, as described by the first alcoholics who wrote the Bible of the alcoholics – known as "The Big Book", first published in 1939.

> "The great obsession of every problematic drinker is that, somehow or other, one day he will be able to drink reasonably and with pleasure. It is amazing how intensely this illusion persists. Many follow it beyond the gates of madness or death."[22] "Whatever the precise definition of the word, we call this pure insanity. What other word could be used to name such a loss of sense of measure, of the power of reason?"[23]

The conflict, as intrapsychic tension was defined by addiction specialists in the 80s, as a manifestation of a personality pathology - "disorders of the self" - given that in the 90s, over 50% of people with addictions were identified as having personality disorders.[24]

In every person with an addiction, we can identify despair. As Søren Kierkegaard stated in his famous book *The Sickness Unto Death* (1840), human despair deploys itself at three levels. The first, which is excruciating in its pain, is the despair that

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[21] Aristotle's word for acting against one's better judgment.
[22] Alcoolicii Anonimi - Textul de bază, 2000, p. 29.
[23] Idem, p. 35.
[24] Fifty alcoholics / addicts were assessed utilizing the Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory (MCMI) 3 to 5 days prior to discharge from an inpatient chemical dependency unit. Results indicated that 50 to 70% of the subjects were likely suffering from comorbid "disorders of the self." (Brown, 1993)

expresses itself in such sentences as, *"Oh, what a miserable wretch I am. Oh, how unbearable it is to be me!"* Still more painful, however, is that despair that expresses itself by crying out, *"Oh, if only I were not what I am! Oh, if only I could be like that!"* This is deeper despair, because it considers self to be so worthless as to want to abandon it completely. There is nothing left of self-worth saving. But the deepest despair of all is that despair that does not believe that one is a self at all. *"I used to be… but now I am not."*[25]
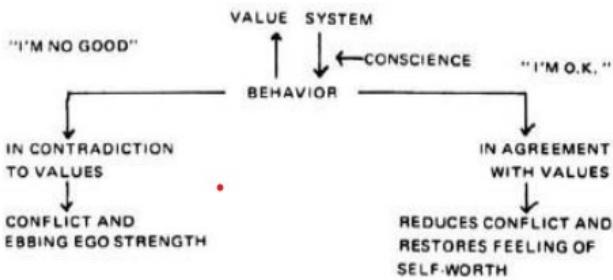
In the adjacent diagram we observe the dynamics of the conflict between behaviors and values, being directed by conscience and the sense of personal worth.[26]

The difficulties the alcoholic experiences are a result of the installation of "self-will run riot"[27]. This is the source of the conflicts he has both with those around him and with himself. "After we became the vassals of the Alcohol King, terrified citizens of the land of alcoholic madness, the horrifying fog of loneliness settled over us, which grew denser and darker with time.... hoping to find someone who will understand and accept us. At first, I found - but total oblivion followed and then came the terrible awakening in front of the Four Hideous Creatures of the Apocalypse: Terror, Confusion, Frustration and Despair."[28]

These findings about the inner turmoil of alcoholics are put on the table in all interactions, as they are revealed in group interaction. So, in the analysis of a support group with addicted persons, we were able to withdraw the following results, using the analysis of interactions in a support group[29] setting.

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[25] Johnson, 1973, p. 76.

[26] Johnson, 1973, p. 78.

[27] Alcoolicii Anonimi - Textul de bază, 2000, p. 57.

[28] Idem, p. 144.

[29] The peer support group is facilitated by recovering addicts and has a specific structure. Members are equals and the purpose of the groups is to share their own experience and hope.

The topic of the group selected by the group members was *Step 4 – Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves*[30]. This is one of the most important actions in the recovery process. People are put face to face with past actions, they will analyze them, identify the fears, resentments, sexual behavior and other mistakes. The 12 steps have to do with making real changes in one's life, from identifying the harmful behaviors / thoughts / lifestyle through the discovery of spiritual meanings of life and helping others as a way helping oneself. We are presenting below some of the introspection provided by the group members:

> Extras 1[31]: "because the feeling of guilt in me as an alcoholic kept me for years it was very difficult that's why it's called without fear I did a moral inventory it was an extraordinary thing the first time I did it I had a very bad relapse for two weeks so you have to be really honest with yourself then *it's very hard when you find out how you are very painful for me, it was very painful*" (recovering alcoholic, 7 years sobriety[32], Transcription of focus group, November, 2022)

The group member shares the difficulties of accepting past failures and mistakes, the consequences of addiction, as for many years, she was trapped in the circle of addiction. Guilt, shame, remorse, resentments are the cause number one of why people relapse or continue their drinking. The illusion is that alcohol lessens these feelings, but on the contrary, they keep the person in the trap of more and more guilty feelings.

> Extras 2: "I began to know myself, to see my mistakes, anger, hatred, malice, all of them, but they were in me, I began to work like this one at a time". (recovering alcoholic, 7 years sobriety, Transcription of focus group, November 2022).

Self-acceptance and accepting the disease is also one of the key factors in management of guilt feelings. The person is sharing about the mirror she sees now, where the character defects are a part of it.

> Extras 3: "at thirty-five years old to find out who you are is a surprise, probably normal people find out along the way, but I found out then and that was liberating" (recovering alcoholic, 12 years sobriety, Transcription of focus group, November 2022)

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[30] Alcoolicii Anonimi, 2000, p. 42.

[31] Transcription of focus group, November 2022. To annotate and transcribe the video and audio recordings we used ELAN software. Full results are not yet available.

[32] People in recovery will continue to address the issues from the active period of consumption, long time after they stopped drinking/ using. The disease of addiction is chronic, and the recovery process needs to be addressed every day, like in diabetes or other chronic conditions.

The new person that they discover is like a "breakthrough" or even a "new birth" to some people.

Extras 4: "I was very critical of myself and others" (recovering codependent, Transcription of focus group, November 2022)

It also shows the suffering of the codependents targeted on other people but also on themselves. This will only deepen the conflict by not being at peace with self and others.

Extras 5: "because from the outside *I was told that I'm not good enough anyway*, I don't have the same results as other colleagues, so I don't dress the same as someone else no:: I don't do various things // uh // s-then ok, I mean I was trying to prove myself probably *by finding fault with others* probably more easily than with myself // so // it was *my survival method* I guess" (recovering codependent, Transcription of focus group, November, 2022)

Family traumas are recollected and evoked by group members, as they understand the factors that kept them in the disease. For codependents, conflict arises greatly as they focus more on others, even to exert control, then to see the reality of their own self.

As we see here, the group setting offers the stage for the most hidden feelings of fear and thoughts to come into light. The participants are bringing the recovery discourse' at the conscient level, so that it will not create turmoil inside. "You're only as sick as your secrets" (anonymous saying in the recovery community).

2. The internal conflict and its role in the emergence of the crisis

Drinking / drugging become a coping mechanism to deal with the pain and conflict, in the well-known cycle of addiction.[33] The inner turmoil is well recognized through attitudes and behavior. Once the intensity reaches a certain point, the addict is hitting "bottom"[34] and the recovery can begin.

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[33] The cycle of addiction represents the emotional factors, the obsession and the way the disease functions, so that the person starts to drink again, the losses control, regrets after, promise he/she will never do it again, then start all over again.

[34] Jellinek's V-chart and progression of the disease, where hitting bottom is the point of critical crises.

"Anger, shame, hate, and love are not psychic facts hidden at the bottom of another's consciousness: they are types of behavior or styles of conduct which are visible from the outside. They exist on this face or in those gestures, not hidden behind them."[35]

Addiction counseling and the existential, humanistic approach identify the hidden roots of the conflict and they try to bring it to the surface in order to resolve/overcome it. Closely related, in the phenomenological approach, addiction is viewed as a unique and personal subjective experience that can only be understood through the exploration of the individual perspective. The forms addressed in counseling are resentment, anger, shame, guilt, jealousy, intolerance, judging, dishonesty, as they remain the roots of addiction. The dry drunk syndrome[36], described by AA and Ernest Kurtz in his book "Not-God"[37], represents the conflict that persists, even after the alcoholic stops drinking:

"Confronted with the problems and concerns of "living sober," aware from often tragic experience of the special danger to alcoholics of such personality pitfalls as grandiosity, resentments, and the tendencies to dominance over or excessive dependence upon others, old-time members began to formulate a significant three-faceted distinction. "Active alcoholism" was the condition of the obsessive-compulsive drinker who continued to imbibe alcohol. From this situation, two others were to be distinguished. The first was that of the "merely dry" former obsessive-compulsive drinker who "put a cork in the bottle" yet continued to "think alcoholically"; i.e., to entertain grandiose plans and expectations, to nurse feelings of resentment, etc.".[38]

Extras 6: "I still *can't* fully *forgive* myself yet**,** *I still hold a grudge against myself*" (recovering alcoholic, 1 year sobriety, Transcription of focus group, November 2022)

Unless we treat the roots of drinking, the dependent person cannot stop on long term the drinking. The spiritual and psychological factors of the disease are again part of the solution. Bill Wilson wrote in the Big Book that "Bottles were only a symbol"[39] and "Our liquor was but a symptom."[40]. In the recent research of interaction

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35 Merleau Ponty, 1964, 52–53; see also Gallagher, 2014.
36 The "merely dry" or "dry drunk" state was precarious, whether as an intermediate stage between "active alcoholism" and "true sobriety," or as simply a falling away from "true sobriety." (Kurtz, 1991)
37 Kurtz, 1979, p. 123.
38 Kurtz, 1979, p. 123.
39 Alcoolicii Anonimi - Textul de bază, 2000, p. 103.
40 Idem, p. 64.

analysis, the recovering people identified the issue of "suffering" as the main factor in determining a person to seek help – "what made me seek help // seek // the solution it was the *pain // despair*", "I would say *despair* because before everything I tried somehow …."[41]

3. The role of the counselling group in "solving" the internal conflict in addictions

The phenomenological approach to addiction science focuses on studying the subjective experience of people living with addiction and understanding the depth and complexity of that experience. This approach views addiction as more than just a behavioral problem or disease, but also a deeply subjective experience involving a wide range of emotions, thoughts, and feelings. The therapist can encourage the person to explore their inner experiences, such as the emotions, thoughts, and physical sensations associated with addiction. This can help the person better understand the causes and triggers of the addiction and to identify strategies to overcome them.

Newcomers who are exposed to disease concept ideas will experience a lessening of guilt, shame, and develop skills to express themselves honestly and openly with others. In the therapeutic process, the phenomenon of "live" emotion regulation process is found, i.e., the cognitive regulation of emotions in real time[42], within the dyadic interaction and secondly as the development of self-emotional regulation within the group interaction: "we note the moral anxiety and guilt brought into conscious focus by this newfound self-awareness."[43]

In the process of change that occurs at the individual level, we ask ourselves: where, when and how does that moment of "awe" occur? Is it an emotion or a feeling? Is it a state of being awake and alert?

The initial stage of recovery, however, is also one of opportunity. As people come to ask for help after a crisis, "an individual's attachment system opens up" and the therapist has a chance to change the client's internal dynamics[44]. In recovery, this transformative experience is usually seen as a spiritual experience resulting from applying the recovery program as a group therapy.

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[41] Varga and Copoeru, 2022, p. 123.
[42] Varga, 2015.
[43] Johnson, 1973, p. 114.
[44] Flores, 2001, p. 72.

"Most of our experiences are what psychologist William James called 'instructive experiences' that occur slowly over time. Those close to the person in recovery see the transformation long before he is aware of this phenomenon. In the end, he will discover that he has changed very profoundly in the way he reacts to life, and that he could not have caused such a change on his own. What happens now in a few months, in rare cases could have happened after years and years is self-discipline".[45]

The group is a laboratory of life, modeled on the "Johari Window" model. You use the group as a mirror, to share experiences, to give hope, to be a leader, to teach others. In the counseling process, it takes the form of a routine structured with exercises and steps to follow, organized for newcomers, to move from denial to a systematic recognition of the effects of the disease and the exercise of recovery skills. Alibrandi (1985) identifies no less than 100 activities (or "tools") employed by AA members to support day-to-day abstinence.

Group members are encouraged to share "if someone has a joy or a sorrow and wants to tell us so that we can support him, it's good to do it" (Extras 10, group leader, Transcription of focus group, November 2022)

Counseling groups can be an effective way to address these character conflicts an initiate change. In a counseling group and peer groups, people with addiction problems can work together with other group members and a therapist, to better understand the root causes of addiction and develop strategies to overcome them. In order to provide the therapeutic environment, the groups setting needs to offer something different, then what they were used to in the environment of active using:

"...newcomer out there was sitting with some druggies, and he comes here and finds other druggies who talk the same thing they were talking about, and the others don't think it's a difference..."[46].

In a counseling group, members share their experiences and offer support to each other. At the same time, the therapist can provide feedback and guidance to help members better understand and manage their character conflicts[47]. The therapist may use various therapy techniques, such as cognitive behavioral therapy, acceptance and commitment therapy, or gestalt therapy, to help members develop self-control and stress management skills. The counseling model moved from the

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[45] Alcoolicii Anonimi - Textul de bază, 2000, p. 27.
[46] Bob-(01:39:52.500 – 01:42:43.277, apud. Varga and Copoeru, 2022, p. 128.
[47] In future research, the "charisma" of the group leader could be analysed in direct interaction with the breaking the denial, working on the conflict, degree of honesty etc.

classical psycho-dynamic therapy to a more interactive model of treatment, as it is found in the counseling groups and support groups.

The participants in the first research group[48] identified several elements that makes them feel comfortable and determine the trust in the counselor: active listening, not being caught in clichés, being available in the here and now, authenticity, feedback, firmness ("no longer in your terms") (see Extras 4). Mary described very well: "they reached me" (minute 52:44) while she described the crises that brought her back into recovery after a harsh relapse, and Tobi: "I even cried" (minute 30:52), at the first support group interaction.[49]

In 1975, Irvin Yalom distinguished 11 therapeutic factors that contribute to healing as group therapy unfolds. One of it describes the "corrective recapitulation of the primary family group—groups provide a family-like context in which long-standing unresolved conflicts can be revisited and constructively resolved"[50]. When the internalized pain of the past is resolved, the client will begin to understand and experience healthy mutuality, resolving conflicts without the maladaptive influence of alcohol or drugs. If the underlying conflicts are left unresolved, however, clients are at increased risk of other compulsive behavior, such as excessive exercise, overeating, gambling, or excessive sexual activity. Considering the complexity of addiction, the suffering person needs proper approach to address the emotional and spiritual conflict that arises due to the behavior. In the extras below, the person is able to recognize the mechanism of addiction and the group allows for this introspection to be revealed:

> Extras 11: "I also managed to see that I made a lot of mistakes especially with my family because// I thought I was better I would argue with them and go // my favorite drink was beer I would run to the store for beer to calm down" (recovering alcoholic, 8 months sobriety, Transcription of focus group, November 2022).

To become adequately resistant to substance abuse, people with addictions should learn to cope with conflict, that will appear in real life, without using chemicals to escape reality, self-soothe, or regulate emotions[51]. The power of example both out-group and in-group, is very powerful, as everyone talks about flaws, it lowers the stigma ("I am not so bad anymore").

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[48] Varga C., Copoeru I., 2022 – first exploratory study – focus group with people in recovery and counselors.
[49] Varga and Copoeru, 2022, p. 126.
[50] TIP series, no. 41, 2005, p. 81.
[51] Flores, 1997.

The recovering addict will never "forget" the active period of use, but hopefully, they will reach forgiveness and lifestyle change, so that they stop the internal conflict. The group settings, especially the 12 Steps, provide the social interaction as the "stage" where the change occurs, as seen in the transcriptions from the focus groups.

Conclusion

The discussions related to the internal conflict, based on the analysis of the interaction within the support and counseling group, reveal to us the fact that its "resolution" is directly proportional to the way in which the therapeutic environment allows bringing the conflict to light, bringing it into the present. Thus, conflict can be processed and transformed into the force that leads to breaking out of denial, recognizing the unhealthy, harmful, and self-destructive patterns of addiction.

In addition to the writings of the authors, who explored this phenomenon, through the examples provided by the people in recovery, during the research, we highlighted how bringing the conflict in the present, within the group interaction, is an essential premise in recovery. The person virtually steps out of the gray, taboo area of life and offers their experience to be transformed. The addicted person restores connection with self and others and provides a model for those still suffering.

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BELIEFS ABOUT THE FUTURE – HOW WHAT WILL HAVE BEEN DECIDES ON HOW WE ARE JUSTIFIED

Saskia Janina NEUMANN[1]

ABSTRACT. The importance of the justification of our beliefs is a long-debated question. The question of how our memory beliefs are justified, however, is a question we have usually neglected as our memory does not seem to draw much attention to itself. As long as it works, we do not even notice that we use it most of the time.

In my opinion, the question of how our memory beliefs are justified, however, should play a bigger role in the philosophical debate. The reason for this claim is that most of our beliefs are memory beliefs. A position, I will argue for in this paper. Based on empirical findings in Cognitive Science, I will explain that our memory is not only involved in forming beliefs about the past but more controversially in forming beliefs about the present, in reasoning processes and even more controversially in forming beliefs about the future.

If beliefs about what has been, about what is the case in the present and even about what will have been the case in the future are memory beliefs, reconsidering our strict focus on the justification of mere beliefs seems to be a change in debate worth considering.

Keywords: Memory, Philosophy of Memory, Belief, Cognitive Science, Epistemology of Memory, Philosophy of Cognitive Science

Introduction

In the following, I will argue for the view that most of our beliefs are memory beliefs. I will claim that beliefs about the past, the present, reasoning processes and even beliefs about the future are memory beliefs. Therefore, I claim

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that the philosophical debate is way past due to be changed to a debate about how our memory beliefs are justified and not only our beliefs in general. After all, if most of our beliefs are memory beliefs, the question of how they are justified is of utmost importance.

Beliefs about the past

In the following, I will introduce the case of Clive. Clive is a person who has lost most of what we would usually consider to be his memory. By introducing Clive, I will ask the question of what beliefs Clive is not able to have anymore and thus which beliefs of the sum of our beliefs are beliefs which should be understood as memory beliefs. I will claim that most of the beliefs we form are memory beliefs and that we should therefore care about the justification of memory beliefs. While Clive's memory beliefs or better, the beliefs Clive is not able to form anymore, are beliefs about the past, I will extend my argumentation by claiming that it is not only beliefs about the past which our memory constitutes but also beliefs about the present and the future in the subsequent sections. The case of Clive can thus be seen as a starting point in arguing for the view that most of our beliefs are memory beliefs.

Admittedly, it would be easier to consider a case in which there is no memory whatsoever involved to show which beliefs of our beliefs are memory beliefs. However, since people without any memory whatsoever simply do not exist, we will have to make do with the closest we can get to a person without memory and consider the case of Clive. His loss of memory is retrograde and anterograde. So, his loss of memory extends to a loss of memory of events that occurred before its onset and to the inability to make new memories after the event that caused the memory loss. With this, Clive is known as one of the people, if not the person, with the most severe memory loss on earth (Baddeley et al., 2020, 4).

The cause of Clive's severely impaired memory is that he had contracted a virus that attacked his central nervous system resulting in a brain infection. This infection rendered Clive densely amnesic. Clive is not able to keep information in mind for longer than a few seconds. This can have funny effects like Clive greeting his wife enthusiastically every time she enters the room even though she has just left. Furthermore, as his interpretation of him not knowing what happened just moments before was that he just regained consciousness, he would not grow tired of telling exactly that to every visitor he got. Even more, he would write down this "new insight" into a notebook. Crossing out the previous line which also stated that he just recently regained consciousness. Even though this story sounds funny to a third observer, for him it felt like a permanent present or as he described it: "Hell on earth", "[...] like being dead—all the bloody time" (Baddeley et al., 2020, 4). Clive

could not follow a TV series or a book because once he got to the next section, he would already have forgotten what it was built on. Nevertheless, it was not like Clive did not know anything about what was going on in his life. He was able to remember that he had spent four years at Cambridge University or that he had conducted the first modern performance of Handel`s Messiah. Still, his memory about his life was vague. He had, for instance, also written a book on the composer Lassus but could not remember anything about it. What he, nevertheless, could still do without any limitation, so, as if he never had any brain injury, was conducting his old choir. He read the score of a song without any difficulties and was even able to accompany himself on the keyboard while singing. In this moment, one could say that he was his old self. Yet, once the choir left again, he was not able to follow any other task. Even after twenty years, Clive is still in the same condition. He learned to live with his impairment (Baddeley et al., 2020, 4).

In the case of Clive, many beliefs one would usually have about oneself, and the world are not available to him anymore. I will explain what exactly is missing for Clive in the following and in which case beliefs should be seen as memory beliefs since they rely on memory in order to be formed.

I will start with the least controversial beliefs when it comes to the question of what we would usually consider as memory beliefs. These beliefs are memories about Clive's own past such as whether he has written a book about Lassus, where he went to university or whether he has just regained consciousness. These beliefs are beliefs we would usually consider as memory beliefs as they highly rely on our long-term memory. The long-term memory is responsible for storing information for a longer period of time. It can be mainly divided into two parts. One would be the so-called declarative or explicit memory. This is the part of memory we would comprehend as related to long-term memory as a layperson. It consists of the episodic memory and the semantic memory (Baddeley et al., 2020, 13).

The episodic memory provides us with the ability to remember specific events (Baddeley et al., 2020, 14) such as where we have gone to university. A memory belief Clive still has. The semantic memory, in contrast, is not that specific in this sense. It stores accumulative knowledge about the world (Baddeley et al., 2020, 14) such as that we have written a book or that we have conducted a choir. Memory beliefs Clive does not have anymore. I take it, that both forms of memory are uncontroversial when it comes to the question of whether we have memory beliefs and not just beliefs based on these mechanisms. When it comes to our past, the beliefs we have are memory beliefs.

In addition, there is a further part of long-term memory we would not usually consider when it comes to memory beliefs. As a matter of fact, these beliefs seem to be more a part of knowledge-how and it is thus more controversial whether

they are beliefs at all. Yet, for the sake of completeness, I will also shortly consider the second part of long-term memory in the following.

The second part of the long-term memory is the non-declarative or implicit memory. This part of memory also often works in a normal way with amnesic patients as this form of learning is preserved. An example of implicit memory would be the so-called classical conditioning. Classical conditioning is most commonly known under Pavlov`s dog. In classical conditioning, a neutral stimulus, such as the ringing of a bell, is paired with an unconditioned stimulus, like presenting food. Presenting food will elicit an unconditioned response. That is salivating in the case of Pavlo`s dog. After the neutral stimulus is paired with the unconditioned stimulus repetitively, the unconditioned stimulus becomes a conditioned stimulus and the unconditioned response a conditioned response. At some point, the conditioned stimulus can even be left out. Only the presenting of the neutral stimulus will elicit the conditioned response. So, presenting the dog with the sound of a bell will make it salivate even though there is not any presentation of food happening (Mazur, 2016).

As you can see, this kind of learning does not require people (or other beings) to remember how and when they learned what they learned. They can learn something new without this kind of information (Baddeley et al., 2020, 14). This is also most probably the part of memory which enables Clive to still conduct his old choir. Yet, whether there is belief involved in Clive's ability to conduct his old choir is an open question. I will not answer it here. However, if there is belief involved, this belief most probably relies on Clive's memory of how to conduct a choir, read a score etc. as it is also a belief about how the past has been like. So, if there is belief in remembering implicitly, remembering implicitly is not only belief but due to its basis on memory a memory belief.

Explicit and maybe implicit memory beliefs are the beliefs we would usually connect to what memory beliefs are. However, they have a way bigger scope. Not only have we memory beliefs about the past with the help of our long-term memory but also with our short-term memory. The short-term memory can be seen as the temporary storage of small amounts of information which subsequently will pass information on to the long-term memory (Baddeley et al., 2020, 11). For instance, seeing your wife entering the room again, being able to tell whether she has just left the room or is merely re-entering depends on short-term memory. Additionally, the ability to watch a TV series or read a book also depends on short-term memory as we have to hold a small amount of information present in order to be able to follow the events within the book or TV series. All of these events are events Clive is not able to follow due to his impaired memory. This means, that even beliefs about the close past have to be considered as memory beliefs as they rely on short-

term memory. Furthermore, beliefs about the past even include lesser periods of time than the just considered period.

While Clive is not able to do many things which would rely on his short- and long-term memory, he is able to see the present as continuous and not as static. So, when he watches a TV-series, he sees the depicted objects and people moving and he hears the appearing sound as a sentence, a word or sound. This is possible due to his apparently unimpaired sensory memory. As a matter of fact, what we actually see while watching a TV series is a series of frozen images interspersed with brief periods of darkness. In order to be able to see continuous moving images, our brain needs to store a frozen images up until the arrival of the next frozen image. The storage system which is responsible for this is the visual part of the sensory memory. As we do not only perceive visual input as continuous, there is a whole series of sensory memory systems being responsible for storing information for a very short amount of time (Baddeley, 1999, 9). This leaves us with every belief being formed on the basis of perceived information necessarily being a memory belief as memory was already involved in processing the rare input. So, not only beliefs about the far past but every belief about perceived information is not only a belief but a memory belief as memory is highly involved in forming the belief. Without perceived and processed information, there would not be a belief at all. So, most beliefs about the past have to be seen as memory beliefs.

Beliefs about the present and future

Even if most of our beliefs about the past have to be seen as memory beliefs, there are more beliefs than just beliefs about the past. Beliefs about the present, beliefs derived from reasoning processes and beliefs about the future do not seem to need memory at first glance. In the following, I will show that this is not the case. We also need memory for beliefs about the present, past and beliefs derived from reasoning processes.

Beliefs about the present do not seem to need memory as they are beliefs about this instance and not of something we have perceived in the past. In order to believe that I am now seeing a pigeon, I seemingly do not need to know anything about the past. Yet, beliefs about the present still have to be seen as memory beliefs for the two following reasons. Firstly, if beliefs are still formed on the basis of perception which is the case in forming the belief that I am seeing a pigeon now, they rely on memory as it is the sensory memory which is responsible for processing the seeing of a pigeon and enabling us to form a belief about seeing a pigeon.

Secondly, if we form a belief, we need some time to form it. This means that we do not form a belief about the present anymore but about the past. Having a belief about the past, however, requires memory to present us with formerly processed information in order to form a belief again. As memory is involved in this process, the belief we have is a memory belief.

However, there are beliefs which are not necessarily of any time but an outcome of some reasoning process in general and thus might not necessarily rely on memory. Yet, beliefs derived from reasoning processes have to be seen as memory beliefs as well due to the following two reasons. Firstly, if our reasoning process is based on information drawn from perception, memory is involved again, and our beliefs would be memory beliefs. Secondly, even if there is no perceptual information involved, we need to hold words, sentences or even other beliefs present in order to be able to actually reason. Otherwise, we would just lose track of our thinking process. Holding information present which would otherwise been lost, however, is again a job memory does. So, the beliefs we would form in this case are also cases in which we form memory beliefs.

If beliefs derived from reasoning processes, beliefs about the past and the present are memory beliefs, beliefs about the future might be left as beliefs which are not memory beliefs. Yet, as argued for in beliefs about the past and present, as soon as we rely on prior information, we rely on our memory and thus form memory beliefs and not only beliefs. However, forming a belief about the future without relying on prior information even if that information is in the very close past such as in the sensory memory does not seem to be possible. After all, there would be no base to form a belief from if we did not rely on prior information. As a matter of fact, this is not the only evidence we have of being involved in belief forming processes about the future. Cognitive Science research even particularly reserves a part of memory for remembering to carry out an intended action at a specific time in the future. This is the so-called prospective memory. Prospective memory consists of different stages. Firstly, one has to form an intention about what one will be doing in the future such as calling your granddad tomorrow as it is his birthday by giving oneself a cue such as marking this day in red in your calendar. Afterwards, sometime after the intention formation passes up until you will actually call your granddad and thus execute your intention. In this case, this will be around a day as your granddad's birthday will be tomorrow. So, your retention interval is around a day. At the point you detect the cue of having marked the day in question in red, you retrieve what you have planned to do and recall that you wanted to call your granddad. After having successfully recalled your intention, you will execute your intention and call your granddad (cf. Baddeley, Eysenck, Anderson, 2020, 683 f.).

With prospective memory, we do not only remember to perform a specific action at a future time but also form beliefs about the future in order to not forget this action by forming a belief about what we want to be doing, by leaving us a cue and by recalling our formerly had intention. So, beliefs formed with our memory are not only involved in beliefs about the future in general but also when it comes to our practical everyday life.

In this paper, I have shown that no matter whether we form a belief about the present, are involved in reasoning processes or form a belief about the past or the future, as soon as we use any prior information, even if it is just what we have perceived, memory comes in. This means, that most of our beliefs must be seen as memory beliefs as they could not be formed without memory. If such a big part of our beliefs needs to be seen as memory beliefs, most of our beliefs are memory beliefs and the question of how they are justified, is a question worth considering.

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LE « CONFLIT » CHEZ MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE

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ABSTRACT. The "philosophical" style specific to Montaigne's *Essays*, totally devoid of demonstration and system, gives the reader the possibility of "essaying" an experience of his own reading, based on the idea that "Words belong half to the speaker, half to the hearer" (III, 13). Following Montaigne's idea that selfishness is the basis of solidarity between men (the basis of society), we can detect two levels in this political conception: 1) on the one hand, the relationship between the individual subject and his own complex state; 2) on the other hand, the relationship of the individual to otherness. For Montaigne, the first level is a priority and, as his own political experience shows, the individual subject has above all the duty to remain true to himself and to his own temperament. The duty to serve others is secondary, occasional and moderate. To complete the ideas that can constitute a "map" of Montaigne's political philosophy, we have analyzed – quantitatively and qualitatively – the contexts in which the French philosopher used the word "conflict". The examples confirm the predominance of the interior level of the individual subject and less of the relationship of the individual to otherness. To be active in the public sphere, the individual needs modesty and moderation in the expression of his opinions, as well as a rational evaluation when he wishes major changes; otherwise, they risk doing more harm than good to others. The individual must struggle internally with the weapons of reason, so as not to give in to irrational desires – such as revenge or carnal desires – which would affect others, which is virtue. An inner balance is necessary, and the others will gain from this.

Keywords: Montaigne, Essays, political philosophy, Renaissance, map, conflict, individual, society, political system, selfishness, solidarity, opinion, public life, moderation, otherness, private life, civil war

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RÉSUMÉ. Le style « philosophique » propre aux Essais de Montaigne, totalement dénué de démonstration et de système, donne au lecteur la possibilité d'essayer une expérience de sa propre lecture, fondée sur l'idée que « la parole est moitié à celuy qui parle, moitié à celuy qui l'escoute » (III, 13, p. 1088). Suivant l'idée de Montaigne que l'égoïsme est à la base de la solidarité entre les hommes (à la base de la société), on peut détecter dans cette conception politique deux niveaux : 1) d'une part, du rapport entre le sujet individuel et son propre état complexe ; 2) d'autre part, du rapport de l'individu à l'altérité. Pour Montaigne, le premier plan est prioritaire, comme sa propre expérience politique le montre, le sujet individuel a avant tout le devoir de rester fidèle à lui-même et à son propre tempérament. Le devoir de servir les autres est secondaire, occasionnel et modéré. Pour compléter les idées qui peuvent constituer une « carte » de la philosophie politique de Montaigne, ont été analysés – quantitativement et qualitativement – les contextes dans lesquels le philosophe français a utilisé le mot « conflit ». Les exemples confirment la prédominance du niveau intérieur du sujet individuel et moins du rapport de l'individuel à l'altérité. Pour être actif dans la sphère publique, l'individu a besoin de modestie et de modération dans l'expression de ses opinions, ainsi que d'une évaluation rationnelle lorsqu'il souhaite des changements majeurs ; sinon, ils risquent de faire plus de mal que de bien aux autres. L'individu doit lutter intérieurement avec les armes de la raison, pour ne pas céder aux désirs irrationnels – comme la vengeance ou les désirs charnels – qui affecteraient les autres, ce que signifie la vertu. Un équilibre intérieur est nécessaire, dont les autres n'ont rien d'autre à gagner.

Mots-cléfs : Montaigne, essais, philosophie politique, Renaissance, carte, conflit, individu, société, système politique, égocentrisme, solidarité, opinion, vie publique, modération, altérité, vie privée, guerre civile

En politique, Montaigne reste aussi divers et contradictoire que sur tous les sujets. Vivant sa vie dans un siècle profondément troublé par les guerres civiles et les crises monarchiques, ses idées, mais aussi son comportement en tant qu'acteur direct de celles-ci, échappent à toute caractérisation définitive. Pour certains lecteurs, plutôt sceptique (« dégousté de la nouvelleté », I, 23, p. 119), pour d'autres même républicain (disciple de son ami Étienne de la Boétie), parfois apolitique (« il est temps de nous desnouer de la société, puis que nous n'y pouvons rien apporter », I, 37, p. 242) ou parfois libérale, il est certain que ses idées politiques étaient du côté de ces *politiques*, qui voyaient des solutions politiques rationnelles aux crises de la France, et des solutions moins belliqueuses-religieuses, alimentées par « les passions », «le zèle », « la colère » et « la haine » et le fanatisme religieux.

J'essaye à dresser une « carte » de la philosophie politique de Montaigne, en prenant comme repère l'analyse des contextes dans lesquels Michel de Montaigne emploie le mot « conflit » dans son ouvrage principal, *Les Essais*. Au début, je résumerai la conception politique de Montaigne par quelques repères, puis j'essaierai de la compléter, en prenant comme repères l'analyse des contextes dans lesquels Michel de Montaigne emploie le mot « conflit ».

I. Une carte de la philosophie de Montaigne ?

En raison du style unique dans lequel Montaigne compose ses *Essais*, tout lecteur des *Essais* trouvera, au fur et à mesure de sa lecture, que Montaigne ne construit aucune théorie cohérente autour d'un thème, que son texte est composé comme une conversation directe avec le lecteur, décousue, détournée, sans paragraphes, sans ruptures d'idées, qu'une idée passe dans une autre, qu'une idée s'oppose à une autre, qu'il n'y a pas beaucoup d'éléments verbaux de liaison entre des phrases ou dans les phrases (connecteurs linguistiques *comme et, parce que, et*), etc. – tout cela étant laissé au choix du lecteur, lui seul pouvant construire son puzzle, en accord ou en désaccord avec l'idée ou avec les multiples idées qu'il lit. C'est un labyrinthe de l'esprit de Montaigne et de son livre dans lequel certains universitaires contemporains ont cherché les méthodes de travail de l'auteur et d'interprétation du texte, certains d'entre eux trouvant même quelques exemples de cohérence[2]. Cependant, toute tentative d'ordonner le texte reste seulement une tentative subjective ; elle n'épuise pas les intentions de l'auteur. « Précisément, le refus de Montaigne de conformer sa pensée au modèle linéaire de l'argumentation et de la persuasion représente une stratégie philosophique novatrice, plutôt qu'un outil purement littéraire, permettant à la réflexion philosophique constructive de se situer en dehors du domaine de la certitude dogmatique et didactique »[3]. Voilà donc que toute « carte » de la philosophie de Montaigne, même politique, est subjective, et Montaigne n'a établi aucune théorie

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[2] Certains chercheurs – Ann Hartle (*Michel de Montaigne: accidental philosopher*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003), B. Fontana (*Montaigne's politics : authority and governance in the* Essais, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2008) et James J. Supple (Les Essais *de Montaigne: méthode(s) et methodologies*, Honoré Champion, Paris, 2000) – ont cherché dans le sous-texte des *Essais* des éléments continus intentionnels à utiliser pour distinguer, parmi les réflexions asystématiques et adogmatiques de Montaigne, certaines structures (cf. Felicity Green, "Reading Montaigne in the Twenty-first Century", dans *The Historical Journal*, 52, 4 (2009), Cambridge University Press, p. 1090).

[3] Felicity Green, *Op. cit.*, p. 1089.

politique articulée, bien qu'il mêle souvent son texte à ses propres idées (ou à des idées empruntées) sur l'individu et son rapport à l'autre, à la société, au système politique, soit à certains moments historiques, soit à sa propre contemporanéité.

La plupart des idées sur la politique sont agglutinées dans le troisième livre des *Essais*, après que l'auteur lui-même eut essayé quelques expériences politiques, à propos desquelles Philippe Desan écrit : « Ambassadeur extraordinaire, chargé de missions, […] négociateur entre Henri III et Henri de Navarre, [le futur Henri IV], embastillé "par représailles" par la Ligue, Montaigne s'est constamment considéré comme un acteur politique et a navigué entre différents groupes de pression, délaissant parfois ses alliés naturels pour rejoindre ses ennemis d'autrefois »[4]. Il s'agit des guerres civiles entre catholiques et protestants (que Montaigne appelle « troubles »), qui commencent lorsqu'il a 29 ans et se terminent après sa mort. Plus l'expérience de deux mandats – de deux ans chacun – en tant que maire de la ville de Bordeaux, ainsi que celle de l'épidémie de peste qui a éclaté dans la région durant la dernière période de la dernière législature. Après toutes ces expériences – pour se défendre contre les accusations portées contre lui (par exemple, qu'il n'était pas un partisan fanatique d'un côté du conflit, ou qu'il a souvent fait preuve d'indécision et même d'indifférence) – Montaigne a écrit ses considérations politiques en deux chapitres : l'un (*De l'Utile et de l'Honneste*) en référence aux guerres civiles, l'autre (*De Mesnager sa Volonté*) en référence à son expérience de maire.

En résumé, la conception politique de Montaigne peut être envisagée à deux niveaux : 1) d'une part, du rapport entre le sujet individuel et son propre état complexe ; 2) d'autre part, du rapport de l'individu à l'altérité.

Quant au premier niveau, la relation entre le sujet individuel et son propre état complexe, il est représenté par le projet même des *Essais*, qui émerge d'une soif individuelle de liberté et d'autonomie, préfigurant l'individualisme moderne. « Je n'ay pas plus faict mon livre que mon livre m'a faict » (II, 18, p. 665), dit Montaigne, et ce dont il avait besoin, c'était seulement de la « citadelle intérieure » de la philosophie antique qui lui en offrait les outils de la pensée et une arrière-boutique où étudier attentivement soi-même, l'individuel dans son inimitable solitude.

Quant à l'autre niveau, celui du rapport entre l'individu et l'altérité, Montaigne y voit une nécessité née de l'égoïsme individuel : l'égoïsme est à la base de la solidarité entre les hommes, qu'il régule rationnellement, sur la base des rapports de force et de la base de ses propres fantasmes :

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[4] Philippe Desan, *Montaigne. Une biographie politique*, Éd. Odile Jacob, Paris, 2014, p. 593, *ap.* André Comte-Sponville, *Dictionnaire amoureux de Montaigne*, Éd. Plon, Paris, 2020, p. 471.

Cettuy-cy, sçachant exactement ce qu'il se doibt, trouve dans son rolle qu'il doibt appliquer à soy l'usage des autres hommes et du monde, et, pour ce faire, contribuer à la société publique les devoirs et offices qui le touchent. Qui ne vit aucunement à autruy, ne vit guere à soy (III, 10, p. 1006).

« Les loix se maintiennent en credit, non par ce qu'elles sont justes, mais par ce qu'elles sont loix » (III, 13, p. 1072), la société n'est qu'un compromis utile, mais qui a une tendance contraire à la liberté intérieure du sujet individuel :

La plus part des reigles et preceptes du monde prennent ce train de nous pousser hors de nous et chasser en la place, à l'usage de la societé publique. Ils ont pensé faire un bel effect de nous destourner et distraire de nous, presupposans que nous n'y tinsions que trop et d'une attache trop naturelle ; et n'ont espargné rien à dire pour cette fin (III, 10, p. 1006).

Montaigne crée-t-il un conflit entre l'éthique du service d'autrui et l'éthique de la fidélité à soi-même[5]? Non, tant que le sujet individuel reste fidèle à lui-même et à sa propre complexion et sert les autres à partir d'une position modérée. Ce que Montaigne choisit – comme dans bien d'autres situations – c'est la position modérée, évitant l'extrémisme et la partisanerie, choisissant dans toutes ses missions diplomatiques la position de médiateur, de négociateur entre les factions impliquées dans la folie religieuse ou celle du pouvoir :

En ce peu que j'ay eu à negotier entre nos Princes, en ces divisions et subdivisions qui nous deschirent aujourd'hui, j'ay curieusement evité qu'ils se mesprinssent en moy et s'enferrassent en mon masque. Les gens du mestier se tiennent les plus couverts, et se presentent et contrefont les plus moyens et les plus voisins qu'ils peuvent. Moy, je m'offre par mes opinions les plus vives et par la forme plus mienne. Tendre negotiateur et novice, qui ayme mieux faillir à l'affaire qu'à moy! […] La naifveté et la verité pure, en quelque siecle que ce soit, trouvent encore leur opportunité et leur mise. (III, 1, p. 791)

Mais, est-il possible au sujet individuel de servir les autres (d'être utile au service du public utile) et de préserver son honneur, de conserver son naturel et sa vérité ? Dans le chapitre *Du travail utile et honnête*, Montaigne dit oui, mais à condition que l'individu se connaisse suffisamment, connaisse ses limites et revienne toujours à la perspective privée[6], de ses propres valeurs personnelles, ce qui peut lui donner

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[5] Thierry Gontier, *L'égoïsme vertueux. Montaigne et la formation de l'esprit libéral*, Éd. Les Belles Lettres, Paris, 2023, p. 100.

[6] Desan, Philippe (ed.), *Lectures du troisième livre des* Essais *de Montaigne,* Éd. Honoré Champion, Paris, 2016, p. 67.

une liberté d'esprit et de décision – de revenir donc au niveau de la relation entre lui-même et son propre état complexe ; ne se donner qu'à soi-même et à autrui que prêter. « Le Maire et Montaigne ont tousjours esté deux, d'une separation bien claire. » (III, 10, p. 1020) et « *Non enim patria praestat omnibus officiis* »[7] (III, 1, p. 802).

Mais c'est la solution choisie par lui, par Montaigne, qui a trouvé un certain équilibre intérieur et qui peut se débrouiller, qui peut « ménager » sa volonté. Il n'est pas de ces « plus vigoureux et moins craintifs qui sacrifient leur honneur et leur conscience, comme ces autres antiens sacrifierent leur vie pour le salut de leur pays ; […] Le bien public requiert qu'on trahisse et qu'on mente et qu'on massacre » (III, 1, p. 791).

Montaigne avait-il des opinions politiques ? Dans la mesure où ils apparaissent dans ses *Essais*, ils sont libéraux, humanistes et conservateurs ; il déteste la tyrannie (III, 8, p. 931), prend le parti des différents (Amérindiens, paysans, sorciers, justiciers, pauvres), il préfère la république, il estime que la « domination populaire » est la plus « naturelle et la plus équitable » (quoiqu'il ne pardonne pas certains crimes de la démocratie athénienne – I, 3, p. 20), il est fidèle à Henri III mais sympathise aussi avec le futur Henri IV, il se déclare catholique mais il a des réserves sur la Ligue catholique et est dégoûté par « nouvelletés »[8], en particulier ceux dont les risques ne peuvent être calculés.

II. « Conflit »

Revenant au mot « conflit » (dont nous allons analyser brièvement les contextes), d'un point de vue quantitatif, il est utilisé avec parcimonie. Sur les 1116 pages d'*Essais* et plus de 322000 mots[9], il n'apparaît que 8 fois – six fois comme « conflict », deux fois comme « conflit ». Même le terme « troubles », avec lequel les guerres de religion étaient appelées, n'apparaît que 13 fois et les autres synonymes ne sont pas trop nombreux non plus – « guerre » apparaît 175 fois, « bataille » 50 fois et « combat » 64 fois.

La première mention du mot « conflit » apparaît au chapitre I, 23 (*De la Coustume et de ne Changer Aisément une Loy Receue*), dans l'un des derniers paragraphes, à la fin d'un réquisitoire contre la nouvelle Réforme de Luther, où Montaigne écrit :

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[7] « Car les devoirs envers la patrie n'étouffent pas tous les autres devoirs » (Cicero, *De officiis*, III, XXIII).

[8] Cf. André Comte-Sponville, *Op. cit.*, pp. 481-482.

[9] Selon la dernière édition anthume, de 1524, cf. Desan, Philippe (ed.), *Lectures du troisième livre des* Essais *de Montaigne*, Éd. Honoré Champion, Paris, 2016.

> Il y a grand amour de soy et presomption, d'estimer ses opinions jusque-là que, pour les establir, il faille renverser une paix publique, et introduire tant de maux inevitables et une si horrible corruption de meurs que les guerres civiles apportent, et les mutations d'estat... (I, 23, p. 120)

Et après ce paragraphe, le mot « conflit » apparaît, à l'intérieur d'une comparaison que Montaigne fait entre le changement soudain et tout à fait irréfléchi apporté par le protestantisme sur le plan religieux et politique avec celui apporté par une médecine faible et mal appliquée :

> Il advient de la leur [les partisans du changement], comme des autres medecines foibles et mal appliquées : les humeurs qu'elle vouloit purger en nous, elle les a eschaufées, exasperées et aigries **par le conflict**, et si nous est demeurée dans le corps. Elle n'a sceu nous purger par sa foiblesse, et nous a cependant affoiblis, en maniere que nous ne la pouvons vuider non plus, et ne recevons de son operation que des douleurs longues et intestines (I, 23, p. 122)

On peut donc dire qu'un nouveau changement (*une novelléte*) n'est pas toujours bon, si le conflit qu'il crée avec le statu quo fait plus de mal que de bien qu'il pensait initialement ; que ce qui apporte le mal, ce ne sont pas les opinions, mais les vices du détenteur de l'opinion.

Une deuxième mention du mot « conflit » apparaît dans un court chapitre, I, 32 (*Qu'Il Faut Sobrement Se Mesler de Juger des Ordonnances Divines*). Ici, après que Montaigne ait donné quelques exemples de batailles tantôt perdues, tantôt gagnées, il dit que nous, les humains, ne pouvons pas nous prononcer sur ce que Dieu décide ; vers la fin, il en vient à l'exemple de Saint Augustin, qui argumentait contre certains opposants au sujet « d'**un conflit** qui se décide par les armes de la mémoire plus que par celles de la raison » (p. 216). En fait, il se réfère au fragment de *La Cité de Dieu* (I, 8), dans lequel Augustin parle du fait que l'homme doit accepter l'existence du mal dans l'histoire parce que Dieu ne rend pas justice définitive ici-bas, mais seulement au jugement dernier. Et la mémoire, dans son sens augustinien, est une faculté dont l'objet, entre autres, est aussi l'avenir, elle pouvant ainsi prospecter le sens du jugement après la mort. C'est pourquoi, non par la raison, mais par la mémoire, les plans divins peuvent être compris, dans le meilleur des cas[10].

Une troisième présence du mot « conflit » se trouve au début du chapitre *De la Cruauté* (II, 11), où il se réfère au conflit intérieur de l'homme vertueux. C'est-à-dire qu'à la différence de l'homme bon – qui, « d'une douceur et facilité naturelle », surmonte les offenses reçues –, l'homme vertueux fait bien plus : « picqué et outré jusques au vif d'une offence, s'armeroit des armes de la raison contre ce furieux

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[10] Je remercie le professeur Alexander Baumgarten d'avoir clarifié ce passage sur Saint Augustin.

appetit de vengeance, et apres un grand **conflict** s'en rendroit en fin maistre » (II, 11, p. 422). Et Montaigne conclut : « il semble que le nom de la vertu presuppose de la difficulté et du contraste, et qu'elle ne peut s'exercer sans partie ». Voilà donc la présence du conflit à l'intérieur d'un sujet individuel, conflit qui définit son intégrité morale, sa vertu, opposée au désir irrationnel de vengeance.

Dans un autre chapitre, *Contre la Faineantise* (II, 21), Montaigne désigne clairement le conflit comme un conflit armé. Ainsi, tout en donnant quelques exemples de héros qui ont préféré faire leur devoir, malgré leur état de santé fragile, il en vient au cas du roi de Fez (en réalité Fès, la capitale du Maroc), Molluch (ou Abd al-Malek), qui, bien que malade, a choisi de défendre son pays contre le roi du Portugal. Il a gagné au combat, donnant sa vie en retour, grâce à une stratégie militaire :

> Il dressa sa bataille en rond, assiegeant de toutes pars l'ost des Portugais: lequel rond, venant à se courber et serrer, les empescha non seulement **au conflict**, qui fut tres aspre [...], mais aussi les empescha à la fuitte apres leur routte (II, 21, p. 678).

Une cinquième mention du mot « conflit » se trouve dans le chapitre *Toutes Choses Ont Leur Saison* (II, 28), dans lequel le sens est celui d'affrontement armé, mais dans un contexte où il s'agit de la relation de l'individu – même avec responsabilités militaires – avec le fait politique, la guerre. Ainsi, Montaigne parle des besoins de l'individu (illustré par la prière), dus à son état intérieur complexe, qui se manifeste même dans des moments jugés inappropriés, « hors de propos » :

> Toutes choses ont leur saison, les bonnes et tout; et je puis dire mon patenostre hors de propos, comme on desfera Titus Quintius Flaminius de ce qu'estant general d'armée, on l'avoit veu à quartier, sur l'heure du **conflict**, s'amusant à prier Dieu en une bataille qu'il gaigna (II, 21, p. 702).

On ne sait si Montaigne pense que c'est une bonne ou une mauvaise chose – dans le même chapitre il dit de Caton que, dans sa vieillesse, il n'était pas temps pour lui d'apprendre le grec, bien qu'il dira le contraire de Socrate (III, 13) quand, également dans sa vieillesse, il apprenait à danser – mais il est clair que depuis que Flaminius a gagné la bataille, il a bien fait.

La sixième présence du mot « conflit » se trouve au chapitre *De la Phisionomie* (III, 12), dans le contexte du conflit individuel avec la mort. Après une exhortation à « se recueillir, à trouver en nous les arguments de la nature contre la mort, vrais, et les plus propres à nos necesitté », Montaigne parle de lui-même en disant :

Fussé je mort moins allegrement avant qu'avoir veu les Tusculanes? J'estime que non. Et quand je me trouve au propre, je sens que ma langue s'est enrichie, mon courage de rien; il est comme Nature me le forgea, et se targue pour **le conflict** d'une marche populaire et commune (III, 12, p. 1039).

Le contexte est celui du comportement face à la mort, et Montaigne dit que le sentiment de courage face à la mort est un sentiment populaire et commun, la culture n'y étant pour rien.

Une page plus bas, dans le même contexte de différences entre les énoncés livresques et ceux de l'homme du commun, le mot « conflict » est de nouveau présent, mais sous la forme de « conflit ».

J'ay veu pareillement d'autres escrits encore plus reverez, qui, en la peinture du **conflit** qu'ils soutiennent contre les aiguillons de la chair, les representent si cuisants, si puissants et invincibles que nous mesmes, qui sommes de la voirie du peuple, avons autant à admirer l'estrangeté et vigueur incognue de leur tentation que leur resistance (III, 12, p. 1040).

La dernière mention du mot « conflit » se trouve dans le chapitre *Apologie de Raymond Sebond* (II, 12) : Le contexte est une large discussion des critères de vérité. Montaigne mentionne un juge de son temps qui, rencontrant un **conflit** aigu entre Bartolus et Baldus – deux jurisconsultes qui faisaient autorité – et une certaine affaire agitée par de nombreuses contradictions, écrivit en marge du livre : Question pour l'ami, un terme juridique indiquant quelque chose de problématique.

Conclusions

En revenant à ce que nous nous sommes proposé de faire au départ – compléter la « carte » de la philosophie politique de Montaigne, en prenant comme repères l'analyse des contextes dans lesquels Michel de Montaigne emploie le mot « conflit », nous pouvons tirer les conclusions suivantes :

Sur les huit usages du terme conflit, cinq concernent le rapport entre le sujet individuel et son propre état complexe, deux concernent le rapport entre l'individu et l'altérité (l'individu face au conflit militaire) et un renvoie au conflit d'idées entre deux savants.

Dans la conception politique de Montaigne (que j'ai résumée dans la première partie de l'article), quantitativement, les exemples confirment la prédominance du niveau intérieur du sujet individuel et moins du rapport de l'individu à l'altérité.

Au premier niveau, l'individu doit s'abandonner à la « marche » commune de la nature, en ce qui concerne les instincts, et se laisser moins influencer par les livres. En effet, selon la conception augustinienne, en s'abandonnant aux armes de la mémoire, il peut accéder à l'avenir.

Au niveau du rapport de l'individu à l'altérité, c'est-à-dire de l'influence de l'individu sur autrui, à travers l'exemple de Titus Quintius Flaminius, Montaigne nous dit qu'un fait individuel privé, né de son propre état intérieur, même à un moment jugé inopportun, il peut conduire – on ne sait si par causalité ou par succession – à une victoire dans l'espace public. Prenant ensuite l'exemple du roi de Fès, Abd al-Malek, Montaigne montre comment un homme public (ce que lui, Michel de Montaigne, n'est pas) choisit de sacrifier sa vie au profit d'autrui.

Les deux niveaux se chevauchent la plupart du temps, le premier plan étant, à Montaigne, prédominant. Il le pratique lui-même dans son activité politique. Pour être actif dans la sphère publique, l'individu a besoin de modestie et de modération dans l'expression de ses opinions, ainsi que d'une évaluation rationnelle lorsqu'il souhaite des changements majeurs ; sinon, ils risquent de faire plus de mal que de bien aux autres. L'individu doit lutter intérieurement avec les armes de la raison, pour ne pas céder aux désirs irrationnels – comme la vengeance ou les désirs charnels – qui affecteraient les autres, ce que signifie la vertu. Un équilibre intérieur est nécessaire, dont les autres n'ont rien d'autre à gagner.

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