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More-than-human, Less-than-human.
Entering the In-between

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ABSTRACT. The article reads some assumptions of contemporary New Materialism against the grain, according to which the question of human/humanity should be completely translated back into material-semiotic entanglements – "beyond the self," "beyond the species," "beyond theory," and "beyond death." On the one hand, the article contrasts them with Bruno Latour's thesis of the current European crisis as a "cascade of engendering troubles" that all revolve around procreation/ reproduction. On the other hand, it confronts them with Luc Boltanki's assertion that the historical situation of today's Europe can be compared to the onto-theological concept of "limbo," in which fetuses or unbaptized newborns traditionally remain—as a "border zone" between inside and outside. The focus here is on the question of the human being in the sense of an "in-between" or more-or-less-than-human.

Keywords: New Materialism, entanglement, conception, fetus, human being, In-between, Luc Boltanski

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It is probably not entirely misguided to detect what Ernst Cassirer described in 1910 as the disappearance of substance into pure function[1] as a current reverberation of Hegel's dictum that we must understand the true not only as substance, but also as a subject – and this reverberation has become a global reality. The thing, the body inherently at peace within itself, even the subjective body, its corporeity with

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[1] Ernst Cassirer, *Substance and Function and Einstein's Theory of Relativity* (1910), translated by William Courtis Swabey and Marie Collins Swabey, The Open Court Publishing Company, 1923.

its inherent limits, its reach and possibilities has turned from a *subiectum* padded in the darkness of its own flesh, as the start and endpoint of all movement, into a transitory hub, into an incessantly newly and differently defined complex without a true core. Hence, the term teleology, essential to biology, which was a descriptive discipline into the 19th century, has been replaced by the perception that all forms of life are to be understood as micro-organism feedback systems that sustain themselves through feedback or energetic regeneration. This simultaneously implies that we should think of individuality as well as the sociality of such organisms as fundamentally pliable. And this return to the wide plasticity of life allows us not only to understand life as projectable into the deepest capillaries (i.e., formable by means of a project or an idea), but also to move machines and organisms onto the same playing field. Today, we think of nature, technology, biospheres, and subjectivity as interconnected spheres in which interfering "actants" that are no longer necessarily human interact dynamically in their fluctuating pockets of meaning. This we can see already in the Actor-Network-Theory of Bruno Latour[2] in which temporary material-semiotic inter-weavings take on the role of a springboard for methodic observations, which in turn constitute entanglements and therefore only marginally form a theoretical distance between the "subject" and its "object." Whatever serves as subject or object is rather a position that continuously needs to be reevaluated. That is why Latour refers to them as "action nets" versus "networks" or refers to the hubs as quasi-objects, actants, plots or mediators. And wherever they have already descended into a nebulous common practice (meaning that we employ them 'blindly'), he speaks of black boxes, of subcutaneous action dens that have not yet been defined or are no longer being defined and that will in due time have 'motivational' consequences that are no longer transparent. One of these consequences manifests itself today in that, as Latour says, "*all forms of belonging* are undergoing metamorphosis – belonging to the globe, to the world, to the provinces, to particular plots of ground, to the world market, to lands and to traditions,"[3] and last but not least, lest we forget, to us *as human beings*.

New Materialism today prominently features knots, networks or transitioning holobionts again, for example, in an interdisciplinary manner in Karen Barad's "agential realism,"[4] in Jane Bennet's "ecology of things" emerging out of "vibrant matter"[5] or

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2 Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social. An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, Oxford University Press, 2005.
3 Bruno Latour, *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime*, Polity Press, 2018, p. 23.
4 Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, Duke University Press, 2007.
5 Jane Bennet, *Vibrant Matter. A Political Ecology of Things*, MNG University Press, 2009.

in the draft version of Donna Haraway's "Chthulucene" replacing the Anthropocene.[6] Referencing the chtonic deities, Haraway takes the image of a spider, the *Pimoa chthulu*, residing beneath tree stumps as a case in point. Its web of "string figures" throughout the root system lets the porous edges and contact points of life merge in a multi-active way with multiple eyes, multiple brains and free of any prior, so-called initiating units or ontologies. Through their cross-reaching and merging, these beings present themselves primarily as reciprocal, i.e., they do not exist prior or independent of these relationships.

Haraway's soil-dwelling, web-weaving being that the *anthropos* is intended to become reminds us of the image of the cicada in Plato's *Phaidros* (258e–259d), but in the reverse. According to the myth narrated within, the cicada had been *human* once, a type of human who had become so enchanted with his own song that he refused all food and died. It provided the basis for the philosopher's image of an autotrophic being that should neither feed itself nor reproduce nor sleep, as Socrates reminds Phaidros, who is on the verge of nodding off in the heat of the day beneath a sycamore tree. Instead, he is urged to continue his song on his own in order to set himself apart from the body entangled in sustenance, dependencies, aging, and reproduction. Haraway's Chthulu's intent seems to be a type of secretion or regression of this insect that refuses all food and connection. Its katabasis is into the earth where all entities, as she writes, "become more a microbiome of fermenting critters of many genders and kinds, i.e., companion species, at table together, eating and being eaten"[7]: "The order is reknitted: human beings are with and of the earth, and the biotic and abiotic powers of this earth are the main story."[8] Haraway consistently uses the term "com-post," a common (com) life *after* (post) *the human life* with the intent of relating to the biotic-abiotic fabric, to think more horizontally and less vertically, and explicitly to disregard the question of being human. All of this is being reflected ubiquitously, in an almost entranced quest for a fundamental decommissioning of dualism models in favor of metaphysical, onto-theological dichotomies, for example, in the differentiation between nature and culture, subject and object, life and matter, will and determinism, growth and technology etc. Emergence, entanglement and process-orientation take their place while the *digital realm* serves as the preferred performative space. Going hand in hand with this opening between human and nature, nature and technology, the essentialist ontologies and subject-focused idealisms are undermined in favor of a life "beyond the Self," "beyond the Species," "beyond the Theory" and "beyond Death."[9]

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[6] Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble. Making kin in the Chthulucene*, Duke University Press, 2016.
[7] Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, p. 170, note 3.
[8] Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble,* p. 55.
[9] Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, Polity Press, 2013 (chapter headings).

I would like to pick up on the pursued undermining but in the sense of a pivotal crossing point that *evades* this multiple composting of growing organisms and projection, of flesh and word, microbiology and info sphere or digital realm which makes it all the more important to capture as it is such an important crossing point or withdrawal moment. Pinpointing the dividing lines that we associate with the beginning and end of human "subjectivity" or human life in its broadest meaning is methodically being neglected by the New Materialisms, precisely because the term *subject* is apparently contaminated. Aside from that, it would be, according to Bennet, an "aporetic or quixotic endeavor"[10] despite the caveat that there are "of course differences between the knife that impales and the man impaled."[11] I'd like to emphasize this difference, however, and point to it as a verticality, that is, as a rupture in the horizontally woven "biofilm" that is centered within this aporia and which I will term, for the time being, as the "materiality of raw openness" (as *materiality* of nakedness, i.e., flesh, and as materiality *of raw openness*, as something that pierces the flesh at the same time). This piercing or perforation introduces an incision into the ongoing material exchange and is an inextricable contradiction. Contradictions know no proxies, they can neither be replaced nor fed back, but can only be borne out and *occupied* (as a projection or symbolically). Coinciding with that, I'd like to assert that the wound, the crisis, the impediment of Europe today can be located in particular in its confrontation with just such "raw openness" (not in the least *as* functioning as being-for-oneself or being-in-itself, but as pure beyond oneself) as well as in the impossibility to close up an incision, *which is after all us,* within the projected horizon of "More-than-human," a back-translated construct of the seductive, recursive interweaving of nature and technology. Maybe this image is skewed but allow me to stay with it for a moment. The seduction of Europa, in the sense of a flight forward into a type of "nature" that manifests itself primarily as the peaceful face of an ecological Gaia-nature, cleaned up by predominantly European 'human beings,' could prove to be a secondhand narrative of the ancient story of Zeus and the Oriental king's daughter Europa in which she succumbs to the true intentions of the highest Olympic God – i.e., his utter indifference given his thirst for power – while she allows herself to be charmed by the enticing physicality of a benevolent snowy white steer and be carried off on his back 'innocently day-dreaming.'

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[10] Bennet, *Vibrant Matter*, p. ix.
[11] Bennet, *Vibrant Matter*, p. 9.

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Without explicitly referencing the neo-materialistic versions listed under the title "More-than-Human," the French sociologist Luc Boltanski highlighted just such an aporia of humankind in his 2004 book *La condition fœtale*, in English *The Foetal Condition. A Sociology of Engendering and Abortion*.[12] The core of his thesis is the unsolvable anthropological contradiction found in all societies, one that today is ever more prevalent as a festering wound in the globally expanding material-semiotic process of entanglement. Where do we find the *human* dividing line or 'border' between inside and outside, between nature and culture, or rather where does it forge its path given the old differentiation has perforated, is being undermined or projectively being shredded? Following the implosion of the grand 'transcending' narratives, each and everyone of us, according to Boltanski, has internalized it. Each individual human being could be viewed at any moment from an aporetic perspective: once to be human *through his/her flesh* and another *through the word*. The output of this insoluble dual, repeated in each individual between the (manifesting) coming-into-flesh and his or her active acknowledgment or lack thereof by a symbolic order that can change at will, forms the demarcation of all other worlds, identities, outlines, and derivations in the sense of *belonging to humankind* in the broader sense.

While human-ontologies in classical philosophy, largely disregarding natality, oriented themselves for over 2500 years primarily on mortality that was meant to be *overcome* in an approximation to a god (*homoiōsis theou*, i.e., a "More-than-human," aligned to a deity, remember the cicada), we appear to be increasingly focused today on *Natality*,[13] i.e., procreation and birth (in the sense of a distinctly 'female' connotation of that dimension) as the venue of such an opening gate into human existence. Especially, and this is Boltanski's specific point of view, in the form of life on the cusp of its singularity, that is, the unborn, the *foetus*. The foetus in and of itself has not been awarded an ontological status in Western-European history so far (it is "less-than-human"); its precarious location between being and non-being was found in the semi-official fringes of symbolic society (just as the continuously precarious status of what we term its "uterine environment," which is that of the mothers and women in general). While these precarious beings on the fringe historically played *no* role in symbolic society, it is their undefined pre-being or

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[12] Luc Boltanski, *The Foetal Condition. A Sociology of Engendering and Abortion*, Polity Press, 2013.

[13] "Because they are *initium*, newcomers and beginners by virtue of birth, men take initiative, are prompted into action" (Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, The University of Chicago Press, 1958, p. 177).

Being in-between on the cusp to a self, to a species, to theory, and to death that moves into the center of society today as a *political* scandalon of negotiability (for there is almost nothing that polarizes and roils the hearts and minds more than that). As a *philosophical* scandalon,[14] however, it is strangely pushed to the sidelines in the neo-materalistic ontologies of pure beyond-the-self or is even disregarded as an aporia or "Donquixotery."

It is worthy to take a closer look at the broad strokes of Boltanski's theoretical analysis. To clarify, neither Boltanski[15] nor I are raising this point to discuss the question of abortion as such, to discuss gender or gender politics, human rights, ecological topics etc. nor are we making any *political* demands in that regard (even though those are desperately needed). Instead, it is explicitly a *philosophical* question, I believe, subcutaneously hidden in all of the "debates" of the human being in the sense of a nervously flickering "more-or-less-than-human," seen in light of his or her *procreation*. And in parentheses I would like to add, Bruno Latour also retraces the core of the current European crisis, even though in more trenchant terms, to a "generational or generative crisis," which is the question of "lineage" and also of "gender," that is to say, origins/belongings and sexuality/procreation/viability that "is now posed at all levels and for all existing beings, involving growing uncertainty about the notion of a limit;"[16] I will come back to that later on).

We are able to draw from Boltanski four theses that build on each other:

1) The unborn, the foetus – has risen, for the first time in time, thanks to medical imaging technology into the realm of visual representation[17] and therefore

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[14] Scandalon is the "stumbling block," i.e., that which ricochets back to us in an anathematic sense, thus introducing a border and a turning point to the publicly negotiable (politics).

[15] Boltanski's aim is to develop "a moral sociology, in Durkheim's sense: that is, not a sociology impregnated with moralism but a sociology which takes 'moral phenomena' [faits moraux] seriously" (Boltanski, *The Foetal Condition*, p. 234). His interest is *theoretical* and the central perspective from which he views abortion as a sociological subject is the question of the general conditions for engendering human beings. According to his own statement, this question and investigation ultimately leads him to the limits of sociology; it becomes a philosophical question in the sense of the *question of ourselves*. He thus brings the "self" or "subjectivity," which is excluded or declared superfluous in many approaches to New Materialisms, back into the entanglement process as a gap, crack or "wound." On the edges of this wound the political tools for debates or negotiability grow fuzzy. Hence, a new perspective is adapted in the endeavors toward New Materialisms, which is to add the human conditionality to the political agency of a human being.

[16] Bruno Latour, *After Lockdown: A Metamorphosis*, Polity Press, 2021, chapter 5: A whole cascade of engendering troubles, p. 68.

[17] See also Donna Haraway, "Fetus: The Virtual Speculum in the New World Order," in: *Feminist Review*, 55, Spring 1997, p. 22–72. Haraway argues "for a broader conception of 'new reproductive technologies' in order to foreground justice and freedom projects for differently situated women in

a state of negotiability – but has, in a sociological sense, stood since the beginning of time on the threshold between flesh and word which, as I want to call it, a materiality of raw openness. It emerges out of the encounter of two gender-specific beings into flesh while this emerging-into-flesh could never be initiated by a symbolic instance. It steps onto the stage later in that it legitimizes this first manifestation of flesh by making it visible and giving it a name as a being allowed to pass through into a social life – or not. Historically speaking, the admission of a new human being into the collective of symbolic relationships was primarily handled along the axis of lineage. In modern times, the state and the thus firmly placed Biopolitics have taken over that role (Foucault). Transferring into singularity has today moved out of state control and become woven into what Boltanski calls the "parental project." Whether this first reality into flesh can or should even be addressed as "human" is now at the discretion of its creators, its parents. Within the reproductive environment, its substance is being turned into a project-based transitory node that is either confirmed as an "authentic foetus" (as "my baby," whose growth including its 'uterine environment' is forthwith surrounded by an extensive market sector and monitored meticulously), or it is termed a "tumoral foetus," a shapeless mass of tissue that can be discarded or be shared as totipotent raw material ("techno foetus") for other bio-technological projects and interests. The "previously virtually unknown foetus has 'entered society' in Latour's sense, as an object of collective dispute over its status."[18]

2) Together with Eve Chiapello, Boltanski worked on the *projective* dimension as an assertion and a controlling instance of the first being-in-flesh in an early work on the "new spirit of capitalism."[19] Its hegemonic might is based on the metaphor of the net/web and is fed by perpetually fluid instances originally based within the contexts of science, technology, and management that are increasingly seeping into

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the New World Order." In addition to her legitimate political interest, Haraway's essay is interesting to me above all because of her use of the fetus as projection screen analogous to its twin, the planet Earth: "The fetus and the planet earth are sibling seed worlds in technoscience. If NASA photographs of the blue, cloud-swathed whole earth are icons for the emergence of global, national and local struggles over a recent natural-technical object of knowledge called the environment, then the ubiquitous images of glowing, free-floating, human fetuses condense and intensify struggles over an equally new and disruptive technoscientific object of knowledge, namely 'life itself'" (ibid., p. 23). I, on the other hand, would like to argue that the fetus represents precisely the opposite – the piercing or perforation – of all projective technologies resp. visual cultures, namely precisely when we understand it neither as "a soft, fleshy child" nor as an objectified heap of tissue ("tumoral foetus"), but as actual human potentiality, which is the *potency of absolute precariousness*. (See below)

[18] Jim Conley, Book Review „Luc Boltanski, The Foetal Condition. A Sociology of Engendering and Abortion," in: *Canadian Journal of Sociology/Cahier canadiens de sociologie*, 39/2, 2014, p. 279–282, p. 281.

[19] Luc Boltanski und Ève Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Verso, 2007.

the world of intimate, physical relationships and inscribing the permanent on-demand status into this world as well. The "project polity" (*cité par projet*) is characterized by instability, transfer and the urge for innovation, that is, radically connectionist. Wherever one project fails, in other words, where corresponding interests fail to connect (where no "deal" can be struck), we end up with an abortive process, a break or departure immediately replaced by a new project with the implicit understanding that what is not tied to the project or asserted by it, does in fact not exist.

3) The project of a unique singularity upheld in the parental project (i.e., the foetus, formed in the projective phase of parenthood, that does not distinguish itself in any detail from the tumorous bundle of tissue that will be "tossed out" if its assertion does not occur) now encounters a further liquifying process in what we could call the *project Gaia* (with or without Latour) that is intended to take the place of parenthood. According to the call for a life beyond the Self, beyond the Species, beyond the Theory, and beyond Death, it now becomes a matter of placing a biotic-abiotic "monism of beings" in lieu of the "species" represented so specifically by parenthood (meaning that human beings give birth to "human beings" in a naturally symbolic sense full of contradiction). These beings are those who are populating planet earth or more precisely, the 'systemic totality' that is formed out of the interactions/interferences between these nodes. By this, I mean not only the status of being human or other 'metaphysic instances' of fluidity but in fact the status of *each and every one of us* who is forced to continually construct criteria that allow us to legitimize ourselves inside the systemic totality or vice versa letting ourselves be legitimized as a dark growth of *chôra*, as a part of the cooperative collective, as a totipotent stem cell, as a tumor or probiotic mish-mash according to the guideline, "It matters what compostables make compost."[20] The criteria of the ranking of such a biocentric egalitarianism result directly from the consequences that the participating actors and actants invoke depending on their stake in it (essentially like Nietzsche's "Will to Power") which creates a permanent state of unease as to where exactly the boundaries are located or should be located *according to prevailing circumstances.* As Latour points out, the right to singularity exists only for beings that are *completely autotrophic,* which is that they can "feed themselves *by themselves,*" and this "can only apply for Gaia, which, by definition, contains itself"[21] – a strange analogy to the absolute in the metaphysical tradition.

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[20] To thwart any neo-Malthusian interpretation, we should add another dictum to the equation, "It matters which stories tell stories" (Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, p. 101).

[21] Latour, *After Lockdown*, p. 65.

This leads us to the conclusion that belonging to humankind is no (longer) a given. Today, the actual position of a human being –– the *condition foetale* –– is becoming radically apparent and not in any abstract form but quite concrete, i.e., as the intensely precarious position of each and every one of us. This "half-born" being, having emerged out of the darkness of its mother's womb into the light only by means of our reproductive and imaging technologies becomes a ghostly image for the currently openly debated nebulous stance while also being left to the projective devices. Or it becomes – for each individual – a cypher for being in-between, to be at once equal and replaceable, that is, an indifferentiable being-for-others, instead of singular and as a singular being, striving to access the perception and memory of others. The fetus shows us the actual human potentiality, which is the *potency of absolute precariousness.* "La condition foetale," Boltanski concludes his considerations, "c'est la condition humaine".[22] Or, as Latour puts it, "This is the new universal that is to be found wherever all existing beings live [...]: we're all affected by the *limits of the notion of a limit*; we find it hard to locate the *nomos* of the earth."[23]

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What can we say about this "nomos of earth"? And what does it mean to localize it or *ourselves* in it? Or rather, what *might* that mean? Which role could Europa play, this aging mother and product of a seductive liaison, that supposedly gave birth to the people of Europe, and who, according to Latour, in postmodern terms is defined by a whole "cascade of engendering troubles," all of which affect the question of continuity on *all* levels: those concerned primarily with the physical basics for survival, the future generations (pensions! mandatory military service!), but also and predominantly the historic, intellectual, spiritual continuity, the act of passing on and the ability to narrate the rich, voluptuous historical body that is Europe. What hovers above all that like a heavy cloud is "a kind of broad threat of

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[22] Luc Boltanski, *La condition fœtale. Une sociologie de l'engendrement et de l'avortement*, Éditions Gallimard, 2004, p. 332. This final sentence of Boltanski's book is missing in the English translation, for whatever reason. This foetal condition as human condition is replayed in the form of a "cantata for several voices" in Boltanski's poem *Les Limbes*, Éditions MF, 2005; Boltanski here compares today's *Europe* as 'limbus': "Is there a term better suited than the concept of *limbus* [as a 'border zone' between inside and outside] to characterize, at least in metaphorical terms, the historical situation that is ours today in this region, this Europe of ours [...]? It is certainly not hell, but it is far from being a paradise."

[23] Latour, *After Lockdown*, p. 62; vgl. Latour, *Down to Earth*, p. 17, where it is said that the new universality is the feeling, "that the ground is giving way beneath everyone's feet at once."

extinction," as if, so says Latour, "the genealogical principle has suddenly been disrupted"?[24] But which genealogical principle is he talking about? Three trajectories in light of the debate of "more-than-human" and with a view of the "dividing line."

First: The genealogical principle apparently, according to Latour, having suddenly "been disrupted" and needing to be overcome explicitly in the "More-than-human" movement ("make kin, not babies"[25] meaning "beyond the species" of human beings), seems to be concerned primarily and exclusively with a degree of assertion by the word, as Boltanski refers to it, which occurs as a second birth, a gesture of disposition of projective power following the first physical one. The first initial real birth (earth, *chôra*, uterus, material, flesh, which is, according to Latour, the productive "female" in the broadest sense), this first birth has itself no home, no being in the historical narrative of this assertion as it is beyond the "male" in the broadest sense "less-than-human," i.e., "nothing." Why then, this "nothing" might wonder, would the genealogical principle (origins, lineage) be *fundamentally* disrupted simply because the assertive word, i.e., the projective, is reined in by boundaries it cannot generate in and of itself? Wouldn't that be quite literally throwing the baby out with the bath? Taking a look today at its other, its second side, would we not recognize the 'genealogical principle' *specifically* as the fact that "self-conscious reason" (to cite Hegel from the *Encyclopedia* § 393) – or even better the self-confident reason – as the principle of the European spirit in its boundless conviction that *nothing* can pose an insurmountable hurdle for it and that it thus touches *everything* in order to manifest *itself* within, that this type of reason has to recognize that rather a lot of things can pose an insurmountable hurdle, most of all the impossibility of self-generating as an autotrophic being? This barrier or flipside, then as now precarious, phantomic, and semi-official in European intellectual history, is not represented by women or the "female aspect" alone, but concerns all "human beings" in their dual relation to procreation and birth. The troubling fact is that procreation is, prior to its projective reabsorption, primarily an act of the flesh between the sexes, a male and a female, an act that is extraordinarily portentous and whose result confronts us, as Levinas describes it, with the explicit demand, "Thou shall not kill me." Where I am headed is that the insinuation of the debate around More-than-human, to find salvation in a new beyond-self project, which is the project Gaia, could not only be the answer to a "generative crisis" but also the answer to a "generational conflict." It is there that it can link up to the demand to leave procreation and birth behind for good just as we would forget a bad memory

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[24] Latour, *After Lockdown*, p. 59.
[25] Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, p. 102.

and with that leave "their poor human bodies *delineated* the old-fashioned way like figures made of wire".[26] "With your antennae, your articulations, your emanations, your waste matter, your mandibles, your prostheses," Latour's Gregor Samsa calls out to us, "you may *at last* be becoming a human being! And it's your parents, on the contrary, [...] – who have *become* in-human, by rejecting becoming an insect *themselves*?"[27]

      Second: The attempt to rid ourselves of our origins by eradicating the tragic act of human procreation, so fraught with absolute non-assurances, to reabsorb a reassuring vision of this act, a vision of bioclastic "com-post" cleansed of the state of being human, seems to contain the risk of letting ourselves be seduced into a type of being human that is free of any wounds (no shadows, an unsuspecting, white, innocent steer on whose back an equally unsuspecting Phoenician princess willingly rides off into the sunset). It also contains the risk that we succumb again without any conditions to the projective, and this projective again bears the name "nature." In a strange twist on the Centauric human image of the past 2500 years this "nature" is no longer supposed to be seen as something that forms an incorruptible substantial dividing line of the reality of agency in human existence, adding just that level of exposure that gives rise to the tension of human existence. To the contrary, this new nature is now supposed to embrace us out of the loins of the physical Gaia, depicted by the modern digital imaging processes, along with all of our ecstatic intellectualism, our waste, excretions and protheses (including an increasing amount of "AI") and in this embrace supposedly eliminate all conflicts in one fell swoop. In light of the current crisis, it might seem more prudent to read Hegel's dictum from the *Phenomenology of Spirit* against the grain, meaning, to recognize the true not simply as subject but also equally as *substance*. Thus, it would be a non-generative beginning that presents also the dividing line to all of the production means and opportunities for action known to us. It seems to me, therefore, that New Materialisms tend to be the aftermath and continuing narrative of that European longing to be *free of all natural-historical conditions*, and that includes the 'cut into the outline of a human body' represented by our being conceived and born which stays with us until death. For who or what is it in the end that takes on the task of "chipping and shredding and layering [the trash of the Anthropocene] like a mad gardener," as Haraway describes it, to "make a much hotter compost pile for still possible pasts, presents, and futures"[28]? Who or what

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26 Latour, *After Lockdown*, p. 21.
27 Latour, *After Lockdown*, p. 17.
28 Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, p. 57.

is empowered or self-empowers to do so? Is it a "holobiont" devoid of all organic matter, in the sense of a cloud-like only vaguely outlined totality of agencies?[29] Is it "nature"? Or is it rather a completely liberated subject that, fleeing from itself, has forged ahead by reflecting his or her own eccentricity back upon the self as "nature" in order to remove themselves out of the grip of being different, a difference that is *not* reflected in nature, neither in the ice crystal nor in a termite colony or in the collective intelligence of a beehive, but only and exclusively in each and every one of us?

  Third and lastly: the Centaur. What does it mean to no longer consider the dividing line of singularity? To dismiss it as "Don Quixotery," as undecidability between doing and suffering, eating and being eaten, the agency aspects and the *raw openness* of our flesh as just such an absolute potency of uncertainty? Let's say, as Boltanski stated, it is each and every one of us, especially *because* it concerns the question of singularity, the "Self" in the sense of being seen, finding access into the memory of another, the question of "Species" in the sense of our origins, a question we must answer but are ultimately unable to decide, the question into "Theory," also in the sense of a turning point and depictability and, finally, the question of "Death," that only arises where we recognize each other as *human* (and not as compost that needs turning). What does it mean to want to toss this reality overboard as a sidenote of natural history that somehow ran off-track? The figure of the Centaur, prominent in European consciousness for centuries and reentering the global stage in a new iteration in the chimeras and cyborgs of Haraway's Chthuluzene as a restlessly cohabitating hybrid being, raises the question of the proportionality of the whole to its parts. Simultaneously, we have to wonder what causes something to become part of a whole in the first place, and the emphasis here is two-fold, as the *part* of a whole or as a part of the *whole*. The centaur (originally, by the way, the personification of a churning, all-consuming waterfall) generally refers to the head, torso and arms of a man merged with the backquarters of a horse, in the connotation of a wild and abundantly wasteful natural power that needs to be conquered and reined in. Haraway's hybrid Chthulu, however, is depicted as a delicate, translucent creation made up of threads, a cluster of nests, flipper fingers and vibrating butterfly wings forming a spine that is meant to evoke a busy, whispering being suffused by cooperative intent. No doubt the Chthulu has

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[29] Cf. Latour, *After Lockdown*, p. 68: "Uncertainty over a body's exact edges is so great that Lynn Margulis has suggested replacing the too narrow notion of an organism by what she calls 'holobionts'. Holobionts are a collection of actors in the form of clouds with blurred contours that allow somewhat durable membranes to subsist, thanks to the help the exterior contributes to what is held inside."

plenty to say to the Centauric hybrid of human and horse or rather steer. As an aged "Europa," as the old woman that we know of as Post-Modernism or Post-Post-Modernism or shall we say as "com-post," she has plenty of eyes, memories and tentacles, in fact her old, parchment-resembling body is literally bursting with rich – conceived and unconceived, told and untold – stories. Likewise, to me without doubt, it is now her role to re-tell the history of seduction and co-habitation to old Zeus who's been sent to the scaffold by all parties. By doing so, she lines up (if we want to call it that) the 'feminine' reproductive gap with the (again citing Haraway) "existentialist, non-committal and thereby masculine reproductive gap" [30] as the preceding witnesses and *attestations* we can never catch up with of just such a shadow of European philosophy with its representative, ontologizing gestures of disposition. This shadow is outing itself today as a "cascade of engendering troubles." *Both* point to the gap that scratches the act of being human into the earth's stage. The fact is we are not only co-witnesses of a reality of agency, implemented compressions and hubs, but also, and simultaneously, gaps, tears, perforations of the very fabric that is entirely indifferent to us. We are witnesses to her tragedy, her painful antinomy between the whole and its parts, the individual and the many, the self, the species, the depictability, our birth and our death. In other words, neither the cicada nor the Chthulu with their predominantly *monistic* air of being able to feed themselves out of their own resources and thus able to reject the difference as an altogether unpalatable chunk, suffice to be human and to become human. The "critical zone," [31] the In-between, in which we ought to find ourselves according to Latour, is not only the three kilometers of fragile ecosystems *above* and *below* (it is them, too, but not exclusively). The actual critical zone runs right through ourselves.

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[30] Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, p. 126.
[31] Latour, *After Lockdown*, p. 44 (with reference to Jérôme Gaillardet).

A Possible Ambivalence in Plato's Approach to *Mimesis* and Poetry

Liana MAJERI[*]

ABSTRACT. This paper explores the complexity of Plato's approach to *mimesis* and poetry, focusing on his critique in *Republic* Books II, III, and X. While Plato dismisses poetry as ethically and epistemologically flawed, his arguments reveal a deeper tension between philosophy and artistic representation. Through an analysis of Plato's tripartite division of reality, the critique of imitation, and the ethical concerns surrounding poetry's influence, the paper examines whether his rejection of art is absolute or if it leaves room for an alternative poetic function. Drawing on Stephen Halliwell's interpretation, the study highlights how Plato's stance is shaped by a broader philosophical concern with truth, knowledge, and the role of art in society. The analysis considers whether Plato's discussion of *mimesis* is not merely an attack on art but part of a larger philosophical negotiation over the intersection of aesthetics, morality, and epistemology.

Keywords: Plato, *mimesis*, ethics, poetry, epistemology

Introduction

Plato's *Republic* is widely regarded as the most comprehensive work of his middle years, which focuses on some of the most fundamental problems of his philosophy and of philosophy in general: ethics, moral psychology, political philosophy, metaphysics, education and art. Beyond these fundamental topics, the dialogue's method itself is significant. The form of dialogues in which fors and againsts are brought to each topic by passionate participants truly involved in debating these issues, established a model for how academic philosophy should be approached and practiced.

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Reading this text offers us at least two advantages in matter of alternative conceptualisations of philosophy itself: "a Socratic conception of philosophy as a reasoned examination of our own and others' beliefs about how we should live, and a more comprehensive and constructive effort to build theories that can help us understand the world around us and our place in it"[1]

One of the striking aspects of the *Republic* is the extensive discussion of poetry, particularly in two substantial passages in Books II, III, and X. This placement of poetry within what is primarily a political work is itself unexpected, as poetry is generally associated with personal experience rather than the broader concerns of governance and societal structure. Even though the main topic seems to be one regarding political theory and the nature of justice, Plato's interest in poetry shows us how much of the public space poetry occupied in classical Greek culture, and the importance it has for the ›polis-model‹ itself. The parallelism between the soul and the city is present in the whole book and it is the reason why the dialogues encompass this wide variety of topics.

We generally hear two things about the *Republic*, in popular culture to say the least: that Plato outlines an extremely authoritarian state in this text, and that he kicks the poets out of the city imagined by him. By analyzing the text of Books II, III and X, I hope to be able to offer at least some insights into what Plato's position actually was. Is his approach really regrettable, or is the way in which it is interpreted arguable? One important thing comes to be understood if we parse the whole dialogue. Plato does not set out to offer an ideal type of state, but rather an ideal type of human.

In this paper I want to discuss the reason why Plato made imitation the general principle of art and the way in which he theorized this. I will take into account the fact that most of the modern criticism of Plato in relation to this theme has as its main reasoning the fact that Plato's rationalism prevents him from recognizing a specific character of artistic creation. Considering the critique he brings to poetry, I will see if we are really entitled to impute to Plato the fact that he relates to art within a ›framework of scientificity‹, expecting from art the same ›fidelity‹ in terms of imitation of nature: "He is said to have forgotten that true art does not copy an existing reality, but that it creates a new reality arising from the artist's own phantasy, and that it is the spontaneous character of this expression which guarantees the independent value of purely aesthetic qualities"[2].

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[1] Gerasimos Santas, *Understanding Plato's Republic*, New-Jersey: Willey-Blackwell, 2010, p.1.
[2] Willem Jacob Verdenius, *Plato's doctrine of artistic imitation and its meaning to us*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1962, p. 2.

Plato's first criticism of poetry is expressed in Books II and III and focuses primarily on the influence that poetry has on the youth, on the minds of those who are in a fragile phase of development, at a stage of life where these future guardians of the city are more easily influenced. Plato argues that young people should be exposed from an early age only to stories that instill in them a desire for virtue and a balanced life, because these stories heard so early in life have the capacity to sediment values that are difficult to displace: "Don't you know that the beginning is the most important part of every work and that this is especially so with anything young and tender? For at that stage it's most plastic, and each thing assimilates itself to the model whose stamp anyone wishes to give to it."[3]

1. The Muse and the metaphysical aspect of *mimesis*

W. J. Verdenius considers two key questions essential to understanding Plato's theory of aesthetics: whether Plato regarded imitation as merely a servile replication and whether modern critics are justified in rejecting the imitative approach in art, which is fundamentally rooted in phantasy.

In some of his texts, Plato speaks of the type of inspiration that poets have, when they feel the urge to create. He says the god takes the minds of poets and uses them as a means to convey something to other people, so that when they hear it, they do not hear the poet but the god himself. He is perceived as the one who addresses the hearer through the poet's mouth and not the poet himself. Inspiration is not just simply given to the poet, like a gift, but is a compelling force, to be followed blindly, which is completely withdrawn from his control: "This induces us to interpret his sitting on the tripod of the Muse mentioned above in a more literal sense than our modern outlook might be inclined to do. Exactly like the Delphic priestess he opens himself so fully to his Muse that her inspiration pervades him entirely and takes complete possession of him"[4] The poet is seen as the one who only transmits what the god dictates to him. How is it possible then, this being the case, that a god deceives himself or inspires the poet with things that are *not virtuous*? A possible theory would be to contend, on the one hand, that the poet erroneously conveys what the god inspires him. On the other hand, it can also mean that his state is not entirely possessed by the god: the Muse or the god does not completely, but only partially, direct his thoughts, thus leaving room for the poet's own interpretation or addition.

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[3] Plato, *The Republic,* trans. Allan Bloom, New york: Basic Books, 1968, 377a-b.
[4] W. J. Verdenius, p.4.

Plato wants to emphasize the poet's dependence on the Muse, but does not insinuate that he is only a vehicle through which one is spoken. The poet does not lose his human will and character he once had. Verdenius makes a relevant connection in this regard, interrelating passages from *Ion* and *The Laws*.[5] If we look at these passages we notice that Plato calls the poet an *›interpreter‹*. Divine inspiration can only reach people through the *›interpretation‹* of the poet. Thus, although a poem is perceived as something beyond human control, its form is not the result of the mechanical reproduction of a divine message, but is the result of the encounter between the divine and the human.

Interpretation, however, is the process that depends on human activity and therefore any imperfection will be attributed to the poet, and to his human weakness, not to the god. Plato says that, in some sense, the poet doesn't know what he is talking about, in that, he is not aware of the *weight* of his own words. He lacks truly grounded knowledge: "Being absorbed in a flow of successive impressions he is unaware of their general connections and implications, for his state of possession precludes him from passing an independent judgment on the images which present themselves to his mind. He can only register these images without deliberately arranging them into a well considered whole"[6] Plato argues that in our relation to poetry, and in the process of interpreting the meaning it conveys, we should not search and we should not expect to be able to to extract paradigmatic truths from it. It is precisely around this insufficiency, that Plato will construct his theory of art, in an attempt to overcome the lack of knowledge. Can we see in this approach signs of a systematic view on art?

It is often said, especially in modern research, that Plato's theory of art is constantly disguised underneath his interest in the rational well being of poetry listeners, or in his interest in the pedagogical effect of art in general. These points might lead the way to uncover what might constitute ›the systemic‹ in Platons approach to art. One might say, on the contrary, that one could not speak of a theoretical system of art in Plato's philosophy. Plato's aesthetics might not be espressed in a systematic manner, but this is characteristic of his dialogical approach to philosophy. The fact that a certain kind of knowledge is not conveyed in a systematic way, does not necessarily imply that the knowledge in question cannot be inherently systematic.

In order to gain a clear perspective of how Plato relates to a particular type of art or aesthetics, we have to construct a theory in a systematic way, by gathering information from several dialogues by ourselves that deal with these issues. In the book mentioned earlier, Verdenius offers some examples of how Plato saw the poet's

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[5] Ibidem, p. 5.
[6] Ibidem, p. 6.

relationship with Muse, even though we will not dwell too much on the theme of inspiration. Although Plato does not reject the idea of divine inspiration in the poet's creative process in any of his textx, irony is not absent from his discourse when referring to it (especially in *Ion* and *Meno* 99d-c). The poet is guided by this Muse in order to be able to *imitate* situations and experiences from ordinary life that people face within the polis. Why does he need to be guided? Because, Verdenius concludes, the Muse wishes for the poet to express something that is more than the simple, immediately palpable reality of everyday life. If the bare representation of everyday life as it unfolds were the sole purpose of imitation, then the possibility that it would be able to deliver something questioning and resourceful would be out of the question.

Why does Plato, in this situation, then speak of the poet contradicting himself? Can this be possible if his art is based on imitation? One might think that imitation and contradiction are mutually exclusive. That the poet fails in his endeavor, is because art also refers to something that is not directly observable or describable. It refers to something universal with regard to life, to the ultimate principles of human character and actions:

> These [the ultimate principles] lie so far from his natural range of thought that he needs the help of divine inspiration. Unfortunately, the ecstatical condition which brings him into contact with the Muse also precludes him from fully understanding her intentions. He can only register his impressions, or in other words, imitate the images which present themselves to his mind. Consequently, his representations are lacking in articulateness: they remain tentative suggestions, in which the general and the particular, the abstract and the concrete, the essential and the accidental are blended so much that the work taken as a whole appears to be inconsistent[7].

Considering the contribution of the poet's relationship with the muse, we can conclude that in Verdenius' analysis, poetic imitation cannot be a faithful copy of nature and its principles. It remains permanently *incomplete* and defective because it takes as its object of representation something that is only partially familiar: "Imitation implies transformation, and transformation implies confusion, if it is determined by a sphere of reality (in this case, the poetical mind) inferior to its object. This conception has its roots in the general spirit of Plato's philosophy. The world is called a divine work of art (Tim. 28a-29a, 37c)" [8]

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[7] Ibidem, p. 13.

[8] Ibidem.

Thus, the world itself is an image of "something else", an imitation of something superior that seems not to be entirely encompassed in the process of artistic creation. We can speak of the metaphysical character of artistic imitation, which does not simply reproduce the world, itslef already an imitation, but encounters the principles mentioned above. It seems that Plato does not reject the idea of divine inspiration in the process of the creation of representational art precisely because this would further emphasize his conviction in Books II, III and X of the *Republic* that imitative art is neither founded on knowledge nor does it transmit knowledge through any of the forms in which it is represented.

Although the concept of inspiration does not receive particular attention in consistent passages in Plato's work, the fact that it is not clearly refuted does lend some support to the criticism it makes of the lack of rational knowledge in poetry. For this and other aspects related to the concept of *mimesis* we will focus further on the texts of the *Republic*, with emphasis on the Book X, where reality is structured in three levels: ideal forms, visible objects and images.

The subject matter of this book can be divided into three categories: (1) a new discussion of poetry, an art form that used to be analyzed earlier, in Books II and III, strictly according to the level of education it offered, (2) an argument for the immortality of the soul and (3) the myth of Er. I will not insist much on a thorough analysis of these other two books. Some of the basic ideas found in them are however useful for the understanding of the new considerations on mimetic / representational art, that are set out in Book X.

2. The ethical focus of the socratic critique of poetry

In his book, *Plato Republic 10,* Stephen Halliwell explains that Plato returned to the subject of poetry in Book X simply because of the internal structure of the *Republic*, even though the relation between this Book and Books II-III could be placed in a wider Platonic perspective. In analyzing the Platonic approach to poetry it is important to further consider elements of Socratic influence.

Socrates appears in several dialogues as a great connoisseur of poetry, especially the poetry of Homer, which he often refers to in his philosophical debates. And we can see that Plato continues to attribute this characteristic to Socrates in many dialogues, including Book X of the *Republic*. This means that we can insinuate a genuine interest of Plato towards poetry, awoken through the persona of Socrates. On the contrary, Socrates views poets with a certain skepticism, and if we look at the passages outlined by Halliwell (*Ion* and *Meno* 99c-d), we are forced to note that Socrates spoke with some irony about the inspiration of poets. The fact that they

could not justify in a rational way the method by which they created poetry, led to the conclusion that their knowledge has an irrational source of inspiration. However, in Book X this topic does not appear at all: "It should be added that poets' lack of rationally accountable knowledge helps to explain the belief, probably in part Socratic (for it fits with his sense of personal dialectic), that consistent *interpretation* of poetry is impossible: for this view see *Prt.* 347c-e, *Ion* again, *Hp. Min.* 365c-d, and the irony regarding Simonides at *Rep.* 1.332b-c"[9].

Plato connects the mimetic form of poetry to the development of human character through habituation in *Republic* Books II and III. As a result, it argues that the future guardians of the city should be exposed only to mimetic poetry that represents virtue. Here, the question posed ultimately leads to an inquiry into the ontology of poetry: why should anyone, in a just society, be exposed to anything other than this kind of ›virtuous‹ poetry? Why is there a need for poetry and art in general, if the main purpose is not ethical formation in all cases? The focus has thus shifted from imitation to character formation, a relation which has to be further examined. This criticism may sound like a radical attack on works of art in general, or a kind of puritanism, in which Plato reclaims the necessity of an ethical impact of poetry. At this point it is appropriate to closer examine the argument Plato expresses in Book X.

One implication of the criticism in this book concerns the need to separate the ethical meaning of the poetic message from its technical quality as *mimesis.* The problematization implied by the aforementioned idea of an ontology of poetry thus dwells on the need to judge poetry according to ethical criteria and on the question of whether *mimesis* itself could be a medium embodying or communicating knowledge.

As we can see in Books II and III, the Socratic critique of poetry has a strong ethical focus. This will remain at the basis of Plato's hostility towards poetry: "If poets purvey ethical falsehoods, not only are they deserving of philosophical rebuttal, but their status as central material in Greek education becomes questionable"[10]. Plato's fear is that the aim of poets is to please the audience, to captivate them with the most shocking or interesting things, and that in pursuing this aim they would always be prepared to sacrifice any ethical standards: "Plato associates the essential pleasure of poetry with the indulgence of our lower emotional nature"[11].

In Books II and III Plato argues that those who are exposed to poetry in direct discourse go through a process of imaginative identification with the moods that poetry conveys, which is detrimental, as it will influence their behavior, whether

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[9] Stephen Halliwell, *Plato Republic 10,* United Kingdom: Oxbow Books, 2005, p. 4.
[10] Ibidem.
[11] Ibidem, commentary on the passage 606b, p. 148.

we are talking about the performer, the listener, or the reader. In Book X the attack on *mimesis* is even more radical. It argues that the influence poetry will have is no longer a matter of producing immediate experiences or feelings. It will have a permanent effect on the mind and behavior of those who expose themselves to poetry (606b5-8). This is the main addition brought in Book X, in comparison to books II and III, where the impact of poetry was presented as immediate but short lived.

The arguments presented in Books II and III - such as falsity, immorality, and poetry's powerful psychological impact - are later revisited in Book X, where they serve as the foundation for an even stricter rejection. More emphasis is placed on the concept of *mimesis*, mentioned only peripherally in the previous Books. Book X thus proposes a new analysis of the concept of *mimesis* and the implications that mimetic art can thus have: "Mimesis is now judged to be *inherently* false or fake, rather than simply capable of conveying falsehoods (which was the suggestion in bks.2-3)"[12]

3. Reality and simulacra: *mimesis* as illusion

Socrates insists on bringing forth his arguments against poetry in a direct, provocative, or even annoying way. Halliwell remarks that it might be worth seriously considering why Socrates has this kind of insistent and perhaps slightly exaggerated discourse. One possible function of his style, Halliwell argues, would be to incentivize poetry lovers to think more rigorously about the value they place on poetry. The challenge that Socrates sets forth is all the greater, because at first glance the reasons for which poetry is enjoyed seem all too obvious, and thus masks the underlying philosophical meaning. To this purpose, following Halliwell's line of argument, we will continue the analysis of the concept of *mimesis* by relating art to reality and to the mind. What, then, is the relationship between our experience of art and our other experiences of the world in general? What is the relationship between art and the reality that surrounds us? And most important, how can something which is offered as a simulation justify itself?

The famous comparison with the mirror in passage 596c-e is extremely relevant and also provocative: if art is compared with a mirror, and what the mirror shows is simply an image obstructing access to the thing it represents, then art, functioning in the same way, should bring forth the same impossibility:

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[12] Ibidem, p. 5.

> For this same manual artisan is not only able to make all implements but also makes everything that grows naturally from the earth, and he produces all animals - the others and himself too - and, in addition to that, ptoduces earth and heaven and gods adn everything in heaven and everything in Hades under the earth. (...) It's not hard, I said, you could fabricate them quickly in many ways and most quickly, of course, if you are willing to take a mirror and carry it around everywhere;[13]

This allegory reveals the limitation to which any representational artistic process is condemned, art succeeding only in producing a simulacrum of the feelings that the actual object could generate in a real experience. This would mean that poetry has no access to the truth and the unchanging reality which lies beyond the appearances that art delivers: "All this, if accepted, necessarily makes it absurd to attribute deep knowledge of the world to poets or painters, and equally so to claim that their work can have an ethically beneficial effect on us — a claim common in Greek culture as well as in later ages"[14]

If the main purpose of art is that of being a perfectly faithful representation of reality, then, says Halliwell, ›illusionism‹ would be the ultimate fulfillment of artistic intent. But this cannot be taken seriously, as it is incompatible with the critical judgment to which art can be subjected to. It is an oversimplification of a complex matter, which should not be trivialized when talking about Plato and the rich theory that he develops. In any case, what draws our attention at first is the fact that Plato rejects representational art or *mimesis* and refuses to admit that this kind of art has any other purpose than representation itself. Let us take a closer look at the issue. Here is the passage where Plato ironically describes how illusionism would obliterate all consciousness of art:

> But, in any event, I suppose, my friend, that this is what must be understood about all such things: when anyone reports to us about someone, saying that he has encountered a humab being who knows all the crafts and everything else that single men severally know, and there is nothing that he does not know more precisely than anyone else, it would have to be replied to such a one that he is an innocent human being and that, as it seems, he has encountered some wizard and imitator and been deceived. Because he himself is unable to put knowledge and lack of knowledge and imitation to the test, that man seemed all-wise to him.[15]

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[13] Plato, *Republic*, 596c-e.
[14] Halliwell, *Plato Republic 10,* p. 7.
[15] Plato, *Republic, 598c-d.*

To escape Plato's criticism of poetry art would have to imply or claim that it is more than a mere imitation of the particulars that it represents. If the perspective on representational art was to start from this premise, that it truly implies more than it seems, then art would not have such a vulnerable status in the face of Platonic arguments.

Creativity or the imagination of the artist could be brought as arguments against a reductionistic perspective on art that can be formulated by the mirror analogy. Such arguments would counterbalance Plato's rejection of poetry from another standpoint, as we saw in our analysis of the Muse. The complexity referred to above stems primarily from comparisons made between different parts of Plato's œvre which does not function as a monolithic entity.

The purpose of the analysis of Book X is to seek a justification of art, a reason why we can explain the existence and necessity of art in the world as an enrichment of the latter. Halliwell's standpoint will be to argue that we cannot simply contradict the mirror analogy just by invoking ›the argument of creativity‹. The purpose of wanting to reject the mirror analogy stems from the fact that it vitiates the meaning that art in general could embody, and creativity is brought up as a faulty way of avoiding this reduction.

How art contributes to enriching the way people understand and experience life and the world with all its experiences is probably due to more than just the artist's creativity. It emerges both from the example of the mirror and from the tripartite scheme (forms-objects-images) that the epistemological perspective plays a much greater role in the present analysis regarding the function of art. As early as passage 602c, we see that the ground is set for criticizing the poets' lack of knowledge, and the problem Plato identifies is that a convincing justification of *mimesis* should appeal to something higher than mere faithful imitation of reality. If the possibility of divine inspiration is not a strong enough argument in favor of art - on the contrary, if it becomes a reason to ridicule the poets' creative process - then the focus shifts to the status of knowledge. How much and what kind of knowledge does an artist possess? Does their art communicate any form of knowledge that is useful, admirable, or virtuous?

As Halliwell will also note, Plato's demand for such a foundation for representational art seems not only unrealistic but also unnecessary, thereby completely missing the role that art can actually play in society: "The principle that anyone with knowledge will put it to practical use, rather than lead a life devoted to representationl art (599a), is arbitrary: why prefer to be a carpenter rather than a painter of, among other things, furniture?"[16] This question naturally leads to

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[16] Stephen Halliwell, *The Republic's Two Critiques of Poetry*, p. 254.

another dilemma: whether artistic imitation can serve as a means through which knowledge is contained or communicated by its very imitative nature. At this point, we attempt to determine whether the lack of an epistemological foundation for representational art - arguably its most vulnerable aspect in the face of Plato's critique - is a strong enough argument against poetry's ability to lead to a better understanding of life and the world we live in.

4. Knowledge as a ground for art

Halliwell undertakes a careful analysis of why Plato argues that mimetic art does not need knowledge from those who create it and that this type of art is not even capable to generate knowledge in those who admire it: "But, i suppose, if he were in truth a knower of these things that he also imitates, he would be far more serious about the deeds than the imitations and would try to leave many fair deeds behind as memorials of himself and would be more eager to be the one who is lauded rather than the one who lauds".[17]

In relating to mimetic art in the way that he does, ignoring the intrinsic technicalities of art, Plato questions a widely held view that artists of representational art were also connoisseurs of the experiences and phenomena they represented in their works. Art cannot therefore be justified by the criteria of the technical mastery that artists convey in their works: "But defenders of both painting and poetry might argue against Plato that by offering images of possible human realities to the imagination, these arts nurture the mind in ways which cannot be categorized according to a scheme of technical spheres of knowledge"[18]

Even if there were some arguments about the kind of knowledge that could be attributed to poets, Plato was still not convinced that poets could have a positive ethical influence in society. Halliwell's argument lays out multiple reasons why Plato took this stance. First, poetry falls into the category of mimetic art, and therefore is concerned with the appearance and not the substance of things:

> Tragedy and its leader, Homer, must be considered, since we hear from some that these men know all arts and all human things that have to do with virtue and vice, and the divine things too. For it is necessary that the good poet, if he is going to make fair poems about the things his poetry concerns, be in possession of knowledge when he makes his poems or not be able to make them. Hence, we

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[17] Plato, *Republic*, 599b.
[18] Halliwell, *Plato Republic 10,* p. 9.

must consider whether those who tell us this have encountered these imitators and been deceived; and whether, therefore, seeing their works, they do not recognize that these works are third from what *is* and are easy to make for the man who doesn't know the truth — for such a man makes what look like beings but are not.[19]

Here we can see the danger implied by the greater distance brought forth by art, when it comes to knowledge, creating yet another layer which concleas the true object of knowledge.

A second reason is that *imitators* are inferior to the *makers* and *users* of objects, another type of distance is thus brought to light. For example, if the creator of a flute would be deemed superior because of the flute's dependency on him to be brought into existence, then the player would be second in importance because of his knowledge of how to use it: "Doesn't the man who knows report about good and bad flutes, and won't the other, trusting him, make them? [...] Therefore the maker of the same implement will have right trust concerning its beauty and its badness from being with the man who knows and from being compelled to listen to the man who knows, while the user will have knowledge"[20].

There appears to be a complex relationship between the maker and the user, where both the *capacity* of the maker and the *knowledge* of the player come to the forefront and are essential relationships to the object, in comparison to the artist, who is most distanced from the essence of the flute. Thus, the artist or the one who would simply paint the flute is the most inferior one of the three, since he neither knows how to use the instrument nor how to create it. He can only interpret the way the object *appears* to him."And will the imitator from using the things that he paints have knowledge of whether they are fair and right or not, or right opinion due to the necessity of being with the man who knows and receivinh prescriptions of how he must paint? - Neither. - Therefore, with respect to beauty and badness, the imitator will neither know not opine rightly about what he imitates."[21]

This argument, based on the tripartite scheme of maker, user and imitator, also gives us pause for thought, as there are several situations where this does not apply in a very clear way. Plato speaks of technical categories of knowledge, and this scheme is closely related to these types of knowledge. If a painter can accurately render what a piano looks like, the level of knowledge he has might be lower than the one who can build the piano, and especially lower then the one who

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[19] Plato, *Republic,* 598d-599a
[20] Ibidem, 601e.
[21] Ibidem, 602a.

uses it, but the painter seems to be the one who can indeed tell whether the piano is well-made or not. We might ever go as far as to say that the builder himself might come to rely on the images that the painter provides.

A third reason would be the lack of followers, or disciples of poets. Here Plato again gives the example of Homer, whose work was enjoyed by so many people, but who, in all his life, was unable to *educate* anyone. This would mean that empirical considerations, if taken into account, show that poets do not change lives in a practical way (599a-601b).

The fact that Homer did not *educate* the people is one reason why poetry would not fulfill the ethical expectations that Plato speaks of. The weakness of the poet lies in the weak relationship between ethical knowledge on the one hand and practical activity and success on the other. However, in this regard, Halliwell proposes that we see here only a rhetorical approach on Plato's part, rather than a philosophical statement, which implies an interesting attitude towards the platonic text, where multiple layers are taken into account. We should not be fooled by the ›letter‹ of the text, when a thinker as profound as Plato is explored.

Plato's argument, if it were simplified, could be resumed as follows: if Homer is ›omniscient‹, wise and loved by everyone, then why doesn't he change the world in a more obvious, tangible way than by writing poems? In other words, why does his action confine itself to written works, and not practical deeds, a theme which is in itself multilayered. A possible retort would be, in the words of Halliwell: "is not the creation of poems which come to dominate the imagination of an entire culture (as Plato's own concern with them testifies) an impressive enough way of changing the world?"[22]

The weakness of this third argument — of Homer neither being able to *educate* nor directly intervening in a *practical* manner in the world — actually lies in the fact that the transitive nature of art, in terms of its impact on man and his way of being and perceiving life, does not depend on a certain type of *knowledge* being delivered to him. The interdependence between knowledge and the impact that it has is thus very problematic. We might say that a vast impact can but does not *require* knowledge. Homer might very well be beloved and have an immense practical influence upon the world, but this does not mean that it is being done in accordance with true knowledge. This would in other words mean a separation between *education* and *influence*. The circle thus closes, as we arrive at precisely the point that Plato is trying to make. Art is clearly not a *specialized* and *true* way of guiding man in life through *knowledge*.Plato's argument advocates — as far as

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[22] Halliwell, *Plato Republic 10*, p. 10.

ethics is concerned — that poetry can hardly be considered an instrument or a guide to practical wisdom.

Halliwell argues at first that it can indeed be true that "poets can hardly be taken seriously as guides to the realities of practical choice [...] in that a consistent relation between experience of poetry and moral virtue cannot be unsentimentally maintained".[23] He furthermore says that Plato's concern with appearances and simulacra prevents the artist from obtaining any real hold on truth. At this point it might be necessary to try and find another meaning in what Plato claims in his argument, if we were to try to bring out the positive perspectives he might have on art, if such perspectives truly exist in his text. Such an alternative would presuppose that the relationship between art and reality is not as one-sided as presented until now.

It would therefore be recommended to look at art's relationship to reality from another angle, one in which art does not try to be a substitute for something in the surrounding world, but rather accounts for the very truths that cannot be derived from the objects that make up the world. Such a premise leaves room for interpretation, in that art has more than a parasitic or purely imitative role for reality. If art tries to unsuccessfully imitate reality, if, in other words, art cannot be a substitute for reality, as Plato shows, then *there is no substitute for art either*. This would be in art's favor — and it seems to be what Halliwell is arguing for — but does it actually have room in a close reading of Plato's text? Halliwell seems to be drawing his conclusion not directly from what Platon is saying, but from the places that are left open by a certain reading of the platonic text and the contradictions or shortcomings that he sees in Plato.

That Plato was directed against art might be understandable. If the only thing that we gather from his theory of imitation is the fact that art is this attempt to substitute reality, then it is very easy to see art in a purely negative way. Art would only vitiate our experience of the world. Our challenge however is to see in Plato's arguments not just a struggle against bad art or art in general, which in Plato seem to become synonymous, but to seek out the positive aspects as well, which, as shown, also appear to exist. Halliwell is not unjustified in affirming that: "a vindication of these activities against Plato [which are a parasitic substitute] will always need, therefore, to identify something in the making and experience of art which *cannot be readily found elsewhere in lif*e, and yet — if aesthetic complacency is to be avoided — something which itself constitutes, or can contribute to, *a good form of life*"[24]

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[23] Ibidem.

[24] Ibidem, p. 11.

I tend to be in agreement with the outlines of Halliwell's stance, as there seem to be aspects of art which do not seem to be accounted for by the theory presented in Book X. Plato seems to focus on only one aspect of it, undoubtedly the most important one for him. However, as we see in other passages of his work, there are certain contradictions or views that do not necessarily align with the argument presented in Book X. The whole topic of inspiration, which I left open, and the hypothesis of an art not based on imitation — if we were to simplify what Halliwell seems to be saying — shed light on other aspects of this phenomena.

5. Representation and reality. A second look at the problem of *mimesis*

Given the venturesome character of this thesis, it might be prudent to take a second, closer look at the concept of *mimesis*, in order to be reassured that we are not criticizing an oversimplified interpretation of *mimesis*. In another book, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis. Ancient Texts and Modern Problems* (2002), Halliwell undertakes a more detailed analysis of the concept of *mimesis*. Here he also acknowledges that Plato's arguments in the *Republic* and other texts dealing with art and poetry pose fundamental challenges to any thinker who takes a serious interest in aesthetics and art, and many of these challenges remain unresolved today. The importance of this concept demands, as mentioned earlier, a philosophical analysis of the relationship between mind and reality. How are these secondary representations of the mimetic process — poetry, painting, sculpture, etc. — realized within the general framework of Plato's philosophy?

Plato's legacy to history of the concept of *mimesis* suggests the impossibility of reconciling art and philosophy. But leaving this issue aside for the moment — for the reasons that were already made apparent — we will move on to the kind of analysis Halliwell will undertake when talking about the concept of *mimesis*. He draws our attention to the fact that Plato's relation to *mimesis* fluctuates in his texts, so that we cannot speak of a ›doctrine of art‹:

> The study of Plato and mimesis has suffered repeatedly from attempts to bring together into a neat, consistent synthesis the many different Platonic passages and contexts in which mimesis is addressed. Whether Plato had a *doctrine* of anything at all, or at any rate gave direct expression to doctrine in his written works, remains debatable. That he had a doctrine of mimesis in particular is not a conclusion that can be confidently reached on the basis of a full and careful reading of the dialogues.[25]

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[25] Steven Halliwell, *The Aesthetic of Mimesis. Ancient Texts and Modern Problems,* New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002, p.38.

One only has to look at the argument against art that appears in Book X, the most radical on this issue, bringing to their limits ideas presented in Books II and III, as we previously saw. In passage 607c-8b we can see the provisional nature of the conclusions Socrates had reached by that point in the book. Here he makes it quite clear that there is a possibility that his position might change if he receives plausible contradictory contributions from both poets and lovers of poetry:

> Nevertheless, let it be said that if poetry directed to pleasure and imitation has any argument to give that it ought to be in a city of good laws, we should be glad to receive them back from exile, since we are aware that we ourselves are charmed by them. (...) And, surely, we would also give its protectors, those who are not poets, but lovers of poetry, the opportunity to utter a metreless argument in its favor, showing that it is not only agreeable, but beneficial to regimes and to the lives of men. And we will listen to them with goodwill[26]

Even if we were to ignore this fragment, which clearly states an openness toward the art of the poets, the proof that Plato's approach is not a static one but subject to dynamic analysis lies in the relationship between the two important parts of the *Republic*, where Plato discussed the issue. It can be generally argued that the role of poetry must be decisive in any discussion which seeks to ground an ideal society on moral and ethical principles, as poetry represents — whatever Plato might think of it — one of the most influential and compelling types of discourse in the Greek world.

Passages 394d-394e ask the questions of whether mimetic poets are something desirable in the city and whether future guardians should also be mimetic. Socrates answers in the negative, arguing that if poetry does exist, what it conveys should be nothing but an example of virtue and guidance towards ethical conduct. Otherwise scenes of heroic grief and similar behavior must be censored because it may influence the guardians to imitate what the poets convey: "Now this is exactly what I meant: we must come to an agreement as to whether we'll let the poets make their narratives for us by imitation; or whether they are to imitate some things and not others, and what sort belongs to each group; or whether they are not to imitate at all"[27]A well organized society should not be one in which poets are constantly changing different types of states, ideals and behaviors, due to mimetic manifestations, thus influencing the states of the audience and of the polis. Such poets should certainly be thrown out of the city because the different psychological and emotional valences of their representations can disturb the stability of a just city.

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[26] Plato, *Republic,* 607c-8b.
[27] Ibidem, 394d.

In these first passages of the *Republic* where the concept of *mimesis* is mentioned, the explanation of the causes and effects that *mimesis* can have refers both to the poets and the people in the audience. First the explanation refers to the poet himself, who is perceived as an *imaginative stage performer* (393c) and then the focus turns to how poetry is received by the young. The interaction between poet and audience took place in a setting where the poet recited aloud in front of an audience — a practice that closely resembled a dramatic act, facilitating audience empathy: "In experiencing poetry in the dramatic mode, the mind orientates itself to, and positions itself *inside*, the viewpoint of the speaker"[28]. What interests us here is how ideas are projected through art, namely how they are embodied in images of human and divine behavior, and how these images are able to shape the souls and minds of those who are exposed to them. Thus, in Book III the analysis of the concept of *mimesis* results in its restriction to the dramatic mode, while its analysis in Book X extends to representational art involving both poetry and other types of visual art.

It is possible to read Plato's criticism of poetry as a radical attack on the works of imagination itself. This aspect entails the problem that Plato could be accused of aesthetic puritanism (Halliwell, *The Aesthetic of Mimesis. Ancient Texts and Modern Problems*, chapter 2). This point was already made clear. Where do we thus find the more positive outlook that we are still searching for?

In *The Republic's Two Critiques of Poetry,* Halliwell stresses that Plato's criticism of poetry does not come from a background of misunderstanding and hostility to poetic work in general, but is grounded precisely in an appreciation and knowledge of poetic purpose and tradition. In Book X Plato's discourse has deep confessional overtones in terms of his respect for poetry[29], as he himself has been a great connoisseur and admirer of Homer since childhood: "This tone, reinforced at a number of later stages in the book, allows the second critique to be read as a philosophical examination of poetry from a position of intimate knowledge rather than detached severity"[30] We thus arrive at the core of the problem from a *systematic* point of view — a point which is however not able to encompass all of the attitudes that Plato evidently has toward poetry, but focuses only on one functional aspect: the concept of *mimesis*. In 595c the concept of *mimesis as a whole* is addressed: "Could you tell me what imitation in general is?"[31] What interests us here, is to underline the lack of systematicity in Plato's approach, thus considering

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[28] Halliwell, *The Aesthetic of Mimesis*, p. 52.

[29] Plato, *Republic*, 595b.

[30] Halliwell, *The Republic's two critiques of poetry*, p. 251.

[31] Plato, *Republic,* 595c.

his focus on *mimesis* to be only one aspect of a greater whole. An issue that Halliwell considers important in this context is the question that is frequently raised among interpreters of Plato, namely that which questions the return to the subject of poetry in Book X, even though this subject has already been treated quite insistently in Books II and III. Is this an *inconsistency* in Plato's thinking or is the structure of the book strategic?

Halliwell stance will be to say that there is good reason for Plato to return to poetry in the very last chapter of the book: "the design of the *Republic* is not determinable a priori, so to speak; it follows an exploratory course, blown by the wind of dialectical argument (394d), and turns back on itself at various points (e. g. the start of V). Book X refers several times to earlier passages of the dialogue. Above all, and unlike Books II–III, it presupposes, though problematically, both the form-centered metaphysics of V–VII and the concept of conflict between soul-parts (IV 439c ff.). Its status is best understood as a coda or appendix to the main structure"[32]

Conclusions

Plato choses to return to poetry in a book that would seem to have political aims because he saw poetry as a crucial cultural phenomenon, due to its power of influence, especially on the minds of the young, who represent the future of the city and contribute to its growth. Beside the problem of *mimesis* and beside the referral to inspiration or creativity there is another aspect that Halliwell conjures up, which might finally give a positive answer to our insistent search for something other in Plato's *Republic*, something which Halliwell calls an ›alternative poetry‹:

> But the impact of a challenge to poetry's credentials at this juncture is only fully felt when we subsequently find that the entire *Republic* is concluded by an *alternative ›poetry‹* — the philosophical myth whose own logos (the soul's responsibility for its eternal destiny, 617e) contradicts the tragic pessimism of the poetic myths earlier dissected by Socrates[33].

This being said, we can neither draw the conclusion that Plato, in the end, returns to a more positive view of the poets, since we argued that he clearly does not, nor that he simply dismissed the arts in a complete manner. Given this hypothesis of an alternative poetry, present in the works of Plato himself. Halliwell concludes: "It is telling that Socrates ends the second critique of poetry by speaking in the language

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[32] Halliwell, *The Republic's two critiques of poetry*, p. 252.
[33] Ibidem.

of a lover who looks back on a former passion with a wistful sense of lingering attachment, but a quiet determination to free his soul from its domination"[34]. The ambivalence is thus firmly maintained, while allowing Plato to formulate a precise rejection of the arts within his theory of *mimesis*.

The effects of Plato's theory were numerous but also ambiguous. Although there are passages in Books II, III and X of the *Republic* in which Plato condemns poetry and art as explicitly as possible, this does not yield a single conclusion but rather leads to different interpretations or, at the very least, provides a foundation for the development of diverse ideas. It is quite difficult for Plato's arguments to receive a clear and strong reply since his texts condemn art on multiple grounds: moral, epistemological and educational. Halliwell ultimately describes Plato's stance toward art as "romantic puritanism"[35]- Plato acknowledges the deep emotional and psychological power of art, but he fears its effects on the soul. He is drawn to its beauty yet wary of its seductive illusions. We might conclude, in a very simple manner, that Plato's condemnation of poetry and art has stimulated multiple ways of thinking about art and has led to the birth of different stances towards the entanglement of art and philosophy, Plato having, in this case, as in many others, opened up spheres of dialogue which have henceforth guided our thinking about the topic.

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[34] Ibidem, p. 256.
[35] Halliwell, *The Aesthetic of Mimesis,* p. 95.

An Eidetic Phenomenology of Emotions: Notes on the Chiasmatic Character of the Emotional Dimension of Existence

Maria Cristina Clorinda VENDRA[*]

ABSTRACT. This article critically examines Paul Ricœur's eidetic phenomenology of emotions. With reference to his early phenomenological analysis of the will, developed in his work entitled Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary (1950/1960), emotions will be understood as involuntary aspects involved in the essential structures of willing. My analysis will be divided into two parts. First, I will discuss Ricœur's conception of emotions as tied to his sustained attention to the theme of embodiment as entailing activity (e.g., wanting, moving, doing) and resistance (internal and external). In particular, emotions will be considered in relation to Ricœur's first two moments of willing: decision and voluntary movement. I will show that emotions are linked to needs, motives, and values, conceived as the body's involuntary dimensions correlated to decision, and I will explain their role as organs for effective action. In this context, I will stress the connection between emotions and imagination based on embodiment, as well as Ricœur's rejection of the opposition between emotionality and rationality. Then, the second part will focus on Ricœur's distinction between feelings and emotions and on his careful analysis of the difference between emotions and passions. These reflections will lead to Ricœur's study of wonder as the most basic emotional attitude. Ricœur's phenomenology of emotions offers rich insights for any philosophical reflection on the ubiquitous nature of emotions and emotional experiences.

Keywords: emotions, imagination, embodiment, feeling, passion

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Introduction: Delving into Paul Ricœur's Phenomenology of Emotions

"The true function of emotion [...] is to incline the will to action."[1]

"As soon as the passions inject themselves into emotion,
I am beside myself, not in the sense that I turn towards another thing,
but rather in the sense that I am deprived of myself."[2]

Emotions are complex dimensions playing an essential role in the development of our personal experiences and in the configuration of our collective life. In other words, emotions are at the core of human existence: individual identities, behaviors, and attitudes, as well as our group dynamics and social interactions, are constantly imbued with emotional tones. Emotions might be expressed in subtle, implicit, or indirect ways, which require the interpretation of non-verbal and contextual cues, or directly experienced through bodily reverberations (e.g., crying, trembling, sweating, etc.) and verbal statements referring to oneself, to objects, and situations, which provide quite precise information about the specific forms of emotions.[3] Yet, emotions can also be repressed, i.e., consciously or unconsciously, bottled up by the individual through various means. In the Western philosophical tradition, from ancient Greek (e.g., Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, the Epicureans) and Medieval Christian philosophers (e.g., Augustine, Aquinas, Scotus), through Renaissance (e.g., Machiavelli, Montaigne, Campanella) and Modern thinkers (e.g., Descartes, Hobbes, Smith, Hume), up to the 19th and 20th century authors of the contemporary phenomenological tradition (e.g., Husserl, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty) and the current philosophical theories on the cognitive nature of emotions (e.g., Nussbaum, Salomon, Marks), the emotional sphere of human life has been investigated as a multifaceted and heterogeneous dimension, as reflecting aspects of physiology, cognition, psychology, and socio-cultural processes.[4] The broad and challenging territories of emotions continue to stimulate philosophical debates and interdisciplinary conversations not only within the humanities but also between these and the empirical sciences (e.g., neuroscience, cognitive science, evolutionary psychology). The study of the spectral nature of

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[1] Paul Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1966, p. 260.

[2] Ibidem, p. 61.

[3] See Ani Stepanyan, "On the Verbal Expression of Emotions: Language and Emotion Interplays," in *Armenian Folia Anglistika*, no. 10, 1-2, 2014, pp. 96-101.

[4] See Andrea Scarantino (ed.), *Emotion Theory: The Routledge Comprehensive Guide: Volume I. History, Contemporary Theories, and Key Elements*, New York, Routledge, 2024.

emotions has led some authors to reject the oversimplified categorization of these as either positive or negative phenomena, as essentially good or bad, namely as having an intrinsic ethical nature.[5] Emotions have been defined in many different and sometimes contrasting ways: as embodied aspects blended with human nature, as forms of perception and proprioception, i.e., as related to the registration of changes in the body (e.g., tiredness, exhaustion, dizziness, etc.), as visceral reactions, as involving propositional attitudes and judgments, as rational or as having a rational structure going beyond bodily changes, as having narrative structures, or as associated to neurobiological properties and dynamics. Yet, philosophical studies about emotions have been recently extended beyond anthropology, giving rise to the examination of the emotional sphere in the fields of animal ethics (Midgley, Aaltola, Acampora),[6] environmental ethics (Candiotto, Beran, Forsberg),[7] ethics of artificial intelligence (Coeckelbergh),[8] and food philosophy (Kaplan),[9] to mention a few.

Acknowledging the richness of the vibrant tapestry of debates on the emotional realm of human life, this article aims at offering a critical examination of the contribution of Paul Ricœur's work to the contemporary philosophical analysis of emotions. We must recognize and confront the fact that Ricœur has been criticized for having left his theory of emotions undeveloped.[10] As Solomon writes, "Ricœur, unlike Descartes, has never bothered to write anything like a 'treatise on the passions,' [or developed] a theory of emotion, despite the fact that his entre philosophical enterprise is, in an important sense, supported by them."[11] Whereas, indeed, Ricœur does not provide us with a systematic account of emotions or with a work entirely dedicated to them, I disagree with Solomon's criticism according to

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[5] See Giovanni Stanghellini, René Rosfort, *Emotions and Personhood: Exploring Fragility – Making Sense of Vulnerability*, 2013, p. 7.

[6] Mary Midgley, *Animals and Why They Matter*, Athens, University of Georgia Press, 1983. Elisa Aaltola, *Varieties of Empathy: Moral Psychology and Animal Ethics*, London and New York, Rowman and Littlefield, 2018. Ralph Acampora, *Corporal Compassion: Animal Ethics and Philosophy of Body*, Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh University Press, 2006.

[7] Ondřej Beran, Laura Candiotto, Niklas Forsberg, Antony Fredriksson, David Rozen (eds.), *The Philosophy of Environmental Emotions: Grief, Hope, and Beyond*, New York, Routledge, 2024.

[8] Mark Coeckelbergh, "Moral Appearances: Emotions, Robots, and Human Morality," in *Ethics and Information Technology*, 12, no. 3, 2010, pp. 235-241.

[9] David Kaplan, *Food Philosophy: An Introduction*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2019.

[10] See Robert C. Solomon, "Paul Ricœur on Passion and Emotion (with a reply by Ricœur)," in Charles Reagan (ed.), *Studies in the Philosophy of Paul Ricœur*, Athens, Ohio University Press, 1979, pp. 2-3. See Beata Toth, *The Heart has Its Reasons. Towards a Theological Anthropology of the Heart*, Eugene, Cascade Books, 2016, p. 54.

[11] Solomon, "Paul Ricœur on Passion and Emotion (with a reply by Ricœur)," p. 2.

which Ricœur's analysis of emotions is deficient. On the contrary, scattered across his writings, Ricœur's philosophical account of emotions is rich, nuanced, and extensive, it is interlaced with the major debates concerning the conceptualization of emotions, and it also offers useful methodologies and resources that can be extended to the study of emotions as enmeshed with contemporary issues, e.g., the environmental crisis, the concern for animal treatment, the use of artificial intelligence, media and technology, etc. I do not intend to provide here an exhaustive treatment of Ricœur's understanding of emotions in his philosophical anthropology, to present a comprehensive study of his considerations on emotions in the light of the "affective turn" or "emotion revolution" in the humanities and social sciences,[12] or to prove the possibility to apply his work to the analysis of today's most pressing challenges in which emotions are involved. Rather, my article has the more modest goal of exploring Ricœur's early phenomenological study of emotions as affective phenomena involved in the structures of human volition. According to him, emotions cannot be understood outside the dialectical play between freedom and necessity, embodiment and cognition, and without paying attention to the reproductive and productive functions of imagination as mediating our interactions with the world. The analysis that I aim at developing stands in continuity with my recently published article "Paul Ricœur's Recovery of Affectivity: Feeling at the Crossroads of Carnal Imagination and the Corporeal Condition,"[13] whose scope was to discuss the relationship between the affective dimension of experience and imagination with reference to Ricœur's phenomenology of the will and its essential structures, i.e., the voluntary and the involuntary. It is in the context of his project of youth directed towards the development of the philosophy of the will, that Ricœur began his inquiry into the nature and the role of emotions in human life as marked by finitude and fallibility. More precisely, his theory of emotions is a constitutive part of his broader analysis of the will and affectivity, which is multifaceted and dispersed throughout his writings. Therefore, emotions are not examined by Ricœur exclusively in his mature ethics, in which he discusses the connection between the ethical conduct of life and the emotions of self-esteem, sympathy, and solicitude, or in his moral theory of judgment, in which he focuses on respect as an emotion expressing one's loyalty to the moral law. Thirty years before examining emotions in the practical fields of ethics and moral philosophy, which are referred respectively to the study of the teleological aim of

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[12] See Marguerite La Caze, Henry Martyn Lloyd, "Editor's Introduction: Philosophy and the Affective Turn," in *Parrhesia*, 13, No. 1, 2011, p. 2.

[13] Maria Cristina Clorinda Vendra, "Paul Ricœur's Recovery of Affectivity: Feeling at the Crossroads of Carnal Imagination and the Corporeal Condition," in *Studia UBB Philosophia*, 70, no. 1, 2025, pp. 63-81.

living a good life with and for others in just institutions and to the explanation of the deontological obligation to respect universal norms, i.e., to the Aristotelian and to the Kantian philosophical traditions,[14] Ricœur already started to articulate an account of emotions as embodied phenomena involved in the dynamics of human volition, in its practical and affective orientations towards the world.

It seems clear to me, then, that Ricœur's mature reflections on emotions as presented in his works on narrative theory,[15] selfhood,[16] recognition,[17] and memory,[18] would remain truncated outside of the reference to his early phenomenological writings. In his phenomenology of the will and human fallibility, as anticipating the hermeneutical examination of fault, emotions are discussed as involved into the structures of the dialectics of activity and passivity of the will, of effort and resistance, and as related to our affective fragility, i.e., to the disproportion of the human being in feeling and choosing between vital demands of pleasure and spiritual desires of happiness. Whereas in Ricœur's eidetic study of the will developed in *Freedom and Nature. The Voluntary and the Involuntary* (1950/1966), emotions are described as involuntary dimensions of actions, i.e., as interlaced with our decisions and our body's acts or motions, in his empirics of the will initiated in *Fallible Man* (1960/1965), emotions are explained in the context of the affective discrepancy between aspects of finitude and infinitude at the heart of human existence. In the empirical description of the will, emotional life is understood as "the site not only for feelings but also for all masks, dissimulations and mystifications,"[19] i.e., for passions as corruptions of the will in its concrete, historical expressions. One must acknowledge that in Ricœur's view, emotions are not essentially illusionary, harmful, or irrational dimensions from which we must take distance in order to live a fully rational, objective, and morally good life. As he explains, human affectivity is "the neutral fundamental keyboard upon which both innocence and fault may play."[20] Contrary to any opposition between reason and emotions, these are understood as modes of our existence as wounded beings,[21] i.e., as suffering and capable agents engaged with the world through thoughts and feelings. Emotions have a chiasmatic character as long as these are involved in

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[14] See Paul Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1992, pp. 169-296.

[15] See Paul Ricœur, *Time and Narrative. Volume 1*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1984. Paul Ricœur, *Time and Narrative. Volume 2*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1985. Paul Ricœur, *Time and Narrative. Volume 3*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1988.

[16] See Paul Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*.

[17] See Paul Ricœur, *The Course of Recognition*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2005.

[18] See Paul Ricœur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2004.

[19] Alison Scott-Baumann, *Ricœur and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion*, London, Continuum, 2009, p. 110.

[20] Paul Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, Chicago, Henry Regnery, 1967, p. xvi.

[21] See Paul Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1970, p. 439.

the connection between thinking, feeling, and experiencing, on the basis of our embodied existence. Without denying the implications of Ricœur's shift from the eidetic level of description of the structures of the will to his empirical account of the will in terms of disproportion and fallibility on the development of his phenomenological understanding of emotions, I will limit my analysis to the descriptive stage of his phenomenology.

To offer a finely articulated analysis of Ricœur's eidetic phenomenology of emotions, this article will be divided into two parts. First, I will examine Ricœur's understanding of emotions as tied to his sustained attention to the theme of embodiment as entailing activity (e.g., wanting, moving, doing) and resistance (internal and external). In particular, Ricœur touches upon the topic of emotions, albeit rather summarily, in the context of his study of the body's involuntary dimensions correlated to decision seen as the first moment of willing, i.e., in his account of organic needs, bodily motives, and vital values. Then, in the consideration of the second moment of the will, that of voluntary movement or effective action, Ricœur extends his preceding analysis of emotions, defining them as involuntary dimensions, as organs of willing. By eliciting and motivating movement, emotions are complementary to reproductive imagination, as modeled on the representation of an absent original previously experienced, and to productive imagination, as engendering transformation and realization of new contexts. For Ricœur, emotions are intertwined with thoughts, beliefs, and imaginative representations. Following his line of thought, in the second part I will draw on the distinction between emotion and feeling, and on the difference between emotion and passion. Although these phenomena are all part of the affective dimension of our existence, there are significant differences that must be addressed to avoid the conceptual confusion that often attends theories of emotions. Moreover, I will analyze what Ricœur conceives as the most basic emotional attitude: wonder. This elemental emotion is accompanied by the work of imagination as supporting the affective anticipations of goods and evils. The representations of good and evil offered by imagination awaken desire, which once appropriated by the will, "inclines without compelling"[22] animating the body's directional experience and exchange with the world. These reflections will lead us to consider the ubiquitous nature of emotions and emotional experiences, opening up the path from eidetic description to the empirical investigation of the will.

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[22] Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, p. 130.

1. Emotions as Organs of the Will: Emotions through Imagination, Motivation, and Movement

It is in his first major work entitled *Freedom and Nature. The Voluntary and the Involuntary* (1950/1966), that Ricœur develops his phenomenological account of emotions as dimensions related to the structures of the will, the voluntary and the involuntary. Broadly speaking, emotions are intertwined with the body and the involuntary that singles out of it, and with the voluntary as functioning in relation to the involuntary aspects of experience. Involved in the process of realization of our projects, which are shaped by the three essential moments of the will – decision, movement, and consent – emotions are conceived by Ricœur as involuntary correlates of voluntary actions. By proposing an existential extension of eidetic phenomenology Ricœur puts into question Husserl's analysis of consciousness and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological study of perception as long as these theories remain faithful to the phenomenological primacy of representation. On the one hand, Ricœur appreciates the rigor of Husserl's phenomenological method and his analysis concerning the intentionality of consciousness as directed towards the world. On the other hand, he follows Merleau-Ponty's resolute refusal of the idealistic tendencies of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology as presented in his later works, including *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1935-8/1970).[24] Certainly, Ricœur relies on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception and to his conception of freedom as limited by our embodied existence in the world. Freedom is incarnate in the sense that it is "a freedom appropriating a body and a world,"[25] and it is limited by the contexts of its occurrence. Hence, "freedom is not a pure act, it is, in each of its moments, activity and receptivity. It constitutes itself by receiving what it does no produce: values, capacities, and sheer nature. In this our freedom is *only* human."[26] However, rather than focusing on perception, Ricœur uses descriptive phenomenology to examine the structures of the human will, thereby leading to an understanding of the affective and practical dimensions of experience. He claims that "even in the obscure forest of emotions, even in the course of the blood stream, phenomenology gambles on the possibility of thinking and naming."[27] More precisely, Ricœur's eidetics of the volitional domain aims at discussing the total experience of the Cogito as including affectivity and its processes. As he argues, "the reconquest of the Cogito must be complete: we can only discover the

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[24] Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1970.

[25] Erazim Kohák, "Translator's Introduction: The Philosophy of Paul Ricœur," in Paul Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, p. xxii.

[26] Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, p. 484.

[27] Paul Ricœur, "Methods and Tasks of a Phenomenology of the Will" [1952], in *Husserl: An Analysis of His Phenomenology*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1967, p. 216.

body and the involuntary which it sustains in the context of the Cogito itself. The Cogito's experience, taken as a whole, includes 'I desire,' 'I can,' 'I intend,' and in a general way, my existence as a body. A common subjectivity is the basis for the homogeneity of voluntary and involuntary structures."[29] In the capacity to decide and to project actions, human beings are not absolutely free, but they are confronted by constraints which circumscribes our choices, projects, and actions. Thus, in Ricœur's view, the human being is not a self-grounded being, i.e., a supreme statement of thought and reason (*homo cogitans*), but a humble and earth-bound willing being (*homo volens*) who has the power to do act while dealing with the possibilities and the limitations of the incarnate existence. For him, our actions are shaped by the reciprocity between the voluntary and involuntary dimensions of the will, i.e., between the exercise of our freedom and the limits imposed by our ontological constitution and the resistance of the external world. As embodied beings, when we decide, choose, or act, we are at the same time passively situated in the world and actively participating to it. As Ricœur observes, the body is linked to the will which at once "submits to it and govern it."[31] The world in which we are situated as observers and actors, is not a neutral space of perception of objects as things objectively described by means of unbiased physical qualities, e.g., length, weight, width, etc. In other words, human life is not "a dry exercise of churning out projects that are merely willed by, me, but my joyous, desiring, wondering engagement with the world."[32] Inscribed in "the texture of the world"[33] as a place inhabited, interpreted, and affectively shared with others, we are carnally involved with what surrounds us and we are capable to give meanings to it. Our experiences are constantly permeated by affects, emotions, and desires. As such, "my experience of an object is not merely a question of *what* I experience, but also *how* this object appears to me and *how* it affects me in my act of experiencing it."[34] Otherwise put, "experiences are always qualified in some way or another. They matter to the experiencing subject; we are always, more or less dramatically, touched and motivated by what we experience."[35] It is in dealing with the qualitative character of experience that Ricœur sketches his phenomenological view of emotions, which lend "an affective coloring and vibration to my encounter with the world, helping to bridge the distance between perception and action."[36]

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[29] Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, p. 9.

[31] Ibidem, p. 10.

[32] James L. Marsh, "Ricœur's Phenomenology of Freedom as an Answer to Sartre," in David Kaplan (ed.), *Reading Ricœur*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2008, p. 20.

[33] Kohák, "Translator's Introduction: The Philosophy of Paul Ricœur," p. xx.

[34] Stanghellini, Rosfort, *Emotions and Personhood: Exploring Fragility – Making Sense of Vulnerability*, p. 42.

[35] Ibidem.

[36] Kohák, "Translator's Introduction: The Philosophy of Paul Ricœur," p. xxi.

In Ricœur's view, emotions are involuntary dimensions of actions, rooted in our corporeal existence and linked to the primordial spontaneity of the body. Like other involuntary aspects of willing, emotions "acquire a complete significance only in relation to a will, which they solicit, dispose, and generally affect, and which in turn determines their significance, that is, determines them by its choice, motives them by its effort, and adopt them by its consent."[37] It is in the description of the act of deciding as connected to our "primordial *in esse*,"[38] i.e., to the original experience of our being and belonging to the world as embodied beings, that Ricœur discusses the theme of emotions with reference to the body's involuntary dimensions of vital needs, bodily motives, and organic values. *Needs* are not understood as impulses, inner sensations, instincts or reflexes, but as lacks that are appropriated and directed by the will. Needs are urges involved into the realization of a project and related to the emotional experiences of fulfillment and happiness, lack and pain, etc. Prospective emotions connected to needs are made possible on the basis of the link between our previous experiences and the work of imagination. As Ricœur observes, "we are led to seek the crossroads of need and willing in the imagination – the imagination of the absent thing and of the action directed toward the thing"[40] as something laden with value. More precisely, "we cannot imagine a pleasure as absent and not as given without having a foretaste of it in the form of motive emotional sketches, of an affective reliving which is some sense makes it present and given [...] The present feeling is the "affective image," the representative, the *analogon* [...] of future pleasure."[41] With reference to Pradines's work *Traité de la psychologie Générale* (1943),[42] Ricœur concludes that "the feelings derouted by emotion are complex affections tied to imaginative anticipations of pleasure and pain. They are not themselves pleasure or pain, but manifest them affectively."[43] Imaginative representations give emotions "a vitality, flesh, and a quasi-presence."[44] Our needs are connected to *motives*. Motivation is not conceived by Ricœur "as explanation, as a process of reasoning,"[45] but as an "inner move (from the Latin *movere*), in the sense of emotional movement"[46] emerging from the body. Although there is a continuity between bodily motives and emotions, as "indicative of the connection

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[37] Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, p. 4.
[38] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, p. 103.
[40] Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, p. 95.
[41] Ibidem, p. 101.
[42] Maurice Pradine, *Traité de la psychologie Générale*, Paris, PUF, 1946.
[43] Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, p. 252.
[44] Ibidem, p. 313.
[45] Vinicio Busacchi, *Habermas and Ricœur's Depth Hermeneutics: From Psychoanalysis to a Critical Human Science*, Cham, Springer, 2016, p. 62.
[46] Ibidem.

between the body's visceral disturbances and the will's inclination to act,"[47] Ricœur draws a clear distinction between these two dimensions. Whereas motives offer goals , emotions do not "contribute to any ends that do not already make themselves felt in needs and quasi-needs."[49] As he puts it, emotion involves motivation and "gives the ends that are already present before consciousness a certain physical prestige whose efficacy is partly of the order of nascent movement."[51] Imagination is implicated in the figuration of different elements that can contribute to the development of our motives, it "creates a realm for comparison and evaluation of the various elements that act as motivating forces."[52] Imagination is a necessary dimension for the dynamism of acting to the point that, as Ricœur stresses, "without imagination there is no action."[53] Yet, involved in the dynamics of decision, emotions are linked to the *organic values* of life arising from the body's spontaneity and essentially directed towards one's preservation of life and wellbeing. Ricœur specifies that "all other values assume a serious, dramatic significance through a comparison with the values that enter history through my body."[54] As he puts it, "emotion gives to all valuation pertaining to other levels of value an organic echo, so that all sensibility can gradually adopt, by analogy or by resonance, the language of pleasure and pain."[55] Emotions amplify in the body valuation and judgment: "only a world about which I care, in which I intend, can shock me."[56] However, Ricœur does not embrace the view of emotions as evaluative judgments, because he considers that even though emotions and judgments are inseparable, "a judgment is made before emotion proper."[57] With reference to Scheler's theory of the emotional a priori, according to which our relation to things and to ourselves is not primarily cognitive, but rather emotional, Ricœur observes that "there exists a certain emotional revelation of values in a given situation."[58] Nonetheless, contrary to Scheler's view, Ricœur argues that the emotional intuition is dependent of "the

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[47] Roger Savage, *Paul Ricœur's Philosophical Anthropology as Hermeneutics of Liberation. Freedom, Justice, and the Power of Imagination*, New York, Routledge, 2020, p. 46.

[49] Ibidem, p. 251.

[51] Ibidem.

[52] David M. Kaplan, *Ricœur's Critical Theory*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2003, p. 81.

[53] Paul Ricœur, "Imagination in Discourse and in Action," in *From Text to Action*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1991, p. 177.

[54] Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, p. 85.

[55] Ibidem, p. 111.

[56] Kohák, "Translator's Introduction: The Philosophy of Paul Ricœur," p. xxi.

[57] See Ricœur, Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary, p. 257. See also Paul Hayes, Noel Fitzpatrick, "Solicitude, Emotions, and Narrative in Technology Design Ethics," *Études Ricœuriennes / Ricœur Studies*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2024, p. 133.

[58] Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, p. 74.

thrust of my dedication, that is, of a project in act."[59]. In this sense, emotional intuition and the emotional revelation of values are always "in relation to an eventual project, which means that values only appear to me in a historical qualified situation within which I orient myself and seek to motivate my action."[60] In sum, "emotions play a fundamental role in the generation of the values that make up and orient our lives as human persons."[61] As such, Ricœur succinctly concludes that "emotion is rarely cerebral: it generally affects our body, social, intellectual, spiritual, and other interests. Hope, fear, worry, rage, or ambition trouble us only in terms of an anticipated or represented good or evil."[62]

Ricœur extends his phenomenological analysis of emotions to the second moment of willing, that of voluntary motion, which he defines as "the acid test of a philosophy of the will."[63] Shaped by the involuntary correlates arising from the body, i.e., needs, motives, and values, a project is realized only through effective action, i.e., through the muscular effort and the capacity to maintain control of the body. More precisely, emotion is defined as an involuntary function of movement that, as well as preformed skills and habits, "sustains voluntary action, [...] serves it in preceding and limiting it."[64] For Ricœur, movement is a voluntary act which can be freely initiated, but it is always related to involuntary bodily aspects, including emotions. He discusses, then, emotion as involuntary dimensions involved in the process of realizing our projects in the world. As he argues, emotions stimulate actions and are "brought to thematic awareness in effort, that is, in will's need to overcome bodily inertia in acting and, more intimately still, in the Cogito's need to subdue the body sufficiently to make thought possible."[65] This means that emotions are not reflex-mechanisms, but they are made intelligible only in relation to a will that appropriates and guides them. Otherwise put, in our voluntary decisions and actions "the involuntary is an involuntary for a will, yet willing is possible only by reason of the involuntary organ it appropriates."[66] As embodied intentional correlates to actions, emotions are meaningful only in relation to a will, which is neither enslaved nor it can fully master them. Conceived as "the epitome of incarnate freedom,"[68] voluntary effort uses the "docile aspects of the involuntary."[69] Moreover, emotions show the

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[59] Ibidem, p. 75.

[60] Ibidem.

[61] Stanghellini, Rosfort, *Emotions and Personhood: Exploring Fragility – Making Sense of Vulnerability*, p. 101.

[62] Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, p. 256.

[63] Ibidem, p. 308.

[64] Ibidem, p. 251.

[65] Kohák, "Translator's Introduction: The Philosophy of Paul Ricœur," p. xx.

[66] Ibidem, p. xxii.

[68] Ibidem.

[69] Ibidem.

homogeneity of thought and movement, of mind and body, they have an enactive character, and it is in them that "consciousness encounters the amiable, the detestable, the joyful, the sad, etc."[70] For example, when I meet a friend after a long time, I feel joy and excitement, i.e., I feel emotions that prove our strong bond and that animate physical and embodied forms of communication (e.g., hugs, handshakes, tears, etc.). Ricœur goes, then, "against the rationalist tendency of the West to see emotions as somewhat inferior, related more to the body than the mind, and even being a threat to rationality."[71] Contrary to Sartre's perspective presented in his work *Existentialism and Human Emotion* (1957),[72] Ricœur does not consider emotions as ruses of consciousness, i.e., as necessarily misleading our conscious experiences, but in terms of organs of the voluntary motion. He does not deny, though, that human beings can use emotions as irrational manipulative tools or that these can turn us towards the pathological, but these are not the most basic functions of emotions. In Ricœur's words, emotions are placed among the organs of willing. Consisting in functional states that "motivate and may produce movements,"[73] emotions do not subdue the voluntary and their significance "depends on the effort which determines whether the will uses them or yields to them."[74] As mentioned above in explaining the dialectic of needs, motives, and images, in the discussion of emotions as related to movement Ricœur specifies once again that emotions offer means to the will and that they are not masters or motives of it. Emotions incline the mobilization of the will by giving to it some ends. As already stated, emotions are linked not only with thought and action, i.e., with cognition and motion, but also with imaginative representations and future anticipations towards which we orient our projects and their realizations. As such, emotions are seen as "protentional states in the sense that they project the person into the future, providing a felt readiness for action."[76] In conclusion, drawing in particular on Spinoza, for Ricœur emotions are involuntary functions of movement that sustain voluntary action in serving means that precede and bound it. Thus, in first place, emotions do not drive us out of control. Rather, they stimulate action by drawing us out of bodily inertia in spontaneous ways.

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[70] Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, p. 379.

[71] Dan Stiver, *Ricœur and Theology*, London and New York, Bloomsbury, 2016, p. 96.

[72] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotion*, New York, Wisdom Library, 1957.

[73] Stanghellini, Rosfort, *Emotions and Personhood: Exploring Fragility – Making Sense of Vulnerability*, p. 153.

[74] Kohák, "Translator's Introduction: The Philosophy of Paul Ricœur," p. xxii.

[76] Stanghellini, Rosfort, *Emotions and Personhood: Exploring Fragility – Making Sense of Vulnerability*, p. 5 and p. 153.

2. Emotions: on Feelings, Passions, and Wonder

In his phenomenological analysis of the will, Ricœur carefully clarifies the meanings of emotion, feeling, and passion. Let us turn to examine Ricœur's terminological distinction between emotions and feelings, and between emotions and passions, as useful to avoid conceptual confusion in emotion theory. As Kohák writes in his introduction to the English translation of *Freedom and Nature. The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, "*l'émotion* (esp. in Part II, Chap. 2, 2) seems at first sight to be an equivalent of English "feeling." However, Ricœur's analysis (page 252 below), clearly indicates that "emotion" is the more accurate rendering."[79] It does not mean, though, that feelings and emotions are opposed. Rather, these are different and related. Feeling has an intentional structure, i.e., it is always referred to something, it is "the manifestation of a relation to the world that constantly restores our complicity with it, our inherence and belonging in it, something more profound than all polarity and duality."[80] By means of its intentional structure, feeling "ties qualities felt on things to the self's inward affection."[81] More exactly, feeling designates "qualities felt on things, on persons, on the world [...] (feeling) manifests and reveals the way in which the self is affected."[82] In other words, feeling consists in the projection of the world as an affective correlate, "not a world of objects but a quality of these objects."[83] Feelings are expressions of a dynamic circularity between oneself and the world as long as "the way in which I am affected, my love and my hate, although [they] manifest in only through the lovable and the hateful meant on the thing, on the person, and on the world."[84] In short, feelings relate to the "affective nuances"[85] of love, hope, joy, hate, fear, etc., registered on things. In revealing the "*élans* of our being,"[86] feeling is related to emotion. However, culminating in the incitation of desire as a motor that inclines to act, emotion as a corporeal disturbance differs from feeling, "echoing and amplifying in the body a rapid, implicit value judgment"[87] concerning the affective and motive anticipation of good and evil.

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[79] Kohák, "Translator's Introduction: The Philosophy of Paul Ricœur," p. xxv.

[80] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, p. 129.

[81] Roger Savage, "Feeling, Interiority, and the Musical Body," in Roger Savage (ed.), *Paul Ricœur and the Lived Body*, Lanham, Lexington Books, 2020, p. 90.

[82] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, p. 84.

[83] Mabiala Justin-Robert Kenzo, *Dialectic of Sedimentation and Innovation. Paul Ricœur on Creativity after the Subject*, New York, Peter Lang, 2009, p. 71.

[84] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, p. 85.

[85] Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, p. 252 and p. 257.

[86] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, p. 86.

[87] Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, p. 256.

Not only is emotion irreducible to feeling, but it must be carefully differentiated from passion. Ricœur writes:

> passions are a distortion both of the involuntary and the voluntary. It is customary to include them with emotions of which they are said to be a more complex, more enduring, and more systematic form. In Descartes, the assimilation of passions to emotion is so complete that the treatise, *Concerning the Passions of the Soul*, is in fact a treatise of basic emotions and of their complications in the form of passions. It is certainly true that our emotions are the seed of passions and that in a general way all the involuntary is a point of entry, an occasion for passions, and, as Gabriel Marcel says, an invitation to betrayal.[88]

In a footnote, Ricœur further explains that, whereas for Descartes passions are opposed to actions, we must carefully acknowledge that there are two forms of passivity related to the soul: "the spontaneity of its body, according to which it receives its motives, its powers, and its necessary conditions in diverse ways, and its own passivity in its corrupt state, according to which it submits to the bondage it imposes on itself."[89] Simply put, whereas emotions are modes of human being's nature in an originally morally neutral sense, passions are fallen forms, distortions of emotions associated with excessive possession (having), domination (power), and valuation (worth). According to Ricœur emotions belongs to our fundamental nature, whereas passions are "detrimental for a wholesome emotionality and an ultimately free will."[91] Contrary to emotions as corporeal forms of the involuntary, i.e., as arising out of the body, passions emerge from the soul and gain their hold through the power of the will that binds itself as a "prisoner of imaginary evils, a captive of Nothing, or better, of Vanity."[92] As Ricœur puts it, "reproach, suspicion, concupiscence, envy, hurt, and grief are various names for chasing after the wind."[93] Hence, passions are "passionate forms of willing,"[94] they introduce their principle of vertigo and bondage "which the will imposes on itself."[95] In his assessment of passions in terms of the will's captivity, Ricœur conceives them in the specific narrow sense of an obsessed desires. Hence, passions are bondages and lies as denounced by moralists (e.g. La Rochefoucauld).[96] In order to develop an analysis of passions, Ricœur acknowledges

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[88] Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, p. 20.

[89] Ibidem.

[91] Toth, *The Heart has Its Reasons. Towards a Theological Anthropology of the Heart*, p. 55.

[92] Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, p. 277.

[93] Ibidem, p. 23. .

[94] Ibidem, p. 21.

[95] Kohák, "Translator's Introduction: The Philosophy of Paul Ricœur," p. xxi.

[96] See Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, p. 374.

that the eidetic method, i.e., descriptive phenomenology, is insufficient. The eidetics of the will has to be extended by an empirics of the will, dealing with the experience of the "effects and vicissitudes of particular actual existence,"[97] as including "the fact of existential distortion and the hope of reconciliation,"[98] namely of fault and Transcendence. Consequently, Ricœur points out that "deciphering the passions demands that we study man through the usages of life and ordinary discourse. This is why the study which will ultimately be devoted to the fault, to passions, and the law, will proceed by an entirely different method of convergence of concrete symptoms."[99]

Contrary to Heidegger's, Sartre's, Camus' perspectives mainly focused on emotions in negative terms, e.g., on existential anguish, anxiety, dread, in the face of death, Ricœur does not follow what he calls their "black existentialism"[100] as a necessary consequence of our ontological nature as finite and fallible beings. For him, the dark vision of these thinkers "is perhaps only a disappointed idealism and the suffering of a consciousness which thought itself divine and which become aware of itself as fallen. Thus, the irritated and in some sense maddened refusal assumes the posture of defiance and scorn."[101] Consequently, rather than existential distress, Ricœur places great emphasis on our desire to be, on the affirmation of life, reinstating the primacy of being over death and nothingness. In contrast to the existentialism of negation, Ricœur embraces a hopeful existentialism, emphasizing the projection of possibilities while acknowledging that human existence, marked by finitude and fallibility, is the primary source of gratitude. As he famously proclaims: "man is the Joy of Yes in the sadness of the finite."[102] The analysis of our effort to exist despite contingency, i.e., the will to live while accepting our limitations, leads Ricœur to consider wonder as the most basic emotional attitude. According to him, wonder is a fundamental emotion and it is an expression of the basic circularity between thinking and the lived experience of the body. As such, wonder or awe is "the most elemental, a kind of primordial unifying emotion which supports an initial unity of bodily and voluntary impulses."[104] Ricœur agrees with Descartes' conception of wonder as a primitive phenomenon. As he puts it, "while modern psychology derives emotion from a *shock* and describes it as a *crisis*, Descartes derives it from wonder and describes it as an

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[97] Kohák, "Translator's Introduction: The Philosophy of Paul Ricœur," p. xiv.

[98] Ibidem, p. xviii.

[99] Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, p. 24.

[100] Ibidem, p. 466.

[101] Ibidem.

[102] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, p. 140.

[104] David Rasmussen, *Mythic-Symbolic Language and Philosophical Anthropology: A Constructive Interpretation of the Thought of Paul Ricœur*, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1971, p. 59.

incitation to action in accordance with the vivid representations which engender wonder."[105] Like Descartes, for Ricœur wonder is not an automatic response to external situations, it is not a reflex or a physiological foreign body reaction. Rather, wonder consists in "an impact of knowledge and a disturbance of the body or, better, a shock of knowledge in a disturbance of the body."[106] Nevertheless, contrary to Descartes, Ricœur considers thought as inseparable from the body, its processes, and its resistance. There is, then, no opposition between thinking and feeling, as Ricœur argues, "to feel is still to think, though feeling no longer represents objectivity, but rather reveals existence."[107] He further holds that "feeling interiorizes reason and shows me that reason is my reason [...] feeling reveals the identity of existence and reason: it personalizes reason."[108] On the one hand, wonder concerns the mind as it strikes regularity, causing "a disorder in the course of thought; all we think, feel, and will is generally brought to a halt."[109] In doing so, wonder leads us to an evaluation of something new, to the perception of some level of novelty On the other hand, like other emotions, wonder deals with our body that "amplifies and magnifies the moment of thought by giving it the time of bodily impression as the substance of duration."[111] As Ricœur argues, wonder is "nourished by bodily repercussions; the shock of knowledge affects the flow of disturbance and bodily inertia to thought,"[112] awakening anew our will to judge and to act. Criticizing Descartes' understanding of wonder in terms of passion, for Ricœur wonder is not a spiritual power, but an emotion, namely it is a form of the involuntary providing us with "means rather than ends – the means of effective action."[114] Wonder is not a master of the voluntary, but an organ of the involuntary that is appropriated and made intelligible by the voluntary.

Conclusion

This article has endeavored to reconstruct the key features of Ricœur's eidetic phenomenology of emotions as relevant to current discussions in philosophy concerning the emotional realm of human life. I proposed, then, a systematic exploration of Ricœur's descriptive phenomenological account of emotions by examining their

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[105] Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, p. 252.

[106] Ibidem, p. 254.

[107] Ibidem, p. 86.

[108] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, p. 102.

[109] Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, p. 254.

[111] Ibidem, p. 255.

[112] Ibidem, p. 254.

[114] Kohák, "Translator's Introduction: The Philosophy of Paul Ricœur," p. xxi.

place and role within the dialectics of the voluntary and the involuntary, of activity and passivity, which determine the essence of the human will. Therefore, rather than discussing emotions with reference to their empirical expressions in actions and practices, I followed Ricœur's lead in stressing the essential nature of emotion in the context of the neutral – but existentially invested – description of "being willing and able."[115] By adopting Husserl's epoché, i.e., the methodological "bracketing of all presuppositions in an attempt to discover things 'as they really are',"[116] in his eidetics Ricœur defines emotions as organs of actions. The phenomenological analysis of emotions as modes of our being has been developed through the study of Ricœur's perspective on decision and movement seen as two essential aspects or moments of the voluntary which is always in some respect inseparable from the involuntary conditions of our existence. Then, I turned my attention to Ricœur's distinction between feelings and emotions as modes of being in the world. According to his perspective, feelings have a more cognitive character as well as "a second-order intentional structure,"[117] whereas emotions deliver us to "mental states with little intentionality, as though in emotion we 'lived' our body in a more intense way."[118] Yet, I showed that in his descriptive analysis of the world of affect, Ricœur carefully distinguishes between emotions and passions as distortions or obsessed desires which "promote the servitude of the free will and generate a never-ending pursuit that leads towards a 'bad' infinite of meaningless quest."[119] Finally, I drew on Ricœur's account of wonder as "a principle of emotion that truly recognizes with awe the good of something, and then proceeds through other emotions (like love) towards desire in a process of moving towards anticipation and towards the grasp of the object of emotion."[120] We can note the following two final remarks, which remain open to further debate and discussion.

First, Ricœur's phenomenology of emotions breaks down the traditional opposition between the realms of emotions and that of reason. In his phenomenological description of the will, he redefines the connection between emotional sensibility and rationality. As he puts it, "our description leads us to understand emotion in the context of a general reciprocity of the voluntary and the involuntary and, more

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[115] Timo Helenius, "The Will, the Body, and Sexuality," in Roger Savage (ed.), *Paul Ricœur in the Age of Hermeneutical Reason. Poetics, Praxis, and Critique*, Lanham, Lexington Books, 2015, p. 200.

[116] James Carter, *Ricœur on Moral Religion: A Hermeneutics of Ethical Life*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 117.

[117] Paul Hayes, Noel Fitzpatrick, "Solicitude, Emotions, and Narrative in Technology Design Ethics," p. 136.

[118] Paul Ricœur, "The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling", in *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1978, p. 158.

[119] Toth, *The Heart has Its Reasons. Towards a Theological Anthropology of the Heart*, p. 55.

[120] Paul Hayes, Noel Fitzpatrick, "Solicitude, Emotions, and Narrative in Technology Design Ethics," p. 135.

precisely, as a circular phenomenon of thought and adjacent bodily agitation."[121] In describing the emotion of joy, Ricœur argues: "there are not two joys, a bodily joy and a spiritual joy: in reality all joy is intellectual, at least in a confused way, and corporeal, at least as an attempt and as it inscribes into the body the possession of goods and evils normally foreign to any usefulness for the body."[122] By focusing on the intertwining of mind, body, and the world, in Ricœur's account of embodiment emotions are discussed as essential ingredients of human action and as linked to judgment. For these reasons, Ricœur's eidetics of emotions can be viewed as a precursor theory to recent enactive and cognitive accounts of emotions.

Second, in his phenomenological study of the will, Ricœur describes emotions as intertwined with imagination in its reproductive and productive forms. On the one hand, emotions can be evoked through the imagination of anticipated satisfaction, frustration, or indifference, based on previous experiences associated with pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral frameworks. As such, linked to the reproductive aspect of imagination, emotions are related to images of absent things as representations of something already perceived. Resting upon our embodied existence, emotions rely on memory of past or known experiences, showing a continuum of past, present, and future orientations. On the other hand, emotions are in a circular relation with the generativity of productive imagination. Emotions are integrated in imaginative processes, sustaining creativity and novelty, enhancing our abilities to realize ideas and to overcome obstacles. In turn, the exercise of productive imagination accompanies our emotional regulation, stimulating new possibilities in which emotions can find a renewed order. Although Ricœur can be criticized for presenting an underdeveloped phenomenology of productive imagination[123] in his early analysis of the will as well as in his later *Lectures on Imagination*,[124] his scattered theoretical insights prove to be highly significant for the consideration of the relation between imagination and emotion, creativity and emotionality, along with rationality and technical capacities. Despite the rapidly growing body of secondary literature on Ricœur's thought, much work still remains to be done on the interlacing of his theory of imagination and his conception of emotions.

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[121] Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, p. 276.

[122] Ibidem, p. 262.

[123] Saulius Geniusas, *Phenomenology of Productive Imagination: Embodiment, Language, Subjectivity*, Stuttgart, Ibidem Verlag, 2022, p. 253.

[124] Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Imagination*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2024.

The Correspondence: The Order of Heavens and the Order of the Earth

Ana BAZAC[1] (ID)

ABSTRACT. This epistemological paper may be thought of as a joke. Still, its aim is serious enough: to show the meanings of an almost taboo topic taken in its double *metaphorical* sense, indicated here by capital letters: relations between the Heaven(s) and the Earth. These meanings appear as a result of a "multi-disciplinary" philosophical approach that, far from confusing us, emphasises, first of all, the different criteria of approaching the relationship between the two "types" of order mentioned in the title. These criteria are metaphysical, epistemological, logical, linguistic, and historical. However, after shedding light on the outlooks these criteria open, the meanings, according to their common metaphorical understanding, appear to be more critical.

Keywords: cosmos, heaven, earth, and Heaven(s) and Earth, human society, meanings, criteria, metaphor, irreversible, justice, *telos*, *ordo amoris*.

Instead of introduction: history of the site of spirits

Not after the humans have imagined that the surrounding things are impregnated and moved by spiritual powers, but rather after religions became institutionalised, the site of spirits in their beautiful hierarchy that ultimately posited a chief at its head became the heaven. *Beyond* the world of humans – the Earth – and *indeterminately far away* from it, no matter if the path to this place was a concrete mountain hiding its heights in impenetrable clouds. In the former *animist* period of the primitive *Weltanschauung*, the spirits were (were conceived of as

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beings) *everywhere* in a *unitary* system of the entire world, somehow *close* to the everyday life of humans and to all of them. But after the institutionalisation of religions, the spirits with their generative and dominant power – and becoming also a transfiguration of the early leadership segregation in the human groups – were located in a new place, *above* the humans.

The former *holistic* frame of thinking became a *dualist* paradigm, of absolute separation and imagined hierarchy between humans and the non-human spiritual power.

Actually, the human communities transposed in their imagined site of gods their own more or less hierarchical organisation. Anyway, their hierarchy was, first of all, "professional" – namely, a well-ordered division of labour and services tasks – although in principle all members could do the majority of these tasks, and the elites (as the potter, then also the blacksmith, the medicine man/woman, the manager of reserves, the strategist in hunting, the strategist in fighting other groups, and even the priest who implored the spirits to help the group and its exploits) have long received only the privilege in the group's common meals[2]. But then, the elites became not only hereditary but thus, also with much larger hereditary privileges, and the chief warriors, managers and priests separated themselves from other elites, constituting a dominant stratum over the group, and even though all of the other elites had a relative privileged place in the social architecture.

This social hierarchy was thought to ensure the social order and coherence, it was a centralised manner to control the material and human resources, to collect taxes just in order to preserve and support the dominant stratum with its nucleus (the palace), and although sometimes the taxpayers chose to leave this domination-submission organisation (Claudia Glatz et al. 2024), in fact it perpetuated and strengthened due to the power of masters: of both the physical and the manipulative power of the conscience of all members of the group(s). And all the problems of the social hierarchy were felt by humans who experienced it on its two versants of the power relations.

Anyway, this experience was transposed into abstract explanations subtending the legitimising stories with *concrete fabulous* personages: the *dualist* explanations of order *and* chaos, light *and* darkness, good *and* evil, man *and* woman, opposite forces (as rarefaction and condensation in Anaximenes) or abstract concepts (as *apeiron/the Boundless*[3] and the elements, in Anaximander).

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2 As in the special egalitarian megasites of the neolithic egalitarian Cucuteni–Trypillia cultures (Frank Schlütz et al. 2023; Robert Hofmann, Nils Müller-Scheeßel, & Johannes Müller. 2024).
3 See also the Hawaiian *Ianiākea* (immeasurable, immense land).

The cognitive periplus between the real and the ideal

This historical introduction was necessary in order to simplify the real *context* of the *cognitive processes* briefly noticed in this paper. It already suggested that, in the same cognitive process, *first*, the humans – that is to say, the masters of the *narratives of legitimation* of the group identity and organisation, and thus of the group's general conscience – have transposed the real social order, and especially, though not only, the *real* hierarchical order into an *imagined* picture of the Heavenly spirits, of their early and mature monotheistic personification. So, from the real to the ideal / *real→ideal*.

But *then*, and obviously just in order to exercise their power, the dominant stratum of spiritual controllers made their way back, "transposing" the supposed ideal order into the real social one: *ideal→real*. And it's not important here that this transposition was legitimated through the promotion of a beautified ideal – the Heavens as the place of perfect truth, justice and beauty, in a word, of perfect love of these holy values personified as Gods and then, God – as a generative factor and trigger of a more just worldly society, based on this love (of neighbours as of yourself (Matthew 22:37-39): for this reason, for the human society, God's kingdom was the *model*, having to be followed by all imperfect human creatures, "your kingdom come, / your will be done / on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10).

Starting from the pattern of *ideal→real* in this well-known *content example* ("on earth as it is in Heaven"), the aim of this paper is *epistemological*.

However, before its deployment two still epistemological explicative notes must be added.

1. The above-mentioned contraries generated a "natural"/*pre-philosophical* dualism. Day and night etc. were simple and at hand appearances, their existence making easier credible the *myths* which *personified* them. But the *first philosophers* were interested in the foundation of the dual appearances, and this foundation could be but *one*: "The uncreated, indestructible reality of which these early thinkers tell us was a body, or even matter, if we choose to call it so; but it was not matter in the sense in which matter is opposed to spirit" (Burnet 1908, 16). In other words, for philosophers, the *abstract*[4] *principles* of movement and rest, of unity and diverse plurality had not yet a different (and opposite) site from that of the earthly movements and rests etc.: they did not yet know the Heavens and the Earth; everything was "earth", namely the *unique multi-faceted reality* that they had to understand: in the pragmatic manner that starts with the results – the world in its appearances – and arrives at the constitutive causes/principles, then stopping from professional interest at them.

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4   Which were no longer personified, as in myths. They became abstract concepts., specific to philosophy.

2. Therefore, for humans the *relations* between the earth and the heaven were firstly of common appurtenance to nature and, actually, equally mysterious. Then, and as the earthly aspects became more and more intelligible, everything mysterious was transferred "outside", and where? in Heavens, the world of spirits. The mythical Gods were otherworldly creatures directing and explaining the world: and thus, the ritualic worship became a necessary habit of the humble humans. However, then, the philosophers "have transformed" the godly creatures into abstract principles: the worship disappeared, remaining the explaining power of words-vectors of reason challenging the human intelligence.

And from now on, these words-vectors have become and structured a special Heaven: of *spiritual human creation*. What was/is its connection with the everyday early problems? Does this spiritual transfiguration correspond to the earthly problems it reflects? Do its suggestions please us, even though it is not a copy of our intentions? The *strict epistemological* direction and line of thinking – giving all sorts of materialism and idealism in the human worldviews – have developed just from this difference and separation between the Earth and the Heaven(s).

The other direction and line of thinking, issuing from the same difference and separation between the Earth and the Heaven(s) is *sociological*: giving to them – thus to their meanings linked to cognition – the supplementary meanings of asymmetric interhuman relations and definitely transforming the difference and separation into an eternal and unquestionable constitutive pattern of reality.

In fact, these lines of thinking were/are *interdependent*. And their evolution concerns the understanding of *relations* between the multifaceted different *orders* of things, as both "order" of words about things and "order" of things themselves. The present paper tends only to put a little order in the epistemology of the combination of lines of thinking about Earth and Heaven(s).

Around the concept of order

The concept of *order* (Bazac 2023) has an "absolute" anthropomorphic fragrance: its criteria and features reflect our human points of view related to and depending on our concrete cognitive and social position in the world. This does not mean that order is only subjective, since once the criteria of analysis declared they can be scientifically verified (reproducibly measured) in the real world. However, this means that the easiest and most rapidly done definition of order we can give is the *negative* definition: how a state is *not* dis-ordered, how it is opposed to dis-order. It's easy to understand why: because in the process of cognition, the humans have focused on a specific thing they were interested in and they "cut out" that thing from its surroundings, at the same time differentiating it (identifying it) from both these surroundings and opposite things in these surroundings.

If so, *order* is not *out of order*, that is, it is *not* defectiveness, corruption (in the etymological sense), scattering, confusion, waste, derangement in structures (damage, defectiveness) and spiritual states (trouble, anxiety, displeasure, annoyance, upset etc.).

Accordingly, order is both a *functional* and a *teleological* concept. It describes states which respond to the criteria of (stable) identity, permanence, endurance and fortitude of structures, at the same time corresponding to the aims and views of humans: the more so it specifies the realm it considers.

Here it takes over the meanings of the realm it describes. Therefore – as in the game sketched in this paper – the *order of Heaven(s)* is not tantamount to the *order of heave*n; it describes the meanings of the cultural metaphor *the Heaven(s)* that refers to the epistemological and sociological points of view about the cognitive-linguistic mediation of human actions and about the domination-submission pattern of the human relations, while the *order of the Earth* contains besides the order of human relations, the order of nature because it is sealed by the human relations.

Actually, the meanings of these concepts always contain – and the English expression *in order for* illustrates – their reason-to-be: always given by human points of view constituted from within the inter-human relations.

Κόσμος as order, and as a good order

Yes, the mentioned *content example* ("on earth as it is in Heaven") was transposed by philosophy into a philosophical outlook given by abstract meanings of words:

♦ κόσμος[5], introduced in philosophy by Anaxagoras and Anaximander, was for the *ancient Greeks*: *order*, good order, propriety/fairness, discipline, organisation and construction; (and from these, *order of the universe*, even the universe as such being thus κόσμος at Pythagoreans and all the philosophers, including Plato and Aristotle; κόσμος was the *material infinity of reality, given by Necessity controlled by Reason* (Plato 1925, 48a), while in Stoics, κόσμος was the soul of the universe (Bailly 2023, 1364) imposing order and meaning on the wholeness of the perishable matter).

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[5] Burnet, *ibidem*, 32: "The later word κόσμος bears witness to the growth of scientific ideas. It meant at first the marshalling of an army, and next the ordered constitution of a state. It was transferred from this to the world because in early days the regularity and constancy of human life was far more clearly seen than the uniformity of nature. Man lived in a charmed circle of law and custom, but the world around him still seemed lawless. That, too, is why, when the regular course of nature was first realised, no better word for it could be found than δίκη".

But why and how was κόσμος tantamount to order, more exactly, to good order?

A) *First of all*, the Universe or "the whole Heaven, or Cosmos" (Plato 1925, 27d), was an *undetermined wholeness.* As the surrounding existence is for the newborn. But the humans want to know because they want to give determinations, meanings to reality: otherwise, they cannot survive, live.

Consequently, they use their *sensations and opinions* based on sensations and arrive to the understanding of the materiality of κόσμος. And they continue to investigate these things, because they need this investigation precisely to live as humans, for without it they only react to the ephemeral as the animals do.

Thus/*then*, two lines of reasoning are constituted.

(**a**) *In non-philosophical thinking*: By already being familiar with the idea of *cause* from their reactions to the material surroundings, they walk from cause to cause until the last one, that epistemologically "must be", the deity from/of things, Gods or God.

(**b**) *In philosophy*: Their investigation of causes develops *abstract concepts* and *reasoning from abstract concepts*: they arrive to think the difference between the *being* of material things – and this being proved to be permanent, despite the many material transformations (and they experienced this) – and on the other hand, the process of *becoming* of material things, and thus of their being as such. Here, they are stuck by the incredible intuition of contradiction between the being and the becoming, just because the being as such has no beginning and *remains stable despite the transformations* of the material things, while the becoming means just that there is beginning and transformation. Once more, these extraordinary ideas occur related to the Universe, surpassing the analyses of concrete parts/t hings (Plato 1925, 27d and 48a).

And a similarly extraordinary idea competing with (**a**) or, rather, surpassing it, appeared: because Gods themselves had functions/reasons-to-be and these could be transformed into abstract concepts, at the level of abstract thinking the *causes* personified as Gods were no longer enough and they were devoid of the *persons* of Gods, the entire reasoning being now deployed – but without annulling the (**a**) line as such – at the level of *abstract concepts*, with them: "everything which becomes must of necessity become" (Plato 1925, 27d), Necessity and Reason becoming the abstract principles governing the strange result of the being-becoming mixture:

> "this Cosmos in its origin was generated as a compound, from the combination of Necessity and Reason. And inasmuch as Reason was controlling Necessity by persuading her to conduct to the best end the most part of the things coming into existence, thus and thereby it came about, through Necessity yielding to intelligent persuasion, that this Universe of ours was being in this wise constructed at the beginning" (Plato 1925, 48a).

Actually, if the abstract concepts were constructed and arrived at and by the cognitive process, they were explained by Plato (and Aristotle) precisely in this way. The famous difference between *doxa/opinion* and *well-grounded cognisance* was made just in order to explain that

§ the material things can be understood via sensations generating, ultimately, efficient opinions for the everyday endeavour but "alterable by persuasion", not stable, not profoundly truthful – partaking to "every man" (Plato 1925, 51e) – but,

§ surpassing this imperfect knowledge grasping the transient, there are also the "objects of Reason only" (Plato 1925, 51d), "immovable by persuasion" (*ibidem*), just because they represent the grasping of the stable and permanent, the "being".

And if the objects of Reason/ their knowledge partake "only the Gods"[6] and "a small class of men"[7] – who, obviously, have opinions but moreover the science of analysis and penetration into the concatenation of causes and determinations – this means two things:

Ø that this science can be learned by "every man", also because men (the wise ones, but they actually represent the humans as such with their latent capacities) can imitate the "godlike" patterns of thinking, arriving to the knowledge of stable essence from the ever-varying and unstable phenomena[8];

Ø and that through learning, the humans become able to discern between different types of persuasion: between the good one happened during learning, and the bad one based on interests outside of learning.

B) So far, we saw that κόσμος, because it already was understood beyond its immediate material constitution, was *order*: reason (alone, Plato thought) is that which deploys the Universe and its understanding in a coherent, ordered way; through abstract causes which "must be" since the world looks the way it does

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[6] *Ibidem*. (But wasn't this manner to express the never-ending complexity of abstractly thinking the never totally fathomable reality, comparable to Kant's thing-in-itself?)

[7] *Ibidem*, 51e. Here is the difference between Plato and Kant: in the latter, all men are able to think transcendentally (reasoning from abstract concepts all the way, and not only from empirical concepts), even though they have to be taught to exercise this faculty. Nevertheless, we do not know whether Plato just *observed* that in the ancient society only men devoted to contemplation and analysis can arrive to abstract theoretical knowledge or *apodictically concluded* that's how things are. Au fond, he showed that Meno's slave was able to discover correlations and to deduce conclusions because the mind itself is in a state of learning and "recollects" "true opinions" (Plato 1967, 86a).) Even though the example concerned geometry that was rather empirical. However, Plato added "he can do the same as this with all geometry *and every branch of knowledge*" (85e, underline added).

[8] Plato 1925, 47c: "by imitation of the absolutely unvarying revolutions of the God we might stabilize the variable revolutions within ourselves".

(causes "governed by Necessity") (so, if the ideal is such, the real must be such, too / *ideal→real*); and, once more, order proven by the existence as such of κόσμος (so, *real→ideal*).

But on what basis would the Universe be good order? The presumption that the ideal as such is good leads us to speculation, and Plato felt this. Because the objective ideal (the Forms) may be absolute perfection, but the human knowing, even at the level of Reason, is only an imperfect means. Accordingly, not the simple abstract thinking of "objects of Reason" is good/leads to good, but the *determination* of these objects as "uniform", *respecting the Forms/Ideas of uniformity, constancy and indestructibility*, is/leads to good. In fact, the respect of these Forms/Ideas "must of necessity be beautiful" (Plato 1925, 28a and b). This beauty of the order of κόσμος gives it the quality of being *good* (*ideal→real*).

And this beauty of the cosmic order assures, in fact, that, *on the one hand*, we all can understand this – because men have seen "the stars or the sun or the heaven" and, concretely, the rhythms of their movements: and not only at the level of empirical knowledge, but also at the one of abstract notions as the number and Time, and thus, men passed from the empirical knowledge to the "means of research into the nature of the Universe"(Plato 1925, 47a), and to beholding "the revolutions of Reason in the Heaven and use them for the revolvings of the reasoning that is within us" (*ibidem*, 47b) (*real→ideal*).

And *on the other hand*, the beautiful order of κόσμος is the stake and model of our own endeavour to decipher its *meanings*: "by imitation of the absolutely unvarying revolutions of the God we might stabilize the variable revolutions within ourselves" (*ibidem*, 47c) (*ideal→real*).

We can compare, yet the realms are different. But if so, we must clearly specify the *ends*, *criteria* and *limits* of our comparison. And in this frame, we must be careful with the *language* we use: we must not multiply the words designing something (*ibidem*, 50c), and we must make accurate deductions as we specify the meanings of the words we use.

Methodologically, Gods are *personification* of causes/of explanations. *Concretely*, they are personification of *concrete* causes/moments/aspects/human forces of the understanding of the real.

An ex-centric explanatory note of the *non-metaphorical* sense of κόσμος

Why ex-centric? Of course, because the perspective of this paper is epistemological – thus, about the conscious subjectively mediated meanings of things / the subjective/cognitive mediation of things – while the note reminds us the *independence* of things from this subjective detour.

As it is known, Heidegger was attentive to grasp how does the human search for the world. But if in this search the world does *appear* – and just this appearance is the ground of the meanings he, the human and we, the interpreters can arrive at – much more important is the first sense of this appearance: that the world *is* as basis of all grounds, that appearances and meanings are only secondary towards the fundamental Beingness, and result just in our clash with and within this Beingness.

And that philosophy – and more, the humans – must emphasise "the Primordial" (is my word)/Primary Substance (Burnet 1908, 13) that thus, is *independent* of the appearances which only they shine sending us meanings. The subject who questions the appearances is *sub-ject*, thrown *under* the Primordial *ob-ject* that is thrown to/in front of this *sub-ject*.

Accordingly, the first problem of philosophy is – and was, because philosophy separated itself and circumscribed from the mythical solving – *ontology*, namely, the question about and discussion of "the Primordial" *ob-ject*, the Being as such. Extracting the solving from the Pre-Socratics, Heidegger discovered that the Being meant the "immortal and ageless" (Burnet 1908, 12) φύσις – *the whole boundless* around us and encompassing us – and it was *tantamount* to *A-lētheia*, the permanent un-concealment of the the "primordial openness" that "does not do away with concealment; rather unconcealment is invariably in need of concealment" (Capobianco 2017, 315), thus of openness that always contains at the same time the "mystery" (let's use Blaga's term) of the two-way partiality of concealment and un-concealment. In front of this two-way partiality, were the Greeks the wonderful original children wondering of the world and being open to the world, respecting it (as Nietzsche and Marx observed).

Therefore, φύσις is truth, truth is φύσις, because what do the humans – via philosophy – understand and acknowledge is always depending on that which is given to them, and not only appearances, but also and basically as that which gives permanence to the given.

More: Being as φύσις and/or truth is not simply the given, but – obviously arising from but beyond the practical cosmological measurement – already the *determined given*: as *ordered and ordering everything*: κόσμος[9]. Borrowing from the cosmological image, κόσμος is anterior to all meanings: "(it) is the 'measure' that is not made by us" (Capobianco 2017, 317), it is independent of the subject (Capobianco 216).

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[9] Burnet, *ibidem*, 32, note: "the term κόσμος seems to be Pythagorean in this sense. It was not familiar even at the beginning of the fourth century. Xenophon speaks of 'what the sophists call the κόσμος' " (Mem. i. 11)".

In the trail of Pre-Socratics, Heidegger's stance is the repudiation of "any human-centric position—including a strict transcendental-phenomenological position—that holds that Being 'is' only insofar as the human being is". (This means that "The later Heidegger is not a phenomenologist in this strict sense" (Capobianco 2017, *ibidem*). He is phenomenologist, I add, only in the accredited "existentialist" sense of deployment and understanding of the world as it appears to the "first person").

We can conclude: since for Heidegger "the subjectivism in the contemporary age has cut us off from our 'source', physis" (*ibidem*, 314) – *subjectivism*, that is not the Kantian subject-centred epistemological outlook, but the removal of human criteria from the world – then he substantiates in his habitual allusive manner that the ontological, objectivist perspective, *from the Earth to the Heaven of ideas*, is the first that put expressly the problem that man/ humankind is determined by the Being.

In this, he strengthened the Kantian warning: that the *epistemic mediation* – and thus, *limit* of the world – is not tantamount to the subjectivist ontological principle. The world is not our meanings but, on the contrary, our determining fate which we must observe: namely, to respect it. To what extend does this respect mean subordination to the order of social world or rather attentive inquiry of it is an open problem.

The frame of different systems

Therefore, we see here the *real→ideal* transposition, and then the meanings in the human world have become the meanings of a still real realm, but exterior to the human society and so far away from it, and that could serve as an all-comprising "χώρα", not a simple "receptacle" or "nurse" of things which are perishable (Plato 1925, 27d) but, because of its everlasting and thus generative specificity, their matrix[10] and thus, the matrix of the human order.

However, and more – including because not long ago, κόσμος was filled with Gods – the universal order was a legitimating argument of the order between humans. Somehow as according to the *ideal→real* pattern of explanations.

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[10] *Ibidem*, 50d and 50e: a substance devoid of all forms since it will receive all of them; 51a: called both according to the senses which perceive it as "Mother and Receptacle of this generated world" or "earth or air or fire or water, or any aggregates or constituents thereof", and according to our reason as "a Kind invisible and unshaped, all-receptive way of partaking to the intelligible"; clearer, it is (52a and b): "ever-existing Place, which admits not of destruction, and provides room for all things that have birth, itself being apprehensible by a kind of bastard reasoning by the aid of non-sensation, barely an object of belief".

Consequently, the epistemological problem raised by the content example of order on Earth as in Heaven is that of the peculiarity of *comparisons between* and *analogies of* two **different** types of systems.

What do comparison and analogy mean?

Here, *comparison* is the operation to put together two things, based on the supposition of some common features they would share. In principle, we can compare the most disparate /intuitively disparate things, the only condition to its validity being the clear specification of comparison *criteria.* Actually, comparison is one of the first cognitive strategies, because in order to know a new thing it was posited in front of the already known things. The meaning of the known was/is that it is legitimate, as "true", truthful, and the humans tried to understand the new unknown thing on the basis of the already legitimate, truthful ones.

The *result* of comparison does not always lead to the *legitimacy* of the comparison, because the two things prove to not meet the requirement of some common features according to the assumed criteria. But nevertheless, comparison leads to a larger knowledge about the new not yet known thing and about the already known one: that there are common peculiarities, but also *differentiae specificae*; that the specific traits make the thing to be known, but that they never exist "purely" but always covered by concrete and random veils and mixed with features common to other things; that there are many criteria to compare, according to the many different types of systems considered; and that the failure of a criterion to generate truthful knowledge does not lead and is not tantamount to ignorance/false knowledge according to other criteria. Comparison lies at the basis of cognitive creativity.

In its turn, *analogy* is either the already result of comparison, as *similarity* of things/systems considered, or it advances their supposed *similarity*. If comparison happens under the question mark, analogy is marked by certainty, by the apodictic point showing completion of judgements.

But in fact, both comparison and analogy are cognitive procedures *in progress*, related to other cognitive procedures and being only moments of the whole demarch to acquire knowledge of the things we focus on (Bazac 2025a and 2025b).

If so, comparison and analogy as defined above are *formal* cognitive frameworks and structures of thinking. They are – let's talk in Kant's terms – transcendental. They are abstract methodological frames/patterns which *we* can understand by judging from concepts (and not from experience, because experience gives always the concrete content) and which even exist in the cognitive architecture as a methodological abstract layer, helping the layer of logic.

[Indeed, Kant showed that this methodological – called transcendental/ pure intellect – layer of reason was absolutely necessary, because without the *rules* given within it, the understanding of the information given by senses cannot occur (Kant 1998, 264 (B166)), namely, without which the experience as such is not possible, because the experience inherently involves thinking (*ibidem*, 224 (B126)).

The *rules* unfold as "principles of the possibility of experience" (*ibidem*, 265 (B168)), or conversely the principles are the rules of the objective use of categories (which are pure concepts of the understanding, applying to the objects of intuition (*ibidem*, 212 (A79/B105; 220 (B116)); and, knowing that the objects of intuition are the objects of experience, the principles are the rules of the objective use of categories applying to the objects of experience (*ibidem*, 254 (B146)). The principles as rules emphasise how "subjective conditions of thinking should have objective validity" (*ibidem*, 222 (A90)), giving "unity in the synthesis of appearances" (*ibidem*, 282 (B196/A157)). And these principles as rules of thinking are: axioms of intuition, anticipations of perception, *analogies of experience* and postulates of empirical thinking in general (*ibidem*, 285 (B200/A161)).

Concerning the analogies of experience, that interest us here, their principle is: "As regards their existence, all appearances stand *a priori* under rules of the determination of their relation to each other in *one* time"/ "Experience is possible only through the representation of a necessary connection of perceptions" (*ibidem*, 295 (A176/B218) and 296 (B219)). The analogies as such "do not concern the appearances and the synthesis of their empirical intuition, but merely their *existence* and their *relation* to one another with regard to this their existence" (*ibidem*, 297 (A178/B220)).

Analogies are *qualitative relations of existence*,

"an analogy of experience will therefore be only a rule in accordance with which unity of experience is to arise from perceptions (not as a perception itself, as empirical intuition in general), and as a principle it will not be valid of the objects (of the appearances) *constitutively* but merely r*egulatively*" (*ibidem*, 298 (A180)).

And "these analogies have their sole significance and validity not as principles of the transcendental use of the understanding but merely as principles of its empirical use, hence they can be proven only as such; consequently, the appearances must not be subsumed under the categories per se, but only under their schemata" (*ibidem*, 298 (A180-A181/B 223)).

> "*These principles, therefore, justify us in compounding the appearances only in accord with an analogy with the logical and general unity of concepts, and hence in the principle itself we make use of the category, but in its execution (its application to appearances) we set its schema in its place, as the key to its use, or rather we set the latter alongside the former, as its restricting condition, under the name of its formula*" (*ibidem*, 298 (A181/B224, p. 298))**]**.

And thus, the picture of *formal* transitions from *real→ideal* and back, from *ideal→real*, and again *→ideal*, in endless movements, is understandable and efficient. But *we cannot legitimise content analogies by the formal legitimacy of analogy as such*. In the concrete formula discussed here, the concept of order of Heaven is an *idealised real* (as a concept, it is the *ideal* that *covers* the richness and contradictory real state of both the *physical* Cosmos and the *mythical* one) that is prescribed to be the model of the *terrestrial real* that, in fact, itself conceived a so-called desirable model to follow. Actually, if the formal analogy is possible, legitimate, from the standpoint of contents, the analogy is *ab initio* considered as a metaphor, fuelled by "earthly" interests.

Isn't this a joke?

The humans know the world through the mind's processing of the information provided by senses. Accordingly, it would seem that the trajectory is always from *ideal→real*. But, as Kant said, "thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind" (*ibidem*, 193-194 (B75/A51)), and content is given by senses from reality: "Without sensibility no object would be given to us, and without understanding no object would be thought by us" (*ibidem*, 193). This means that from the standpoint of the *formal* cognitive process, we cannot reduce it to either of the two models (*real→ideal* and *ideal→real*).

But the two models refer to the *content* given by the cognitive process, and concretely, to the content arisen from or suggested by more than comparison, the analogy of necessary similarity of the earthly order with the celestial one. In the *content* cognitive process, not the *neuro-physiological*, psychological (Cassam 2019) and *formal epistemic* means and patterns are important, but the *meanings* arisen from analogy and from the role and weight of the compared systems.

In the well-known *dominant* message, the order of Heaven(s) is the model, it is mandatory because it is supposed to be the best, and thus the profane order must copy it. The order of Heaven is like a Plato's Idea: it is perfect/represent perfection, and the worldly order has only the choice to copy it if it wants not to fade away (becoming dis-order, in other words, anarchy). Therefore, from the standpoint of *content*, the dominant message doesn't suppose the physiological

and epistemological formal versant *real→ideal*; it begins directly with the precedence and primacy of the *ideal→real* versant. The two *loci* of order, Heaven and Earth, can be compared and are compared in terms of the order that must be similar. The Earth must copy the heavenly order, and thus its order arrives to be similar to its trans-mundane model.

Once more, the two types of order are of different order. *The known order/order as it is known is not tantamount to the real order.* The first – *the known order* – is the tableau of words and images: and it strongly interferes with and influences the real[11]. When expressed as *order as it is known*, this known order arrives to even change the Heaven of the rational traditional meanings until now assumed both officially and really by the majority of humans. The feelings, emotions, beliefs, intentions, anticipations were articulated according to experience and generated experience precisely through articulation. In this process, the order – logical, necessary and pleasant, desired – was the *universal* value: "the struggle for justice is universal, and meaning comes from committing to that struggle, whatever the costs, with no exceptions" (Glazebrook 2025). When this universal order is destroyed, destruction is a *war against human meaning*.

Actually, there is never a unilateral direction from words to the real, but always a *two-way relation between them, complicated by feedbacks*: for example, the real geopolitical relations and positions change and thus, also their geopolitical articulation.

> "The world that existed in 1991-2022 does not exist anymore. It's not coming back. You can just invade your neighbor. You can just fire missiles at international shipping lanes. You can just threaten to annex members of your military alliance. 'You can just do things', as the techbros like to say. The mirage of a post-historical order that only has to be policed from time to time but is never seriously challenged has disappeared. What did you think cancelling the End of History meant?" (https://x.com/RWApodcast/status/1877120997427654660).

As a result, the dominant ideological ideas change too: they are no longer the *universalism* that tempered the power asymmetry, and not even democracy and human rights, since neither the form is the same, and it is not respected anymore, but the "sovereign" right to attack, the *individual and group survivalism*. Well, letting

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[11] See for instance the power of words – functioning as *fulfilling prophecies*, both individually and socially. (Bargh, Chen, Burrows 1996. The words become memes, but they are advanced in asymmetrical social relations and thus they need to be rationally analysed with arguments all the way; otherwise, their creation, circulation and evaluation deviate from their reason-to-be. (Medish 2025).

aside this rather abstract expression, we nevertheless can mention that now it's about the system crisis phase of capitalism in new geopolitical conditions (see only Pacini 2025), and an open aspect of the old relations and language (Blinken 1987): the present dis-order continues the traditional dis-order in only relatively new forms, but in incredibly savage contents.

Science intervenes

However, and despite the power of the word(s), the humans arrive to consider them with circumspection. They turn the words upside down, extract the concepts and judgements and try to see their consistency, their internal logical proof. But this procedure proves to not being sufficient and thus, they go *beyond words*, *into reality*. They decompose it according to the Aristotelian causes, and its objective characteristic begins to shake the "no alternative to the Word" promoted by the dominant message.

Actually, the rationalist verification took place only with the help of the scientific outlook of objective causes, and the words – "*theories*" based on concepts and judgements – became thus similarly objectively given, necessarily decomposed in the same scientific manner as nature. In this manner, the rationalist inquiry of concepts and judgements was not a superfluous repetition of "tautologies", and science and rationalism became really complementary, surpassing the autonomously regarded language-centred functions and relations. (Even though not in the endless philosophical quarrels outside a dialectical holism that nevertheless seems to become today prevalent *sans le dire*; although this dialectical holism is not devoid of partisan attacks promoting different types of particularisms).

Science used comparisons and analogies, of course, but they should not be superficial, as Hegel warned, because in this way the disclosure of causes abandons the verification *all the way*. And in the case of this superficial deviation, to it a formalist speculative interpretation corresponded: that later was opposed by science and the philosophy of dialectical holism founded in the 19th century as dialectical historical materialism.

Science used forms to understand contents, and its object was precisely *the contents*. Philosophy – that considered theories – used forms to understand the *formal aspect of theories*, and its object was precisely *the forms of theories*. For this reason, science treats the order of heavens like any object, scientifically (Azhar and Butterfield 2018), emphasising the causes and historicity of this order, and the biunivocal relationship between the subjects of the theory of order of heavens and the theory as such. Philosophy could but follow science, and thus the command that

the earthly order follows the heavenly order can be interpreted both *epistemologically* and *historically-socially*.

The meanings

If in the *formal* cognitive process both the real and the ideal have each of them only one meaning – *the real* being the real world of experience and *the ideal* being the ideas about it, and concretely, the Heaven being the ideal/mental construction of perfection and, obviously, the world being the real world of experience and not the cold inanimate cosmos – in the *content* cognitive process things are more complicated.

Because the humans have discovered new and new meanings related to new and new experience, they did not only construct new words but also transferred the new meanings to the existing words. In this way, the *literal* and *figurative* meanings appeared:

- Ø the *first*, explanatory and exact, denoting in the main the object to which the speaker(s) referred to habitually, and also another object to which secondarily the speaker(s) arrived to refer habitually – and thus the connotative sense from the second literal use of the word arriving to become a denotative sense that formerly belonged only to the first literal use of the word; but the connotative sense, including in its becoming denotative, appears only in relation with other (non-problematic) objects[12] – and
- Ø the *second*, suggesting an object with words which designate other objects, thus *comparing* them *as if* showing that they are similar; but the words designating other objects are not even similar but emphasise a "colour"/
- Ø rather nuance of the intended object, which misses in the literal use of words for this object.

And the humans arrived to use all of these meanings without confusing them and with an ever-greater pleasure. But the use of words takes place in judgements/ arguments/discourse (*speech acts*) which put face to face the emitter and the receiver, and thus the literal and figurative meanings were developed *according to the levels of intentions and cognitive elements* comprised in judgements and discourses. In this way, the levels of intentions – thus, of meanings – are according to the emitter and the receiver, and they *coexist*, just opposite to the literal and figurative meanings which are mutually exclusive.

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[12] Literal: eye; eye of the cyclone.

The meanings according to intentions are: the l*ocutionary*, "constative" (Austin 2005, 3), descriptive, ostensible, and thus *literal* meaning; the *illocutionary*, that is not a simple neutral *figurative* meaning, but involves a distortion of the locutionary[13], promoting the speaker's *intention* to suggest his/her meanings apart from the literal ones, thus giving them new truth values but covering the speaker's intention; and there is also the *perlocutionary* meaning, that which is the (may be unintended) *effec*t on the listener, so external to the performance of an utterance.

And sometimes or even many times, the illocutionary meaning reflecting the intentions of the *emitter* is denied by the perlocutionary one: this denial gives a new, awakened meaning resulted from the divergence between the exposed locutionary meaning which is, in fact, perlocutionary, and the reality known by the *listeners*.

This happens because the speaker does not take responsibility for the holding of the conditions of his intentions: if the perlocutionary meaning exudes insincerity, it is because the speaker does not subordinate his/her sentence to the illocutionary rule (Alston 2000) of correspondence between reality and his intention to depict this reality according to his/her views. If a politician, for example, invites to be voted because he/she is the only one who could lead the country toward a good evolution, but his/her entire political activity denies this illocutionary meaning, the perlocutionary effect is quite opposite to the illocutionary meaning (which is a directive speech act, suggesting and requesting and ordering).

Concretely, the formula of the two different orders – that of Heaven(s) and that of Earth – provides a complex set of meanings, and not a simple locutionary one: yes, we, readers or listeners, must be aware of the simple *locutionary* meaning of the formula, that the model of the terrestrial social order is/must be that of the Heavenly order; so, from *imagined ideal* (and not from ideal as the objective mental construction as selective reproduction of and from the real) → *real*. But just the utterance as such discloses that the imagined ideal is *subjective* in two senses:
- the one of a *speculative and hidden* order of the Heavens as a valuable/desirable model for the human social order: on behalf of the *creators* of the formula;
- and the one of an *irreal* Heavenly order as an absurd proposition to humans, because "the Heaven" has countless contradictions and problems both in the *mythology* of quarrels of gods etc. And we, readers or listeners, know that these divine quarrels etc. are narratives (ideal transpositions) of mundane social relations – and in the *reality* of a cosmos that is not the welcoming home that provides endless comfort to the human beings which pollute, waste, exploit it.

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[13] There is a "difference between saying something and meaning it and saying it without meaning it", (Searle 1969, 3).

The *perlocutionary* sense of the formula – just opposite to the illocutionary sense of the intentions of speakers – transforms the imposed locutionary expression into a bombastic, ridiculous and outmoded pronouncement. And the scientific analysis, preserving it as an element of history and culture, reverses it and gives it a metaphorical use: from the *real* Earth when the anthropogenic waste and disorder is removed → the *real* Cosmos considered in the same responsible manner. And both the mental ideal and the imagined one serve this new relation whose demiurge is no longer situated in Heavens but on the dusty Earth.

The logical non-correspondence

The Heavenly order as more than a model for the untrustworthy humans, as a "kingdom" encompassing the subjects in a mesh of dependencies and promises, had the logical function of *explanans* for the uncertain human settlement always shaken by unforeseeable actions, thus for what had to be put in order, namely, be explained: for the *explanandum*. But although the *logical* scheme is *explanans→explanandum* (because...there is.../we have...), the *pragmatic* field may well impose reversals: as here, from *explanandum* – that which eventually explicates (the heavenly order) – to *explanans*, that which has to be explained.

Thus, here *explanandum* is the premise: but not of a deduction that follows from it. The prescriptive formula – *order on Earth as the order in Heavens* – is not, or at least not directly, an explanation. *The apodictic propositions involve the value of truth*. Or, here the value is *not* truth, it is not resulting from the logical form. The prescriptive formula is wrapped in normative – and, through repetition – imperative propositions, denoting a *command* transfigured as a *desire*, as an ardent *aspiration*. Their value is more than the *possible* (Lukasiewicz 1930, 53), it is the non-Aristotelian – thus, *non-demonstrable – necessity*. This value does not result from an analytical deontic logic, but from an assertion of a will, from a judgement of this will. The prescriptive formula – the conclusion in Matthew 6:10[14] – does not result from the theses asserting the will. Thus, the value is indeterminate, the simple expression of the will. Linguistically, this expression involves both the subjunctive and the imperative moods, they once more showing that it's not about truth/false, thus not about explanation.

Accordingly, even though in the logical scheme of the prescriptive formula the order is reversed (*explanandum→explanans*) towards the logical scheme of the normal apodictic propositions (*explanans→explandum*), the entire fragment dissolves the logical scheme of relationship between that which explains and that which has to be explained. "The order of Heavens must be the order of the Earth. Why? Because we wish".

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[14] "your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven".

Let's put order

Until now,

1) We have the *formal* schemes of relations between the ideal and the real, according to the intuited meanings of the Heavens (the ideal) and the Earth (the real): consequently, we distinguish between the *formal* schemes and the *content* example (the relation between the Heavens and the Earth), but we relate them (actually, our discussion started from the content example decomposed as above)

2) We understand that the relations between the real and the ideal involve these relations between different types of systems, but *formally*, always the real and the ideal have each time only one meaning given by the criterion specified when taking the systems we relate

3) For the content example, we add a concrete reference to cosmos as order, as a basis for the formal patterns of the ideal and the real

4) We have the epistemological meanings of the ideal as a *cognitive* transfiguration of the real: both at the level of concepts as the ideal level, and at the concrete level of Heavens as an idealised concept

5) We mention that to this cognitive processing and reproduction, different figures of speech correspond and especially comparison and analogy

6) The model function is formalised in the two patterns (*ideal→real*, *real→ideal*) which are two interrelated versants of the relations between the real and the ideal

7) The model function applies to the content example(s), and *from the content standpoint*, the model involves each time many meanings of the real and the ideal

8) We have the historical/cultural explanation of the real, and also of the precedence of the real towards the ideal (the precedence of the real historical human subjects towards their ideal constructions)

9) But also, we have the *concomitant* independence and precedence of the ideal constructions towards the real world of humans

10) We have thus the (dialectical/tense) correspondence concerning the two related lines of problems: between the ideal and the real, and between the order of Heavens and the order of the Earth

11) We have the logical non-correspondence of the order of Heavens and the order of the Earth.

Therefore, we pointed the real and the ideal, and respectively, the order of Heavens and the order of the Earth mutual relationships at *conceptual* [metaphysical (distinguishing the form and the content), epistemological, logical, linguistical, historical] level. This level constitutively supposes that, with all the strong process of independence and precedence of concepts, not they are the subject positing their different places and meanings, but are the creature of the real subject, the humans.

As we know from philosophy, knowing is determination of things. The above-mentioned aspects of the conceptual level shed light on the *relationships* which, as we also know, are the ultimate determinants of things.

Do not forget

However, before coming closer to conclusions, let's stop a moment on the *ontic* level of technical relations as "matter-to-matter" connection.

1) Earth-heaven connections

The GPS/ Global Positioning System is a connection – through radio waves – between satellites and ground stations, and is based on Earth-centred location solution. And it confuses us concerning the priority in earth-heaven relations: on the one hand, satellites are man-made earthly objects, but on the other hand, the direction of transmission is from satellites/heaven to Earth. The order is given, nevertheless, by the Earth, by calculating the time between the transmission of the signals (with their data of position and time) to their reception in the ground stations, and according to this by calculating the four-dimensions positions of the GPS users: on Earth.

Via satellites – a detour in the heavens – people can *localise* their own positions within a space that is either unknown, because Terra is large enough for little vulnerable beings, or too fragmented to be known by everyone. Of course, in a dry post-modern managerial expression, the quest for localisation reflects the need for security, efficacy, and intensification of one own's existence (Razac 2005). And obviously, the amazing technology of space and time control can make more vulnerable the beings who use it as their own prosthetic organs. And thus, these beings become they themselves objects of control: "the desire for security is also a desire to localise disturbing desires... the desire to be localised requires the localisation of desires" (ibidem, 383) and people cannot resist. They can't run away. There is no "extraterritoriality" (Jeanpierre 2005) that is anyway a juridical fiction, even though the movement, the shift, the displacement might have uncomfortable consequences and significances for the controllers.

There is rather a unidirectional manner to approach even the distant objects from cosmos: that from the Earth, making them virtually present (Bazac 2022).

2) Redefining from heavens the order of the Earth

Opposed to the supposed continuation of the social Heavens command on the earthly problems, this short note emphasises only the top-down material influence of the cosmic order on the subordinated material organisation on Earth. And not the well-known old human orientation according to stars (to the North Star) is mentioned, but an apparently strange orientation of inferior animals. The Bogong moths in Australia seasonally *migrate* from the hot summer southeast to the Australian Alps – and in autumn return – with the help of a "compass" already written in their genes and that is genetically instructed by the starry night sky as a pattern of sky orientation. However, it's true that the command of stars converged with the earthy magnetic field: the pattern proved to be a mixture of top-down and bottom-up influences (Dreyer et al. 2025).

The metaphorical use of (correspondence between) the order of the Heaven(s) and the order of the Earth

There are quite enough metaphorical uses of our motif, the correspondence between the two types of order. Let's see some of them.

1) From a juridical point of view – reflecting and reading the capitalist point of view – the "cosmic justice" means a justice that would be *universalisable*, but since on Earth there is no such thing, we must apply only a justice that considers all members of society *formally* equal (this is equality before the law). So, the historical injustices are only conditions, not direct efficient causes of facts which are sanctioned by the law.

The earthly justice, some ones consider, forbids "putting particular segments of society in the position that they would have been in but for some undeserved misfortune they are not" (Sowell 1996, 15).

However, the principles of the modern law as such do not exclude social reforms to correct the "undeserved misfortune". Of course, today the positive discrimination of some groups in college admissions is absurd, but also the fact that pizza is not delivered in some dangerous neighbourhoods. No one is excepted from exams of college admissions, and from the standpoint of the owner of the pizza shop, it's normal to not accept delivery in places where the personnel could be

harmed. But would it not be better to *prevent* these situations by assuring high quality education and social messages to all the candidates to admission, and decent social conditions to all neighbourhoods?

The *universalisability of principles of justice* reflects the spirit of justice of the human mind, but they are not absurd. If they are only 200 life preservers when a boat with 300 passengers is sinking, the just solution is yes, unfortunately those who have no life jackets will die, but the life jackets have to be used by the 200 people. Because the universalisability of justice involves the least loss, the least harm. On the contrary, the quoted author's perspective is that of justice in a minimal state that assures through a formal equality before the law, the perpetuation of injustices. This is why he gives the above-mentioned examples, and no other ones, graver. But *the content cannot be legitimated with the formal/legitimacy of the formal.*

2) The impassable distance between the humans' genetic limit to know "in real time the significance of the time we happen to be living in" (Medish 2025) and the idea that this significance exists and can be known: and thus, dealt with.

Here, outside the order put by humans – because knowledge is order, moreover it is its basis – there is nothing. There are no Heavens which would assure the comprehensiveness of the time in its deep holistic meaning. And thus, in order to manage their life in the big context comprising them as an *an sich* space – about which, being a "thing-in-itself", one can say nothing, as Kant demonstrated – people have only "metaphors": which, because of their inherent selectivity and despite their realism and ability to signify more than their direct locutionary expression, "are grossly over-written and over-determined relative to the complexity and contingency of what we should know is out there. They become dogma" (*ibidem*). Clearer, the different outlooks materialised in conceptions about the ordering of the entire world become rather corsets imposing the only fashionable truth.

It seems that we are destined to have "limited thoughts" because of their constitutive contradiction between the intention to refer to an encompassing domain, inevitably vague because of its scale and, on the other hand, the expression/conception that inevitably reduces/selects according to the inherent points of view (Priest 1995); fragmentariness is, therefore, the feature of thoughts, because otherwise they simply cannot deploy/cannot be expressed (Priest 2023), but in this way the domain intended is different (ineffable) from the conception that, effable, nevertheless is part of or rather approaches us to and familiarise us with the domain.

However, beyond that cognitive and logical contradiction – *sine qua non* for the scrutiny of the consistency of theories – there are the ontic determinants / social conditions of their coherence. These determinants explain that the shortcomings

in the communication process and its epistemology, observed in 1980[15], were not corrected in fact, and that even today the "many voices" of the Earth tend to be reduces to the one voice of "the Heaven".

Obviously, we cannot forget the *ontic* determinants – the power relations, namely, the class domination-submission relations – which give a very contradictory image of the principle of free elections coexisting with the insidious but also visible brutal interference within them.

Therefore, the Heaven(s) of thinking is not tantamount to the Heaven(s) of taboo decisions of the powerful. To equate the "antinomies of reason" – both in the Kantian precise meaning[16] and also as a metaphor for the ideal Heaven of the thought, of the untouchable life of words, language and the ideal entities created by our mind – with the social contradictions means to *embrace the moral relativism in the name of gnoseological and ontic relativism*. It means to swim in an ocean of paradoxes and to save ourselves only by climbing on alternate planks which, coexisting, disturb each other and that the solution would be the destruction of those which are weaker than "we who are successful" (implying that "since only the successful are representatives of the humankind").

Order as *telos*: the metaphorical Heaven and the metaphorical Earth deviate the *telos* of order

Our representation of the order of things cannot ignore that the origin of order is the *human subject*: in its plural, multitude guise of *human species*. Otherwise, there are only *relations* and *processes* determined by physical, chemical and biological forces. But *harmony*, *symmetry*, *cadence/regularity/repeatability*, *rhythm*, thus *coherence* and *predictability* are grasped and *conceptualised* by humans. The κόσμος is, indeed, *human-made*[17].

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[15] International Commission.... 1981. See the General comments (Sergei Losev, 279-280; Mustapha Masmoudi, 280-281; Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Juan Somavia, 281).

[16] These antinomies consist in the disproportion between *reason*, as ability to think the dialectical complexity of things, and *the intellect* that grasps only the formal, the inherently abstract in empirical appearances. The cunning thinking "solves" this disproportion by the extension of categories: let's say of concepts, so annulling *la propriété des mots*, the correct denomination of things according to their real existence and meanings resulted from the relationships with other things.

[17] As a part of the title of a work of contemporary art that emphasizes the correspondence between the human-made "micro-cosmos" and the real cosmos: Tudor Pătraşcu (1979), *Untitled* (Home-made Cosmos), from the series Walls, Breath, Words, produced in the expositional project Virus Diary, initiated by Dan Perjovschi at White Cuib (2), 2020. "The work consists of the photographic documentation of a temporary intervention carried out in the space of my home. On a black circular

If so, and with all the real and metaphorical mediations, the humans create the *relations* between all the types of order. Thus, all types of "heavenly" order arise from the human "Earth".

Actually, just this direction of all the relations between types of order is the *telos* of all these relations: "order is for humans, by the humans"[18].

But since the human "Earth" includes the Heaven(s) of those who master the decisions on both the Earth, the heaven and the relations between all these decisions, their ground and the receivers made dependent on, would the anterior formula not be too general, thus irrelevant?

Let's see.

If the *spiritual* Heaven of articulated mediation of human relations is reduced to "words, words, words" – which are considered to be so relative that they dislocate any basis and criterion – then it itself is destroyed. And thus, only the "brutalist" Heaven of commands from the Up – as the Only Truth – to the slaves from the Bottom remains.

So what? Is there a demonstrated basis of the critique of domination of Heaven(s) on Earth? There is. Long time ago, continuing the voices of Greek rational empiricists Plato – yes, Plato – and Aristotle, Augustine of Hippo[19] has indicated that only if the Heaven is God – namely, *the whole of infinite reason and sentiments of benevolence, fondness, compassion and help* – is it the origin, keystone and light of and for a valuable and human existence. Thus, *it depends* on which Heaven do we consider: we must be cautious in our human choice of Heavens. The Heaven is the "siege" of *moral and affective principles* without which there is no humaneness and humankind: we remember the ancients' "good order": not as a cold astronomical cosmos full of cosmical objects, but as the ordered κόσμος as "the best" for existence as such.

Concretely, and Augustine of Hippo drew attention on an old and permanent worry, the divine Heaven generates both the different human *loves* – like the love between man and woman – since the essence / pleasure and ultimate reason-to-be of the human life is love, and the human *love* for Him, that is, *for the good/the moral principles* He represents. The old and permanent worry is how to equipoise

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support are arranged various types of pharmaceutical tablets which, as a whole, create a structure that can be perceived as a representation of the cosmos. This approach speaks about the anxieties of the present, using as working material readymade products of scientific research in the field of pharmacy", https://www.facebook.com/muzeulparvan/posts/observatorexpozi%C5%A3ie-de-art%C4%83-contemporan%C4%83-curatoriat%C4%83-de-florin-bobu-delia-bulgar/909093834595664/.

[18] The formula is paraphrasing Abraham Lincoln's description of democracy ("government of the people, by the people, for the people") in his *Gettysburg Address*, November 19, 1863.

[19] Saint Augustine. MDCCCLXXI, 92: "So that it seems to me that it is a brief but true definition of virtue to say, it is the order of love".

the two: the gentleness, ardour and trouble of earthly feelings – without which the humans are not complete – and the unwavering righteousness following the moral principles.

Well, Saint Augustine showed that the two types of emotions do not exclude each other and, more, the emotions of earthly love can be controlled. The ancient Greeks spoke about the human *reason* that can control the appetites and feelings, allowing the development of *virtuous* attitudes towards life (Heraclitus, Epicurus, Plato, Aristotle). And later on, Kant demonstrated how *reason*, indeed, can direct the human sentiments because it is able to arrive to the moral principle of not treating others only as means but always also as ends: and thus, it is able to put feelings to accommodate to this principle.

In his turn, the Bishop of Numidia Cirtensis knew that the humans have the ability to feel both their complex sentiments and their consciousness' warning about what is right and what is wrong. And in order to fit these two types of torments, God gives them the *order of loves*. Their *virtue* becomes to respect the order of loves/ *ordo amoris* (Sancti Aurelii Augustini, 107).

Actually, God is *order* – as infinite reason – and *love*: thus, *order = love*, and *love = order*. And this two-way equivalence shows that the humans – "sons of God" – can have an ordered love[20], because without order – as reason – not that the humans are not complete, but they are not humans at all.

So, Heaven is the moral order, the moral *principles* – which are fundamental causes of human thinking and acting – not words devoid of any ground and emitted from the top as the Single Truth.

But do not forget: the moral order involves the concrete sentiments, it is interdependent with them, and thus this human and coloured moral constructs the trail for the development of good sentiments, goodwill, cooperation, sympathy, responsibility, and empathy.

This full of love "good order" is, au fond, the *telos* of human actions. Otherwise, *what for* the human life?

For our topic, God is a symbol and we all must explain symbols in order to understand the human life.

Let's add: as it is known, already in ancient plays, when the plot – necessarily expressing contradictions – arrived to a climax, when it seems that there would not be any possible exit from the clew of qui pro quos, a *deus ex machina* appeared, a god or unexpected personage, restoring the good order: not destructing it, as it would have occurred without this "extra-terrestrial entity". *Deus ex machina* is a

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[20] Saint Augustine, *ibidem*: "love itself is to be ordinately loved, because we do well to love that which, when we love it, makes us live well and virtuously".

symbol for happy events, meeting the human needs of happiness in good human environments. Therefore, the good deity bringing only goodness was the original Heaven and the symbol of the human *telos*. While the Earth was the symbol of real human problems, sometimes even determined but anyway worsened by fake words and absurd commands of absurd leaderships.

Instead of conclusions

This paper shed light on the relationships between the Heaven(s) and the Earth in the metaphorical meanings of these two denominations of structures. The Heaven(s) themselves illustrate two metaphorical meanings: of the mediation of words as articulated symbols of the autonomy of this mediation in the human relationships with their human and non-human environment; and of the rulers' domination on the ruled. The rapid analysis of the relations between the three metaphorical meanings in their feedback loops showed if is there a correspondence between the structures viewed metaphorically, and what kinds of correspondence.

The *telos* of these relations is indeed the human measure (*juste mesure*) of the good, that is the good life. Accordingly: the human measure of good life of *every human being*, because otherwise – in epistemological, and not moral analysis – the good life would not be a *standard measure*, avoiding the excesses and deficiencies[21]. The Earth symbolises just the *telos* of good life of every human being, opposite to both the Heaven of sovereign and autonomous domination of the intangible words and their messages, and the Heaven of sovereign and autonomous contemptuous domination of human groups over the human species.

Consequently, it results that the Earth must be the criterion of relations with the Heavens in both the above-mentioned metaphorical meanings. As the Criterion, the Earth is able to erase the deviated meanings of Heavens[22]. And this implies, first of all, the critique of Heavens, of *their* "Good"[23].

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[21] The criterion of standard measure/standard mean or, in our modern terms, the criterion, avoiding the excess and the deficiency in Plato. 1921, 283e-284d.

[22] "Heaven is not a future reward, but the act of doing good today" (White, 2024). Not reducing the good to compassion, but developing it as encompassing criterion of actions.

[23] "The most insane thing about our efficiency-loving world is its prodigious inefficiency" (Rey. 2014).

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The Original Truth of Understanding and Taking Action: Gadamer on Plurality and Solidarity

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ABSTRACT. Starting from his conception of an original "extra-methodical" truth, of which one can gain experience through art, history, and philosophy, Gadamer enhances the fore-predicative dimension of knowledge. In his opinion, the awareness of our "pre-judices" – the voice of tradition –, reached through interpretation, opens up to the otherness of the other and increases friendship as well as solidarity. By defining hermeneutics as practical philosophy thanks to a re-working of Aristotle's concept of *phrónesis*, Gadamer starts up a "rehabilitation of practical philosophy". This "recovery" contributed to overcoming the world crisis in the mid-twentieth century and could still orient a "life together" within today's ethical and political frameworks.

Keywords: hermeneutics, science, practical philosophy, friendship, solidarity

We must learn to live together as brothers or we will die together as fools
Martin Luther King

1. A "rehabilitation of practical philosophy" to overcome the traditional dualistic worldview

What is knowledge? Within the philosophical tradition, a definition of "knowledge" has gradually become predominant: knowledge consists in the correspondence between our judgements and reality. Inextricably linked to this

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conception is the definition of truth as the equation of thing and intellect ("*Veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus*")[1]. It was thought that only by applying a strict method, articulated in precise rules, can one formulate judgements correctly and, consequently, reach the truth. The application of a universal method – it was believed – assures exact knowledge of the natural world as well as of the historical phenomena and the cultural production of human beings. A dualistic vision has taken shape especially in the new age: on the one hand theoretical knowledge and truth as correspondence; on the other hand action, praxis, which results from the application of knowledge.

From the industrial revolution onwards, the praxis *par excellence* was identified with technology, which was defined as the most effective application of scientific knowledge. This worldview was questioned from the ground up after the rise of totalitarianism and the explosion of the atomic bomb. In the mid-nineteenth century, the limits of technological reason were outlined and the various kinds of knowledge were scrutinized. It emerged that the original way of understanding inheres in praxis, on which even theoretical knowledge is dependent.

Problems connected to these experiences were discussed by the exponents of the cultural movement known as "rehabilitation of practical philosophy", which spread mostly in post-war Germany.[2] Thinkers who contributed to this movement went back to Aristotle and Kant with the aim of making their reflection on praxis fruitful for today's world. In the early twentieth century, many of these philosophers attended Heidegger's lectures on Aristotle. In their interpretation the ethical- political aspect of Aristotle's philosophy, which was overlooked by Heidegger in an effort to put the spotlight on the ontological aspect of the Aristotelian thinking, came to the fore.

The "rehabilitation of practical philosophy" began with Gadamer's book *Truth and Method* (1960), the title of which sums up Gadamer's aim: developing a hermeneutical philosophy that would become a kind of practical philosophy suitable for

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[1] For this concept – the most famous wording of which is to be found in Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 4: *Knowledge in God: 1a. 14-18*, ed. by T. Gornall, Cambridge University Press, 2006, Ques. XVI, Art. 1, 3, pp. 82-84 – see G. Schulz, Veritas est adaequatio intellectus et rei*: Untersuchungen zur Wahrheitslehre des Thomas von Aquin und zur Kritik Kants an einem überlieferten Wahre*, Brill, 1993. Despite considerable differences, Jean Grondin identifies some similarities between this traditional definition and Gadamer's concept of truth (see J. Grondin, "La fusion des horizons: La version gadamérienne de l'*adaequatio rei et intellectus*?", in *Archives de Philosophie*, vol. 68, 2005, Facultés Loyola Paris, pp. 401-418).

[2] For its topics and settings see M. Riedel (Hrsg.), *Rehabilitierung der praktischen Philosophie*, Rombach, Bd. 1: *Geschichte, Probleme, Aufgaben*, 1972; Bd. 2: *Rezeption, Argumentation, Diskussion*, 1974. For an overview see S. Toulmin, "The Recovery of Practical Philosophy", in *The American Scholar*, vol. 57, no. 3, 1988, Phi Beta Kappa Society, pp. 337-352.

our technological age. In order to fully grasp the train of thought followed by Gadamer, it is advisable to concisely remember the bottom line of *Truth and Method*. After that, the concept of "solidarity" is to be analysed because it exemplifies the link between knowledge, truth and action that is increasingly required in contemporary world. Finally, it should be stressed that revisiting our past is crucial to broaden that "horizon of expectation", in which a "plural" humanity can grow.

2.   Scientific and "extra-methodical" truth

Gadamer entitles his work *Truth and Method* because he wishes to draw attention on the oxymoron contained in this expression: in his book, Gadamer aims to show the limit of the scientific truth, reached by means of the application of a method. Gadamer does not aim to question the validity of the scientific method, but rather to promote reflection that challenges its presumed absoluteness. Scientific truth – the truth achieved through a method – is not the only one possible.[3] It concerns only objects that can be defined by means of a rigorous demonstration by the subject in order to be dominated in a cognitive and practical way. The method has thus its own legitimacy in the field of natural sciences, but it does not provide an original truth, which can only be attained through experience. There are extra-methodical experiences of truth that hermeneutics aims to bring to light.

In the *Introduction* to *Truth and Method* Gadamer mentions the experiences of art, of history, and of philosophy.[4] He intends to investigate their legitimacy in order to prove the originality of a kind of truth that he calls "hermeneutical" and puts over against the truth obtainable by a method. Yet what does "hermeneutical truth" mean? It deals with a kind of truth that pertains not to "knowledge", but to "understanding".[5] Hermeneutics interrogates neither the conditions for the possibility of knowledge nor what kind of a method should be followed. Instead, it asks what happens when one understands, what is the event of truth. Understanding is

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[3] For Jean Grondin, it is a truth "before" method and not "against" a methodological procedure (see J. Grondin, *Hermeneutische Wahrheit? Zum Wahrheitsbegriff Hans-Georg Gadamers*, Beltz Athenäum Verlag, 1994², pp. 1, 4). Of another opinion is Ernst Tugendhat (of whom see *Philosophische Afsätze*, Suhrkamp, 1992, p. 428). Gadamer clarifies the meaning of the title *Truth and Method* in H.-G. Gadamer/C. Dutt, *Hans-Georg Gadamer in Gespräch*, hrsg. von C. Dutt, Universitätsverlag Winter, 1995², pp. 15-17.

[4] See H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, tr. by J. Weinsheimer and D.G. Marshall, Continuum, 2004 (= TM), pp. XX-XXI, here p. XXVI; S. Marino, "'Un altro sapere': la verità extrametodica dell'ermeneutica", in H.-G. Gadamer, *Che cos'è la verità. I compiti di un'ermeneutica filosofica*, S. Marino (ed.), Rubbettino, 2012, pp. 5-43, here pp. 7-8, 20-23.

[5] See D. Di Cesare: *Gadamer. A philosophical portrait*, tr. by N. Kiane, Indiana University Press, 2007, pp. 37-38.

neither a process nor a cognitive procedure, and knowing is rather a modality derived from understanding as an event. Hermeneutics aims to describe the truth that pertains to understanding, that is, a truth that "happens"[6]. Gadamer scrutinizes it by examining art, history, and language. At the end of his analysis, he reaches the conclusion that each understanding proceeds from a "fore-understanding", which contains the complex of one's own "prejudices".

3.   "Prejudices", that is, "fore-understanding"

Gadamer rehabilitates prejudices by criticizing the Enlightenment. If we look at the Latin word "*preiudicium*" and at its juridical use, then "prejudice" has neither a negative nor a positive meaning. It has acquired a negative connotation only since the Enlightenment, which it still has to this day, indicating an "unfounded judgment". The Enlightenment distinguished between two sources of pre- judices: "authority" and "overhastiness". Gadamer writes: "The division of prejudices into those of 'authority' and those of 'overhastiness' is obviously based on the fundamental presupposition of the Enlightenment, namely that methodologically disciplined use of reason can safeguard us from all error. This was Descartes' idea of method". Gadamer notices that "the division is based on a mutually exclusive antithesis between authority and reason"[7] because it sees authority inextricably linked with blind obedience, opposed to reason and freedom.

On the contrary, Gadamer connects authority with the acknowledgement "that the other is superior to oneself in judgment and insight and that for this reason his judgment takes precedence"[8]. Consequently, authority should be claimed and granted by a free and rational act. Gadamer writes: "Romanticism conceives of tradition as an antithesis to the freedom of reason and regards it as something historically given, like nature [...]. It seems to me, however, that there is no such unconditional antithesis between tradition and reason." In fact, traditions do not form and develop automatically, but require "to be affirmed, embraced, cultivated"[9] by those who are situated in them.

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[6] "*Vollzugswahrheit*" is the definition of the truth as unveiling of Being, which Gadamer gives in his conversation with Carsten Dutt (see H.-G. Gadamer/C. Dutt, *Hans-Georg Gadamer in Gespräch*, p. 63).

[7] TM, p. 279.

[8] TM, p. 281. See I.M. Fehér, "Prejudice and Pre-Understanding", in N. Keane/C. Lawn (eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to Hermeneutics*, Chichester, 2016, pp. 280-288.

[9] TM, p. 282. For this reason, the interpret does not have any power over the sense and he is always involved in a hermeneutical event (see A. Noveanu, *Arta interpretării-Dialogurile hermeneutice ale lui Hans-Georg Gadamer*, Editura Grinta, 2010, pp. 10-14, 38-41, 170-173).

Tradition passes on to us the concepts that we use to understand and take action: our fore-understanding, our pre-judices originate from tradition. Consequently, "pre-judices" is a term to take literally: it means just the implicit understanding that precedes judgement and makes it possible. "Pre-judices" stem from the tradition which one belongs to. For this reason, Gadamer stated: "The self-awareness of the individual is only a flickering in the closed circuits of historical life. *That is why the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgments, constitute the historical reality of his being.*"[10]

For Gadamer, rehabilitating prejudices does not mean praising prejudices. We can and should become conscious of our own prejudices. However much consciousness is critically trained, it can never be perfected. One of the reasons for it is that we belong to our tradition, which is why our prejudices continually modify: prejudices are the form that tradition takes in the field of understanding. On the one hand, we hear the voice from the past. On the other hand, we can participate in the dialogue of tradition by articulating these voices again and again. In this way we concretize the past, which exists only "in the multifariousness of such voices"[11]. It is within this dialogue that the production of meaning, explained by Gadamer with the aid of the concept of "effective history" (*Wirkungsgeschichte*), takes place.

4. "Effective history" and "fusion of horizons"

The expression "effective history" has not been invented by Gadamer. He inherits it from the literary criticism, which made use of it in the nineteenth century. "Effective history", in the literary field, refers to the auxiliary discipline that deals with the reception of a work. Every text, every event, takes on a new meaning and shows a new side, each time according to the expectations raised by the historical context, but also according to the previous interpretations. For Gadamer, "effective history" means not only the "history of effects" or reception of a work, because it has not only a passive sense, but also an active: history itself is acting, writing and inscribing the traces that make the past legible.[12] It is along this path that history

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[10] TM, p. 278.

[11] TM, p. 285.

[12] Because of this, Paul Ricœur reads the history as if it were a text and attaches great importance to the concept of "trace". Nevertheless, he does not neglect the "passive" aspect of the historical condition by supplementing the notion of "historically effected consciousness" with the concept of "being-affected by the past" (see P. Ricœur, *Time and Narrative*, tr. by K. Blamey and D. Pellauer, The University of Chicago Press, vol. 3: *Narrated Time*, 1988, pp. 216-240).

reaches us. The workings of history[13] penetrate us far more deeply than our consciousness can absorb.

This is what "effect" means: that history works above and beyond the consciousness we can have of it. For this reason, there is never a transparent and pure consciousness, but an awareness of history that always remains opaque and contaminated. With the expression "historically effected consciousness" (*wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein*), Gadamer means the awareness that we are produced, forged, and tormented by history.[14] More than acting, it seems to be a suffering, dragged and drawn into that "interplay" which Gadamer has described as the hermeneutic circle.[15] The most important effect produced by the working of history is to indicate the limit of modern consciousness, that is, the impossibility of self-consciousness. Therefore, instead of "being-conscious" (*bewusst-sein*), Gadamer chooses to speak of "being-vigilant" (*wachsam-sein*).[16]

With the concept of "vigilance" (or "alertness") it becomes possible to clarify what Gadamer means by the expression "fusion of horizons" (*Horizontverschmelzung*) that points out the way in which understanding happens. Situatedness means being bound to a point in time and space, which limits our vision. Gadamer states:

> "Horizon" characterizes the limit that moves with us when we move. Understanding can be seen as the encounter, inscribed into a particular historical constellation, between two horizons. One horizon fades into another and thus forms a movable horizon, which encompasses the depth of history out of which human life is lived and which can be defined as "heritage and tradition".[17]

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[13] "*Travail de l'histoire*" is the translation of "*Wirkungsgeschichte*" by Jean Grondin (of wohm see *L'universalité de l'herméneutique*, Presses Universitaires de France, 1993, p. 172). For it and for the related concept of "historically effected consciousness" see G. Gregorio, *Hans-Georg Gadamer e la declinazione ermeneutica della fenomenologia*, Rubbettino, 2008, pp. 225-227.

[14] See TM, p. 302.

[15] See TM, p. 293 and J. Grondin, "Entrare nel circolo ermeneutico significa anche volerne uscire", in *Logoi.ph*, vol. 9, no. 3, 2017, Mimesis, pp. 7-15, here pp. 13-15.

[16] Gadamer inherits from Heidegger the concept of "vigilance" (*Wachsamkeit*), which had been developed by means of an interpretation of this expression in *The first Letter of Paul to the Thessalonians*, 5, 6 (see M. Heidegger, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life* [*Collected Works* 60], tr. by M. Fritsch and J.A. Gosetti-Ferencei, Indiana University Press, 2010, pp. 73-74, 89).

[17] TM, p. 303. The concept of "fusion" has given rise to criticism because it may not sufficiently take into account the contrasts and difficulties inherent in any authentic confrontation. In this regard, Paul Ricœur notes that "against the *hubris* of total reflection" it is advisable to replace "the fusion of horizons" with "the receding" of them, "incompletion" (P. Ricœur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, tr. by K. Blamey and D. Pellauer, The University of Chicago Press, 2004, p. 413). Jaques Derrida has perhaps been the most famous critic of Gadamer. For the debate between the two see D.P. Michelfelder/R.E. Palmer (eds.), *Dialogue and deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, Suny, 1989.

In the fusion, both horizons (one's own and the other's) are changed. Gadamer writes: "Every finite present has its limitations. We define the concept of 'situation' by saying it represents a standpoint that limits the possibility of vision". Gadamer inherit the concept of "hermeneutical situation", that is, the situation in which one lives and the conditions of each understanding, from Heidegger.[18] Gadamer points out that a situation is always limited by its horizons. "Horizon" means a field that on the one hand limits vision, on the other allows one to see something from a certain point of view. Gadamer stated:

> Applying this to the thinking mind, we speak of narrowness of horizon, of the possible expansion of horizon, of the opening up of new horizons, and so forth. Since Nietzsche and Husserl, the word has been used in philosophy to characterize the way in which thought is tied to its finite determinacy, and the way one's range of vision is gradually expanded [...]. In the sphere of historical understanding, too, we speak of horizons, especially when referring to the claim of historical consciousness to see the past in its own terms, not in terms of our contemporary criteria and prejudices but within its own historical horizon. The task of historical understanding also involves acquiring an appropriate historical horizon, so that what we are trying to understand can be seen in its true dimensions.[19]

Nevertheless, this does not imply that "we must place ourselves in the other's situation in order to understand it." This requirement belonged to the historical school, to Dilthey and Droysen. Gadamer criticizes the historical school by stating:

> We think we understand when we see the past from a historical standpoint – i.e., transpose ourselves into the historical situation and try to reconstruct the historical horizon. In fact, however, we have given up the claim to find in the past any truth that is valid and intelligible for ourselves. Acknowledging the otherness of the other in this way, making him the object of objective knowledge, involves the fundamental suspension of his claim to truth. However, the question is whether this description really fits the hermeneutical phenomenon. Are there really two different horizons here – the horizon in which the person seeking to understand lives and the historical horizon within which he places himself?[20]

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[18] See M. Heidegger, "Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle: Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation", tr. by M. Baur, in *Man and World*, vol. 25, no. 3-4, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992, pp. 355-393, here p. 358. Gadamer refers to Heidegger's "fore-structure of understanding", which corresponds to the "fore-structure of Dasein itself", in TM, pp. 268-269.

[19] TM, pp. 301-302.

[20] TM, pp. 302-303.

The answer is negative.

> The historical movement of human life consists in the fact that it is never absolutely bound to any one standpoint, and hence can never have a truly closed horizon. The horizon is, rather, something into which we move and that moves with us [...]. The surrounding horizon is not set in motion by historical consciousness. But in it this motion becomes aware of itself. [...]. There is no more an isolated horizon of the present in itself than there are historical horizons which have to be acquired. *Rather, understanding is always the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves.*[21]

In this fusion, the false prejudices, which lead to misunderstanding, can be separated from the true prejudices, which are essential in understanding. The fusion of horizons turns the fore-understanding into the explicit understanding and converts it into interpretation. Moreover, the fusion applies what is understood to the specific situation of who understands. Gadamer depicts understanding, interpretation, and application not as separate but as constitutive moments of a unified process. Application does not simply come after, but is rather the cornerstone of understanding.[22] Gadamer's return to the concept of *applicatio*, which was put aside by traditional hermeneutics, marks an important turning point in the history of this discipline, since it reverses the hierarchical relationship between the cognitive value and practical value of understanding: it is the latter that now becomes important. As a consequence of this, Gadamer's hermeneutics shows itself to be a new kind of practical philosophy, upon which philosophical ethics can be founded.

5. Kant's normative ethics *versus* Aristotle's situational ethics

In the essay *Hermeneutics as Practical Philosophy* (1972) Gadamer emphasizes that understanding is all along acting, not only because it is inseparable from actions in the world and with others,[23] but also for the reason that it is a kind of act in itself. Consequently, the hermeneutic consciousness overcomes the limit of the subject to encounter the other in order to devote itself to ethical vigilance. Gadamer's path of thought was marked by ethics even prior to hermeneutics. Gadamer was confronted with Greek ethics as early as 1923, when he attended

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[21] TM, pp. 303-305.

[22] See TM, pp. 306-310 and D. Liakos, "'The Recovery of the Fundamental Hermeneutic Problem': Application and Normativity", in C.R. Nielsen/G. Lynch (eds.), *Gadamer's Truth and Method: A Polyphonic Commentary*, Rowman & Littelefield, 2022, pp. 165-185.

[23] See H.-G. Gadamer, *Reason in the Age of Science*, tr. by F. Lawrence, MIT Press, 1981, pp. 88-112.

Heidegger's famous seminar on the sixth book of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.[24] It was exactly Heidegger's interpretation of Aristotle that pushes the philosophical debate to focus on ethical issues and gave rise (primarily in Germany) to the "rehabilitation of practical philosophy".

In the essays entitled *On the possibility of a Philosophical Ethics* (1963) and *Aristotle and Imperative Ethics* (1989) Gadamer focuses on the "aporia" that appears when ethics, in order to become philosophical, reaches the level of a reflection on the universal. Philosophical ethics that aims to be unconditional and absolute is, however, ethics that is at a remove from life – as Kierkegaard showed – and separated from any concrete situation that would call for a decision.

The Kantian imperative ethics attests to this aporia. According to Kant's ethics, the rightness of moral action depends on an abstract norm. In fact, the categorical imperative states that one should always respect one's own duty. But this imperative does not specify what duty is in a particular situation. As part of this, Kant presumes that the moral law has already been recognized. In this way, moral action becomes an object, to which a method should be applied in order to rich objective knowledge. Gadamer criticizes that Kant's ethics neglects the particular situation of the person who has to take decisions before acting. This ethics remains empty and does not overcome the dualism theory/practice. On the contrary, Aristotle's ethics attempt to be another kind of knowledge, namely the knowledge that is at stake in life.

Gadamer reworks Aristotle's ethics in many writings, for instance in the 1930 essay *Practical Knowledge* and in the chapter on *The Hermeneutic Relevance of Aristotle* in *Truth and Method*.[25]

This chapter develops four crucial themes: practical actions are autonom and unrepeatable; *phrónesis* – which Gadamer translates with the word "reasonableness" – has a high moral value because it guides human behaviour; *èthos* should be taken into

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[24] It was just reading the sketch of Heidegger's earliest interpretation of Aristotle (included in "Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle") that drove Gadamer to go to the young lecturer in Freiburg (see Gadamer's statement in "Heideggers theologische Jugendschrift", in M. Heidegger, *Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles [Anzeige der hermeneutischen Situation]*, hrsg. von G. Neumann, Klostermann, 2013, pp. 67–75, here p. 69). For Heidegger's influence on Gadamer regarding the "primacy" of practical knowledge see A. Noveanu, "'The Sympathy of Experience with Life!' – Understanding practical knowledge from Heidegger to Gadamer and back", in *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai – Philosophia*, vol. 66, no. 2 Supplement, Cluj University Press, 2021, pp. 165-179.

[25] See TM, pp. 310-321 and for its relevance in view of the "Rehabilitation of practical philosophy" T. Gutschke, *Aristotelische Diskurse: Aristoteles in der politischen Philosophie des 20. Jahrhunderts*, J.B. Metzler, 2002, pp. 190, 200, 226-227.

consideration because ethical and political relations are the framework of action; the search for good happens by confronting the other and it culminates in the realization of practical good.

The "hermeneutic relevance" of Aristotelian ethics lies for Gadamer in the new paradigm offered by *phrónesis*. In the sixth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle defines *phrónesis* as a practical wisdom. It is that dianoetic virtue which is concerned with how to act in particular situations in order to achieve the aim of living well overall.[26] *Phrónesis* builds upon the *èthos* of a community[27] embodied in the *phronímōs* (the moral exemplar) and contributes to modifying this *èthos*. There is a dialogical relation between *èthos* (convictions, values, habits we all hold in common) and *phronímōs*. On the basis of the ethical order of the *pólis*, everyone acts in accordance with their *phrónesis* by virtue of articulating the *èthos* in light of the individual situation. One can, by recognizing what is "doable", what is both appropriate and right, take aim at the centre, actually finding the mean and achieving good, *prákton agathón*.

Gadamer stresses Aristotle's reference to responsibility not only to oneself, but also to the other, a responsibility included in *phrónesis*. *Phrónesis* leads to a decision involving consultation with the self that is always consultation with others. *Phrónesis* is inseparable from *synesis*, or sympathetic understanding, which makes it possible for one to grasp the action of the other. *Phrónesis* also involves *gnóme*, *syngnóme*, and *epeikeîa* (the ability to have insight and patience, to discriminate correctly, to enter into the situation of the other and thus to judge correctly).[28]

In *Truth and Method*, interpreting Aristotele's *phronesis*, Gadamer focusses especially on *synesis*. It realizes a transposition into the concrete situation of the one who must act in order to judge him correctly.[29] Gadamer gives the example of advice in

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[26] See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. by R. Crisp, Cambridge University Press, 2004, VI, 1140 a 24-1140 b 30, 1143 b 18-1144 a 35, pp. 106-108, 115-116. For Gadamer's rediscovery of this dianoetic virtue see R.M. Marafioti, *Heideggers und Gadamers Wiederentdeckung der φρόνησις*, Alber, 2022, pp. 71-119.

[27] Gadamer focuses on this circulare relationship in the essays "Praktisches Wissen" – in *Griechische Philosophie I* (*Gesammelte Werke* 5), Mohr Siebeck, 1985, pp. 243-248, here pp. 246-247 – and "Ethos und Ethik" – in *Neuere Philosophie I. Hegel – Husserl – Heidegger* (*Gesammelte Werke* 3), Mohr Siebeck, 1987, pp. 350-374, here p. 354. *Phrónesis* and ethical virtues are for Aristotle intrinsically linked (see Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VI, 1144 a 7-9, 1144 b 32-33, pp. 116, 118).

[28] See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VI, 1142 b 34-1143 b 17, pp. 113-115. Aristotle does not underline the importance of *synesis* for the interpersonal relationships, whereas Gadamer (and Ricœur) attributes an important social role to it (see D.H. Fisher, "Is *Phronēsis Deinon*? Ricoeur on Tragedy and *Phronēsis*", in F.J. Mootz III/G.H. Taylor [eds.], *Gadamer and Ricoeur*, Continuum, pp. 156-177, here p. 162).

[29] See TM, pp. 319-320.

"questions of conscience". In this kind of advice, he writes, "we discover that the person who is understanding does not know and judge as one who stands apart and unaffected but, rather, thinks along with the other from the perspective of a specific bond of belonging, as if he too were affected"[30]. The ability to have insight and patience, to discriminate correctly, to enter into the situation of the other and thus to judge correctly (*gnóme*, *syngnóme*, and *epeikeîa*), is possible only on the basis of that "belonging" which always already binds me to the other in the community.

6. Friendship and solidarity

The relevance of the relationship with others in philosophical hermeneutics has already emerged in the clarification of the fusion of horizons because this fusion culminates when a common language arises from dialogue. It is made clear by Gadamer (who takes inspiration from Aristotle) in several of his writings from the mid- 1980s onward, in which he defines the concept of "solidarity". For Gadamer, solidarity is a sign of a civic life together with friends, but also with fellow citizens and non-citizens. Solidarity arises without taking awareness of similarities or differences. It bounds people who are "other" to each other. Exposing Gadamer's concept of friendship before addressing his definition of solidarity could be helpful to understand it in depth.

In the essays *Friendship and Self-Knowledge: Reflection on the Role of Friendship in Greek Ethics* (1985) and *Friendship and Solidarity* (1999), Gadamer underlines that Greek thinkers have investigated friendship much more than modern philosophers.[31] The reason is that modern thought deals with the rational subject and its self-consciousness: friendship could only pique its interest if it had identified with a value, a belief or an acquirable virtue.[32] On the contrary, friendship is a good, although it cannot be bought or sold.[33]

Gadamer writes:

> So much is obvious; but it is just this which for Aristotle constitutes both ethics and politics together as practical philosophy. This was the first thing that needed to be worked out in opposition to the modern philosophy dominated by the primacy of self-consciousness. [...] Modern philosophy stated that the mind is at the core of society

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[30] TM, p. 320. See H.-G. Gadamer, *Reason in the Age of Science*, p. 132 (*synesis* in connection with understanding and learning), p. 133 ("only friends [...] can give advice").

[31] See H.-G. Gadamer, "Friendship and Solidarity", tr. by D. Vessey and C. Blauwkamp, in *Research in Phenomenology*, vol. 39, no. 1, 2009, Brill, pp. 3-12.

[32] See H.-G. Gadamer, *Hermeneutics, Religion, and Ethics*, tr. by J. Weinsheimer, Yale University Press, 1999 (= HRE), p. 117.

[33] See HRE, p. 131.

and state. But what did the Greeks, who had no such concept of science and of "mind", think about this? The fact that Plato could think of world, city, and soul all in one, and that Aristotle […] avoided narrowing it to an ethics of disposition, and placed alongside, makes Greek practical philosophy in many respects a paradigm for the critique of subjectivity that still occupies our thought today.[34]

Gadamer lingers on the free nature of friendship, which realizes itself by being shared and cannot be forced. Friendship, Gadamer asserts, is "bestowed on us"[35]. In the essay *The Ethics of Value and Practical Philosophy* (1982), he states:

> [F]riendship far surpasses the realm of moral responsibility for oneself – like all "goods". […] No more than love can friendship be summoned on demand. For these reasons, friendship reaches far beyond the pleasure experienced when an individual who gives himself to the other in *eros* and *philia* rises above the narrow sphere of self-concern.[36]

Living together and overcoming a mere friendliness,[37] friends develop a "reciprocal co-perception". In *Friendship and Self-Knowledge: Reflections on the Role of Friendship in Greek Ethics*, Gadamer writes: "The bond of love can be of such a kind that over the long term it turns into the bond of genuine friendship, and the same is true of business friends who form a lasting friendship, sometimes even for generations."[38] As long as they have been sharing experiences, friends learn to appreciate their similarities and differences. They also discover key features of their personalities (character, interests, emotional attitudes, worldview): they acquire self-knowledge, since "one recognizes oneself in others and the other recognizes itself in us"[39].

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[34] Ibid. In "Theory, Technology, Practice: The Task of the Science of Man", tr. by H. Brotz, in *Social Research*, vol. 44, no. 3, 1977, Hopkins Press, pp. 529-561, Gadamer admits the usefulness of information theory and machine technology in clarifying how consciousness functions. Nevertheless, he warns about their pretention "to *control* scientifically the organic and conscious life of man" (p. 534). Compared to Heidegger, Gadamer gains a deeper understanding of technology and shows how also technical reason could be advantageous for men. He considers cultural criticism to be "insincere" and not radical enough (see H.-G. Gadamer, *On Education, Poetry, and History: Applied Hermeneutics*, ed. by D. Misgeld and G. Nicholson, State University of New York Press, 1992 [= EPH], pp. 165-180).

[35] HRE, p. 117.

[36] Ibid. Gadamer has been interested in this topic since 1929. He remembers a few lines above his early essay "The Role of Friendship in Greek Ethics" (in HRE, pp. 128-141). For the Aristotelian conception see Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII, 1155 a-1163 b, pp. 143-163.

[37] See HRE, p. 134.

[38] Ibid.

[39] H.-G. Gadamer, "Friendship and Solidarity", p. 9. See M. Hofer, "Verstehen und Anerkennen: Zum Stellenwert der Freundschaft bei Hans-Georg Gadamer", in *Existentia*, vol. 12, no. 1-2, Societas Philosophia Classica, 2002, pp. 87-102.

The difference between friends is also important. The role of difference in philosophical hermeneutics leads to respecting those who are "others" than ourselves. Gadamer emphasizes that "the other is not my dominion and I am not sovereign"[40]. The other remind me that my own knowledge is limited and make me able to confront the truth.

Friendship, like solidarity, needs society. In the essay on *The Limitations of the Expert* (1967), by addressing the problem of the expertise required in politics, Gadamer notices the lack of solidarity in modern society: on the one hand, society has been increasingly fragmented due to bureaucracy, technology, and specialization; on the other hand, traditional unifying forces like religion weaken. Instead of contrast divisive drifts, politics supports processes which divides citizens. Gadamer writes: "Our public life appears to me to be defective in so far as there is too much emphasis upon the different and the disputed, upon that which is contested or in doubt." Therefore, "what we truly have in common and what unites us remains, so to speak without a voice"[41]. In the 1986 speech on *The Idea of the University – Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow*, dealing with forms of alienation peculiar to our world and with their manifestation, Gadamer further laments that it is "so unbelievably difficult just to discover an existing authentic solidarity" in the whole society.[42]

Nevertheless, Gadamer believes that bonds of solidarity are possible and they should be strengthened by keeping the focus on them. Gadamer invites the audience of *The Idea of the University – Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow,* to bring its own experience of solidarity to focal awareness.[43] He mentions solidarity among family ("nobody who has been embraced by a family for an extended time should discount that he has once known solidarity")[44] and between friends, colleagues, and people working at university. According to Gadamer, these forms of solidarity "anticipate" broader kinds of connection like fellow citizens and even "the grand universe of humanity, of all human beings".[45]

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[40] EPH, 233. See A. Noveanu, "Abstand – eine Fußnote. Zur Erfahrung des Anderen bei Hans-Georg Gadamer", in I. Copoeru/C. Bodea (eds.), *Time and Difference. In Honorem Virgil Ciomos on his 70th Anniversary*, Zeta Books, 2024, pp. 119-130.

[41] EPH, p. 192. For the interplay between life together, solidarity and ethical life see S. Marino, *Gadamer and the Limit of the Modern Techno-Scientific Civilization*, Lang, 2011, pp. 224-225.

[42] EPH, p. 59.

[43] See D. Walhof, *The democratic Theory of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

[44] EPH, p. 59.

[45] Ibid. In his later writings, despite his unconcern about the plurality of traditions in *Truth and Method*, Gadamer investigates the conditions of intercultural dialogue. The reason for the previous narrowness of his perspective is highlighted in C. Olay, "Die Überlieferung der Gegenwart und die Gegenwart der Überlieferung. Heidegger und Gadamer über Tradition", in *International Yearbook for Hermeneutics*, vol. 12, Mohr Siebeck, 2013, pp. 196-219.

Gadamer trusts the power of education. He writes:

> There is this chain of generations which pass through an institution, like the university, in which teachers and students meet and lose one another. Students become teachers and from the activity of the teachers grows a new teaching, a living universe [...]. I think this small academic universe still remains one of the few precursors of the grand universe of humanity, of all human beings, who must learn to create with one another new solidarities.[46]

Gadamer stresses the importance of politicians being well educated because they should lead society. He further asserts that politicians should not exploit differences during election campaigns; they have to enhance what unites citizens instead.[47] In the essay *The Limitations of the Expert*, he writes:

> [I]n the face of the loss of the unifying power of religion and of the churches, we must retrieve what has become a social task for us in the last centuries: to become aware of what unites us [...] in being responsible for our future and the future of our children and children's children. The actual consequence of the limitations of the expert is, it appears to me, that we recognize these limitations as our own. We need to acknowledge as our responsibility all that which is entailed by our decisions. This is a responsibility which cannot be shifted to the expert's shoulders.[48]

Gadamer presupposes that solidarity arises from what people living in the same community have in common. He closely connects solidarity with practice in the conclusion of the 1976 essay on *What Is Practice? The Conditions of Social Reason*.[49] Gadamer underlines that practical reason is crucial for distinguishing good from evil. Assumed that the basis of any judgement are costumes, norms, and habits shared in a community (the *èthos*), solidarity plays a decisive role in choosing what is right and good. Insofar every decision has repercussions on what influenced it, that is pre-understanding, pre-judices, choices are means of revision and renewal of individual and collective identities.[50]

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[46] EPH, p. 60.

[47] See EPH, p. 192.

[48] Ibid.

[49] See H.-G. Gadamer, *Reason in the Age of Science*, p. 87.

[50] Gadamer's notion of identity is used as hermeneutical key to interpret social phenomena in the "age of communication" by A.S. Davarpanah and M. Khanjarkhani in "A new narration of the concept 'identity' and method for teaching identification", in *Opción*, vol. 34, Especial no. 15, Universidad del Zulia, 2018, pp. 165-193.

7. Openness to the other: similarities and differences

Although solidarity could contribute to the satisfaction of public or shared interests, it cannot be reduced to a specific concern for the public good. Gadamer develops a conception of solidarity that does not imply any universal accounts. What binds people living in a specific community depends much more on factors related to a particular historical moment and a specific cultural and social framework than on a presumed universal human nature or reason. Under this point of view, Gadamer's concept of solidarity presents some similarities with that of Richard Rorty, which is briefly to be remembered.

For Rorty, solidarity cannot be founded on a "recognition of one another's common humanity"[51]. Rorty rejects such universal notions because they are abstract and insufficient for contrasting cruelty or pushing to charity. He claims that our concern for others strengthen when the other is considered "as 'one of us,' where 'us' means something smaller and more local than the human race". When in a particular historical context one is seen as part of me, then solidarity comes up.[52] This kind of bond stems from recognizing a certain identity with the other, thus it might be called "solidarity as identification".

This kind of solidarity appears in the most evident way between people with the same origin, race, ethnicity, religion. Rorty admits that his own approach is "ethnocentric", but he gives a new meaning to this word. His version of ethnocentrism implies the following: "To be ethnocentric is to divide the human race into people to whom one must justify one's beliefs and the others. The first group – one's ethnos – comprises those who share enough of one's beliefs to make fruitful conversation possible."[53] Not only does solidarity involve national, ethnic, religious differences, it also sets them below similarities "with respect to pain and humiliation", which ultimately take root in the radical contingency of the Self.[54]

Admitting my contingency is for Rorty the starting point for developing solidarity. Insofar as solidarity requires the capability of distancing from myself to make a step towards the other and to identify with him, solidarity need contingency: only if I recognize myself as "other" than the "others", can I seek to "be one" of the others. This "be one", that is, identification, is at the center of Rorty's theory, which

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[51] R. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity,* Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 189-191.

[52] Ibid., p. 191.

[53] R. Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 30. See M. Janack, "Rorty on Ethnocentrism and Exclusion", in *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, vol. 12, no. 3, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998, pp. 204-216.

[54] See R. Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, p. 192 and I.M. Fehér, "Irony and Solidary: Two Key Concepts of Richard Rorty", in *Philobiblion*, vol. 20, no. 1, Cluj University Press, 2015, pp. 175.

is why Gadamer cannot accept it without reservation. Gadamer criticizes Rorty's approach because it makes solidarity dependent on the recognition of similarities (and differences). For Rorty, solidarity arises from identification, and an awareness of similarities is needed to let it flourish. For Gadamer, in contrast, solidarity bounds through similarities and differences, which is why it underlies communities.

Therefore, Gadamer doesn't narrow down solidarity to a politics of recognition, unlike the most authors of the twenty-first century.[55]

Identity arises from the confrontation with others and thus presupposes plurality. Hannah Arendt deepens the concept of plurality in the book *The Human Condition* (1958), published two years before *Truth and Method*.[56] Like Gadamer, Arendt thinks that plurality could play a decisive role against technocratic and bureaucratic politics thanks to the interaction between citizens by means of pacific actions and political speeches.[57] However, she focuses on a kind of confrontation that allows one to know and respect the other, without underlining the importance of self-knowledge for encountering the other. In contrast, Gadamer is convinced that knowing yourself is the precondition for recovering what bounds us to each other.

Gadamer takes for granted that a solidarity bond already exists and that it is all about becoming aware of it in order to let it spread. He entrusts with this task a philosophy which also should teach "us to see the justification for the other's point of view and which thus makes us doubt our own."[58] In the essay *The Diversity of Europe: Inheritance and Future* (1985), Gadamer writes: "It is not easy to acknowledge that the other could be right, that oneself and one's own interests could be wrong. There is a beautiful religious essay by Kierkegaard *The Edification implied in the Thought that as against God we are always in the Wrong*. This solace, which is encountered here in a religious form, is in truth a basic constant that shapes our whole human experience. We must learn to respect others and otherness. This implies that we

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[55] For an overview see S. Thompson, *The Political Theory of Recognition: A Critical Introduction*, Polity, 2006. A wider sense of "recognition" is elaborated on the basis of the philosophical tradition in hermeneutic-phenomenological perspective by P. Ricœur, *The Course of Recognition*, tr. by D. Pellauer, Harvard University Press, 2005 (Ricœur mentions Gadamer on pp. 211-212).

[56] See H. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, tr. by M. Canovan, University of Chicago Press, 1998², p. 7: "The human condition of plurality" consists in "the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world".

[57] See H. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp. 320-325 – where Arendt describes "the victory of the *Animal Laborans*" in the modern society "of jobholders" that "demands of its members a sheer automatic functioning" (p. 322) – and Gadamer's "Notes on Planning for the Future" (in EPH, pp. 165-180), where Gadamer rejects the idea of "a universally regulated and rationally ordered world" (p. 166), in which politics has become administration. Such a global political order would favour only a political model to the detriment of the others. It would also oppose the occidental civilisation to alien traditions (see pp. 167-168).

[58] EPH, p. 152.

must learn that we could be wrong."[59] Understanding it lets us become able to increasingly widen our horizons and to pave the way for a kind of knowledge that is feeling and taking action at once. Gadamer arrives at this conclusion by making our past fruitful in today's world.

Indeed, in its path of thought, the concept of solidarity appears for the first time in *Truth and Method* amongst the leading humanist concepts, which are to be re-evaluated in view of defining the kind of knowledge proper to human life. By analysing the *sensus communis*, Gadamer writes: "The *sensus communis* is an element of social and moral being"[60], it is the sense that makes a community. *Sensus communis*, for Shaftesbury, is a "social virtue", and "ancient Roman concepts [...] include in *humanitas* a refined savoir vivre, the attitude of the man who understands a joke and tells one because he is aware of a deeper union with his interlocutor."[61] Solidarity is later connected to community feeling, which appears to be a "genuine moral and civic solidarity"[62]. Gadamer states:

> Judgment is not so much a faculty as a demand that has to be made of all. Everyone has enough "sense of the common" (*gemeinen Sinn*) – i.e., judgment – that he can be expected to show a "sense of the community" (*Gemeinsinn*), genuine moral and civic solidarity, but that means judgment of right and wrong, and a concern for the "common good".[63]

In one of his later essays, *From Word to Concept: The Task of Hermeneutics as Philosophy* (1995), Gadamer concludes that solidarity is needed for developing common convictions. Hence, understanding (which is led by solidarity) has a "world-political significance"[64] (*weltpolitische Bedeutung des Verstehens*). If "politics" is to be understood literally (it derives from Greek, from "*polis*", the wider sense of which means human interactions), the message that Gadamer conveys to us consists in the appeal to enhance our understanding by acting together and, conversely, to intensify our actions by understanding each other. Only in this way can we enrich ourselves and let truth happen.

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[59] EPH, p. 233.

[60] TM, p. 29.

[61] TM, p. 22.

[62] TM, p. 29.

[63] TM, pp. 28-29.

[64] H.-G. Gadamer, "From Word to Concept: The Task of Hermeneutics as Philosophy", in R.E. Palmer (ed. by), *The Gadamer Reader. A Bouquet of the Later Writings*, Northwestern University Press, 2007, pp. 108-120, here p. 118. See I.M. Fehér, "Verstehen bei Heidegger und Gadamer", in G. Figal/H.-H. Gander (Hrsg.), *Dimensionen des Hermeneutischen. Heidegger und Gadamer,* Klostermann, 2005, pp. 89-115, here pp. 113-115.

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Geoengineering Revisited in the Shadow of Climate Crisis and Technocratic Control

Radu SIMION[1]

ABSTRACT. Ten years after the publication of *The Ethics of Geoengineering: Perspectives from Romania*, I revisit the ethical and epistemological questions surrounding climate intervention technologies. In the meantime, geoengineering has moved from being a speculative concept to becoming a central element in climate policy discussions. I argue that this shift has not been driven by transparent public debate or broad scientific consensus. Rather, it results from a deeper process of normalization that increasingly portrays techniques like Solar Radiation Management as rational and even necessary responses to the climate crisis. This framing is rooted in a technocratic worldview that prioritizes control, modeling, and predictive planning, often at the expense of ethical inquiry, democratic engagement, and respect for ecological complexity. I believe that the dominant assumptions shaping geoengineering foster a vision of governance where preparedness is mistaken for legitimacy, and responsibility is reduced to procedural compliance. As a result, critical questions about authority, knowledge systems, and the future we choose to pursue are frequently marginalized or deferred. In response, I advocate for a different ethical framework, one that emphasizes epistemic humility, justice across generations, inclusive co-design, and recognition of multiple ways of understanding the world. Geoengineering, in my view, is not a neutral technological fix but a manifestation of modernity's drive to impose order in response to planetary uncertainty. An adequate ethical approach must go beyond measurements and institutional procedures to question the kind of planetary future we are creating, whose voices are included, and which values guide our decisions in times of crisis.

Keywords: geoengineering, environmental ethics, intergenerational justice, procedural ethics, moral responsibility.

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1.   A Decade Later- **Rethinking the Ethics of Climate Intervention**

It has now been a decade since I published *The Ethics of Geoengineering: Perspectives from Romania* (2015)[2], one of the first theoretical reflections on geoengineering from the perspective of environmental ethics to emerge within the Romanian scholarly context. At the time, geoengineering remained largely embedded within the speculative domains of climate modeling and technoscientific anticipation, occupying a conceptual space suspended between hypothetical necessity and institutional hesitation. My intellectual curiosity around this topic was not only shaped by philosophical concerns, but was also deeply sustained by the emergence of the first serious warnings regarding the alarming trajectories of the global climate, warnings that, even then, were more than abstract projections. They pointed toward risks that, far from being speculative, are now unfolding as concrete realities that impact societies across the planet. From the outset, my interest extended beyond assessing the technical feasibility of intervening in Earth systems, and focused instead on the underlying epistemic and moral assumptions that drive the very impulse to intervene. This impulse is far from ideologically neutral; it reflects a worldview in which ecological complexity is treated as governable, planetary fragility is rendered operational, and the Earth is interpreted primarily through the lens of models, protocols, and risk-managed possible futures. Seen through this lens, geoengineering appears not merely as a proposed response to climate change, but as a cultural expression of modernity's enduring aspiration for planetary control, an aspiration that conflates governance with mastery and transforms crisis into a design challenge to be engineered rather than a condition to be ethically confronted.

Over the past ten years, ideas that were once considered marginal or even controversial have slowly moved to the very core of climate policy. This shift did not happen because of major scientific discoveries or because people reached broad democratic agreement, but rather through a gradual change in how we talk and think about geoengineering. As Bellamy and Healey (2018) explain, this process, called "discursive normalization", has made previously unthinkable solutions seem more acceptable.[3] The way we speak about large-scale interventions in the climate has moved away from a cautious, ethics-focused language and toward a more practical, action-oriented one. Solar Radiation Management (hereafter referred to as SRM), in particular, has returned to public discussions under the more neutral

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[2]   Simion, Radu. 2015. "The Ethics of Geoengineering: Perspectives from Romania." *Annals of the University of Bucharest – Philosophy Series* 64 (2): 27–43.

[3]   Bellamy, Rob, and Justin Healey. 2018. "Slippery Slopes and Steep Cliffs: Intervention Intensity, Decision-Making Heuristics and Moral Judgements of Climate Engineering." *Global Environmental Change* 49: 10–18.

label of "climate emergency response." It is now often presented as a temporary safety measure, something that could help buy time while we struggle to reduce emissions through other means.[4] But this new framing is not just a change in vocabulary; it shapes how SRM is perceived, making it seem like a logical and even necessary tool in the larger system of climate planning. At the center of this shift lies something deeper: a change in how we understand the role of these technologies. Even though SRM and similar ideas have not progressed enough to be implemented in the real world, they have become more "real" in another sense- through their constant presence in climate models, future scenarios, and strategic policy documents. These imagined futures give the technologies a kind of unofficial legitimacy, positioning them as tools of early planning that can guide decisions before they even exist. As Dannenberg and Zitzelsberger point out, even experts in climate science are more likely to support geoengineering when they feel personally threatened by climate risks.[5] This suggests that the language of emergency does not solve ethical doubts; it simply shifts the conversation so that quick action feels more acceptable, regardless of unresolved moral questions. When urgency takes over, ethical reflection often gets pushed aside. What once seemed morally unacceptable can quickly become politically reasonable, not because it is safer or fairer, but because our range of choices has been narrowed to whatever seems technically possible.

Behind the calm and calculated tone of today's technocratic approach to geoengineering lies a far more complicated moral landscape, one where fundamental questions about legitimacy, responsibility, and global ethics are increasingly marginalized in favor of technical thinking and procedural planning. In earlier debates, the focus was on whether it is morally acceptable to interfere with the Earth's climate at all, and whether such actions could violate the integrity of natural systems or undermine the principles of environmental justice. Today, however, these deeper ethical concerns are often set aside, replaced by discussions about how to manage risk, build regulatory systems, and prepare for future implementation. The debate has shifted from ethics to technical policy-making, where scenarios for deploying these technologies are based more on probability models than on public dialogue or democratic reflection (Bellamy and Healey 2018).[6]

This shift in how we talk and think about geoengineering is not just an abstract change in academic language. It is closely tied to new strategies that deliberately reduce public criticism. As Low, Sovacool, and Baum (2022) explain, geoengineering

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[4] Dannenberg, Astrid, and Sonja Zitzelsberger. 2019. "Climate Experts' Views on Geoengineering Depend on Their Beliefs About Climate Change Impacts." *Nature Climate Change* 9 (10): 745–749.

[5] *Ibid.*, 747.

[6] Bellamy, Rob, and Justin Healey. 2018. "Slippery Slopes and Steep Cliffs: Intervention Intensity, Decision-Making Heuristics and Moral Judgements of Climate Engineering.", 14-15.

is now often wrapped in what they call "soft camouflage", a set of tactics that include labeling research as harmless "basic science," presenting SRM trials as purely exploratory, or avoiding politically sensitive terms like "geoengineering" altogether.[7] These moves are not accidental or neutral. They reflect a deeper effort to remove politics from the picture, separating scientific research from its real-world consequences and postponing serious ethical discussions until the moment of actual deployment, by which time it may be too late. This strategy has had another important effect: it has moved the debate over ethics away from public spaces into closed, expert-dominated circles. This trend can lead to a conceptual box, where only certain ways of thinking, especially those focused on cost-benefit analysis or managing climate risks, are seen as valid. At the same time, the number and diversity of people who have a say in shaping the future of geoengineering remains limited, often excluding those communities that are most vulnerable to its ecological and political consequences.

Even though the public debate around geoengineering has become narrower and more expert-driven, public opinion remains deeply divided. Technologies like carbon dioxide removal are often presented in a positive light, as tools that can strengthen existing efforts to reduce emissions. In contrast, SRM continues to raise serious doubts among many people. Studies show that SRM is commonly associated with interfering in natural systems, creating risks of moral irresponsibility, and deepening global inequalities, not just in terms of who is exposed to harm, but also in who gets to decide.[8] These concerns are not simply the result of a lack of scientific knowledge. Rather, they express a deeper ethical position, one that rejects the idea of treating the Earth as a giant experiment, especially when decisions are made without real public participation. As Cox, Pidgeon, and Capstick (2018) have shown, how people view geoengineering has less to do with technical facts and more to do with their values: how they see nature, how they understand political responsibility, and how they relate to future generations.[9] This challenges the common assumption in science communication that opposition comes from ignorance. Instead, what we see is that public responses are shaped by broader concerns about fairness, power, and historical injustice. People are not just asking

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[7] Low, Sean, Chad M. Baum, and Benjamin K. Sovacool. 2022. "Rethinking Net-Zero Systems, Spaces, and Societies: 'Hard' versus 'Soft' Alternatives for Nature-Based and Engineered Carbon Removal." *Global Environmental Change* 75: 8.

[8] Mahajan, Ashwin, Dustin Tingley, and Gernot Wagner. 2019. "Beliefs about Climate Beliefs: The Importance of Second-Order Opinions for Climate Politics." *British Journal of Political Science* 49 (3): 1279–1307.

[9] Cox, Emily, Nick Pidgeon, and Stuart Capstick. 2018. "Public Perceptions of Carbon Dioxide Removal in the United States and the United Kingdom." *Nature Climate Change* 8 (11): 928–936.

whether these technologies work; they're asking who benefits, who decides, and what kind of future is being built.

Despite this, the ways in which the public is included in geoengineering decisions are still limited and often superficial. Many current engagement efforts are designed more to build support than to allow for real debate. They often assume that geoengineering is inevitable, leaving little room for alternative ideas, such as focusing on reducing consumption, restoring ecosystems, or changing political and economic systems.[10] Public input in these cases is often treated as a tool for communication or institutional approval, rather than as a meaningful opportunity to shape or challenge the direction of climate action. Because of these dynamics, geoengineering remains caught in a state of confusion in terms of knowledge and political direction. It exists in a space where action is increasingly encouraged without clear public agreement, and where new technologies are developed without strong democratic legitimacy. From an ethical perspective, this is a troubling situation. What may appear to be a logical and forward-thinking path of technological development is, in reality, filled with deep unresolved tensions- both about how we understand the world and about the values we choose to prioritize. Geoengineering is not unfolding as a clearly defined project with specific goals and transparent rules, but rather, as Mike Hulme (2014) describes, as a *technopolitical imaginary*, a kind of speculative framework where possible planetary futures are imagined, rehearsed, and governed in advance, through simulations, institutional routines, and infrastructure planning.[11]

The status of geoengineering remains fundamentally unstable. These technologies are not fully real, yet they are no longer entirely imaginary either. They occupy a strange in-between space, a kind of exception zone, where the usual standards of caution, responsibility, and democratic oversight are set aside in favor of experimental thinking and governance through imagined scenarios. In this space, ethical questions are not directly answered but rather replaced by simulations and technical modeling. This leads to a culture of governance where ethical reflection is not absent, but becomes secondary, less about moral debate and more about managing uncertainty, which makes it harder to truly challenge or rethink the direction we're heading. For these reasons, this article suggests that geoengineering should not be viewed as just another technological option on the table. Instead, it should be seen as a symptom of a larger cultural and political condition, what might be called *planetary*

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[10] Burns, Elizabeth T., Diana M. Rhoten, Aarti Gupta, and David W. Keith. 2016. "Politics of Participation in Climate Engineering Research." *Nature Climate Change* 6 (6): 562–566.

[11] Hulme, Mike. 2014. *Can Science Fix Climate Change? A Case Against Climate Engineering.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

modernity, marked by unequal risks, contested ideas of knowledge, and fundamental uncertainties about how we relate to the Earth. Rather than simply asking whether geoengineering can work or how it might be safely managed, the more important question is this: what cultural beliefs, knowledge systems, and institutions make geoengineering seem like a reasonable idea in the first place?

In the second section, I explore how ethical and knowledge-related perspectives on geoengineering have changed over time, tracing a movement away from simplified, control-driven models toward more relational approaches that take into account the complexity of systems and interconnections. The third section focuses on the global politics of intervention, examining how imbalances in power, vulnerability, and authority over knowledge influence who gets to decide, who is most affected, and how legitimate those decisions truly are. In the fourth section, I turn to alternative ethical perspectives that go beyond the usual technical and managerial thinking, drawing inspiration from ideas such as ecological care, humility in the face of uncertainty, and the recognition that there are multiple ways of understanding the world and our place within it. Looking at geoengineering today should not be limited to improving climate models or updating policy strategies. It calls for a deeper reconsideration of the ethical foundation of climate action itself. It invites us to ask, clearly and collectively, what kind of world we want to build, what values we are prepared to defend, and how we choose to live within the limits and uncertainties of a shared planet. The authors referenced throughout this article were chosen because of the depth and relevance of their contributions to the ongoing conversations about geoengineering, environmental ethics, and the broader philosophical questions raised by emerging technologies. This list is not intended to be complete. Geoengineering is a field marked by both theoretical richness and real-world complexity, with significant work taking place across many disciplines and regions. Due to the natural limits of access, especially to regionally published studies or non-mainstream materials, this article does not aim to capture every viewpoint. Instead, it focuses on presenting some of the most influential ideas that have shaped the ethical and political discussion on geoengineering in the last ten years.

2. From Reductionism to Systemic Responsibility

The ideas that shape how we understand and justify geoengineering today are not new, nor are they free from ideological influence. As Schubert (2022) explains, they come from what he calls the *science–state dispositif*, a long-standing alliance between scientific institutions and state power that took form during the Cold War and evolved through systems designed to measure the planet, simulate its behavior, and anticipate future threats. This close relationship brought together

atmospheric science, military research, and the early stages of digital technology, forming a kind of expert-driven framework that treated scientific knowledge as a tool not just for understanding the world, but for managing it in the name of national or global security.[12] In this way of thinking, knowledge is not something that follows action; it comes first, shaping the conditions in which action appears necessary, justified, and even inevitable.

The roots of this way of approaching the climate can be found in early weather modification efforts like Project Cirrus and Project Stormfury, which were launched in the mid-1900s as joint ventures between science and the military.[13] Although these projects did not produce reliable or repeatable results, they played an important role in shaping attitudes toward the atmosphere. They helped establish the belief that weather systems could, at least in theory, be controlled through the right mix of data, simulations, and expert planning. The Cold War did not just bring new technologies, but introduced a new way of thinking, one in which the global environment was no longer just something to observe, but something that could be shaped and managed for strategic purposes. The way of thinking about weather and climate during the Cold War was closely tied to the geopolitical goals of that era. Efforts to modify the weather were not just aimed at helping agriculture or reducing the damage caused by storms. They were also imagined as tools of power, methods for gaining strategic advantage over enemies, influencing populations, or controlling natural systems in regions formerly colonized.[14] This mindset treated nature not as something humans are part of or connected to, but as a resource to be controlled and programmed. These ideas were not passing fantasies. They laid the foundation for today's ways of thinking about climate engineering, in which planetary systems are seen through the lens of long-term stability, technical efficiency, and strategic planning for the future. This way of imagining control over the planet (technopolitical imaginary), is still present in how we design climate models and make policy decisions today. In this context, simulation is no longer just a helpful tool to explore possibilities.[15] It becomes a powerful method that shapes what futures seem possible or acceptable, even before any action is taken. Through climate models, imagined scenarios, and projections, the future is turned into something that can be managed. Once an outcome is predicted, it begins to look legitimate. In this

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[12] Schubert, Christian. 2022. "Science–State Alliances and Climate Engineering: A Longue Durée Picture." *WIREs Climate Change* 13 (6): 790.

[13] Edwards, Paul N. 2010. *A Vast Machine: Computer Models, Climate Data, and the Politics of Global Warming.* Cambridge: MIT Press: 260-267.

[14] *Ibid.*, 264-267.

[15] Schubert, "*Science–State Alliances and Climate Engineering: A Longue Durée Picture.*" 787.

system, making forecasts becomes a way of exercising control. Simply put, planning becomes a form of governance.

This whole process depends heavily on what we might call the aesthetics of control- the persuasive power of graphs, maps, charts, and computer-generated images. These visual tools don't just show data, they give it authority. They influence how both policymakers and the general public imagine the future. For example, a graph showing possible climate outcomes might look objective, but it also suggests which futures are acceptable and which are not. The "cone of uncertainty" (a diagram often used in weather prediction) becomes not just a warning, but a moral excuse for certain decisions. A graph showing emissions paths may be read like a map for navigation. A risk curve can quietly define what levels of danger we are willing to tolerate. But behind these clean images is a system built on simplifying assumptions. It often hides disagreement, ignores complexity, and transforms open-ended futures into ones that look predictable and manageable. Understanding where this way of thinking comes from is not just a matter of historical interest. It helps us see the deeper mindset behind how geoengineering is discussed today, a mindset built on the belief that we can anticipate and control the future, that we can act on the climate before we fully understand how deeply interconnected and socially complex it really is. As I see it, this history also shows how decision-making about the planet is often handed over to models and expert panels, rather than being guided by public debate or shared moral values. In other words, governance becomes based more on prediction than on participation.

This background is crucial for understanding why geoengineering has gained traction. The idea that we can cool the planet by reflecting sunlight (through SRM), or that we can engineer new ways to absorb carbon from the atmosphere (through Carbon Dioxide Removal), is not based only on physical science. It also relies on a long-standing belief that the climate system can be controlled if we just have the right data and tools. That belief has been reinforced over decades, not through real-world testing, but through repeated modeling and simulation. So geoengineering today is not just a new set of tools, but is rather a part of a much older dream: to make the Earth understandable, manageable, and subject to human design. As I argued in earlier work, this approach comes from what can be called a *reductionist knowledge culture*- a way of thinking that breaks the planet down into separate pieces that can be measured and manipulated.[16] This is not just a shortcut for analysis; it's a deep shift in perspective that makes climate intervention seem both possible and necessary. Concepts like atmosphere, sunlight reflection (albedo), heat trapping (radiative forcing), or carbon storage are each modeled as isolated systems,

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[16] Simion, "*The Ethics of Geoengineering: Perspectives from Romania*" , 29-30.

disconnected from the larger web of relationships that include ecosystems, social histories, and political structures. But when we gain clarity through simplification, we often lose sight of the ethical and ecological complexity that really matters. This way of modeling the world reflects what Paul Edwards calls a closed-world paradigm-a method of thinking inherited from Cold War science, which assumes that complex systems like the climate can be treated like machines, with inputs, outputs, and feedback loops. However, to make the math work, such models often rely on parameter insulation, a technique where unstable or unpredictable parts of the system are artificially held constant. The result is a smooth, simulated version of the world, where everything looks governable, even though the real, messy world often refuses to behave so neatly.

The narrowing of perspective caused by this type of modeling has been further reinforced by how deeply it has become embedded in institutions. Climate models today no longer just offer support for decision-making, they actively define what is seen as possible, reasonable, or acceptable policy. The future, once imagined and simulated in these models, becomes a guide for action. But these models do more than just predict risks, they also carry with them hidden assumptions about politics, science, and ethics. Because these assumptions are often invisible to those outside expert circles, simulation gains a kind of authority of its own. In this context, if something is not included in the model, it effectively disappears from the list of things that can be governed. Within this way of thinking, even uncertainty is treated differently. It is no longer seen as a signal to be cautious or a reason to question our knowledge. Instead, uncertainty becomes just another variable, something to measure, manage, and factor into planning. It gets translated into probabilities, built into decision trees, or absorbed into flexible planning strategies. This shift may seem small, but it changes everything: instead of asking "what don't we know?", the question becomes "how can we limit the risks of not knowing?"

But treating uncertainty this way comes with serious ethical consequences. As Biermann (2022) points out, the growing acceptance of solar geoengineering is not because we now know more or have stronger evidence. Rather, it reflects a change in the rules of how knowledge is used.[17] We are moving away from ethical discussions that focus on public debate, caution, and disagreement, and toward a more procedural mindset where legitimacy is defined by whether institutions are ready and plans look optimized on paper. The idea of climate emergency helps push speculative technologies forward, even before political or moral debates are resolved. As a result, serious ethical questions are reframed as technical problems to be managed. The conversation subtly shifts, from asking "should we do this?" to "how would we

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[17] Biermann, Frank. 2022. "Solar Geoengineering: The Case for an International Non-Use Agreement." *WIREs Climate Change* 13 (1): 754.

do it?", from rejecting a risky path to regulating it, from questioning the premise to fine-tuning the details.

What is really at stake here is not just the future of a particular technology, but the very way we make ethical decisions. When simulation replaces real discussion, and when ideas like resilience are no longer connected to fairness or justice, climate governance starts to lose its moral depth. Geoengineering stops being treated as a controversial option that demands public reflection and becomes something that feels inevitable, just one more item in the policy toolbox, justified not by public agreement, but because it fits into the models and aligns with existing plans. In today's policy and research environment, geoengineering technologies are often treated as real and legitimate not because they are fully developed or tested, but because they are included in plans for the future. This process, sometimes called epistemic anticipation, means that the idea of these technologies gains credibility simply by being present in official documents, such as climate policy roadmaps, funding programs, simulation platforms or institutional reports. This appearance of readiness does not come from broad agreement between scientists, engineers, and society. Instead, it is built through repeated alignment between scientific narratives, policy expectations, and financial interest.[18] The more often these ideas are repeated in planning documents and research agendas, the more "real" and inevitable they start to seem, regardless of how ready they actually are.

This leads to a situation where the notion of deploying geoengineering technologies comes before their technical feasibility. What begins as speculative modeling or scenario planning slowly transforms into what McLaren and Corry (2021) describe as ontological staging- a process in which political and institutional imagination is prepared for a future that has not yet happened, but is already being justified and normalized. This preparation doesn't just happen through academic texts or projected scenarios; it takes shape through concrete actions like launching research programs, creating funding channels, conducting ethics reviews, or organizing small-scale experiments, all of which help establish geoengineering as a serious and actionable part of current climate policy.[19] But this future-focused logic does more than open up new possibilities. As I previously argued, evaluating geoengineering only in terms of risk or cost-benefit analysis is not enough. These tools are based on the assumption that the world is stable and that technology simply modifies inputs and outputs. But geoengineering does more than tweak the system, it reshapes

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[18] Schubert, "*Science–State Alliances and Climate Engineering: A Longue Durée Picture.*" 762.

[19] McLaren, Duncan P., and Olaf Corry. 2021. "The Politics and Governance of Research into Solar Geoengineering." *WIREs Climate Change* 12 (6): 707.

the very world it intervenes in, along with the concepts, values, and frameworks we use to understand it.[20]

For this reason, a truly ethical approach must begin not with calculations of impact, but with a deeper examination of the assumptions that make such interventions seem logical or acceptable in the first place. We must ask: Who decides what counts as a "global risk"? What visions of the world are built into the models and simulations we use? Which perspectives and values are left out of the decision-making structures? If we fail to ask these questions, we risk falling into a kind of false neutrality, an ethics that looks impartial on the surface but is actually disconnected from power, politics, and justice. In such cases, ethics becomes more about following procedures than about truly reflecting on what kind of future we want to create. In the end, asking critical questions about how we come to "know" geoengineering means uncovering the deeper structures that make it seem like a reasonable or even necessary option. These structures, made up of knowledge systems and institutional authority, do not simply reflect the world as it is. Instead, they actively shape the kinds of futures that appear governable and worth pursuing. They influence not only what actions are technically possible, but also what is seen as logical, urgent, or inevitable. In doing so, they limit space for disagreement, reduce the diversity of viewpoints, and often bypass meaningful public debate. Under the banner of planning for the future, we risk accepting a future that has already been designed in advance by the very systems meant to explore it.

The ways in which geoengineering is imagined and made thinkable go far beyond simplified climate models. They are upheld by a broader network of expert systems and technologies- such as simulation tools, forecasting platforms, risk metrics, scenario planning models, and advisory committees, which create the impression that we understand and can manage the planet's complex dynamics.[21] These tools do not just describe reality; they help reshape it into something that looks manageable. They turn uncertainty into something that can be measured, categorized, and controlled. Through the repeated use of numbers, graphs, and future scenarios, the climate itself is turned into a system that seems predictable and open to intervention. But this is simply an illusion of prediction, a false belief that if we can simulate the future or run enough probabilistic models, we can make legitimate decisions based on them, even when the science is still uncertain. This belief doesn't come from having clear, tested results. Instead, it comes from the pressure of institutions that need to act, make plans, and justify decisions in a context marked by urgency and

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[20] Simion, 2015, 33.

[21] Low, Sean, Benjamin K. Sovacool, and Cassidy M. Baum. 2024. "Taking it Outside: Exploring Social Opposition to 21 Early-Stage Experiments in Radical Climate Interventions." *Energy Research & Social Science* 90: 3.

competition over whose knowledge counts. In such an environment, the ability to present a coherent vision of the future becomes a kind of power in itself, giving models influence even when the systems they describe are fragile or speculative.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the growing attention given to SRM. The fact that SRM is now regularly included in climate discussions is not because it has been proven to work, or because there is broad agreement on its use. Instead, its visibility comes from the belief that it could deliver major climate effects at relatively low cost. In this logic, what matters is not ethical depth or long-term justice, but whether something can be measured, priced, or built into a system. This way of thinking favors abstract economic calculations and tends to ignore place-based knowledge, local values, or questions of fairness. This way of framing the conversation is especially visible in discussions about Stratospheric Aerosol Injection (SAI), a geoengineering method that involves spraying tiny particles into the upper atmosphere to reflect sunlight and cool the planet. The debate around SAI often focuses narrowly on questions like how easy it would be to deploy, how far the particles would spread, and whether the benefits would outweigh the costs. What I consider largely missing from these discussions are deeper ethical concerns: questions about who gets to decide, how global power imbalances affect climate decisions, and how non-Western ways of understanding the environment are excluded from the conversation. As shown by Low and colleagues (2024), studies of public opinion reveal that this kind of technocratic thinking, focused on technical performance and efficiency, tends to ignore or override people's concerns about fairness, representation, and responsibility for past harms. One of the most politically sensitive issues linked to geoengineering is what's called the *mitigation deterrence effect.* This refers to the fear that if geoengineering seems like a backup plan, it will weaken the push for cutting emissions in the first place.[22] This is not just a theoretical worry. Many studies and international consultations reflect the same concern. In focus groups held across countries in the Global South, participants often expressed skepticism or discomfort. Some saw geoengineering as a short-term fix that might buy time for poorer countries still dealing with poverty and weak infrastructure. Others saw it as a way for wealthier nations, the ones most responsible for climate change, to shift the risks and burdens onto communities that are already suffering from rising temperatures, droughts, or flooding.

These perspectives challenge the idea that scientific expertise is neutral or universally accepted. They reveal that geoengineering is not seen by all as a fair or inclusive solution to the climate crisis. Instead, it can appear as a tool shaped by

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[22] Low et al. 2024, 14-16.

unequal power dynamics, a strategy designed and promoted by the most influential actors, often without consulting or even acknowledging those who would be most affected by its consequences. Rather than being a shared global effort, geoengineering emerges here as a political and knowledge-based system that tends to exclude the voices of the vulnerable. There are also new and increasingly popular ideas that combine advanced technologies like blockchain with geoengineering strategies such as SRM and CDR. These proposals suggest that emissions control could be coordinated globally using automated systems, specifically, through tools like smart contracts and distributed digital ledgers. The goal is to synchronize climate actions across different regions and timeframes by coding them into programmable sequences, essentially turning planetary governance into something that can be managed by algorithms and automated transactions.[23] At first glance, this may seem like an innovative way to increase efficiency. But what stands out is the deeper assumption behind this approach: *the belief that global agreement can be written into code, that uncertainty can be solved through technical compatibility, and that difficult ethical questions can be avoided by turning them into precise rules and contracts.* This model assumes a level of technological uniformity and institutional stability that does not reflect the real world, especially in the countries where resources, infrastructures, and governance capacities vary greatly. As a result, questions of justice, representation, and democratic input are pushed to the side. What matters instead is whether the system works smoothly at a technical level, even if it excludes the very people most affected by the decisions being automated.

In this way, the logic behind geoengineering goes beyond simply breaking the world into smaller, manageable parts. It actively builds a reality in which only those futures that can be calculated and controlled are seen as viable. Ethical coherence or democratic legitimacy become secondary, while computability becomes the primary condition for action. Scenarios, instead of helping us imagine a range of possible futures, begin to narrow our options, ruling out anything that cannot be easily measured, modeled, or programmed. Geoengineering, then, becomes something in-between: not fully real, not fully imagined. It occupies a kind of grey zone where the usual rules of responsibility and democratic oversight no longer apply. In this space, scientific modeling starts to replace moral thinking. Political decisions are reduced to technical infrastructure. Disagreement is reinterpreted as a risk to be minimized. And the principle of caution (so important when dealing with uncertainty), is seen as a barrier to innovation rather than a safeguard.

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[23] Lockley, Andrew, Jian Mi, and David Coffman. 2019. "Integrating Blockchain and Smart Contracts into Geoengineering Governance." *Futures* 109: 37–48.

In my interpretation of these phenomena, what we're witnessing here is more than a debate about technology. It's a transformation in how ethics itself is structured. Responsibility becomes blurred or spread thin across systems, disciplines, and timelines. In some cases, it is automated altogether. Instead of asking what is right or fair, we risk asking only what is technically possible. If epistemology is about what counts as valid knowledge, and governance is about how decisions are made and actions are taken, then questioning the way we produce knowledge is already an ethical act. To truly evaluate geoengineering, we must look beyond the surface and examine the deeper structures that make it seem like a plausible solution in the first place. This means paying attention to the assumptions built into climate models, the blind spots created by how risks are framed, the inequalities present in data collection systems, and the speculative tools used to justify future interventions in the name of climate security.[24] A strong ethical approach to geoengineering should not begin by asking how we should govern these technologies. It should start with a more fundamental question: who decides the rules of governance, and whose knowledge, values, and visions of the future are included (or excluded) from that process? What we need is not just more caution or better procedures. We need epistemic justice, a way of thinking that takes seriously which types of knowledge are valued, who produces them, and how they shape the future we imagine as possible or acceptable. This leads us to a striking paradox: geoengineering claims to bring stability to a planet in crisis, yet it relies on systems of knowledge and forecasting that are themselves unstable, incomplete, and shaped by political interests. When interventions are built into models and long-term projections, there is a risk that ethical reflection gets replaced by procedural rules, and that decisions about the planet's future are reduced to calculations about what can be simulated or optimized. If we accept that knowledge is never neutral, then the ethics of new technologies must start by asking who controls that knowledge and how it is used.

Recognizing this calls for a shift from simply criticizing the way knowledge is used in geoengineering to actively proposing what ethical frameworks should guide it. It's no longer enough to ask how geoengineering became thinkable. We must also ask how it should be governed, and based on which ethical commitments. That is why, in the next section, I propose we look at the politics behind intervention and begin to outline a possible ethical framework, a set of guiding principles, limitations, and shared responsibilities for acting in a world where climate, politics, and our understanding of reality are all intertwined.

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[24] McLaren, Duncan P., and Olaf Corry. 2021. "The Politics and Governance of Research into Solar Geoengineering." *WIREs Climate Change* 12 (6): 719.

3. **From Technical Legitimacy to Political Responsibility**

If in the past climate engineering seemed like a distant idea, limited to speculative scenarios, futuristic speculation, or academic thought experiments, it has now moved to the center of political thinking about how to manage the climate crisis. This shift has happened quickly, but it has not been matched by an equally strong effort to build democratic legitimacy or reach broad ethical agreement. Instead of emerging through public discussion and debate, geoengineering has gone from being a marginal concept to an institutional reality without first passing through the necessary stages of public consent and accountability. This transformation raises serious ethical questions. As Grasso (2022) explains, geoengineering today functions as a high-impact tool that could be activated in moments of climate emergency. Yet the systems needed to ensure that such action reflects the will of the people or respects principles of fairness are still missing or underdeveloped. In many cases, the fact that institutions are prepared to act is treated as enough, readiness is mistaken for legitimacy, and the mere possibility of success is taken as moral approval. These problems are made worse by a deeper and ongoing imbalance in how knowledge is produced. Most of the information about geoengineering (how it might work, what risks it involves, and how much it might cost), is created in research centers located in the Global North. This knowledge is usually generated by narrow academic fields focused on climate modeling, economic analysis, and technical forecasting. These approaches tend to favor simplified, abstract, and highly controlled ways of thinking about the climate, while often ignoring local knowledge, historical experience, and more relational or community-based perspectives.[25]

Meanwhile, those who are most likely to feel the real effects of geoengineering, such as island nations threatened by rising seas, Indigenous people, and communities that depend on subsistence economies- are often left out of the decision-making process altogether. Their voices are missing from policy forums and research projects, their knowledge systems are ignored, and their concerns are reframed as technical problems to be solved later. What results is not a fair or inclusive system of expertise, but what should be recognized as a deeply political way of organizing knowledge, one that excludes the very people who have the most at stake. The issue we are facing goes far beyond questions of whether procedures are formally fair. At its core, it is about what kind of responsibility we have toward the planet and one another. An ethical approach to geoengineering should not start with technical calculations, like how efficient or effective a method might be. It should start with recognizing

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[25] Grasso, Marco. 2022. "Justice in Solar Geoengineering: The Normative Foundations of International Legitimacy." *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 9 (1): 276.

our moral responsibility: the duty to offer justification, to include those affected in decision-making, and, when necessary, to say no. This is especially important because framing climate interventions as engineering problems to be solved often hides the deeper injustices that shape who is most vulnerable to climate change and who holds the power to act.

When complex social and ecological realities are simplified into model parameters and algorithms, the human dimension is lost. Those already living in fragile or unjust conditions, along with future generations who cannot yet speak for themselves, are reduced to numbers or labeled simply as "stakeholders." This is not just a case of unequal distribution of risks or benefits; it is a deeper form of erasure. Entire communities are stripped of their voice and their ability to influence decisions that will shape their future. There is also a serious risk that powerful actors, such as states, militaries, or large corporations- will dominate the governance of geoengineering. Many researchers have warned that SRM, in particular, could be especially vulnerable to such influence. These actors have the resources and institutional power to shape how and when these technologies are used, based on their own interests rather than the broader public good. In this context, scientific expertise stops being neutral. It can become a tool used to justify the authority of those already in power. The ability to model the climate becomes linked to the authority to intervene in it, blurring the line between scientific knowledge and geopolitical strategy.

Even when there are efforts to include the public in decisions about geoengineering, those processes often fall short. Consultations with civil society are frequently reduced to symbolic gestures, meant to create the appearance of openness while the real decisions have already been made. Participation is staged as a way to manage consent, rather than to invite real debate or imagine different paths forward.[26] This technical, box-checking approach to engagement fails to recognize that consent is not just about attending a meeting or filling out a survey, but is about building trust, ensuring accountability, and creating shared spaces where different kinds of knowledge and experience are genuinely valued. Given these realities, the core ethical challenge is not simply to draw a line around what kinds of geoengineering might be acceptable. The real task is to rethink the basic conditions under which large-scale intervention in the Earth's systems can even be seen as morally meaningful. As Neuteleers (2019) points out, climate ethics needs to move beyond what he calls moral minimalism: approaches that rely on thin, universal principles like maximizing efficiency or minimizing harm. These are often too simplistic to deal with the complex mix of values, ways of knowing, and lived realities that define global environmental

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[26] Low et al., 2024, 14-17.

injustice.[27] Ethics must engage directly with the difficult questions of fairness across generations, cultural and ecological diversity, and the legacy of historical exploitation. It must reject the illusion that technology can be separated from politics, or that climate systems can be "optimized" without changing the deeper structures that created the crisis in the first place. Even in the face of climate emergency, we cannot justify shortcuts when it comes to knowledge and ethics. If we are to even consider technologies like Stratospheric Aerosol Injection, they must be embedded in institutional structures that prioritize fairness and legitimacy, not just speed or control. This means building systems where the voices of the Global South are fully represented, where serious public deliberation happens before, not after, research agendas are set, and where there are clear and enforceable limits that prevent powerful actors from dominating decision-making.[28] Without these safeguards, geoengineering cannot be defended on ethical grounds. At best, it can only be justified technically- but that is far from enough.

In the end, technical expertise and readiness must be guided by political responsibility. Institutions and technologies must be held to account not just for what they do, but for what they push aside, such as democratic debate, diverse moral perspectives, ecological worldviews, and traditions of care for the planet.[29] When governance is focused mainly on speed, control, and predictability, and ignores values like justice, meaning, and inclusion, geoengineering stops being a potential tool for repair. It becomes a symptom of a deeper problem: the tendency of modern thinking to believe that more knowledge and better tools can replace moral reflection. The ethical legitimacy of geoengineering cannot be judged only by looking at its predicted outcomes. What truly matters is whether the conditions exist for people to give meaningful consent- whether they can express their views, be heard, and have their perspectives built into actual decision-making structures. Technologies like SRM or SAI are designed to operate at a global level, yet the systems set up to govern them are still based on national interests and corporate power. This mismatch is not accidental, but it reflects a much deeper imbalance in how risks are shared, who takes responsibility, and who has the power to shape the conversation about the future. These imbalances, evidently, stretch across regions, social classes, and generations. In theory, actions that affect the whole planet should be backed by global

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[27] Neuteleers, Stijn. 2019. "Moral Minimalism and the Problem of Motivation: A Critique of Moral Arguments for Climate Action." *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 22: 727–740.

[28] Flegal, Jane A., and Aarti Gupta. 2018. "Anticipating Future Governance: Normative Considerations for Solar Radiation Management Research and Deployment." *Climate Policy* 18 (7): 735.

[29] Baatz, Christian. 2019. "Can We Have It Both Ways? On Potential Trade-Offs between Mitigation and Solar Radiation Management." *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 32 (2): 294-297.

consent. But in reality, most of the authority to decide lies in the hands of a few technologically advanced countries and powerful institutions. Their goals often do not align with the needs or values of the communities most vulnerable to climate impacts. The danger here is clear: when decisions are made by the powerful, they can easily become decisions for the powerful. As Grasso (2022) points out, this is not just a procedural flaw, it is a moral failure, one that refuses to acknowledge the right of others, especially those historically excluded, to participate in shaping the future of the planet.[30]

That's why procedural justice cannot be treated as an optional extra or as a symbolic gesture added on top of technical analysis. It is essential to the ethical foundation of any geoengineering effort. As many scholars have emphasized, real justice in decision-making goes beyond simply holding consultations. It requires what philosopher Nancy Fraser calls parity of participation- the idea that everyone affected by a decision should have an equal chance to be involved in shaping it. This means they must have access to information, be protected from pressure or manipulation, and have the actual power to influence what is being decided, not just offer feedback after the fact.[31] Without these conditions in place, public engagement risks becoming something more than just performance alone. It may create reports or collect opinions, but it does not build real dialogue or shared ownership of decisions. In the context of geoengineering, where the consequences are global, long-term, and potentially irreversible, the absence of strong and fair participatory structures undermines not just moral legitimacy, but also the credibility of the knowledge and authority behind the interventions.

In many parts of the world, people continue to express a strong sense of powerlessness when it comes to how geoengineering is discussed and decided. Studies consistently show that what are labeled as participatory processes often feel superficial or symbolic, especially in regions that have historically had less influence in shaping global climate policy. In these contexts, communities are usually treated not as partners in shaping the future of the planet, but as passive recipients of technologies designed elsewhere. This is not simply a case of poor inclusion. It continues long-standing patterns of excluding alternative forms of knowledge and reinforcing ecological power imbalances, where decision-making remains concentrated in the hands of a few dominant institutions and regions. This imbalance becomes even

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[30] Grasso, Marco. 2022. "The Politics and Ethics of Geoengineering." *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 9: 268.

[31] Nancy Fraser, "Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition, and Participation," in *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, ed. Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth (London: Verso, 2003), 102.

more concerning when we consider the dimension of time. Climate interventions will affect not only today's societies but also future generations, those who cannot yet speak, vote, or protest, yet whose lives will be shaped by the decisions we make now. Thinking ethically about the future requires more than predictions or long-term planning. It calls for a deeper moral imagination, one that recognizes our duty to care for people and worlds that do not yet exist.[32] From this perspective, virtue ethics becomes especially valuable. It encourages the development of qualities like ecological humility, caution, and responsibility toward the future. These are virtues that help us resist the desire for control and instead affirm the dignity of what we do not yet fully understand.

This also means we need to rethink what we mean by "consent." If we truly want justice that extends across generations, then consent cannot be reduced to a one-time political decision made in the present. It must be seen as an ongoing, intergenerational practice, a shared responsibility to protect the interests of those who are not yet represented in our institutions. In this light, a truly ethical approach to geoengineering must take into account not just who gives consent, but when consent is meaningful, and whose future it is meant to protect. To address these challenges, several scholars have proposed the creation of independent, inclusive consultative bodies that could continuously assess and revise the legitimacy of geoengineering proposals like SRM. These forums would operate beyond the influence of national governments or corporate stakeholders and would bring together a wide range of participants. That would include civil society groups, interdisciplinary scientists, Indigenous leaders, frontline communities, and people from across the planet's diverse regions and contexts.[33] The goal is not simply to satisfy the formal requirements of fairness, but to build a more morally responsive system of governance, one that listens, adapts, and remains accountable as new information, risks, and perspectives continue to emerge.

In short, the ethical problem with geoengineering is not limited to the physical risks it might create. Just as serious are the ways in which it can institutionalize silence, exclusion, and marginalization. The real danger is not only that we might push technology too far, but that we might recreate deep inequalities in how decisions are made and whose voices are heard. When only some perspectives are consistently included while others are left out, we risk repeating the very injustices that geoengineering is supposed to solve. Any effort to intervene at a planetary

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[32] Cadilha, Miguel, and Paulo Guedes Vaz. 2023. "Virtue Ethics for Intergenerational Climate Justice." *Climate Action* 2 (1): 1–6.

[33] Grasso, Marco. 2022. "The Politics and Ethics of Geoengineering." *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 9: 268.

scale must begin by bringing historically excluded communities to the center of the conversation- not just as affected populations, but as knowledgeable and active participants in shaping the future. If geoengineering is more than just a collection of new technologies, if it also acts as a powerful framework that shapes how we think about the planet and how we plan for the future, then it requires an ethical response that matches this complexity. Standard approaches to technology ethics, which often focus on safety, consent, or fairness in distribution, are still important but no longer enough. These frameworks must be rethought and expanded to reflect the deeper stakes of planetary intervention, not just its physical effects, but also the ways it reshapes our ways of thinking, the legitimacy of our institutions, and the moral horizons within which we imagine our responsibilities to each other and to the Earth.

What we need is not just an ethics that applies to technology from the outside, but an ethics that takes seriously the nature of technology itself, how it shapes our ways of knowing, imagining, and deciding. This means shifting the focus from simply evaluating the consequences of technologies like SRM to asking how such technologies become thinkable and acceptable in the first place. Ethical frameworks cannot remain distant, abstract, or disconnected from the real lives and contexts of the people they affect. Ethics needs to be grounded in relationships, emotions, and specific histories. It must speak directly to the fears, hopes, injustices, and experiences that are already woven into the speculative systems we use to plan climate futures.[34] Geoengineering, as a technology designed for future risks, involves more than technical risk, it reflects our attitudes toward uncertainty, our responsibilities to future generations, and our relationship with the natural world. A first step in building this kind of ethics is to acknowledge the deep inequalities that shape both knowledge and power. Decisions about technology are rarely made on equal ground. They often emerge in conditions of structural ignorance, situations where important perspectives are missing, ignored, or intentionally left out. In these conditions, ideas of urgency and technical efficiency help justify certain interventions, while alternative visions of how to respond to climate change are pushed aside. To respond to this, ethics must support a commitment to valuing different kinds of knowledge, encouraging slower and more reflective scientific processes, and making space for inclusive public debate. This is especially important when the potential impacts of an action are global, long-term, and unevenly distributed across communities and generations.[35] Without

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[34] Müller-Salo, Jörg. 2023. "Motivational Gaps in the Ethics of Climate Change: On Moral Requirements, Psychological Possibilities, and the Problem of Motivation." *Climate Action* 2 (1): 1–8.

[35] Faber, Daniel, and Barbara Unmüßig. 2025. "Democratizing Climate Futures." In *Post-Growth Futures: Ethics, Justice, and Climate Repair*, edited by Müller-Salo and Faber, 73–94. Springer.

this kind of pluralism, the principle of precaution becomes empty, and ethics risks being reduced to a technical checklist for managing risk.

In addition, we must rethink what it means to be responsible toward future generations. It is not enough to rely on abstract economic models or distant calculations about costs and benefits. Ethical thinking about the future should be based on virtue ethics, on the idea that caring for the future is a matter of character and orientation, not just data. They introduce the idea of prospection, which means cultivating a mindset of care for a future we will never see, one that embraces uncertainty and accepts that not everything can be planned or predicted. Prospection invites us to act not just based on what we can measure, but also based on the kind of world we want to help shape through the choices we make today. To care for a planet we will not personally inhabit requires imagination, humility, and a richer ethical language than technical rules alone can provide. At the same time, any meaningful ethical approach to geoengineering must also address what Müller-Salo calls motivational disjunctions.[36] The issue is not just about what people and societies should do, but also about what they can do, especially when climate change and planetary crises feel distant, abstract, or disconnected from everyday life. Calls for justice, caution, or care for the planet often fail to move people precisely because they lack emotional depth, cultural relevance, or existential meaning. That's why an ethical framework for technology must also speak to how people feel, what stories they relate to, and how their identities shape their engagement with the future. Ethics must connect with people's lived realities, not just their reason.

Equally important is rethinking what we mean by consent and legitimacy. In a world marked by vast differences in power and access to decision-making, it is not enough to rely on formal tools like consultation sessions or stakeholder meetings. True legitimacy requires a commitment to giving historically marginalized groups a real voice, not just as targets of policy, but as active participants in shaping how decisions are made. This may mean creating new institutional structures that represent future generations (such as ombudspersons or commissions) that can intervene when ethical boundaries are crossed. It also requires strong, independent oversight bodies that have the authority to stop research or deployment if it fails to meet standards of fairness, caution, or inclusiveness. Together, these reflections point toward a richer and more grounded ethics for geoengineering, one that includes several key principles.

First, it must cultivate epistemic humility, which means recognizing the limits of what we can know and predict, and refusing to let models or simulations replace

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[36] Müller-Salo, 2023, 5-6.

real ethical thinking. Even the most sophisticated climate model cannot tell us whose risk is acceptable or what cultural values deserve protection. These are moral questions, not technical ones, and they must remain open to collective reflection and debate. Second, any ethical framework for geoengineering must ensure that the most attention and moral responsibility should be directed toward those who are most vulnerable and have the least power in the decision-making process. This could mean, for example, giving priority to environmental and social impact assessments that are centered on Indigenous communities or creating complaint and redress mechanisms that are truly accessible to historically marginalized populations. Third, the framework must be built on participatory co-design. This means involving affected communities not just at the end of the process, when policies are finalized, but from the very beginning, helping shape the core questions, assumptions, and approaches that guide geoengineering research. Real inclusion of this kind takes time, careful communication, and a willingness to build trust, especially when people come from different cultural, geographic, or knowledge backgrounds. Fourth, the framework must include temporal justice, or fairness across time. This involves taking responsibility not just for today's impacts, but for how decisions affect future generations. Policies should be designed to keep options open for the future, favor solutions that can be reversed if needed, and avoid actions that might cause permanent ecological harm. Fifth, and perhaps the most transformative requirement, the framework must encourage questioning the deeply rooted belief that Earth is simply a system to be managed or controlled. Instead, we need to create space for ecological worldviews that see nature not as a passive backdrop, but as an active partner in shaping the planet's future. This shift asks us to rethink not only how we act, but how we understand our place in the world. In conclusion, what we need is not just better ethical checklists or stronger rules for managing risk. We need an entirely new moral architecture, a way of thinking that can deal with the scale, complexity, and unique challenges that geoengineering brings. Without this kind of ethics, we risk repeating the same patterns of control, exclusion, and overconfidence that brought us into crisis in the first place, only this time, under the label of innovation and planetary stewardship.

4. Concluding Remarks

To develop an ethics that truly matches the global scale and uncertain future of geoengineering, we need more than just adjustments to existing rules about regulation and risk management. What's needed is a deeper shift in how we imagine morality itself, one that embraces the idea that there are multiple ways of understanding the world (ontological pluralism), that we must act with humility

given the limits of our knowledge, and that genuine inclusion in political processes matters at every step. In this broader sense, ethics is not just about achieving fair outcomes within the limits of existing institutions. It is about building the conceptual and institutional foundations that enable justice to be imagined, articulated, and practiced in new and meaningful ways. As I see it, this calls for a transformation in how we understand our moral roles: from rule-enforcers to co-creators, from risk managers to builders of shared planetary futures. Seen this way, geoengineering is not merely an environmental tool. It is a deeply political and philosophical site of struggle, a space where science, desire, infrastructure, and emotion converge to stabilize or contest particular visions of the Earth, of nature, and of humanity. Decisions about how to engineer the climate are never just about numbers or reflective particles in the sky. They are decisions about whose knowledge is trusted, whose future is being protected, and what kind of relationships we are willing to sustain between people and the planet. For ethics to remain relevant in this context, it must be able to move at the same depth, scale, and complexity as the interventions it seeks to guide. It must be speculative, imaginative, and relational, willing to explore new moral horizons as climate governance becomes increasingly uncertain and contested.

Traditional ethical principles, like informed consent, minimizing harm, or ensuring fair distribution, are still important, but they are no longer enough. These ideas assume a world where everyone agrees on basic definitions of agency, risk, and fairness. But geoengineering takes place in a world where those very definitions are up for debate. Informed consent assumes a shared understanding of what's at stake. Harm minimization assumes we can measure future damage. Fairness assumes we know who the "stakeholders" are and how they will be affected. In reality, geoengineering unfolds in a space shaped by deep uncertainty, irreversible consequences, and many ways of understanding life and value. What's needed, then, is not abstract moral rules applied from above, but situated ethics: an approach grounded in the real experiences, cultural perspectives, and ecological relationships of different communities.

This means giving renewed value to forms of knowledge that have long been dismissed as anecdotal, spiritual, or unscientific. Indigenous perspectives, for instance, with their emphasis on relationality, reciprocity, and cosmological balance, offer not just different values but entirely different ways of understanding what it means to care for the Earth. These are not peripheral additions to scientific expertise, they are complete worldviews that challenge the dominant managerial mindset, which treats the planet as a system to be optimized and controlled through human intervention. An ethical approach that ignores this kind of ontological diversity risks reinforcing the very hierarchies of knowledge and power that geoengineering

should be questioning. At the same time, this ethical shift requires a deeper engagement with the emotional, motivational, and narrative dimensions of climate action. Abstract moral arguments, no matter how well reasoned, often fail to inspire action. One of the greatest challenges today is not just disagreement over facts, but a gap between what is morally prescribed and what feels emotionally or culturally meaningful. Urgent calls for justice or planetary care often clash with psychological distance, political disillusionment, or a lack of lived connection. In such cases, moral arguments don't fail because they're incorrect, but because they are disconnected from the everyday structures of meaning that people inhabit.

A more grounded approach lies in the ethics of virtue, which shifts focus from external rules to internal dispositions, from obligation to orientation. What's needed is not just more regulation, but more cultivated ways of being. Dispositions such as humility, caution, responsibility, and care for those who are yet to be born become ethical anchors in a world marked by uncertainty and long temporal horizons. These are not abstract ideals but practiced ways of living- habits of holding space for the unknown, of moving carefully rather than forcefully, of responding with attentiveness instead of control. In a time when the future feels increasingly unstable, these virtues offer a way to act meaningfully without pretending we have all the answers.

What comes into view here is not a fixed plan for how geoengineering should be governed, but rather a reorientation of ethical thinking, a call to build systems that are not just designed for deployment, but also for reflection, for refusal when necessary, and for repair where harm has already occurred. A truly sustainable ethics of geoengineering would not limit itself to regulating technologies. It would go deeper, reaching into the space of political imagination. It would not act as a barrier to innovation, but as a creative force that expands our sense of what can be just, what can be livable, and what is worth protecting.

In the delicate context of today's international relations, marked by hegemonic aspirations, tunnel-vision thinking (narrow, self-interested, and biased), and superficial communication between major powers, it is increasingly difficult to identify competent political actors who are willing to engage in genuine, responsible dialogue grounded in reason, science, and culture. This makes the pursuit of a truly sustainable ethics even more urgent, an ethics capable of fostering not only technological responsibility, but also diplomatic imagination, cultural awareness, and a shared sense of planetary care. Such an ethics would push back against the urge to rush into the future under the pressure of technical urgency. It would open up room for many possible futures, for non-linear understandings of time, and for more radical forms of responsibility, ones grounded in humility rather than control. From this perspective, geoengineering no longer appears simply as a technical fix or a last resort. Instead, it becomes a

kind of mirror- one that reflects the deeper failures of our political and economic systems. It reveals the inequalities that shape who is vulnerable to climate change, the silences built into how knowledge is produced and used, and the assumptions that have made it seem natural to treat the Earth as something that can be engineered.

Ethical thinking, then, must begin not with ideas of optimization, but with a deeper sense of repair. That means listening before acting, including others before deciding, and taking the time to question before moving forward. This is not about romanticizing inaction or underestimating the seriousness of climate collapse. Rather, it is about recognizing that the rush to act must itself be held up to ethical scrutiny. In a world marked by ecological fragility, doing less may sometimes be more meaningful than doing more. This is not a form of ethical withdrawal. It is a practice of care, grounded in the awareness that our entanglement with the planet runs deep, and that our confidence in solutions often hides the real cost of acting without reflection. Confronted with multiple overlapping planetary crises, our most pressing task may not be to assert greater control over the Earth, but to relearn how to live in harmony with it. We need to cultivate forms of ethical attention that remain attuned to interdependence, to vulnerability, and to the limits of what we can truly know and control. Perhaps the most radical form of care, then, is not to push harder or faster, but to pause, to listen carefully, and to ask again what it really means to be responsible on a global scale.

As I reach the end of this reflection, I find that I am neither more hopeful nor more discouraged than I was ten years ago. What I feel instead is a deeper awareness, an understanding of how complex and tightly woven the mechanisms behind climate breakdown really are. I am also more realistic about what is possible. As long as fossil fuels remain central to how we power our world, as long as critical researchers continue to be marginalized, and as long as some of the most powerful political leaders ignore or deny the weight of this responsibility, I believe we will continue to slide deeper into crisis. And as that happens, the ways we imagine the future will shift, moving away from grounded hope and toward visions that feel more distant, more abstract, and more dystopian. That drift is not inevitable. It is a consequence of failing to act with care, with humility, and with imagination while we still had the chance.

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On the Completeness Interpretation of Representation Theorems

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ABSTRACT. Representation theorems, similar to their counterparts, categoricity theorems, establish an isomorphism between certain algebraic systems. However, in contrast to categoricity theorems, they have received considerably less attention in the philosophy of mathematics. The paper attempts to rectify this shortcoming by excavating the philosophical potential of representation theorems through an analysis of one of their most popular interpretations in the mathematical literature, the completeness interpretation. The meaning of this notion of completeness and the mechanism through which representation theorems are supposed to achieve it are still unclear. The paper addresses both issues. First, it proposes a definition of completeness that best suits the informal notion used in the mathematical interpretation of the theorems. Second, it formally details the mechanism responsible for achieving it. In the process, I'll issue some remarks on the significance and relevance of the formal reconstruction of the completeness interpretation for non-eliminative structuralism. For exegetical as well as evidential reasons, I'll focus on Cayley's representation theorem and use it as a case study.

Keywords: Cayleys representation theorem, semantic completeness, categoricity, axiomatic completeness, representation theorems.

Technical preliminaries

In this section, I'll briefly introduce [2] some standard definitions, and state without proof some elementary results in model theory that will be used in the analysis of representation theorems. I assume familiarity with these notions and results, so I'll skip accompanying clarificatory commentaries or examples, but I'll emphasize where I deviate from standard terminology in order to accommodate the discussion with the structuralist jargon.

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[2] To this end I'll follow the presentation in (Marker 2002)

Definition 1. A first order language [3] $\mathcal{L}$ consists of:

(i) A set $\mathcal{C}$ of constant symbols

(ii) A set $\mathcal{F}$ of function symbols associated with a positive integer n_F specifying the arity of each $F \in \mathcal{F}$.

(iii) A set $\mathcal{R}$ of relation symbols associated with a positive integer n_R specifying the arity of each $R \in \mathcal{R}$

I assume familiarity with the inductive definitions of $\mathcal{L}$-terms, formulas, and sentences.

Definition 2. An $\mathcal{L} - \text{system } \mathcal{M}$ (or $\mathcal{L} - \text{model } \mathcal{M}$) consists of:

(i) A nonempty set M called the *domain* of $\mathcal{M}$

(ii) An element $c^{\mathcal{M}} \in M$ for each $c \in \mathcal{C}$

(iii) A set $R^{\mathcal{M}} \subseteq M^{n_R}$ for each $R \in \mathcal{R}$

(iv) A function $F^{\mathcal{M}} : M^{n_F} \to M$ for each $F \in \mathcal{F}$

As in the case of syntax, I assume familiarity with the tarskian truth definition of $\mathcal{L}$-formulas $\varphi(\bar{x})$ and $\mathcal{L}$-sentences φ in a $\mathcal{L}$-system or model $\mathcal{M}$.

In what follows, I will drop the prefix where the signature or language $\mathcal{L}$ **is implicit, so that talk about systems $\mathcal{M}, \mathcal{N}$ is always understood as talk about** the implicit $\mathcal{L}$-systems or models. Also, I customarily abbreviate tuples of elements or variables, so $\bar{a} = (a_1, .., a_{n_R})$, or $\bar{a} = (a_1, .., a_{n_F})$ and $\bar{x} = (x_1, .., x_n)$. Definition 2 is the first place where I deviate from standard terminology: $\mathcal{M}$ is usually referred to by 'structure' (or 'model'), but this term is highly qualified in the structuralist literature, so I reserve the structuralist meaning to the term and detail its relations with systems and models in due time.

Now, as Hodges observed[4], definition 2 doesn't tell us how these ingredients are assembled, that's the role of axioms. I will generally denote the set of axioms by Λ and add indicative subscripts for specific types or sets of them.

Definition 3. Two systems, $\mathcal{M} = \langle M, c^{\mathcal{M}}, R^{\mathcal{M}}, F^{\mathcal{M}} \rangle$ and

N=$\langle N, c^{\mathcal{N}}, R^{\mathcal{N}}, F^{\mathcal{N}}, \rangle$ are isomorphic, in symbols, $\mathcal{M} \cong \mathcal{N}$,

if there exists a bijective function $f : M \to N$, such that

(i) for each $c \in \mathcal{C}, f(c^{\mathcal{M}}) = c^{\mathcal{N}}$

(ii) for each $R \in \mathcal{R}$ and each $\vec{a} \in M^{n_R}, \vec{a} \in R^{\mathcal{M}}$ iff $f(\vec{a}) \in R^{\mathcal{N}}$

(iii) for each $F \in \mathcal{F}$ and each $\vec{a} \in M^{n_F}, f(F^{\mathcal{M}}(\vec{a})) = F^{\mathcal{N}}(f(\vec{a}))$

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[3] some authors use the more appropriate term *signature* - see (Hodges 1997)

[4] 'And second, *exactly* what is a structure? Our definition said nothing about the way in which the ingredients [(i)]-[(iv)] are packed into a single entity. True again. But this was a deliberate oversight - the packing arrangements will never matter to us. [...] The important thing is to know what the symbols and the ingredients are, and this can be indicated in any reasonable way' (Hodges 1997) p. 4

The logical counterpart of isomorphism, elementary equivalence, is defined as follows:

Definition 4. Two systems $\mathcal{M}, \mathcal{N}$ are elementary equivalent, in symbols $\mathcal{M} \equiv \mathcal{N}$, if for all sentences $\varphi \in \mathcal{L}$

$$\mathcal{M} \vDash \varphi \text{ iff } \mathcal{N} \vDash \varphi$$

Definition 5. A theory T is consistent if it has a model, that is, there exists a system $\mathcal{M}$ such that $\mathcal{M} \vDash T$.

Definition 6. A theory T is categorical iff for any two T-models $\mathcal{M}, \mathcal{N}$

$$\mathcal{M} \cong \mathcal{N}$$

Definition 7. A theory T **is semantically complete iff for all sentences** $\varphi \in \mathcal{L}$

$$T \vDash \varphi \text{ or } T \vDash/ \varphi$$

If, as standard, we denote by $Th(\mathcal{M})$, the full theory of $\mathcal{M}$, the set of sentences φ such that $\mathcal{M} \vDash \varphi$, then we can reformulate the previous definition by imposing on the systems $\mathcal{M}, \mathcal{N}$ the condition $Th(\mathcal{M}) = Th(\mathcal{N})$.

The next elementary theorem establishes that $Th(\mathcal{M})$ is invariant under isomorphism.

Theorem 1. Isomorphic systems are elementary equivalent.

Actually, something stronger follows from isomorphism, namely that all open formulas are invariant under isomorphism.

Theorem 2. If $\mathcal{M} \cong \mathcal{N}$, then $\mathcal{M} \vDash \varphi(\bar{x})$ iff $\mathcal{N} \vDash \varphi(\bar{x})$.

The next theorem shows that elementary equivalence implies semantic completeness.

Theorem 3. Let T be a theory consistent theory such that for any $\mathcal{M}, \mathcal{N}$ models of $T, \mathcal{M} \equiv \mathcal{N}$. **Then** T is semantically complete.

The completeness interpretation of the representation theorems

Representation theorems. An informal description

In an effort to describe the representation theorems in a general manner, and to accurately capture the meaning of particular statements of them, some qualifications are in order. First, representation theorems concern mathematical types such as the type of groups, or rings, or graphs, etc., customarily specified by dedicated clusters of axioms. Second, representation theorems target particular classes of systems that can be aptly described as the *intended systems*. Third, a

distinction[5] between two kinds of mathematical systems should be employed. On the one hand, systems can be introduced and presented in an austere way, described solely in terms of the relevant signature $\mathcal{L}$ and axioms[6] Λ that they satisfy, with no additional information, e.g. about the identity of the elements in their respective domains. Such systems are called abstract. On the other hand, systems are introduced as exemplifying particular mathematical types, so that the identity, as well as the behavior of their elements are well understood, e.g. when the permutations on a set together with composition of functions are presented as forming the symmetric group. Such systems are called concrete. I will emphasize the aspects of the mathematical practice presented in the following sections that corroborate and substantiate these qualifications.

A representation theorem is understood to be for a mathematical type and relative to a class of intended concrete systems. In this setting, the theorem states that every abstract system is isomorphic to an intended concrete system. Star examples of representation theorems include Cayley's representation theorem for groups (every group is isomorphic to a group of permutations), Stone's representation theorem for boolean algebras (every boolean algebra is isomorphic to a field of sets), and Kuratowski's representation theorem[7]. The pressing issue of the significance of the representation theorems is addressed in the following subsection; it also motivates the focus on Cayley's theorem.

Exegetical evidence for the completeness interpretation

The first author to systematize the interpretations of representation theorems found in the mathematical literature is George Weaver. In his 1998 article[8] *Structuralism and Representation Theorems*, he distinguishes between three interpretations of the representation theorems, the completeness, the minimal generalization and the typical example interpretation, noting that some theorems have been given more than one. The focus of this paper, the completeness interpretation, is attested in (Birkhoff and Mac Lane 1953) *vis-a-vis* Cayley's representation theorem: after proving the theorem, the authors state that it 'can be interpreted as demonstrating the completeness of our postulates on the multiplication

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[5] The distinction made a career in contemporary philosophy of mathematics, especially in structuralism, so is employed both in philosophical and mathematical literature - see the next sections for details.

[6] of a specific mathematical type, of course.

[7] see (Weaver 1998), p. 262 for details

[8] (Weaver 1998)

of transforms'. In the second edition[9], they develop the interpretation, changing assertively its tonality in the process, and take Cayley's theorem to show 'that the axioms for the operation of multiplication in a group imply all formal properties valid for the operation "composition of permutations"'[10]. Notably, Weaver's gloss of this quotation shows the murky state of the interpretation: 'Thus, each 'formal' proposition/property true on all groups of transformations (where multiplication is interpreted as the composition of permutations) is true on all abstract groups; and, hence, follows from the associative, inverse and identity laws. Like Veblen's claim that categoricity implies semantic completeness, the above presupposes that isomorphic systems are indistinguishable in the class of propositions along with the modern definition of logical consequence'[11]. The notion of completeness alluded in both Birkhoff & Mac Lane and Weaver's quotations has to be distinguished from semantic completeness[12]. That much is clear from the elementary observation that the theory of groups can accommodate both abelian and non-abelian groups. Now, it is true that representation theorems establish an isomorphism, but not to the extent of categoricity[13]. But precisely what is this notion of completeness and how exactly follows from the isomorphism involved in the representation theorems remains highly unclear. In the next section, I'll address both issues, thus providing a formal explication of the interpretation. In his article, Weaver goes on to provide textual evidence for two more authors[14] endorsing the completeness interpretation for other representation theorems: Sikorski, in addressing the significance of Stone's representation theorem for Boolean algebra, and Stoll, in considering Kuratowski's representation theorem for partially ordered sets. These last additions suggest a lack of predilection for a particular representation theorem in conveying the completeness interpretation. However, as I'm going to show in the remainder of this subsection, meanwhile, a notable exegetical evidence surfaced, in which the proof of Cayley's theorem is purposely aligned to the goal of proving the completeness of the axioms of group theory. This explicit case-study in the completeness interpretation is the reason for focusing on Cayley's theorem.

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[9] (Birkhoff and Mac Lane 1967)

[10] (Birkhoff and Mac Lane 1967) pp. 97-98.

[11] (Weaver 1998) p. 263

[12] as defined in the technical preamble. Weaver certainly is aware of the difference between the two notions, as can be seen by his assessment that 'like Veblen's claim that categoricity implies semantic completeness' the interpretation presupposes that isomorphism implies propositional indistinguishability.

[13] there is also indirect evidence for this, representation theorems do not imply semantic completeness

[14] see (Weaver 1998), pp. 263-264 for details.

Completeness of axiomatization via Cayley's theorem

In his dedicated video[15] on it, Richard Borcherds emphatically presents Cayley's theorem as proving the completeness of the axioms of group theory. In fact, in opposition to the other advocates of the interpretation, Borcherds doesn't fill with a scarce completeness moral the after-proof of Cayley's theorem, he states the issue of the completeness of the axioms of group theory followed by the role of Cayley's theorem as providing a proof of it right from the beginning of the exposition. Only then he proceeds to prove a purposely altered version of Cayley's theorem as a way of securing the sought completeness. As in his courses[16], he begins by defining the notion of a 'concrete group' as 'the set of symmetries of something'[17], for example the symmetries of a rectangle, followed by the standard definition of groups, under the label 'abstract group'[18]. He then remarks that the former definition easily 'translates' into the latter, and posits the problem of the converse: 'It is clear that if we take the composition of symmetries as our binary relation, then the concrete notion of a group can be translated to the abstract notion. It is a *subtle and important point* (my emphasis) that the converse is true[19]'. And, again, in his 2005 lectures: 'The first, "concrete" definition can be thought of in the second, "abstract" way by making the operation composition of symmetries. Is the reverse true? Cayley proved that the answer is yes' [20]. In the video, Borcherds explains the 'subtle and important point' in terms of securing the completeness of the axioms of group theory: the question of the converse, namely, whether an abstract group 'is [...] the symmetries of some object', is equivalated ('in other words', as he puts it) to that of finding '*all* (my emphasis) the axioms for a group that we need'[21].

It is instructive to sweep through Borcherds's dedicated-to-the-goal-of-completeness proof of Cayley's theorem, and the first thing to note is the essential use of group actions.

Definition 8. A *left action* of a group G on a set

S, $G \curvearrowright S$, is a map $\cdot : G \times S \to S$ such that:

1. $g \cdot (h \cdot s) = (gh) \cdot s$, for all $g, h \in G, s \in S$
2. $e \cdot s = s$ for all $s \in S$

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[15] (Borcherds 2020)

[16] (Borcherds 2017, 2005)

[17] (Borcherds 2005, 2017)

[18] (Borcherds 2017)

[19] (Borcherds 2017) p. 6.

[20] (Borcherds 2005)

[21] (Borcherds 2020), 1:05 - 1:14

Now, a group G acting on a set S induces a homomorphism[22] $\sigma: G \to Sym(S)$ defined by $\sigma(g) = \pi_g$, where $\pi_g: S \to S$ is the permutation associated with each $g \in G$ by $\pi_g(s) = g \cdot s$. The proof of these claims is easy and can be found in (Dummit and Foote 2004) p. 42. The converse direction, from a homomorphism σ to the induced left action, $G \overset{\sigma}{\curvearrowright} S$, is, again, an easy exercise. The core of the proof consists in finding 'some object S such that G comprises the symmetries of S'[23]. Actually, the 'finding' is implemented as a construction of such an object from the action of G, considered as a group, to G, considered as a set S (=G). A routine check shows that $G \curvearrowright S(= G)$ given by $g \cdot s = gs$, where gs is the group operation, is well-defined, and it induces the homomorphism $\sigma: G \to Sym(G)$ defined by $\pi_g: G \to G, \pi_g(s) = g \cdot s = gs$. However, as Borcherds explains in the video, S (=G) has to have some structure, in order for *all* its symmetries to be exhausted by G. This additional structure is provided by the right action of G that the symmetries must preserve.

A *right action* is defined correspondingly to a left action and, obviously, generates corresponding results. A symmetry $f: S \to S$ preserves the right-action iff $f(s \cdot g) = f(s) \cdot g$ for all $g \in G, s \in S$. Associativity ensures that every left action of a group acting on itself preserves the right action[24]. So, G acting on S (=G) by the left action is subsumed under the symmetries of the object S (=G) with the additional structure given by the right action of G on itself. All that remains to show is that the converse also holds, i.e., every symmetry $f: S \to S$ that preserves the right action corresponds to an element of G considered as a group. The point of the proof is to look for the element $g \in S(= G)$ to which such a symmetry f maps $e \in S(= G)$, i.e. $f(e) = g$. Then, for all $s \in S(= G), f(s) = f(e \cdot s) = f(e) \cdot s = g \cdot s$. The first equality is justified by the identity $s = es$, the second equality by the condition that f preserves the right action, and the third by the supposition that $f(e) = g$. So any symmetry f is just multiplication on the left by an element $g \in G$. Thus, 'G is exactly the symmetries of G preserving the right action of G' [25]. In both lectures, Borcherds ends the proof with a recipe for constructing a[26] Cayley graph of the 'structured object' G plus the right action component, which has all its symmetries given by the left action of G: 'We can picture G as a graph, where the elements are vertices, and the edges between elements are labeled by their right actions. Then the left action

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[22] This homomorphism σ is also known as the permutation representation of the action.

[23] (Borcherds 2017) p. 7

[24] This can be easily seen by setting $f(s) = g \cdot s$

[25] (Borcherds 2005) p. 8.

[26] There are multiple definitions of what constitutes a Cayley graph - see (Pegg, Rowland, and Weisstein n.d.)

of G gives the symmetries of the graph'[27]. In the video, he presents two color-coded examples of such graphs. Immediately afterwards[28], he summarizes the moral of the recipe for constructing 'a Cayley graph from any group [such that] the group is then the group of symmetries of the Cayley graph' by writing that the 'axioms of group capture [the] concept of [the] "symmetries of an object"' and adds that 'anything we can prove about all symmetries of an object can be deduced from the axioms; we haven't missed out any vital axiom'[29]. A similar procedure is hinted[30] in Wilfrid Hodges's *A shorter model theory*. *Exercise 4.1.1* asks to '[s]how that for every abstract group G there is a structure with domain G whose automorphism group is isomorphic to G'. The hint on how to proceed aligns with Borcherds' recipe: 'Let X be a set of generators of G, and for each $x \in X$ introduce a function $f_x: g \to g \cdot x$ on the set G. Consider the structure consisting of the set G and the functions f_x. *This structure is essentially the **Cayley graph** of the group G*' (emphasis in original).

This cluster of expositions, by means of explicit definitions for abstract and concrete groups, testifies for and solidifies the corresponding general distinction, mentioned in the first subsection, between abstract and concrete systems. Explicit in Borcherds's presentation of Cayley's theorem, and, *mutatis mutandi*, in any discussion on the significance of representation theorems, the distinction is, in a sense, inherent to their formulation. In fact, in his 2005 lectures, the first theorem[31] proven by Borcherds, theorem 1.1., concerns exactly the equivalency of the two systems in the case of group theory. The left to right direction is, essentially, Cayley' theorem. This way of framing Cayley's theorem is by no means peculiar or idiosyncratic. (Cameron 2008), in the second edition of his *Introduction to algebra*, notes that '[b]efore the rise of the axiomatic method', 'a group was either a permutation group (whose elements are permutations of a set, and whose operation is composition of permutations), or a matrix group (whose elements are matrices, and whose operation is matrix multiplication). In modern terminology, we could say that the early group theorists studied subgroups of the symmetric group Sym(Ω) or of the general linear group GL(n, F)[32].' He then goes on to prove a variant of Borcherds' theorem 1.1.: 'In order that this body of knowledge should not be lost, it is necessary to ensure that the new groups (axiomatically defined) are really the same as the old ones. We already showed [...] that the symmetric group and the general linear group

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[27] (Borcherds 2017) p. 8.

[28] (Borcherds 2020) 23:00

[29] (Borcherds 2020)23:00-23:38

[30] (Hodges 1997), p. 100.

[31] A set G is an abstract group iff it is a concrete group. (Borcherds 2005) p. 7

[32] (Cameron 2008, p. 132).

are groups in the axiomatic sense, and hence their subgroups are too. The point of Cayley's Theorem is to show the converse of this for permutation groups: that is, every group 'is' a permutation group'[33].

Obviously, what Cameron's describes as the object of study of the early group theorists, subgroups of the symmetric group Sym(Ω) or of the general linear group GL(n, F), are 'concrete' groups in Borcherds's sense, and the 'axiomatically defined' groups are essentially Borcherds's 'abstract' groups. This last correspondence points to the general significance of the axiomatic approach in shaping abstract systems. In the next section, I'm going to recover this significance in model-theoretic terms giving a distinct role to the axioms of a mathematical type.

Embroidering on Cameron's comment, in order that this body of evidence not be lost in irrelevance relative to the first subsection, let's remark the ample support it provides for the other two qualifications succinctly described there. First, Cayley's theorem is fundamentally and categorically about the type of groups. This is evident from the very formulations presented above, also, from some descriptions of the theorem as 'Cayley's representation theorem for groups' [34]. Second, again, the very formulations of the theorem highlight particular classes of systems as intentional: in Borcherds's framing, those that fall under the notion of 'symmetries of an object', and in Cameron's case, the traditional permutations of a set.

Completeness of axiomatization

All these considerations are formally distilled in the following definitions and results. The connection to the informal discussions and arguments presented in the previous sections are easy to spot as I am following them closely.

Definition 9. $\varphi\left(\vec{x}\right) \in \mathcal{L}_{\mathbf{T}}$ expresses a **T**-property or a structural or formal property P of **T**-concrete systems S_C if for all S_C, $S_C \vDash \varphi\left(\vec{x}\right)$. Alternatively, denoting the appropriate closure of $\varphi\left(\vec{x}\right)$ by $cl\varphi\left(\vec{x}\right)$, $\varphi\left(\vec{x}\right) \in \mathcal{L}_{\mathbf{T}}$ expresses a **T**-property or a structural or formal property P if $cl\varphi\left(\vec{x}\right) \in \bigcap_{S_I} Th(S_I)$.

Definition 10. An axiomatization $\Lambda_{\mathbf{T}}$ is complete **relative to the T**-intentional concrete systems S_I if for all $\varphi\left(\vec{x}\right) \in \mathcal{L}_{\mathbf{T}}$ **expressing T**-properties of S_I, $\Lambda_{\mathbf{T}} \vDash \varphi\left(\vec{x}\right)$.

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[33] (ibidem)
[34] see, for example, (Givant 2017)

The previous definition is quite trivial, as can be seen by considering abelian permutation groups, S_{APG}, to be the intentional concrete systems, and their axiomatization, $\Lambda_{\mathbf{G}}$, to be the standard group axiomatization.

Then, $\Lambda_{\mathbf{G}}$ **is not complete relative to G**-systems S_{APG} for obvious reasons: $\varphi(x_1, x_2)$, expressing the commutative property, is a **G**-property of S_{APG}, although $\Lambda_{\mathbf{G}} \vDash/ \varphi(x_1, x_2)$. That is, the axioms of group theory are not complete *vis-a-vis* abelian groups.

Definition 11. Call *abstract* a standard **T**-model-theoretic system

$$\mathcal{M}_{\mathbf{T}} = \langle M, c_1^{\mathcal{M}}, c_2^{\mathcal{M}}, \ldots, c_k^{\mathcal{M}}, R_1^{\mathcal{M}}, R_2^{\mathcal{M}}, \ldots, R_n^{\mathcal{M}}, f_1^{\mathcal{M}}, f_2^{\mathcal{M}}, \ldots, f_m^{\mathcal{M}} \rangle$$

satisfying only the axioms $\Lambda_{\mathbf{T}}$.

With these utensils at hand, we can recast the formulation of a representation theorem as:

Theorem 4. Every $\mathcal{M}_{\mathbf{T}}$ **system is isomorphic to a T**-intentional concrete system S_I.

As a consequence, *via* theorem 2 every formal property P of intentional systems S_I is a property of their abstract model-theoretic counterparts $\mathcal{M}_{\mathbf{T}}$.

From this consequence, the justification of the completeness claim follows easily.

Theorem 5. Let $\Lambda_{\mathbf{T}}$ **be the axiomatization of the mathematical type T** such that every abstract system $\mathcal{M}_{\mathbf{T}}$ system is isomorphic to an intentional system S_I. Then $\Lambda_{\mathbf{T}}$ is complete.

Proof. Given that for all $\mathcal{M}_{\mathbf{T}}$ there is a T-intentional system S_I such that $\mathcal{M}_{\mathbf{T}} \cong S_I$, and that open formulas are invariant under isomorphism, it follows that $\mathcal{M}_{\mathbf{T}} \vDash \varphi(\bar{x})$, **for all** $\varphi(\bar{x})$ **such that** $cl\varphi\left(\vec{x}\right) \in \bigcap_{S_I} Th(S_I)$ so, according to the definition of completeness of axiomatization, $\Lambda_{\mathbf{T}} \vDash \varphi(\bar{x})$ □

Conclusions

There are three relevant consequences that follow almost immediately from the proposed formalization and result.

1. Categoricity theorems can be construed as limit cases of representation theorems. If one intends to axiomatically capture just one system S_I, then *theorem 4* implies categoricity: there is just one isomorphism class of systems, that of S_I. For example, in this setting, Dedekind′categoricity theorem can be restated as: Every PA2-system is isomorphic to the standard system.

2. Semantic completeness implies completeness of axiomatization. This can be easily proved using the alternative of *definition 9* and noting that by semantic completeness $Th(SI) = Th(Sj)$ for all concrete systems S_I, S_j.

3.   The distinction between concrete and abstract systems and the way in which abstract systems are construed offer support to non-eliminative forms of structuralism, especially to the structuralist thesis that positions in pure structures have no mathematically relevant non-structural properties. As emphasized and argued the distinction is at the heart of a representation theorem. Furthermore, the essential trait of abstract systems is that of having no other discernable properties over and beyond what the axiomatization prescribes. Their elements are akin positions in pure structures and their properties and relations are confined to $\Lambda_{\mathbf{T}}$. Of course, this observation amounts to nothing more than a confirmation from mathematical practice of the non-eliminativist stance in the philosophy of mathematics. It is by no means an indication of what the pure structures are – for technical reasons, such as the Burali-Forti paradox, pure structures, whatever they may be, should have a different regime than systems[35].

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[35] A standard maneuver for setting apart pure structures from systems, in the non-eliminativist literature, is to endow the former a *sui-generis* status

Book Review

Adrian Costache, *Cum să nu predăm? Studii de didactica disciplinelor socio-umane*, Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2025, ISBN 978-606-37-2652-1

Adrian Costache's book provides the readers, first and foremost, with different approaches, which are philosophically inspired, to better understand what pedagogy and the act of teaching is all about. His book is divided into five chapters, each representing an autonomous study on ardent problems concerning education. His overall goal is not to offer the potential teachers reading the book with a full-fledged account of how teaching should unfold, but rather, he gives certain hints towards the way in which the pedagogical methods can be strengthened and improved.

For example, and as we are going to see, he discusses the dialogue between student and teacher, the role of metaphorical analogy, the limits of certain thematizations in education science, but also, an assessment of the notion of the Cartesian method in the process of teaching. His main interest involves the so-called humanities disciplines, wherein

major improvements are meant to take place, to facilitate the overall process of learning.

His approach is mainly hermeneutical, although here and there he inserts theories and notions pertaining to the phenomenological tradition in philosophy and to different approaches in pedagogy and didactics.

From the very commencement of his first study, Costache regards the question (and answer) between student and teacher to be paramount. He appeals to Gadamer's notion of dialogue between I and Thou to describe how the process of living spoken interaction between the two actors of the educational process unpacks. Costache appeals, though critically, to the method of active participation of the student to the course, and not to his or her passivity, since he acknowledges from the very beginning that the learner in not a recipient in which the teacher pours knowledge, but rather, the student and teacher participate via dialogue into the overall process of education, each contributing to this dialogical event. Costache traces the method of dialogue to the maieutic of Socrates, wherein certain convictions were challenged by Socrates to arrive at different conclusions and to a different view upon a certain aspect of the world.

Costache then tackles the phrase of dialogue with oneself, a saying very dear to Gadamer, to point how the pedagogical process can be carried further by the student even on his or her own (outside the class), bearing always in mind the questions which we address to ourselves and the tentative answers which we can provide at a certain moment in time.

The author of the book advances further by commenting certain passages from Gadamer's *Truth and Method*, in which the latter discusses the problem of question and questioning in general. Costache considers that Gadamer puts such emphasis on the act of questioning to establish the very horizon of the question (and answer) per se. The horizon of the question, and accordingly, of the answer cannot be too wide, nor too narrow, but rather the question should point to a certain tentative answer, which could consequently fuel the dialogical relation between student and teacher. The horizon of the question pertains to the situation wherein the overall situation of questioning and answer takes place; thus, the context of this communication is also addressed. Costache distinguishes between wrong questions, rhetorical ones and the so-called blind ones, out of which the rhetorical questions seem to provide a certain aid to the educational process sometimes. Once again, the horizon, which in Greek designated a certain landmark or even a limit, seems once again to represent the *sine qua non* of this interaction between student and teacher.

The second chapter of Costache's book investigates, in a Nietzschean tone, the uses and abuses of dialogue in education. He starts by recalling the active methods of participation in the classroom, alongside several definitions of dialogue

provided by different scholars. Soon after, the author considers that the standard thematizations of dialogue prove themselves insufficient, so he appeals to the thought of Jacques Derrida, to disentangle this web of diverse significations attached to the notion of dialogue. This living dialogue between I and Thou (student and teacher) involves not only the reality of the act of communication, but also its effectiveness. The horizon of dialogue seems once again to be the crucial point, if we were to think about the legitimacy of the to-and-fro game between question and answer. The horizon of dialogue cannot encompass all the possible answers to a question; thus, Costache provides us with Derrida's critique of Ferdinand de Saussure. By introducing the reader to the framework of thought pertaining to the father of deconstruction, Costache suggests that the Thou encountered in dialogue is always and already radically another Thou. What does this precisely mean? He emphasizes Derrida's notion of becoming-other, to suggest that there is a certain tension between I and Thou in this register of dialogue, since the theme of dialogue, i.e. its object is most of the time taken for granted. The play of "differance" involves somehow the trace of language. This means that every word spoken or uttered transposes us into another horizon of meaning and so on and so forth. This points to the idea that unless the to-and-fro game between question and answer is presented alongside its horizon, i.e. limitation, there exists an infinite number of directions in which the dialogue can be reoriented, this leading to the failure of grasping the essential traits of the question and answer.

As the author of the book considers, there exists an impossibility of an exchange between I and Thou, unless the abovementioned conditions are satisfied, namely taking into consideration the horizon of dialogue, and accordingly, the knowledge which the student has at a certain point in the process of education. Therefore, the issue of becoming-other represents a reality, but also a constant menace to the unfolding of dialogue. We could suggest that the problem of becoming-other is not a hindrance to the educational dialogue, but rather, in a Gadamerian manner, a mutual enrichment between I and Thou, which pertains to the receptivity and responsivity of the student insofar as the teacher initiates the dialogue.

Costache argues, towards the end of this chapter, that the "play of differance" involves a hindrance vis-à-vis the possibility of the coagulation of a certain theme or object of dialogue. Finally, the author expresses his gratitude towards the method of dialogue regarding the possibility that encountering this sort of radical alterity, namely the Thou, as someone who stands opposite of myself, alongside his or her worldview. This difference and distance between I and Thou represent not only the possibility of a fruitful interhuman encounter, but also the very emergence of existential questions concerning how the other thinks, feels, and conceives the world, in a different manner

from myself. Therefore, difference, and not differance this time seems to be the *via regia* through which we can bridge the distance between two subjectivities, enter into relation and take advantage of this perceptual mutual enrichment.

In the chapter dedicated to the metaphor and analogy, Costache starts with a very interesting reference to Gadamer. In his magnum opus entitled *Truth and Method,* Gadamer points towards an innate "metaforicity" of our language. After this reminder of the perennial feature of language, the author moves towards Aristotle's *Poetics,* where we can find the relation between metaphor and analogy as explicitly posed for the first time. The natural formation of concepts does not obey Aristotle's equation between the proximal genus and the specific difference, but rather it works by virtue of metaphor. Thereafter, the transfer of the name of one object to another is enabled by the usage of metaphors. Not only does the metaphor prove itself to be pivotal for semantics, but it plays a decisive role also in the psychology of memory. Hence, Costache, drawing on psychological sources, holds that the metaphor allows the passage of an informational content from short-term memory to long-term memory. He finally applies the function of metaphor and analogy to an example taken from a high-school lesson in economics.

The fourth chapter inquires into the notion of problematization, as it is applied in the classroom. The author states clearly from the very beginning that education is educating oneself, and moreover, it means educating oneself about something, i.e. a specific discipline of study. Costache advances in describing the difference between the method of inquiry of Descartes, for example, wherein the subject (of inquiry) was divided into several parts by means of analysis, to finally reach clear and distinct results or conclusions. He contrasts this method with other approaches to pedagogy in which the teacher leaves space open for the student's discovery of his or her own. This discovery implies certain aspects of reality, to which we can arrive thanks to the feeling of wonder and surprise. Not only do wonder and surprise stimulate the learning process, but also, the two feelings raise the need for questioning further the world. Moreover, surprise and wonder might be the key elements through which a problematic situation can be resolved, providing impetus for the process of questioning and answering.

The author further considers, following the lines of the phenomenological sociology of Schutz and Luckmann, that reality or the world is composed of different finite provinces of meaning, which have their peculiar cognitive style, providing different significations depending on our attention to life and to the tensions of duration. For example, a painting might represent a piece of material, onto which colors are added, or it can be as well considered a work of art, or even a masterpiece. Thus, Schutz and Luckmann reject the idea that there could exist a "world in itself", rather, the world is composed of these finite provinces of meaning, such as the

world of dreams, of art, fantasy, work, or play. They describe these provinces of meaning to finally reach the paramount reality, which can be described first and foremost as pertaining to the notion of common sense, i.e. the unquestioned reality of everyday life and of everyday face-to-face encounters with others. This would be the phenomenological notion of natural attitude. The paramount reality, i.e. the everyday world and life, is guided by a pragmatic motif, and it designates different facts pertaining to common sense, such as the way we do not question the existence of objects and others, but rather take them for granted, and act accordingly.

Summing up the conclusions of this very chapter, problematization should be applied according to the stock of knowledge (Schutz and Luckmann) possessed by the students at a certain moment in time. Problematization should also involve questioning, which is an actual problem and not some sort of pseudo-problem that could lead the student to confusion. Moreover, the problem should designate an aspect of life and of reality, i.e. a pragmatic motif for action and interaction. Finally, there should exist an actual and genuine interest in resolving the problem, this designating its urgency.

The final chapter retraces the author's steps back to his early critique of the Cartesian method; hence, this inquiry will take the critique of the latter as its starting point. The two points which will be made explicit throughout these pages point to the lack of grounding of the pedagogical and didactical methods as they are applied to the humanities, especially to philosophy. Furthermore, in a similar vein to Martin Buber, the author considers that it is not the method which proves itself to be decisive, but rather the pedagogical tact. Without a method, the teacher would be a dilletante, but the uniqueness or the personality and character of the teacher really make the difference.

As Costache acknowledges, the Greek word for method represents first and foremost a path to be followed. Only with Francis Bacon's *Novum Organum* from 1620 does the notion of method receives its modern usage. For Bacon, method describes the process through which the mind established a relation with the external world, to search for its truths. Even though Bacon paved the way for Descartes' own account of method, it is only with the latter's appraisal that this very notion will sink its roots into intellectual history.

For Descartes, method designates the set of rules thanks to which the mind comes to distinguish truth from falsehood. After providing certain excerpts of Descartes' theory of method, Costache concludes that it is improbable that this very method would have any success in the case of contemporary didactical methodology.

After establishing a list of different pedagogical methods, Costache comments upon them, showing at the same time that they are insufficient, namely that they present certain limitations. For example, the magistral lecture seems to be a sort of

teaching method wherein the participation of the students is not triggered as such. Costache then opposes the so-called magistral lecture to the heuristic conversation, which would have more credibility than the former approach of lecturing.

Analyzing another method, namely that of brainstorming, Costache traces its origin back to the medieval period when there existed the so-called exercises of arousing one's mind. The most relevant example for this would be precisely the work of Anselm of Canterbury, i.e. the *Proslogion.* Costache enumerates many other methods of teaching such as Philips 6-6, focus-group, fishbowl, jigsaw, or the cube approach.

The bedrock distinction of Descartes between *res cogitans* (thinking substance) and *res extensa* (extended substance) is well known, but the author further discusses Descartes' lack of interest or orientation towards spiritual object, such as texts, works of art, rituals, or the laws. Therefore, it is the duty of hermeneutics to help disentangle the meanings of these spiritual objects, and moreover, to overcome Descartes' tendency to overlook them.

Drawing some conclusions from his appraisal of the Cartesian method, Costache suggests that the teacher should create an opportune context for the student to explore the text on his or her own. Thus, one of the first duties of the teacher should be to familiarize the student with the context in which that text was written. The text is not only an expression of the author's mind, but also of the world in which he or she lived in. Moreover, the teacher should indicate towards the problem with which the author of the text was struggling to resolve. Finally, the teacher should present the utility of such a text for the student's own intellectual development.

Concluding, Costache's book proves itself to be of great aid both to teachers, philosophers, students and for every person who wants to understand what is at stake in education, both in Romania and abroad. Costache's thoughts seem to have a wider reach and implication than merely their application in the Romanian educational system, because besides applying them to the actual context of education, some of his recommendations might prove themselves crucial for the future generations as well. Not only does the author emphasize how the hermeneutical problem is a universal one both in philosophy and education, but his thorough analyses reach a larger scope, since notions as "linguality" (Gadamer), dialogue or metaphor seem to be the very essence through which the educational process can be facilitated further.

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Book Review

Claudio Paolucci, *Cognitive Semiotics. Integrating Signs, Minds, Meaning and Cognition* (Springer, 2021)

Claudio Paolucci's *Cognitive Semiotics* is an ambitious and original contribution to contemporary semiotics, particularly within the realm of cognitive semiotics, where he puts forth a bold thesis: cognitive semiotics should not be seen as a subfield or applied domain of semiotic research, but rather as the core vocation of semiotics itself. Adequately understood, semiotics is an inquiry into how human beings come to know, act within, and transform their world through sign systems. The book builds on the legacy of Umberto Eco and Peircean pragmatism while placing semiotics into direct conversation with three major currents in contemporary cognitive theory: Radical Enactivism, Pragmatism, and Material Engagement Theory (MET). The result is a theoretical synthesis that is both conceptually robust and surprisingly unified, especially given the diversity of traditions it brings together.
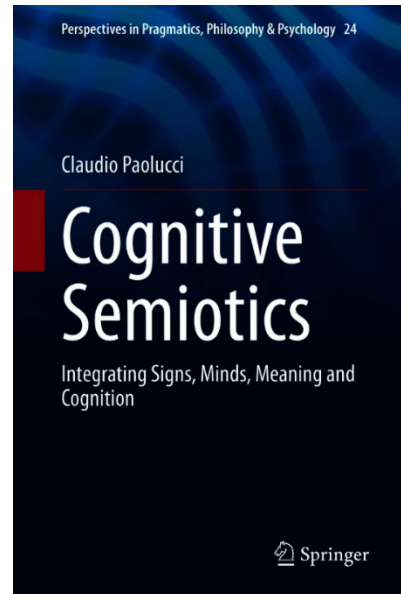
The book consists of five chapters, beginning with a substantial *Preface* in which Paolucci places his work within Eco's semiotic tradition. The *Preface* is particularly noteworthy, articulating Eco's core question—how we come to understand the world—as a fundamental issue for any semiotics that seeks not

simply to explain how signs mirror our understanding but to address how signs actively create and shape it. In this context, Paolucci's formulation - "the object of cognitive semiotics is the way in which semiotic systems represent the background of our perception of the world and define the conditions under which cognition and knowledge are possible" (p.VI, Preface) serves as a pivotal entry point for the argument that semiotics should be considered not as a passive reflection of reality but as an active constructor of cognitive possibilities. This perspective enables a nuanced dialogue with contemporary cognitive theories, emphasizing how semiotic scaffolding not only facilitates cultural distinctions but also enhances our capacity to interact with and transform the world we live in. In fact, this is a recurring theme throughout the book and involves rejecting the long-standing dichotomy between nature and culture that has structured semiotic investigation. This rejection of the classical threshold between nature and culture represents one of Paolucci's most significant theoretical commitments and marks a major shift from the semiotic tradition. He associates semiotics not only with cultural systems (as in Eco's earlier "logic of culture") but with any system capable of enabling cognition. This perspective allows for Paolucci to unify continental semiotics—particularly the structuralist and Gremasian traditions—with the pragmatism of Charles S. Peirce, biosemiotics, and contemporary theories of embodied and distributed cognition.

The book is the result of that effort and illustrates how semiotics can enhance current discussions about cognition, which in Paolucci's view is conceptualized as: (1) an enactive approach to sense-making that involves engagement with the external environment; (2) an action-oriented process mediated by meaning, wherein meanings function not as representations or truth conditions but as interpretive habits and activities for generating understanding; (3) an understanding of texts, languages, and semiotic systems not as an articulation of pre-existing ideas but also as something that shapes our thoughts and comprehension of reality, an understanding that ultimately acts as a cognitive scaffolding that sustain our perception of the world.

One of the book's notable achievements is its redefinition of Eco's well-known paradoxical concept of semiotics as a "theory of the lie." Eco's concept of a "theory of lie" doesn't refer to someone intentionally deceiving others, but rather to the existence of a system that enables deception to occur. A system is considered semiotic if it "allows for the construction of significant surfaces capable of lying, if it allows for the deceiving of the other, by hiding the object for effective action" (p. 4). Paolucci offers an anti-representational interpretation of this idea: rather than focusing on deception as a matter of subjective intention, it is more important to recognize that semiotic systems create possible worlds. In doing so, they establish the meaningful contexts through which organisms engage with their environment.

From this perspective, semiotic systems do not merely depict the world; they enact it by highlighting specific features, making them thinkable and actionable.

Paolucci discusses this topic in the opening chapter of his book, where he also presents the integrative framework for his approach. He posits that enactivism – especially in its radical form – pragmatism, and material engagement theory (MET) share a fundamental insight: cognition does not rely on representation but emerges from embodied action, habitual interpretation, and material mediation. This position is strongly informed by Eco's concept of semiosis as an infinite process of attributing meaning and serves as the foundation for cognitive semiotics. Instead of viewing cognition as an internal mental process, Paolucci—drawing on radical enactivism articulated by Hutto and Myin (2013) — presents a perspective on cognition that emphasizes the importance of active engagement with the environment, rather than perceiving it solely as an internal mental process. In this framework, knowing, in essence, becomes synonymous with doing. However, although enactivism sheds light on the dynamic exchanges through which organisms make sense of their surroundings, it says much less about how richer, more organized meanings develop. Paolucci argues that this is precisely where semiotics becomes essential. Semiotics provides the necessary scaffolding to account for the emergence of structured systems of meaning—such as language, narrative, and other symbolic forms. In short, enactivism provides insights into how cognition is embodied, whereas semiotics offers a framework for understanding how meaning is structured, or as Paolucci put it, "that is why cognitive semiotics is radically enactivist; languages do not represent the world, instead they build categorizations (forms of content) that install habits" (p.7).

Continuing his argument, Paolucci provides evidence of the deep connection between cognitive semiotics and pragmatism, mediated by the philosophy of Ch. S. Peirce, who is recognized as both the father of cognitive semiotics and the founder of pragmatism. This fundamental connection emphasizes that meaning arises from habits and the process of making sense of things. In Peirce's words, the meaning of any concept or object is determined by the habits it involves—essentially, the regularities or patterns of action that it generates. The identity of a habit is based on how it might lead us to act, not only under circumstances that are likely to occur but also in situations that are merely possible, no matter how improbable they may be. In other words, the meaning of a concept is inseparable from its practical implications and the potential differences it could make in practice. It should also be noted that Peirce's semiotics—and in particular his definition of meaning as a triadic relationship between sign (representamen), object, and interpretant—plays a fundamental role throughout the entire work. Paolucci shows that, for cognitive

semiotics, this triadic relationship is not an abstract concept but a living process that ultimately shows that thinking is not a mental event but an action based on relation, where every cognition is a "doing", not in the form of behavior, but as a habit or a predisposition to act in certain future situations.

Moreover, as Paolucci points out, habits, as understood in cognitive semiotics, are not limited to human beings; since they involve "regularity", "continuity", and "patterns of action" (p. 7) that repeat and iterate over time, any material system can incorporate habits. This perspective leads to the Material Engagement Theory (MET) proposed by L. Malafouris, which Paolucci believes can be seen as a comprehensive semiotic theory of cognition, not only through its most apparent notion—the concept of the "enactive sign"—but also through two additional foundational dimensions: the *extended mind* and *material agency.* Together, these dimensions reveal how cognition is fundamentally distributed, enacted, and situated within the interplay of signs, embodied practices, and the material world. Overall, the first chapter presents strong theoretical arguments and focuses on meaning as the result of ongoing engagement rather than a fixed representation, thereby allowing Paolucci to unify enactivist and material engagement theories and to show that our cognitive realities result from interactions among signs, embodied practices, and the material world. Paolucci demonstrates his strength most effectively by using Peirce to bridge enactivism and MET, showing that semiotic scaffolds not only illustrate the material-dispositional structures that these theories address, but underscore the necessity of a semiotic perspective for a comprehensive understanding.

Chapter 2 offers a strikingly original account of subjectivity based on "an ennactivist explanation, founded on a semiotic theory of effective actions grounded on pragmatism" (p. 26). Paolucci moves away from Benveniste's theory of enunciation, which originates the concept of the subject from the linguistic "I" and asserts that subjectivity is developed through the act of speaking. He also moves away from the Aristotelian view that places the subject at the center. For Paolucci, the self is not an inner essence or a purely phenomenological form; it emerges as a semiotic capacity shaped by reflexive and impersonal structures of enunciation. He draws from his earlier work on *Persona*[1] to argue that subjectivity emerges from **illeity**—the third-person, structural dimension of signs that makes self-reference possible. Contrary to first-person approaches in philosophy of mind, Paolucci insists that the self becomes an object for itself only through semiotic mediation: "This duplication of the subject himself for the purposes of effective action, whether we call it *self-consciousness* or the *I*, exists only to the extent that a semiotic capacity to make

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[1] Paolucci, C. (2020). *Persona. Soggettività nel linguaggio e semiotica dell'enunciazione.* Milano: Bompiani. French translation 2020. Liège: Puliège.

oneself object of one's own reflections exists, representing the foundation of subjectivity". (p. 36). In short, the second chapter of the book provides a semiotic alternative to both analytic and phenomenological theories of subjectivity. One limitation of Paolucci's argument is that he relies primarily on a strong linguistic model of enunciation that shapes how a person thinks and perceives the world; the role of gesture and non-linguistic embodiment could be further developed.

Paolucci further explores Peirce's influence on his own perspective in the following chapter, where he describes the **semiotic mind** as composed of habits and beliefs that are fundamentally public, social, and extended. The chapter begins by emphasizing the anti-mentalist tradition of semiotics. In Peirce's conception, beliefs are not internal mental attitudes but represent dispositional habits that guide our actions. These habits help us remove doubt and are consolidated through the scientific method and through signs. In particular, Peirce's definition of the mind as an "**external sign**" proves to be important for Paolucci's approach, which continues this perspective, arguing that all cognition is extended, as beliefs and habits depend on semiotic networks that extend beyond the mind. If the mind is seen as extended and enacted, and if semiotic representations are not internal at all and content isn't defined solely by truth conditions, then adopting an "anti-mentalistic" or anti-cognitive position becomes unnecessary. This idea aligns with Material Engagement Theory, which argues that the mind is shaped by semiotic processes — "Signs, texts and languages were not, in Peirce's theory, the external expression of a preformed mind localized inside the brain and the body, but were rather thought of instead as something that shapes the mind" (p. 64). In summary, semiotic structures function as cognitive architectures in the sense that diagrams and gestures serve not only as external tools we use, but also as integral components of cognition. Overall, this third chapter provides a rigorous and convincing analysis of how semiotics can address the challenges and limitations of both classical cognitivist theories and externalist theories of the mind.

The title of the fourth chapter, "Social Cognition and Autism Spectrum Disorders: From Mindreading to Narratives," announces the most interdisciplinary chapter of the book, bridging semiotics, psychology, and cognitive anthropology. With a clearly defined objective from the outset — to highlight the significant role of semiotic narratives in social cognition — Paolucci begins by criticizing the "mind reading" paradigm, also known as Theory of Mind (ToM) —dominant in developmental psychology and the philosophy of mind — which holds that social cognition involves attributing mental states to others. The aim is to emphasize how a semiotic theory of narrativity can occupy a key position in explaining our ability to attribute meaning to others' actions and to understand, through the analysis of semiotic interactions, impairments in social cognition, such as Autism Spectrum Disorders,

in infants. Paolucci develops a semiotic approach to Shaun Gallagher and Daniel Hutto's **Narrative Practice Hypothesis (NPH)** from 2008, which he calls the **Narrative Practice Semiotic Hypothesis (NPSH).** While Gallagher and Hutto (2019) understand narratives as "representational artifacts," Paolucci points out the importance of distinguishing between narratives and narrativity, since semiotic narrativity is neither an artefact nor a representational one. This approach requires, as Paolucci states, "a radical enactivist account of social cognition, according to which narrative competence is not always connected to narratives thought as representational artefacts" (p. 103). This chapter proves to be truly innovative because it attempts to redefine research in the field of autism, which is no longer viewed in terms of an inferential or representational deficit, but as a difference (not a lack) in narrative semiotic attunement.

The book concludes with a semiotic theory of perception, drawing on predictive processing, Eco's semiotics of perception, and Koenderink's work on perceptual imaging. Paolucci adopts the increasingly influential idea that perception is "controlled hallucination"—a constructive process guided by predictive structures— but insists that these predictive structures are semiotic. He argues that "a semiotic theory of perception must deal with the phenomenological account of the percept as an effect of a diagrammatic process of emerging. This is done through imagination, through 'controlled hallucination" (p. 147). Here, perception is seen as an active process that involves ongoing inference, guided by habits, patterns of meaning, and material scaffolds that shape what we perceive. Therefore, Paolluci concludes that there is no raw perception, but only semiotic mediated perception. This final chapter of the book is an excellent illustration of how semiotics can contribute to contemporary debates in the cognitive sciences, and Paolucci's intervention is subtle, advocating for a semiotic enrichment of predictive processing. Consequently, in Paolucci's account, semiotics is not an optional addition to cognitive science but a necessary lens for understanding mind and world. His arguments encourage us to recognize how deeply sign systems inform our thought and the very texture of our lived reality.

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Book Review

Emmanuel Alloa, *Rezistența sensibilului. Merleau-Ponty și critica transparenței,* Oradea: Ratio & Revelatio, 2025, ISBN 978-630-6657-23-0

The Romanian translation of Emmanuel Alloa's book entitled the *Resistance of the Sensible* provides the reader with an overview of the key concepts of Merleau-Ponty's developing thought. Not only does the author of the book touch upon several aspects that have been overlooked by the current exegesis, but he also provides a unitary view on Merleau-Ponty's idea of transparency, as is found in the corpus of his work. Moreover, Alloa suggests some critical remarks concerning how Merleau-Ponty's thought can be enriched by comparing it with research stemming from psychology, linguistics and the history of philosophy. For example, the last chapter of his book compares the thematization of Aristotle with the late thinking of Merleau-Ponty, to finally propose the notion of "diaphenomenology" as emblematic of the French phenomenologist's thinking.

Alloa commences with the simple, yet definitory question of what does perceptual evidence exactly mean? We can just think of Merleau-Ponty's early *magnum opus* entitled the *Phenomenology of Perception,* wherein the French philosopher engages with the framework of Husserl, at the same time, advancing theories which have

their origin in psychiatry or psychology. Perceptual evidence designates, first and foremost, the givenness of the object as something coherent, permanent and constant. It is what is before our eyes, contrasting and opposing us. We could just remember Ponty's famous glossing from the *Visible and the Invisible* that "I have faith in what is perceived", thus, starting with Merleau-Ponty late phenomenological ontology, we could also discuss the notion of perceptual faith in the world.

Alloa's book also provides us with certain hints concerning how we should read Merleau-Ponty's oeuvre, thus the author suggests, following Ponty's reading of Eugen Fink, an author also present in the *Phenomenology of Perception,* that wonder is precisely the starting point of philosophy, at which we can arrive by loosening our intentional threads which bind us to the world. Therefore, the experience of philosophical thinking would be an utterly strange experience. This strange experience shakes the foundations of our familiarity with the world, introducing us into the philosophical realm per se.

The author emphasizes that the notion of transparency is not found in any glossary pertaining to the key concepts of Merleau-Ponty, whereas for Alloa, it is precisely transparency which can be called the leitmotif of Ponty's work. Therefore, we could discuss transparency in relation to ourselves, with the world and with others. Even though the current exegesis identifies several stages of Ponty's work, Alloa argues for the continuity of the former's oeuvre, suggesting that it is precisely perception which provides the unitary aspect of Ponty's corpus.

For example, even though some scholars argue for an expressive or ontological turn, Alloa manages to demonstrate that the very first writings of Ponty reveal his main interests and areas of research, which will follow him throughout his life.

In the *Structure of Behavior,* Alloa argues that Ponty's gesture is rather unusual, because the entire book consists in an engagement with Gestalt psychology, the bibliography excluding any philosophical source or reference, while psychiatric, psychological and neurological references seem to reign over Ponty's early inquiry into perception.

From this book onwards, Ponty will subsequently argue that philosophy should entertain a permanent dialogue with the empirical sciences, not to intermingle with them, but rather, to provide several examples of how a philosophical idea can be grounded.

Advancing towards the second main book of Ponty, the whole purpose of the *Phenomenology of Perception* is to describe how the embodiment of perception enables our dwelling in the world, and how it renders possible experience as such.

Thus, Ponty's main claim would refer itself to a sort of primacy of perception over the other faculties or acts of the human being.

The abovementioned usage of the notion of dwelling is not arbitrary, because the second step in Alloa's analysis depicts the relation of embodied perception with the environment. Like other philosophers before him, Ponty's draws on the work of certain biologists concerning the notion of environment, to find empirical evidence for his philosophical claims concerning perception and embodiment. Anticipating, the discussion aims to unpack the notion of environment, which will be taken up again in the final chapter of Alloa's book, wherein the conjunction between the writings of Ponty and those of Aristotle becomes most evident.

In the chapter concerning the passage from environment to world, Alloa attempts to answer a question which was posed before him by many other authors, namely what exactly does the body mean? We can state for the moment that we know our body to be ours, and moreover, we can experience it either from the outside or from the inside. Alloa challenges the perspective in which the body is posed as something that we possess, rather we are, as existing beings in the world, a body, thereby embodiment is addressed. Alloa then reiterates the distinction which is to be found in Husserl's work, between the lived body and the objective body. While the lived body is, so to speak, the experiencing body, the objective body represents the body as subsumed under the laws of physics, or more precisely, the body experienced at the third person, whereas the lived body designates first and foremost the first-person phenomenological perspective. Alloa does not overlook the importance of the objective body, for phenomena described by Merleau-Ponty, but rather, he insists on the importance of lived experience, in conjunction with the objective body, thereof lived experience would be paramount.

Tracing the steps of von Uexküll, Alloa reinterprets Ponty's account as one in which the lived body marks the passage from the mere environment to the world construed as a unitary whole. The body is first and foremost an opening to the world, which transcends the mere environment in which one lives, to open the experience of multiple and possible horizons of experience, which end up in constituting our world as such.

In the chapter concerning the problem of transcendence, Ponty advances a rather bold claim, inspired by the overall system of Kantian criticism, thus he writes that transcendental philosophy, as a philosophical discipline, should be grounded anew. Alloa acknowledges the paradox behind Ponty's statement, since the latter's philosophy would fit into what Kant has called pre-critical philosophy. This happens because Ponty insists on the importance of empirical science, as a means for philosophical questioning, his main interest being situated in the region of the

pre-reflexive. What Ponty had exactly in mind was not a continuation of the Kantian criticism, but rather a rethinking of the question of the transcendental. For example, in his *Phenomenology of perception,* Merleau-Ponty argues for the significant role of transcendental philosophy, for unpacking the conditions of possibility of our experience, although, it seems to overlook the effective givenness of these experiences. As Alloa correctly observes, in the criticist system, no place is allotted to the issue of real exteriority. Exteriority is presupposed, but never posed as such, thereby the transcendental ego is conceived as utterly anonymous. This anonymity designates the fact that this ego is neither in me, nor in the other. Ponty's appraisal of Kantianism points to the thesis that his project was not fully accomplished as such.

Stressing the Kantian a priori, Ponty considers that the former introduces somehow hierarchization from within his system, thus rendering possible the knowledge of the world, although without a direct experience of it, i.e. the world. As Kant writes, the subject, be it transcendental, should be somehow situated before the world, his main role being that of a legislator, in the philosophical sense of the term. Ponty further finds Husserl's critique of Kant to be a justification of his overall account of perception, because as Husserl observes, Kant neglects the multiple forms of human sociality, culture and community.

Ponty finds once again support in Fink's assessment of the question concerning the transcendental, hence, the latter writes that contrary to the Kantian account of this issue, the transcendental should be conceived as the facticity of being engaged in the world. Moreover, Ponty agrees with Fink's statement that the transcendental subject should be regarded as an intra-ontic being. Henceforth, the transcendental reduction is never fully accomplished, but rather, it designates a perpetual process of questioning.

We can only think about the world insofar as we have the experience of it, not only formally or in a transcendental manner. Ponty turns towards Husserl's text about the earth that does not move to find the necessary ground onto which this experience can be consolidated. Ponty is very attentive in establishing the relation between the earth and the body, thus, our experience of the world, since it takes place on the earth is eminently an embodied one.

We are quickly approaching the distinction between transcendence as such and the transcendental realm of experience. If transcendence refers to the pre-critical dogmatic principle, the transcendental investigates the epistemological standpoint of critical philosophy.

The next section of Alloa's book tackles the issue of language as it is found throughout Ponty's developing thought. From the very outset, Ponty considered the body to be a means to expression, thus we ought to gloss the wording of expressive

body. Ponty's great achievement consists in, writes Alloa, the way in which he established the relation between consciousness, body and expression through his notion of intentional motricity. Situating himself in the tradition inaugurated by Husserl, Ponty argues that through the body, consciousness expresses an "I can" and not an "I think that". Therefore, embodiment would be paramount, while opinions and beliefs would be secondary or even derivative.

In a similar vein to Wittgenstein's late descriptions, which bear a certain phenomenological stamp, Ponty considers that the expression of anger or a smile depict the coincidence of the idea and the expression. This sort of interpretation comes prior to the symbolically and culturally mediated forms of communication. The problem of language cannot be thought outside the problem of the expressive body, as the *Phenomenology of Perception* attests. As Alloa considers, the phrase used by Wittgenstein denoting the "language at work" applies also to Ponty's thought. Language is not a medium for communication, but rather a manifestation of our lived and expressive body. Henceforth, there exists certain manifestations of language which do not serve a pragmatic outcome such as communicating one's ideas about a subject. Paramount for this case wherein language is not strictly a pragmatic tool is the example of silence, which might even transmit more than a verbal expression of a statement.

Perhaps one of the most beautiful expressions pertaining to Ponty's corpus, which is reiterated by Alloa is that man will never feel at home in painting in the way he feels the familiarity of language. Merleau-Ponty was very attentive towards works of art, and to the lives of the artists, but also to the specific language of the poets, thereby he acknowledged the familiarity of language over the strangeness of the work of art.

The next chapter of Alloa's book wraps up the discussion by proposing a thorough analysis of Ponty's ontology of the visible. First and foremost, Alloa appeals to the example of the artists, to show how Ponty's main intention was to circumscribe the region of the visible, by bringing together art and nature. As the examples provided by Ponty clearly show, Cézanne's landscape is not just a meeting between one's regard and a stance of nature, but rather, Cézanne's paintings represent a universe in becoming. As Ponty explains, these paintings of landscapes turn our attention towards a pre-world, to a world not yet humanized, i.e. to the natural world. Perception is already a stylization, because it transcends the dichotomy between receptivity and activity. Ponty agrees with Husserl that style does not reveal a particular style of a particular ego, but rather the style of one's world, world being here construed as being-in-the-world, and not as some of private landscape, to use another of Ponty's wordings. In a Heideggerian framework of thought, being-in-the-world

means always and already to make the world, according to this or that style of dwelling. Alloa's next observation resonates with Renaud Barbaras' interpretation of the flesh, when the former argues that there exists a strange similarity between the earth, as described by Husserl, and one's lived body.

Even though this correlation seems tenable, Alloa further strengthens the thesis that we should understand the body and the world as being made up of the same material. Although the emphasis is being put on the world, we could also consider the body (the flesh) to be something which is rendered possible by the world, and not vice versa. Thus, we do not have a world because we have a body, but rather our being-in-the-world permits one to access one's body. Alloa reminds us of Derrida's idea that auto-affection seems to represent the archaic and primitive scene of phenomenology, in a similar vein to Michel Henry's thematization. On the other hand, Barbaras would insist on the peculiar role played by hetero-affection, thus we are left with the question as to whether auto-affection is paramount. For Merleau-Ponty the dichotomy between auto-affection and hetero-affection seems to be a false dilemma, because in his later work, particularly in the *Visible and the Invisible* he discusses reversibility in relation with touching one's hand and being touched at the same time. Alloa seems to endorse this last point, when discussing the main attributes of the flesh. Merleau-Ponty even calls the reversibility of the flesh by the name of an absolute truth. As Alloa correctly observes, reversibility is to be coupled with the notion of chasm. Criticizing Levinas' assessment of Merleau-Ponty's chasm, Alloa suggests that even though the two notions of chasm and reversibility operate together, the chasm cannot be reduced to a mere specular reversibility.

The last chapter of Alloa's book coincides with his proposal for a "diaphenomenology". He retraces Ponty's steps back to Husserl, precisely when the father of phenomenology suggests that the forgetfulness of things is a consequence of the forgetfulness of their intuitive environment and of the forgetfulness of the subject. The forgetfulness of the subject will become for Heidegger the very forgetfulness of being. Following Ponty's steps, Alloa coins, alongside the author of the *Phenomenology of Perception*, the phrase forgetfulness of the sensible. Alloa draws attention to the phenomenon of the perceptual field, wherein the forgetting of it brings attention to the very presence of an object. The world is not first and foremost the totality of beings, but rather the very horizon from within beings manifest themselves.

To conclude, Alloa's highly original interpretation of Ponty's work proves itself to be of great aid not only to the ones who wish to engage, for the first time, with Merleau-Ponty's overall thought, construed as a unitary whole, but also to the ones who want to find arguments which might reinforce their claims in developing Ponty's thinking further. Already in the last chapter of his book, Alloa provided certain

hints towards the rapprochement, for example, of the works of Ponty and Aristotle, under the rubric of "diaphenomenology", a novel perspective upon the thought of the author of the *Phenomenology of Perception,* which will, in the end, strengthen Alloa's standpoint.

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