Perspectives on the Self

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Reflexivity in the Humanities

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DE GRUYTER

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List of Abbreviations

Aesth. Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich: *Aesthetics. Lectures on Fine Art*, vol. 2
C   Rousseau, Jean-Jacques: *The Confessions and Correspondence, Including the Letters to Malesherbes*
DI   Rousseau, Jean-Jacques: *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men*
E   Rousseau, Jean-Jacques: *Emile, or on Education*
EH   Nietzsche, Friedrich: *Ecce Homo. How You Become What You Are*
GA   Fichte, Johann Gottlieb: *Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*
GM   Nietzsche, Friedrich: *On the Genealogy of Morality*
M   Kafka, Franz: "Metamorphosis"
OC   Rousseau, Jean-Jacques: *Œuvres complètes*
PH   Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich: *The Philosophy of History*
PhN   Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich: *Philosophy of Nature*
PR   Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich: *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*
PS   Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich: *Phenomenology of Spirit*
TLP   Wittgenstein, Ludwig: *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*
WL   Fichte, Johann Gottlieb: *Wissenschaftslehre*
Z   Nietzsche, Friedrich: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

Tereza Matějčková
Introduction

1 Humans, Humanities and the "General Appropriation of the World"

It is not a good time for the humanities, yet, it is the best world for them. Frequently, the humanities find themselves attacked: some call them ideologically distorted; others believe they themselves distort reality. These accusations echo a debate that started in the seventies, when humanities were linked to the popularity of the Frankfurt School in university campuses. While the criticism has not essentially changed, it certainly has gained new momentum due to the economic crisis of 2008. Once again, the rhetoric of uselessness is growing rampant and students are being called on to focus on immediately applicable skills.[1]

Undoubtedly, this situation is not new. Traditionally, philosophers have been ridiculed for their lack of matter-of-factness. It suffices to remember that in *The Clouds*, Aristophanes pictured Socrates as a stranger to the world who comes down in a basket, hangs above the stage and claims that his official interests lie with "air-walking and spinning my thoughts around the sun" (2015, p. 29).

While contemporary philosophers and scholars working in the broad field of humanities may understand themselves as partaking in a tradition of ironised predecessors, a profound change has occurred nonetheless – the world above which Socrates's basket floats is not the same. Socrates was well versed in the languages of religion and tradition and actively participated in the cultic life of the ancient polis. This can mean many things; for us, it means that at the time, normativity was not considered to lie mainly in the hands of humans. However, today, most philosophers and scholars in humanities live in a world that we know, or is at least deemed to have been created, by our norms, actions, utter-

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1 In fact, according to most statistics, humanities have been registering a decreasing number of applicants on a worldwide scale. For a good overview of the situation in the US, see, for instance, Schmidt (2018, cf. Goldstein 2021). In this context, Gumbrecht (2015) focuses not only on the situation in the US but also addresses the "eternal crisis of the humanities" in Europe. Gumbrecht suggests in a Luhmannian vein that we can consider an increase of complexity to be the principal function of the humanities: While natural sciences give answers and thus reduce complexity, humanities increase complexities by asking questions (2015, p. 22). For an overview of the different crises befalling the humanities, see Jay (2014).

ances, emotions and, most importantly, observation of these norms, actions, utterances and emotions.

Significantly, today, more than maybe at any other time in history, the word, spoken and written, is omnipresent in our lives; in fact, it is present to such an extent that we forget that it has not always been that way. Humanities are intrinsically linked to two revolutions: the Gutenberg revolution, which transformed all into potential readers, and the digital revolution, which turned everyone into potential authors. As Habermas has recently shown, this has dramatic consequences for the public sphere (2020, pp. 71–87). Although we readily admit that such fictive phenomena as money or the recognition of certain ideas is constitutive of reality, the dismissal of humanities, which deals precisely with the significance of words, symbols, actions and emotions, is widespread.

Hegel, a thinker many writers in this volume refer to, associates modernity with the insight that man is the master of the world and considers this very insight to be the epitome of a new time and a new relationship to the worldly realm:

> While at first it [consciousness] is only dimly aware of its presence in the actual world, or only knows quite simply that this world is its own, it strides forward in this belief to a general appropriation of its own assured possessions, and plants the symbol of its sovereignty on every height and in every depth. (Hegel 1977, p. 146)

In the course of this appropriation, the world is humanised in an unprecedented manner and both heaven and hell lose their persuasiveness as otherworldly realities. Having lived through attempts to make room for heaven and hell in our thoroughly immanent world, we are aware at how high a price this metaphysical flattening of reality comes.

Although, we entertain a specific relationship to the world in modernity, the importance of words, thoughts and even of ideals lies in the very foundation of Western civilisation. Hegel, who has been criticised for his motto "what is actual is rational" (2008, p. 14), claims in the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences* that his thesis is, in fact, anything but reactionary, as suggested by critics. Quite on the contrary, it is in line with the most venerable tradition – the biblical creation story. According to this narrative, God creates the world through language, through the word (see Hegel 2008, § 6, p. 33). In fact, modern man finds himself in a not dissimilar situation.

In theological terms, the real is real since it has been the object of thought prior to being real. Accordingly, what is real in modernity is real because it has already been thought by someone else, processed as relevant information and distributed through appropriate media channels. In this respect, the biblical in-

sight holds that whatever we think has been thought before. In modernity, the consciousness has realised that concepts such as God, eternity and laws – concepts traditionally considered to be beyond human consciousness – are socially negotiated, and now, it becomes apparent that one's reflexive activity flows into the objective world; this insight into the social construction of reality is an insight characteristic of the modern world.

2 Hegel, Luhmann and the Constitution of Reality

It is not only Hegel whom many authors of this volume take up as someone whose key ideas merit new appropriation. Niklas Luhmann is the other most frequently cited name. Luhmann's ambivalent relation to Hegel is well known and has been amply reflected upon.[2] However, it is not the intention of this volume to compare and contrast these two outstanding minds of German thought. Instead, we take inspiration from these authors to think through the issue of reflexivity on the subjective and objective levels. Moreover, both can be read as thinkers aware of how either the exercise of spirituality or that of communication shapes, transforms or even institutes a world.

Luhmann captures his version of our constitutive relationship to what reality is for us in a succinct formula: "Whatever we know about our society, or indeed about the world in which we live, we know through the mass media"(2000, p. 1). In this regard, it is significant that Luhmann invented a most intricate system of ordering knowledge in his *Zettelkasten*, an ever-expanding system, eventually comprising of some 90,000 entries. Thanks to this invention, he became one of the most prolific writers of his time, eventually crediting this invention for the authorship of his books: rather than him writing books, the *Zettelkasten* "generated" them (see Schmidt 2012). Based on this system, Luhmann is often thought of as the inventor of Google before it actually came into being. Considering this, he might not object to the claim that whatever is real is "googleable".

From this insight about a googleable reality, we draw an admittedly banal conclusion: reality arises from interpretation, from someone's observation. Does this mean that it is a mere construct of those who create online content? This would be a premature conclusion. To quote Luhmann again,

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2 For a good overview, see Schönwälder-Kuntze (2012, pp. 261–265).

> Knowledge can know only itself, although it can – as if out of the corner of its eye – determine that this is possible only if there is more than just cognition. Cognition deals with an external world that remains unknown and must, as a result, come to see that it cannot see what it cannot see. (Luhmann 1990, p. 65)

Accordingly, Luhmann does not deny that cognition has an "outside". And yet, we have no means to capture this outside, unless we reconstruct it from our inside, from the perspective of the specific codes of the respective position. These codes (unique for every system) structure content and are inevitably founded in a blind spot. Accordingly, every system – social or psychic and thus, the system of individual cognition – devises a model of reality or a picture thereof. This model is viable only if the inside and the outside retain a productive tension. In other words, the system, or even a specific perspective, is dependent only on its ability to allow the environment to resonate in its inside. How does the environment arrive at having this effect? Through various forms of disturbances, rather than being obstacles to existence, they, quite on the contrary, anchor the system in reality. Thus, communication does not occur *despite* misunderstandings and mistakes but *because* of them.

But why reflect on Luhmannian heritage today? While we set out to work in the tradition of Enlightenment philosophy with its key concepts as subject, object and reflexivity, we simultaneously attempt to respect a certain (inevitable) short-sightedness of the respective philosophies they have been part of. Drawing inspiration from Luhmann's insights allows us to follow this tradition while maintaining an ironic view and, at times, even an undermining distance from it.

3 Hegelian Alienation, Luhmannian Parasites and the Promise of Narrative

At first sight, our endeavour might appear as a mistaken enterprise. After all, one of Luhmann's intentions is to break away from traditional authors who trusted in unity, rationality and the importance of individuality and its creative power. As to the revocation of traditional starting points, Luhmann emphasises that human beings are an outsider to society (Luhmann 1998, p. 35), the society itself being made up not of people but of communication; this means it is not people who communicate, but rather, communication that communicates. In other words, it is not us who speak, but it is we who are spoken by language (Luhmann 1998, p. 105). Moreover, "communication" originally means "to produce something in common"; in this sense too, individuals are not "sharable" and thus, are beyond communication.

At least if we abstract, for a while, from the social component of Luhmann's philosophy, we may notice that this idea is not novel in philosophy.[3] Numerous authors in our collection revert to it from the perspective of theoretical philosophy. Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer (pp. 21–42) thematises Wittgenstein's insight: the I is the limit of the world; it is not its part. Ladislav Kvasz (pp. 231–255) comes back to the very same idea in his elaboration of the history of perspective by relating it to paintings. The idea of the subject, which according to Wittgenstein is not part of the world, can be interpreted as the viewpoint from which a painting is constructed. More importantly, this does not relate to paintings alone, but the various types of perspectives relate to different types of subjectivity developed in the respective periods.

Moreover, the idea that the subject is an outsider, even a parasite of communication, is not elucidated only on the level of theoretical philosophy. Hegel himself uses the term *Entfremdung* (alienation) abundantly and in more than one sense. One of the two most prominent senses of *Entfremdung* is the alienation that is internal to self-consciousness itself. For self-consciousness to be real, it needs to "come out of itself" (Hegel 1977, p. 111). In other words, it is essential for self-consciousness to maintain a distance from itself. To speak in Luhmannian language, reality and self-observation fall in one category. Only this condition of self-observation actualises what freedom means in this context: it is no longer subject exclusively to natural necessity.

The second most important sense of alienation relates to a dynamic that is deemed an inevitable part of the modern social world. Paradoxically, the more self-consciousness conceives of the world as a "garden planted for him" (Hegel 1977, p. 342), the more it struggles with dehumanising consequences. Hegel analyses this on the example of the emancipatory efforts of the French Revolution, which ended in the Jacobian terror (Hegel 1977, p. 296). According to Hegel, modern freedom and terror as well as emancipation and subjugation seem to be close allies.

However, while it is necessary to draw attention to the sinister side of modern subjective freedom, it needs to be equally maintained that the idea of progress does have its merits, even victories. In this regard, to speak of an *idea* of progress is an understatement. After all, for Hegel and his contemporaries, prog-

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3 This is why rather than situating Luhmann in the anti-Enlightenment camp, we posit him on its borders. We can name at least three reasons for this: first, he himself leans heavily on traditional Enlightenment concepts, and both in his refusal and in his ironical twists, he performs on them; second, Luhmann has created the last German grand system; and third, the link between meaning, rationality and differentiation can be viewed as a specific trait of Enlightenment rationality.

ress was certainly not an idea, even less a utopic concept. Indeed, he witnessed and expressed that history is "the progress of the consciousness of freedom" (Hegel 1956, p. 88). Certainly, history is never only a one-way process exempt from regressions. Yet, it should not be lost from sight that it is also progress, a phenomenon that materialised during Hegel's lifetime in the growing number of people who had the opportunity to autonomously shape their life.

From the onset of modernity, the principal means to come to grips with this Janus-faced situation was traditional – fantasy, imagination and narrativity. Of course, myths have always played a key role in societies, but once people reached an insight into the "narrative structure" of reality they even consider the "modern" to be synonymous with an aesthetic approach to reality.[4] Hegel takes up this idea explicitly: modernists are "free artists of their own selves" (Hegel 1975, p. 1228). Significantly, for both Hegel, as a theoretician, and Émile Zola, as its practitioner, novels were the principal means to capture this ambivalence at the heart of modernity. In fact, Zola considers a novel the "broadest, the strongest and the most convenient form of modern rhetoric" (as cited in Gourcq 1891, p. 3) and adds that whoever wants to be heard, needs to resort to novels.

Zola's suggestion makes sense. If fiction is an intimate dimension of reality itself, an artist may be in a closer relationship to reality than a scientist operating with the concept of statistics or likelihood, which might arrive at formulating probabilities but never the truth. If this presupposition is true and rationality and fiction are indeed part of reality, it might be the case that not only is the subject self-reflexive but the "substance" or objective reality too.

How does one make sense of such a self-reflexive and, therefore, self-differentiating social substance? For this, we shall first consider self-reflexivity at the level of consciousness. According to Hegel, self-consciousness itself is a process of differentiation: it lives by making a difference that is not a difference; thus, it introduces a (fictive) difference into an identity that is constituted by this differentiation. In this process of turning against itself, it creates not only self-knowledge but inescapably a blind spot too – while it sees the other self-consciousness, it does not see the place from where it sees. In this sense, self-know-

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[4] It is no coincidence then that one of the most famous definitions of modernity does not originate from a philosopher but a poet. Baudelaire (1972) says, "modernity is the transient, the fleeting, the contingent; it is one half of art, the other being the eternal and the immovable" (p. 403). Indeed, the idea that artists helped create what we today call the modern world, at least as much as scientific discoveries and market economies, is not an overtly controversial thesis. Its proponent is, for instance, Taylor (1989, pp. 368 – 390).

ledge is always alienation, even self-deformation, and thus, any insight is built upon an initial blindness.[5]

In modernity, not only is self-consciousness captured as a process of self-differentiation, but language too is conceived of as a set of differences. This very language is, in turn, considered an apt model of what reality is, precisely because it has a reality-constitutive power of its own. In fact, Hegel calls the objective spirit, whose dynamic he expounds by analysing customs, as the "universal language" (Hegel 1977, p. 213). In this case though, language is not a mere system of signs (even if it is self-differentiating) but a system of comportment and coordination. In other words, the objective order is a collectively negotiated structure that has its own dynamic and reflexivity as well as blind spots. Accordingly, society cannot be represented within society. There is no definite word to be spoken and no definite world to be seen.

Luhmann himself has developed the most intriguing model of this socially constituted (and reflexive) world. To sketch its main thesis, it is helpful to look at the very origins of social differentiation. According to Luhmann, differentiation and, with it, modernity sets in once the realm of politics emancipates itself from its embrace by the sphere of religion. This happened in the course of the Renaissance period, and it is during this time that modernity emerged (Luhmann 1998, p. 713).[6] The emancipation of politics and its constitution as an autonomous system with a unique code (which means with its own logic of communication) results in a domino effect. Gradually, more and more realms follow this lead and abandon religion. Thus, it becomes ever less acceptable to apply a code taken from one system to another. In the realm of health care, only the binary code health/sickness counts. Applying any other code to this realm, that of religion for instance, is anathema. Henceforward, every system is highly specialised and has its own code, its own rationality and its own perspective from which it observes the world. Thus, we see that Luhmann introduces a peculiar social Kantianism to the modern world: every system cannot help but interpret reality from its own self-observation.

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[5] Rasch (2000) refers this idea of self-consciousness as self-mutilation to both Hegel and Luhmann.

[6] In this volume, Kvasz (pp. 231–255) draws attention to the fact that in the Renaissance, the idea of perspective and, with it, a new concept of subjectivity were born. In the perspectivist form used in Renaissance painting, the subject looks at its world from an external viewpoint and creates a distance from it. In other words, we know that we disclose the world by our perspective and upon this relate to it as if it were something given. With the discovery of perspective, the world gains depth; it itself becomes a place in which a man transcends himself by various forms of *Bildung*.

Where does the *self* stand in this conception? It is autonomous as far as it is self-reflective. But as long as it is self-reflective, it is deserted as well. Society is its environment from which it is excluded: the individual does not partake in the system of politics, law or education; these systems are composed exclusively of communication. Certainly, for communication to exist, consciousness, or in Luhmann's words, the "psychic system", must exist too. And yet, communication has a peculiar autonomy regarding consciousness. It cannot be reduced to any single consciousness; instead, it transcends the individual and even develops an autonomous structure that falls back on the individual.

Gradually, Luhmann arrives at an ingenious vision of the relationship between man and society and the conception of humans. He is not satisfied with modern dualism of mind and body, but instead of attempting to bridge the gap, he multiplies distinctions: man is body, mind and communication. Thus, man can be thought of as a tripartite entity. Yet, it should be remembered that the communicative part is a potential not everyone needs to develop. In fact, Luhmann observes that modernity, priding itself on democratic participation of broad masses of people, has the most sophisticated means of excluding people from *any* form of participation: once one loses the ability to relate to one system, for instance, that of education, economy or healthcare, one automatically loses the means to relate to any other as well. In this sense, exclusion is integrative: being excluded from one system results in being excluded from the others as well, and eventually man is reduced to body without the means to communicate socially (Luhmann 2005, pp. 80 – 82).

Many political and social scientists have voiced suspicion that in the wake of technological changes, societies will indeed depend on an ever-decreasing number of individuals. Now, if there is no economic need for individuals, the chances are that the political sphere itself will lack the incentive to resonate with the public. In his contribution, Kervégan (pp. 101–116) touches upon some of these issues, suggesting that in the wake of late modernity, the narrative of individual rights, a potent narrative, is being challenged. Accordingly, political scientists seek a new understanding of a type of governing – the so-called "démocrature" – that has democratic parameters but depends on an ever-limited number of individuals.

We started this introduction with the insight that modernity is under the sway of the insight that reality is socially constituted. Yet, this does not mean that there is nothing to our world than communication as an expression of different perspectives. The years 2020 and 2021 have been educative in more than

one regard.[7] We have found ourselves amid a pandemic that has highlighted our dependence on sectors that do not work with words only but with bodies. We do not have to think of the sector of health care alone; all those people whose physical presence is indispensable for a smooth functioning of society comes to mind – be it cashiers or postmen. But we have encountered other crises too, as Ikäheimo notes in his contribution: Australia has faced devastating fires, drawing attention to the fact that modernity and progress come at the cost of a deepening chasm between culture and nature (p. 43, 53).

Scholars in humanities spell out the phenomena that appear elusive despite their presence. This elusiveness stems from the fact that individual systems have closed themselves off from their environment. Observing oneself exclusively through one self-reflective code easily ensues in a loss of the outside – in other words, in a loss of touch with reality. It is the endeavour of humanities to anchor the systems and thus save the phenomena and the individual systems from "walking on air".

4 Sections and Contributions

Despite the multifaceted nature of our volume, there are central points reflected on by all contributors. Most importantly, they thematise the power and powerlessness of reflexivity on numerous levels. All of them show that the word "perspective" employed in the title of the volume discloses the very precariousness of modernity. It pretends to be an answer, while in fact it is its very expression. The fact that humans adopt perspectives and that systems themselves have their own perspectives highlights the loss upon which modernity is founded: the loss of God's unique perspective of whom man considered himself the privileged observer. This means, whoever says "perspective" says "increasing complexity".

We have structured the volume into four sections. While the first part "Self-Making and Reflexivity – Theoretical Topics" focuses on distinctively theoretical themes, the second, "Social Self and the Modern World", develops the concepts formulated in the first part within a broader social context. The third section "Literature – Self and Narrativity" engages with literary narratives related to reflexivity and autopoiesis. Authors of the final section "Creative Self – Text and Fine Art" take up the question of aesthetics in the broadest sense of the word: they

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7 The sequence of crises did not stop. While we are reviewing the manuscript in April 2022, a war is raging in the Ukraine.

consider the concept of the aesthetic itself or tackle the concepts of perspective and narrative in the visual arts.

The volume opens with an article by Stekeler-Weithofer, "Being in the World as Self-Making: On the Logical Concept of a Personal Life". In his contribution, the author focuses on the concept of "person" and "personality". For Stekeler-Weithofer, personality reaches beyond mere consciousness and individuality: to be a person means to maintain relatively stable intentions and to shape the world accordingly. However, one cannot limit oneself to one's own subjective dimension but must engage in joint actions and fulfil concrete roles and corresponding commitments.

In this context, Stekeler-Weithofer points out that the modern behaviourist world model is insufficient for furnishing a convincing concept of a person. He illustrates this point by means of Ulrich, the protagonist of the *Man without Qualities*, a title Stekeler-Weithofer suggests rendering as *Man without Personality*. Ulrich distances himself from the world that is conceived of as a realm of statistical laws and mere conventionality. In such a world, individual activity is increasingly meaningless or exhausts itself in the subjection to void conventions. Showing that this dualism is false, Stekeler-Weithofer argues that "we have to actualise all kinds of schemes and conventions, but we can and must do this in a flexible way by intelligent adaption to context and situation" (p. 33).

Remarkably, Stekeler-Weithofer suggests that the flexibility of a person is conditioned by the idea of God. Only in relation to this idea is it possible to inquire into the concept of conscience and truth. Thus, while it is the case that conscience is the "internalised voice of the generic community of persons" (p. 40), it does not follow that truth is mere consensus. Instead, the idea of a radical beyond constitutes an individual's capability of transcending any factual situation *and* consensus. Hence, "religious talk about God must be understood in the context of constituting the very idea of truth about our whole character, soul or full person" (p. 41).

In his essay "'Spirit'– or the Self-Creating Life-Form of Persons and Its Constitutive Limits", Ikäheimo adopts Stekeler-Weithofer's interpretation of Hegel's objective spirit as the human lifeworld. This lifeworld conceived of as the social and institutional structure of human co-existence is to be permeated both by the insight into one's autonomy and the respect of the other's autonomy, or by recognition. Thus, for subjectivity to be fully developed, recognition of the other plays a key part. Yet, recognition is more than that: it is insight into one's autonomy that is expressed precisely by the ability "to transcend the solipsism of concern in the sense of experiencing another subject as another centre of concerns" (p. 49).

Ikäheimo further pays attention to the fact that the Hegelian concept of freedom actualised by individuals within an objective spirit is to a considerable part always reconciliation, namely reconciliation with an aspect that necessarily determines us. Accordingly, Ikäheimo's chapter resonates on the background of the current ecological depletion, one that has grown on the illusion that spirit is independent of nature. On the contrary, spirit is freedom in nature and with nature.

Matthew Nini introduces the reader to Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, discovering in Fichte an original thinker whose idea of self-differentiation and construction offers important conceptual tools for an understanding of the strengths and limits of an autopoietically conceived system of knowledge. More than this, in his article "The System Must Construct Itself: Narrativity and Autopoiesis in Fichte's 1804 *Wissenschaftslehre*", Nini agrees with Stekeler-Weithofer that personality is essentially performance, but he probes more into the *type* of performance. He argues that it is repetition that is essential for self-consciousness. In positioning oneself within a theoretical whole that one elaborates, the subject repeats in this unique endeavour timeless cognitive structures. And precisely in repeating the invariable, the subject arrives beyond itself – it devises something new. In other words, "to tell the same things is always to say something new" (p. 77). By repetition, not by intentionally creating newness, we arrive at novelty.

David James turns to the phenomenon of autobiography, which itself is a form of repetition, since in penning an autobiography, one is reproducing one's life. In his contribution "Autobiography and the Construction of Human Nature: Rousseau on the Relation between Self-Love and Pity", the author analyses such a reproduction by the Swiss philosopher, focusing primarily on his *Confessions*. James stresses the fact that according to Rousseau, society is a dynamic that profoundly changes human nature. Egoistic self-love, triggered by society, requires the suppression of the natural sentiment of pity. Since for Rousseau a socialised man is a being in whom an egoistic form of self-love has been nurtured, it means that a socialised man is denaturalised, which means that they lack pity.

Now, this lack is not just an emotional and a psychological shortcoming. In fact, James convincingly shows that key for the capability of pity is imagination. With this, Rousseau breaches a too abstract division of cognitive and affective faculties and demonstrates that certain emotions prove specific cognitive capabilities. Through imagination one is transported outside of oneself and thus one can regain one's lost nature, even within society.

In this respect, his contribution discloses, among other things, a point that is relevant for the tackling of populism in modern societies, an aspect touched upon by Benno Zabel but fully developed in Kervégan's paper "Is the Grand Nar-

rative of Rights at Its End?" Put simply, emotions are too often considered a burden of politics and their upsurge a sign of a potential danger. While this may not be considered wrong, it needs to be differentiated. In order to think properly and to argue, we must not abstract from emotions but rather should cultivate certain emotions that themselves might be the very locus of sound argumentation.

Zabel opens the second section of the volume. In his chapter "Post-Metaphysical Right? Modernity – Between Self-Reflection and Crisis", he positions the question of personality into a legal context. The individual subject and the socialisation of individuals are inconceivable without taking account of political power. The establishment of subjective rights makes an individual into a person who is free and equal before the law.

Yet this very emancipation delivers the individual to a new neediness generated by the legal order itself. The anthropological turn, or what Zabel calls the "naturalisation of the self" (p. 123), is an expression of the irreversible break with traditional social-metaphysical preconditions. The self is abandoned and disclosed in its absolute neediness. Accordingly, society faces the burden of the demand to support the abandoned individual, a demand that is structurally coupled to the modern social world and that populistic groups find easy to abuse.

Kervégan probes further into the narrative of individual and human rights and its gradual decomposition, linked particularly to an unprecedented dedifferentiation of society. In this regard, he comes back to Luhmann's concept of differentiation, noting that what Luhmann reasoned as irreversible is being reversed in late modernity. Today, even the legal sphere is invaded by different codes, for instance, by the code of economy. More specifically, the "demands" mentioned by Zabel enter the systems. Moreover, suddenly, the question why not tolerate forms of slavery if they save human life from poverty does not elicit a spontaneous answer. Instead, it is an object of thought. This very helplessness announces the death of a "grand narrative", that of inalienable rights.

In her contribution, "Autopoiesis and (Prosaic) Heroism: Of Gods and Overmen (and Giant Insects)", Tereza Matějčková shows the intrinsic uneasiness essentially embodied by the modern hero, a figure she considers symbolic of the centrality of the subject in modernity. In Hegel's work, we encounter the "world-historical individual" and in Nietzsche's work, the "overman". Their heroism is of a specific kind though; it is founded on the dialectic of power and powerlessness. Man creates himself in his own image and then, having achieved this, realises that, as an individual, he has no power over the world – the society – he has created.

Since anything with the tag "modern" has a built-in dimension of the transient and the finite, modern perspectives on the self and its world show a vivid

interest in time. Eventually, this emerges even in the works of most unheroic, even antiheroic, author of modernity: Franz Kafka. In his *Metamorphosis*, Kafka (2009) presents a model that on the surface appears to be a decisive parting with any form of heroism, while in fact he shows that a form of regression is internal to the specific nature of modern heroism.

Since narratives are formulated on the junction of self- and world-understanding, our third section deals with the link of narrativity in the form of literary self- and world-pictures. The section opens with the contribution "Narrative Voice, Heteropoiesis, and the Outside" by Ian James, who focuses on the limits of autopoiesis. For Ian James, autopoiesis is always equally heteropoiesis. The author illustrates his insight by means of Pascal Quignard's novels, which probe the essential rootedness of man in a "jadis" – in something preceding their spontaneity and consciousness. There is a marked continuity of humanity and human symbolic forms with the biological and the zoological. Ian James refers to this reflection on rootedness as naturalism and thus takes up Zabel's concept used in the context of legal philosophy.

While Ian James does not deny the central importance of the concept of narrativity, if we respect Quignard's thesis that "we are brought forth by invisible anteriority" (p. 164), Eva Voldřichová-Beránková shows in her chapter "Paradoxes of Self-Creation and Narrativity in the Symbolist Novel" that along with the emphasis on narrativity, its contrary also emerged in an equally powerful form. It was especially symbolists and decadents who considered it their vocation to challenge narrativity. Consequently, the artists devised so-called "novels of extreme consciousness" (p. 182), thus instituting a self-inquiring genre in which the author probed into the recesses of their own inner life, considering this very abandoning of narrativity the proof of creativity.

Significantly, authors such as Remy de Gourmont, Édouard Dujardin and André Gide refused narrativity while they certainly did not refuse the emphasis on human creativity. In fact, they abandoned narrativity precisely because the narrative itself appears to be a means of entanglement in a dynamic foreign to human consciousness. Rather than attempting to write a novel that reflects social reality, as Zola did, their ambition was to write a book that "would stand by itself, by the inner strength of its style" (Flaubert 1980, p. 31). However, Voldřichová-Beránková shows that soon this proved to be a blind alley: the public grew tired of books without plot, so tentatively, narrativity has been taken up again, though in a fragmentary mode.

Chiara Mengozzi takes up the idea of self-creation in yet another context but without leaving the realm of literary narratives. In her article "On Recognition, Duplication, and Self-Creativity in Colonial Contexts: Hegel, Fanon, Tournier", she claims that no form of mutual recognition can be accounted for without re-

sorting to conflict, struggle or negation. In this regard, Mengozzi does concur with Ian James in that self-consciousness and its narrativity are preceded by a form of "jadis", but she emphasises that often this "other" is not nature but a preceding interpersonal or social disequilibrium of power.

Situating her inquiry into the context of colonial reality, she notes that initially the colony is thought of as a *copy*, as a translation of the original. Often, the creativity of the colonised finds its expression in mimicry, parody and defiance. Skilfully, Mengozzi develops her point into an elaborate interpretation of Tournier's novel *Vendredi ou les limbes du Pacifique* (1972). Although this novel is a homage to Friday, Mengozzi demonstrates that its audience comprises "fool and blinkered Robinsons that we all are" (p. 192). Accordingly, she uncovers the power struggle essential for most, if not all, narrative structures.

This section built upon an analysis of literary narratives closes with Josef Še-bek's contribution "'Sketch for a Self-Analysis': Self-Reflexivity in Bourdieu's Approach to Literature". Šebek takes a step back from the narratives themselves in order to concentrate on the literary world as a social field per se. Here too, the awareness of the involvement of the scholar in the object of their writing has turned into a privileged object of inquiry. In Bourdieu's understanding, reflexivity is not a mere synonym of modern subjectivity. Instead, it is thought of as a means of "questioning the privilege of a knowing 'subject' arbitrarily excluded from the effort of objectification" (Bourdieu 2000, p. 119). Thus, reflexivity is precisely the dynamic that does justice to the fact that a subject is always derivative of an outside and that the individual is a social category; in this context, Luhmann suggests that sociology itself is Enlightenment – the individual on whom so much emphasis is being put is recovering from the illusion that they *as* an individual, rather than the social realm, are the agent (1974, p. 67).

The final section, "Creative Self – Text and Fine Art", opens with a contribution by Ladislav Kvasz. In his article "Changes of the Pictorial Form and the Development of the Self", the author takes the pictorial form of western painting and relates it to the epistemic subject. To this end, he considers the development of the pictorial form as parallel to the developments of various forms of subjectivity. That which cannot be expressed in language belongs to the form of the subject, and that which cannot be expressed in painting but is nonetheless constitutive thereof is the pictorial form. In other words, the pictorial form is the horizon of a given painting. In his enlightening study, Kvasz develops eight types of pictorial forms that are at the same time types of self- and world-relations. Thus, what Kvasz calls the "perspectivist form" points to how the painter or observer sees the world, whereas by means of the "projective form", the observer learns to understand how their world appears to somebody else. Combinations of different perspectives lead to the emergence of new pictorial forms.

While Kvasz's topic seems to be removed from the focal point so far presented, his meticulous elaboration of different types of perspective culminates in a genuinely Hegelian insight: one needs to admit that the others see the world through their eyes. In itself, this insight would be banal, yet Kvasz's elaboration is far from banal: only by admitting the others' perspective does the subject gain distance from the world, this very distance being constitutive of the "coordinative form of perspective". In line with Luhmann, Kvasz further maintains that otherness is constitutive of any form of perspective, more importantly even of self-understanding: "Without the encounter with otherness we may be stuck on the surface of the self, on the outer layers of our subjectivity" (p. 253).

The volume closes with Vojtěch Kolman's contribution "Why Doesn't Laocoön Scream? Autopoiesis in Art", wherein he offers an interpretation of the statue *Laocoön and His Sons*. As the title suggests, he enquires into the following question: "Why doesn't Laocoön scream?" Being attacked by venomous snakes, Laocoön is depicted as being in agony, yet, he is not screaming; instead, his face suggests only a mild discomfort. According to Kolman, it is on the observer to imagine the scream: in order to see the statue as a piece of art rather than a piece of marble, the observer must see Laocoön as screaming even if he is not.

From this, Kolman arrives at a more general conclusion: the aesthetical quality of a piece of art lies in the tension between the gesture executed and the gesture expected by the audience. Based on this insight, Kolman formulates a narrative model of experience, a model characterised by a distinctly autopoietic nature. The statute serves as an illustration of the fact that reality exceeds whatever is seen with the naked eye. Kolman further contrasts his narrative model of experience with the causal model within which the correspondence theory of truth is formulated. While the causal model works with the *here* and *now*, the narrative model not only integrates the causal one into itself but also transcends it. Eventually, it is based on two contrasting views on the here and now. These internal contrasts, rather than the comparison of interpretation with external reality, establish what we call experience.

In its minimal form, narrativity is a sequence of events understood from a certain perspective and thus endowed with meaning. Accordingly, we arrive at the conclusion suggested in the beginning: at the heart of human experience, we disclose a narrative component. It is, however, essential that narrativity grows from perception and never leaves this foundation. Consequently, we consider art as the unique means to bridge the gap between perception and communication.

Put differently, art performs the unique feat of relating consciousness and communication without being limited by language. Thus, through art, a specific form of non-linguistic communication arises. We can make this communication

explicit with the help of a narrative, but we do not have to. In fact, the freedom art enjoys vis-à-vis narrative makes it the source of a specific form of sociality: it is understandable, recognisable and sharable by so many, even without words – but with an autopoietic form of experience.

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I Self-Making and Reflexivity – Theoretical Topics

Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer

Being in the World as Self-Making: On the Logical Concept of a Personal Life

Abstract: The notion of *being a personal subject* is most intricate. It demands, as Hegel sees it, a logically correct understanding of reflective terms like "being", "subject" and "person", by which we talk about different "moments" of ourselves as human beings sideways on. Moreover, in most cases we must not identify the grammatical subject to which the words "I" refers with my individual body during some parts of my lifetime. We rather should reconstruct, with Heidegger, Socratic and Christian mythological talk about our eternal soul as the result of our self-making by perfecting one's own personhood, striving for true self-knowledge and conscience.

Keywords: persons; subjects; individuals; identity; self-consciousness

1 Introduction

The correct understanding of the pronoun "I" and the anaphor "self", demands, as Hegel, Heidegger, and Wittgenstein teach us in their different (and idiosyncratic) ways, logical commentaries about their usages. In such reflections, we use titles like the "I", "subject", "person", "individual", and "identity". The first problem is to distinguish between the speaking subject and the topic of her talk, the second between literal and figurative readings. Plato's eternal soul turns out in the end as the result of our self-making in a process of developing our personhood. Post-mortem, the whole person is a *timeless* truth-maker for standing sentences about me, just as all other things of the past are settled forever.

2 Individuals, Subjects, and Persons

> I am my world (the microcosm).
> (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* [= *TLP*], 5.63)

The notion of *being a personal subject* is one of the most important reflective concepts in systematic philosophy. It is so intricate because it presupposes a suffi-

cient analysis of the meaning of the word "subject", the usages of the pronoun "I", and of the corresponding logical forms.

The first proposal is this: By using the terms "individual" (a), "subject" (b), "person" (c), and, lastly, the "I" (d) in a very general sense, we distinguish between four different aspects or moments of using the word "I".

a. As an *individual*, I am the *indivisible living body* from birth to death, so to speak. In this sense, I properly say: this *is* me – while pointing to a photograph of myself. If I would say: this *was* I, I would already suggest that I look different and that I am somehow different now, at least older, or that I did other things when the photo was taken than I do now. The differences between me as child, youth, and adult are obviously differences of one bodily individual. In a sense, its temporal moments are similar to its local parts. Each moment or part can (re)present the whole individual.

Higher animals cannot be cut into two parts that both survive. We have turned this general fact into a logical form: Animals provide the anthropocentric prototypes for individuals during their lifetime, for numeric identity, which remains as stable as their *being*. From this, we have developed a formal logic for the more ideal systems of individuals in (higher) arithmetic, the pure numbers, and the pure sets. We do this on the ground of properly replacing fading number-terms or sets of real things that change in time. Only generic objects like ideal forms or generic species are "time-general", as we can say using an already established terminological proposal for the "eternal" way of being an abstract entity.

b. As a *personal subject*, I am the present actor of an action or agent of my conduct and behaviour. Commenting on it at present, the word "I" refers to me as the subject of the ongoing performative process. When I say, for example, that I was thinking of you yesterday, I distinguish me as the subject speaking now from me as the subject who was thinking of you yesterday. There is some implicit reference to the body in its given individuality in time and space, but I do not talk about me as an individual body (neither from birth to death nor just now), rather about me as the subject or agent who is actualising some types of conduct.

Animals are subjects too, even though they cannot use the word "I". They share with us "subjectivity" as it consists in the perspectival stance of all their doings here and now. The word "subject" thus refers, roughly speaking, to an individual agent in a certain present process – such that the temporal extension of the word "I", if used in the mode of referring to me as the subject of some act or behaviour, lasts as long as a certain action or behaviour takes. The duration of the relevant presence of the subject is at least suggested by the predicate, as we can see in examples like the following: "I was swimming an hour ago, but now I am running". While swimming, I was, in a sense, another subject than I

am now. Now I am running and speaking. This amounts to the proposal not to speak bluntly of different "persons" in the case of the behaviour of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, but of different personal subjects in different situations and roles.

Nevertheless, when we express the differences between me now and who I had been, we idiomatically use the reflective commentary word "person" and say, for example, that in my youth I had been a different person. We usually do not say that I was a different subject then. There are, however, rather thoughtless (and, more precisely, metaphorical) ways of talking about "becoming a subject", "developing one's identity or individuality", or "inventing subjectivity". We *are* always *already* subjects and individuals with a given identity; but we *become* persons in the sense of having the faculties to live together with all other persons in such a way such that, in the end, we have achieved a certain personal status or personality. The whole history of religion and philosophy can be viewed as an ongoing process of making the basic facts of subjectivity, individuality, and personality explicit.

The following example shows the difference between relating to me as a subject and as a person. When I say that I am still teaching to a colleague who wants to enter the classroom, I refer to me as the personal *subject presently teaching* the class. I refer to me as a *person* or personal status when I say that as a retired professor, I still give classes. In both cases, I do not talk about me as an individual body. The body *as such* does not teach and does not have a social status.

c. Talking about me as a person does not refer to ongoing actions or processes but to time-general social roles, social faculties, and social statuses – and how I fulfil the corresponding personal commitments. I am a person in relation to all other persons. It is only a kind of metaphorical politeness if one idiomatically counts persons and not humans or individuals (human bodies) in elevators.

I am a person as a speaker and listener, writer and reader, student or teacher, son or father, citizen or professional, and so on. As a personal subject, I actualise personal roles and manifest social statuses. *Virtue* in the traditional understanding of the Greek word *arete* is the corresponding competence in fulfilling (in the ideal case: in a perfect way) the commitments of being a full person – such that there are always ways of becoming a better person.

d. In Wittgenstein's sentence "I am my world", we see a fourth, "speculative", most general and high-level type of using the word "I".

In order to understand such a statement, we could start with the observation that the words "I" and "me" can have the same extension as the word "my" – such that you can insult *me* by insulting, let us say, *my daughter* and damage *me* by putting damage to *my house*. It is therefore, phenomenologically and linguistically wrong to identify the *topics* to which the words "I" and "me" can refer with me *as an individual body* or material object. Any part, moment, or property

that is mine can replace or represent me as a whole person. Not the hand of the thief is stealing; the person is the thief. Not the bending of a finger kills a man; the murderer kills him by shooting his gun.

I am, in the end, my whole world in the following sense: whenever I relate to an object O in the world, we can represent this relation R by a formula like $R(I,O)$ and turn it into a "property" of *myself*. There is an age-old metaphorical way of saying logically that something or somebody (an X) has a property P if the property P "lies in X". This metaphor plays a crucial role in most reflective talk about something "inner": I am my world insofar as my world can be found "in me" – not in a local sense ("in my brain") but according to the allegorical way of talking about the objects of my knowledge or my properties.

3 Objects and Agents

[S]ubstance is in and for itself [the meaning of a grammatical] subject.[1] As an object of reference, it presupposes reflection in itself [which means that an identity is defined in a system of equivalent representations and presentations]. Things exist only by virtue of such an identity-with-itself;[2] [focusing on] the inequality of equivalent representations would dissolve the [unity of the] objective or substantial reference.[3] Any identity is [a result of] pure abstraction which is [the result of] *thinking*. ... The subsistence of anything consists in its identity or pure abstraction [i. e. as the form of possible identification]. Therefore, it is, as it were, an abstraction of itself [consisting of a manifold of different representing parts, moments, or presentations in the sense of different empirical appearances from here and there or now and then]. Or it is in itself its own inequality with itself and [as such] its dissolution: It is its own inner and its taking back [the appearances as instantiated dispositions] into itself – its becoming.

(Hegel in the extremely dense foreword to his masterwork *Phenomenology of Spirit*)[4]

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1 My translation of the text is supplemented with some explanations in square brackets.

2 This corresponds to Quine's famous dictum "No entity without identity".

3 This holds also for focusing on the different representations of abstract entities like pure numbers or the different presentations or representations of one and the same bodily thing – as, for example, the Eiffel tower.

4 "Dadurch überhaupt, daß [...]die Substanz an ihr selbst Subjekt ist, ist aller Inhalt seine eigne Reflexion in sich. Das Bestehen oder die Substanz eines Daseins ist die Sichselbstgleichheit; denn seine Ungleichheit mit sich wäre seine Auflösung. Die Sichselbstgleichheit aber ist die reine Abstraktion; diese aber ist das *Denken*. [...] Dadurch nun, daß das Bestehen des Daseins die Sichselbstgleichheit oder die reine Abstraktion ist, ist es die Abstraktion seiner von sich selbst, oder es ist selbst seine Ungleichheit mit sich und seine Auflösung, – seine eigne Innerlichkeit und Zurücknahme in sich, – sein Werden." Hegel (1980, p. 39) Cf. Stekeler (2014, vol. 1, p. 304, § 54).

In our disambiguation of the word "subject", we first have to distinguish *a gram-matical* or *logical subject* from *being* a *subject* of *performative doings.* Just as the identity of a living being is defined by its continuous living, any object exists only as a moment in a (longer lasting) process. In its finite usage, "substance" stands (generically) for a limited substantial thing like my body or this house or that stone. "Becoming" is the title for all changes and movements in the limited time and localised place of any object or subject.

Hegel's gnomic assertion that substance is subject expresses at least three thoughts:

a.   The first says that (substantial) objects are referents of grammatical subjects.
b.   The second says that singular substantial objects to which we refer are the subjective centres of their own being, just like an animal or a Leibnizian *monad*. Being a subject in this sense means to *perform* a certain form of be-haviour – with the "enactive perception of an animal" (Noë 2004) as a *logical paradigm:* The subject is a *manifestation* of a type or species of things and its behaviour instantiates in normal cases what such a sort of thing *typically* is able to do or does.
c.   The third thought says that we can view (in a *speculative* way) the whole world as a kind of a grand subject. As such, it is *natura sive deus*, Nature identical with God.

Hegel distinguishes between being an object for us and being a subject for itself. In his path-breaking approach, Leibniz had tried to generalise the being of an organism to the performative being of monads – which he somehow had identi-fied with perspectival points. Things can be objects of reference from outside, but this always presupposes a perspectival or subjective point of view. The distinc-tion between a monad and an object corresponds in a way to Martin Heidegger's differentiation in *Being and Time* (1979) between *to be* in the sense of performing one's mode of being (*Sein, esse, einai*) and *being an object* of apperception, in-tuition and/or thinking (*Seiendes, ens, on*).[5] In his later writings, Heidegger has famously talked about an *ontological difference* in this context.

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5 In English, there is a reluctance to nominalise parts of speech by using the definite article, due to a common misreading of the result as an alleged *definite description* of a "hypostasized entity". Educated Greek and German speakers, writers or readers use of a definite article "to" or "das" as in "to einai" or "das Sein" but also "das Nichts" as *operators for reflective abstraction.* Just as in talking about *nothingness*, we can formulate commentaries on the meaning of *to be* or *not to be* – without any need of defining general identity conditions for the *objects* of reflection. This holds also for an expression like the "I". The gerund *being* serves too many purposes. It can stand for *being a subject of performative being* (a), *being an object of perception or thinking* (b),

Talking about a human being can now mean to talk about a human person in a generic way, about an individual or about his or her present "Dasein". Heidegger used the word "Dasein" in order to somehow replace the (ambiguous) word "subject". We can continue to use "subject" if it is clear that the topic is an agent in a present performance or being ("Dasein" or life), which corresponds in the case of a personal subject (vaguely) to the meaning of the word "I" in expressive declarations of the form *I am ...* – presupposing a contrast to *I was ...*, *I will be ...*, but also to *it is ....*

Now, we can continue our commentaries on Hegel's logical analysis: A substantial thing (*ousia*) is determined *in itself* by a corresponding semi-sortal genus (as a domain of objects) *D* and exists *for itself* in virtue of its own self-relations.[6]

As an object of reference, a thing in the real world is, like any semantic content, defined by the equivalence relation for its representations and presentations – relevant for the respective objects and identities. We usually presuppose such relations that define the identity of the object (including topics or contents), even though we ourselves have set them – just as we do it in the case of talking about rational numbers, presupposing the equivalence of different ratios.

All identities are defined by abstraction; and abstraction is, as such, a form (in fact: the essential form) of *thinking*. Presupposed equivalence relations (or identification in the sense of negating possible differentiations) define the identity of all entities. We know this from the clear cases of abstract things like pure numbers; but it holds also for objects like tables or other medium sized dry bodies. In the case of waves or rainbows, it is also clear how we identify them: a wave in the ocean, for example, is moving to the shore. However, if we look at the physical parts of the wave, they locally stay where they are. In a similar way, all the parts of a living body are replaced as time goes on, such that the identity of an individual animal is not defined by the set of its substantial

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being an object *for itself* in the world, i. e. under abstraction of all relations to perceiving subjects (c). In the case of being a living being, it stands *for the process* of life in its actualisation (d). In its generic use, the word *being* stands for a *type* of being, i. e. for an essence *ousia*, *Wesen* (e), a way of being (f), or for one of the many meanings of *existence* of concrete or abstract objects (g). Altogether, a being can be an object *an und für sich* as an abstract entity or concrete thing about which we talk or to which we refer. It can be a subject in its being *für sich* or its way to be in the mode of generic *an sich* or in actual empirical *becoming*, its existence in a domain or in a contrast of its essence and appearance.

6 All things in the real world are finite; this means they come into being and disappear in time; therefore, they form only semi-sortal domains; only the absolutely time-general and in this Hegelian sense *infinite* mathematical sets of pure forms and numbers are *fully sortal*, as I would like to say.

parts but by its indivisibility in life.[7] These are particular examples for Hegel's more general observation that focusing on mere (re)presentations of an object can (and usually does) *dissolve the unity of it*. In consequence of Quine's correct insight that entities presuppose identities we thus arrive at the Anti-Quinean insight that most abstract and concrete objects and entities we talk about are not at all *sets*.[8]

Moreover, in contrast to the logical analysis of the *is* in ordinary language by comparison to Gottlob Frege's formal logic, the copula expresses only in fully sortal domains either identity or being an element or subset of a set defined by a predicate.[9] To understand the formal form of predication *in general*, we have to be aware that the formal logic of sortal sets serves only as an analogy. That means that we frequently have to use free and good judgement in order to properly interpret the intended *relation* between the *subject* S and the *predicate* P in sentences or statements of the form *S is P*. In other words, the *is* of normal language can be disambiguated by comparing it to the mathematical or set-theoretic model, but has, in fact, even more readings – such that Bertrand Russell's criticism that for Hegel allegedly the "is" only expresses identities misses the point. Hegel's logic of concept shows, for example, that in an *analytic* use of the word "is", we do not talk about the *object* S but about the sense of its representation – in distinction to what he calls *synthetic cognition*, in which we talk about the objects.

In order to avoid a collapse into *subjective* idealism, we have, however, to distinguish between the object *for us*, constituted in our ways of talking and thinking, and the object *for itself*. The latter is, in a sense, an "abstraction of itself", as Hegel's idiom has it. This notion of *being for itself* should be understood as a kind of *epoché* in the Greek sense of *abstracting* from all *special relations to us*. That is, we (try to) restrict our focus (essentially) on the properties of a thing itself and put into brackets how the thing *looks* – or is *for us*. However, when we talk and think about ourselves, we also put the way how we relate to ourselves

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7 Abstractions of pure numbers are defined by turning equivalence relations between numerals or number-terms that we can freely reproduce into abstract identities. In the case of objects in the real world, our definitions of types and identities of things can depend on our interests as thinkers and speakers; but we presuppose *possible* identifications, which the world allows or presents itself.

8 See Quine (1951, § 22, p. 122): "It is by no means clear what objects are to be regarded as concrete. Should we, for instance, regard men as concrete objects, or should we regard events as concrete objects and then explain men as classes of events?" For present purposes, Quine adds, we should be happy enough *with an ontology of sets* and "repudiate" concrete things.

9 I omit the case, in which we use "is" in order to expresses "there exist".

into focus. This is crucial for understanding logically any (talk about) self-relations or self-determinations – as in self-knowledge, self-consciousness, autonomy or auto-poiesis. They all contain a substructure of "being for itself", which I take as a system of relations xRy between presentations or representations "of something" such that $x = y$ holds with respect to the relevant "object" or "subject". The very concept of self-consciousness presupposes, for example, a kind of inner split between a consciousness of other things and of myself, just as auto-nomy refers to laws for oneself also.

If we focus on parts of an object or on its appearances for us or on its effects on other things, we can speak of the fact the any object "in itself" shows a manifold of inequalities "within itself". As a result, the word "inner" does not only stand for what is *locally* in an object, but also what is *conceptually* inner, just as a *content* has its outer forms as inner parts, as we may tend to say. This means that we can view the content or meaning of a word like "man" as *containing* all translations into other languages (*l'homme*, *Mensch*) or paraphrases (human, mortal) or definitions (animal with true language) and so on. The actual being of a subject or substance (object or thing), however, is its *becoming* ("Werden") or, more precisely, its processual existence from its (temporal and spatial) beginning to its end.

4 Being a Subject and the Logical Form of Entities

> The thinking, representing subject does not exist.
> (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *TLP*, 5.631)

From the *utterance* of a (true *or* wrong) assertion of a sentence like "I am doubting that p", it actually *follows that* I exist and that I am thinking, as Descartes famously had noticed. This does not exclude the possibility that the *content* of my thought might be somehow wrong. My existence does not follow from the *sentence* (on the level of syntactic forms), but from the actualised *speech act*, the *performative assertion*, which *presupposes* even in a case of doubt that as a subject I am presently doubting, thinking, and existing.[10]

The word "I" always refers to the speaker; however, in a situation in which I answer by "I" on the question "Who is there?" it is not the *content* of the *word*

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10 I omit the case, in which I dream that I think or say something, meaning there is, of course, some need to discuss Descartes' argumentation for itself in much more details.

but the *very sound of the utterance* that guides the reference of a listener to a speaker. In cases in which you recognise me from the sound *I* make as a speaker, you will not ask back: What is your name? This is like identifying the direction or place where I am by the *sound* of my saying "here" when I answer to your question "Where are you?" It is clear, that I normally do not have to listen to myself in order to know that I am the one who is speaking or thinking – and that I am here.

When Kant talks of an *intellectual intuition*, it should be understood as referring to cases in which doing or saying something "immediately" shows the *existence of the subject*, that is, its presence, which is my presence if I am the actor. In such cases, the direction of fit (John Searle) is *absolute* in Hegel's sense, meaning it is not relative, because it is of the form, saying or doing so, makes it so. The *content* of a claim about an *object*, however, is *relative* in the sense that we still have to check if the fulfilment conditions are satisfied.

Descartes' inferential form "cogito ergo sum" thus leads, as Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel already see, to an *absolutely* true conclusion or consequence, if we read the *I* as referring to me as the present personal subject. It *does not* prove the *existence* of me as a special sort of thinking thing (*res cogitans*). This is so because we know quite well that talking about human souls, angels, or gods is *fictional* and abstract, just as the thinking subject or mind. Insofar, there is no soul or *res cogitans* separate from the body. This much "Aristotelianism" is true. However, this does not at all preclude the possibility to talk and think about the whole person that I am and will be from birth to death, with all deeds, roles, and statuses.

Moreover, the truth of a statement *p* does not follow from my or your *declaration*, but I am nevertheless a thinking subject insofar as I *instantiate* a possible thought – in silent verbal planning or public speech, inner imagination, or outer images. When we distinguish the bodily individual from me as the thinking or acting subject, we just distinguish different identity conditions and different predicates: We should not ascribe *mental* predicates to the body because we should exclude improper inferences that result from substitutions of all kind of *physical identities*. When I think of you, for example, it is not a relation between my body or brain and you.

The usual notion of an individual object presupposes its genus in the sense of a sortal or at least semi- quasi-sortal domain *D* of entities *d* to speak about. Such a domain *D* is frequently understood in view of the ideal paradigm of a mathematical realm of abstract entities like pure numbers or pure geometrical forms. To explicate our semantical techniques is a bit tricky: *D* is defined by the (re)presentations of its entities *d* together with an identity that fits to a system of situation-invariant (or time-general) predicates (of the *d*'s in *D*). The fitting

condition is expressed by the Leibniz-principle: $t = t^\star$ holds if an only if for all *D*-predicates $\varphi(x)$ and for all *D*-terms t, $t^\star$ $\varphi(t)$ holds if and only if $\varphi(t^\star)$ holds. (Any well-defined *D*-term t "refers" to some d in *D*, as we say.) Most one-place predicates stem, by the way, from relations between *D*-entities. Some are defined via so-called parameters (as in "bigger than Goliath or greater than two"),[11] others by quantifications (as in "attractive to some persons or divisible by some numbers").[12] In talking about the real world, however, most of the *relations* are, in fact, *processes* and all the objects exist only in a *limited epoch of time*; virtually all expressions for real-world-species (like "dog" or "milk") include (as a part or moment of their meaning) some *generic disposition or faculty*. On the other hand, there are no such dispositional predicates like "being soluble" or "fire-extinguisher" in mathematics.[13] As a result, we must deal with the timeless model of mathematical logic in just the same way as we understand metaphors: we silently cut all "wrong" analogies out.

The distinction between me as a bodily individual, as a subject in some doing and as a person can now be seen as a distinction between logical domains of different objects of talk, just as the distinction between ratios and rational numbers or converging sequences and real numbers. The different domains of *entities* are categorically defined by the different identities and predicates – such that we should refrain from trans-categorical attributions of mental and personal (social) predicates *to the body*. A reciprocal problem lies in a usual split of personhood into phases of self-memory as we find it in John Locke or, more recently, Derek Parfit (1984). The extensions of the word "I" in referring

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11 The logical form of such a predicate is $\lambda x.\varphi(x, N)$, with *N* as parameter. The 2-place predicate or relation xRy has the form $\varphi(x, y)$ – or more precisely: $\lambda xy.\varphi(x, y)$. We write '$M \,\varepsilon\, \lambda x.\psi(x)$' for '$\psi(M)$' or, what amounts to the same, we use the syntactical rule $M \,\varepsilon\, \lambda x.\psi(x) \Leftrightarrow \psi(M)$.

12 The logical form of such a predicate is $\lambda x.\exists y\varphi(x, y)$, with $\lambda xy.\varphi(x, y)$ as the corresponding 2-place relation.

13 For the logical form *soluble (in water)* the following holds: *x is soluble (in water)* is by definition *true* if and only if the following rule *(if) x is put into water* $\Rightarrow$ *(then) x dissolves* can be viewed as a generically valid rule. Such a *definition* for a disposition is not viable as long as logicians work with Bertrand Russell's notion of a *material implication*. In rule-theoretic logic, a syntactical rule $p \Rightarrow q$ can be turned into a *generic* conditional $p \to q$. As a sentence it may appear as a sub-phrase in more complex sentences, if we distinguish between *sentences* as reproducible linguistic figures expressing general rules and *assertions* (of sentences in concrete utterances) expressing particular empirical claims. In mathematics, sentences *S* express eternal, that is utterance-invariant, rules in systems of formal expressions that fulfil (by our own constructions) the following *non-trivial* condition of *tertium non datur:* $S \vee \neg S$ is true, which means that it expresses a valid rule. We really cannot assume such a rule as valid outside mathematics. Nevertheless, since Aristotle *tertium non datur* is regularly confused with the *trivial* meta-statement that either *S* is true (valid, correct and so on), *or it is not*.

to me as a subject of performances can be different, depending on the performed actions or types of behaviour, even when the person in the sense of my place in personal relations remains the same, just as my individual body.

We thus can understand the talk about different souls or personalities as ways to speak about different aspects, roles, and statuses of me as a person. I can appear to other people differently as father, as friend, as teacher, as philosopher, or as writer. It is just a popular *metaphor* for one's wish to get recognised *as a personality* when we talk about developing one's *identity* or *individuality*. We *already are* individuals, subjects, even persons. But we develop our personhood, as Goethe had also famously stressed. Talking about *policies of identity* is also metaphorical for cooperative projects regions, nations, or states, but also a euphemism for developing privileges in favour of a national, tribal, racial, or religious in-group, mostly by discrimination of others. This is why we need to distinguish between canonical and figurative, categorical and tropical ("ironical") usages of our reflective words and logical forms.

5 Becoming and Being a Person

> Be a person and respect others as persons.
> (G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, § 36)[14]

The first part of Hegel's general categorical imperative says in its widest sense more or less the same as Pindar's famous dictum "Become who you are – by self-formation."[15] By learning, we should become who we generically already are, namely persons that can develop their personality.

The place of the gnomic formula in the *Philosophy of Right* might suggest a reading in a more restricted sense, namely: "be a *legal and moral* person and recognise all others in their lawful personal rights and moral dignity." However, being a person means in its active sense much more. It involves all kind of intellectual and practical competence in individual and joint actions, to be able to play personal roles and to fulfil corresponding commitments or duties. Respecting others as persons means in the normal case to cooperate in a "spirit of trust" (Brandom 2019); in the case of people that need our care, it means to respect

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14 Hegel (1995, § 36): "*Sei eine Person und respektiere die andern als Personen.*" Cf. also Stekeler (2021, p. 244).

15 *Genoi hoios essi mathōn.* See Pindar's 2. Pyth. Ode 72.

their legal, moral, and personal rights; these are independent of active competence and compliance and thus come at least *prima facie* without any duties.

Being a competent person who fulfils the conditions of personhood sufficiently is the 'idea' of a personal life. This 'idea' in the sense of Hegel's 'Idee' is an actual instantiation of the form or concept of being a full person. For this, we have to develop our personal faculties and properties, which virtually all come from our relation to other persons, in the end from humankind.

However, before going deeper into the logically nontrivial question what it means to become and be a person leading a personal life – and how it is a kind of self-making in the world – some short comments on the second part of Hegel's oracle might be in order. Respecting the others as persons does not mean respecting only those human beings that are able to communicate and cooperate with us in a competent form. In the second part of Hegel's dictum, the "sacrosanct" moment of human dignity prevails, which is a kind of "passive" attribution that says that *all human beings* must be treated with due care. This precludes any limitation of human rights to some privileged "race" (silently allowing slavery for certain people as we see it in Aristotle and even still in John Locke and Immanuel Kant). It also precludes any rule of the form "whoever does not work with us shall not eat" (St. Paul), but it means much more. It includes the demand to take any neighbour or any fellow human we actually meet into the set of people who deserve help if in need, but also into the group of people with which we cooperate in free trust or under the guide of economic division of labour and utility – as far as we are able to do.

6 A Man without Personality?

> Ulrich [...] came to the conclusion that he preferred, after all, to take the architectural completion of his personality into his own hands, and he began designing his future furniture himself. [...] In his potentialities, plans, and emotions, man must first of all be hedged in by prejudices, traditions, difficulties and limitations of every kind, like a lunatic in his straitjacket, and only then will, whatever he is capable of bringing forth, perhaps have some value, solidity and permanence. [...] However, the Man without Qualities took a second step [...] and abandoned the fitting up of his house to the genius of his tradespeople [...]
> (Robert Musil, *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften,* transl. by me, PSW, mainly following the proposals of B. Pike and S. Wilkings)[16]

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16 "Nach eingehender Beschäftigung [...] kam er zu der Entscheidung, dass er den Ausbau seiner Persönlichkeit doch lieber selbst in die Hand nehmen wolle, und begann seine zukünftigen Möbel eigenhändig zu entwerfen. [...] Es muß der Mensch in seinen Möglichkeiten, Plänen und Gefühlen zuerst durch Vorurteile, Überlieferungen, Schwierigkeiten und Beschränkungen

In his philosophical novel, Musil pictures *Ulrich* as a mathematical logician, in profession and character not too far away from Bertrand Russell, even though he seems to believe – more than Russell – in statistics and probabilities as the new methods of the social sciences. For his racical behaviourism, individual action is virtually meaningless. Aggregates of statistical behaviour allegedly shape the world. As a result, Ulrich is a man not without qualities, as the English translation of the title has it, but without stable personal virtues. Ulrich's desperate detachment from the world results from an image of himself sideways on. In this view, it seems to be an illusion to make oneself into an irreplaceable and unique personality anyway. Ulrich is wholly disillusioned about the "conventionality" of all norms and forms of becoming and being a person. He distrusts free will, autonomy, authenticity, conscience, and does not take part in the idea to produce a "heroic" personality, as the above passage already shows. Even his name is ironical, just as his sister's *Agathe*, literally "the good", who is, in moral and legal matters, not good at all: "*Udal-rich*" means in Medieval German, "rich of property".

In a sense, Ulrich is an ironical counterperson not only to Goethe's Wilhelm Meister, but also to Nietzsche's *Übermensch*. Nietzsche wants his *overman* to be pure autonomy and will. Nevertheless, both share a kind of intellectual arrogance, looking down to the schematic attitudes of ordinary folks. Nietzsche contradicts himself in his heroic contempt of the masses that he needs nevertheless for recognition.

We can put the common problem of Nietzsche and Musil this way: we know what it means to be only a half-person with one or more types of privations just as we know what it means to be a bad scientist or mere sophist. But in view of the fact that we do not know precisely about our own privations, in applying the norm of respecting all others as a person and the deep rule of loving the world as it is, we do not have any right to look down on half-persons. As persons, we have to actualise all kinds of schemes and conventions, but we can and must do this in a flexible way by intelligent adaption to context and situation. Hegel uses the image of "liquefying" the "rigidity" of traditional norms (from taboos to conventions) in his explanation of reason and spirit. By this, he turns the *Holy Ghost* of Christian religion into (divine but human) *Spirit*, which is, in the end, the free competence of autonomous judgement in application and development of traditional norms.

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jeder Art eingeengt werden wie ein Narr in seiner Zwangsjacke, und erst dann hat, was er hervorzubringen vermag vielleicht Wert, Gewachsenheit und Bestand. [...] Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften [...] tat auch den zweiten Schritt [...], er überließ die Einrichtung seines Hauses einfach dem Genie seiner Lieferanten [...]." (Musil 1981, vol. 1, p. 23 f.)

7 Practical Self-Relations

> The subject does not belong to the world but is a limit of the world.
> (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *TLP*, 5.632)

As Ernst Tugendhat has shown (1975), Martin Heidegger has analysed the logical form of active self-relations starting with the questions of what I care for when I care for my (future) self, and what I refer to when I talk about who I wish or want to be. My past and present actions obviously have consequences for my future being. What I do now will have consequences for the person or personality that I can become, i.e. for what I will be able to do and how I possibly can live in the future. Caring for myself and actively determining myself thus is changing my possible future or future possibilities by present actions and conduct.

However, already Hegel had seen that any talk about a self-relation has the form *xRy* in such a way that *x* and *y* will turn out as different "parts" or better "moments" of one and the same "object" or "subject" – such that *x* = *y*, if we give the equation or identity statement an appropriate reading. In the case of my active self-relations, I as the subject – who is doing something – am *not immediately the same personal subject* to which my doing will bring some change or have some effect.

By using the words "I" and "me" in statements about me, I refer as an actually thinking or speaking subject to a possible past or possible future of me as a personal individual. The identity conditions of my body are different (in time!) from the identity conditions of me as an actual speaker. As a speaker of some words, I exists only as longs as the performance last. This does not hold for my body.

No animal is an I or has a self. Animals have access only to present surroundings, but neither to their past nor to their future.[17] In fact, no animal has access to the relevant domain of possibilities. This is so because we need a *true language* for this. Such a language, by which we can make (future) possibilities present and represent things that are not here, is totally different to any animal language of signals for conveying merely present information and coor-

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17 This presupposes, however, a proper distinction between presence, past, and future since all presence is extended in time. Animals have indeed access to some "present future" in ongoing processes (for example by sight and experience). The notorious idea of presence as a limiting time-point between past and future is just a formal and ideal way of articulating the fact that we can always look for shorter present processes.

dinating behaviour. This is a deep *logical* fact – which modern naturalism obviously has not yet fully understood. As a result, contemporary public opinion does not know that, how, and why animal life takes place in a world without non-present possibilities and future, without any You, I, and We, hence, in a sense, without real reality as an actualised possibility at all.

Hegel analyses in his *Logic of Essence* the very notion of real reality (*Wirklichkeit*) as a linguistically developed model or possibility that is conceptually canonised as a *true* ground or cause for actual appearances in such a way that it generically fits to our general experience with it in the world. This is the core insight of *objective idealism* with its primacy of thinking. Thinking is transcendentally presupposed in our very notion of empirical (subjective) and real (objective and partially time-and-space-invariant) reality, which are, of course very general reflective concepts – by which we talk about our critical evaluations of distinguishing judgements, conditioned inferences and other assertions and claims.

8 Self-Knowledge of Self-Consciousness in Self-Determination

> Self-consciousness "is Self-consciousness for Self-consciousness".
> (G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 177)[18]

At first it appears to be an obscure formulation to say that self-knowledge is self-consciousness *for* self-consciousness. Most readers follow those who have emended the German text by a plural "e" (the English by an "s"), as if Hegel talked here about *two* different "self-consciousnesses", referring to two *different persons* (subjects or individuals). This is obviously too hasty. Instead, Hegel talks about the very notion of self-consciousness as self-knowledge of my knowledge and my self-knowledge including my self-determinations in conscious and intentional action (which Hegel also calls "labour", "Arbeit"). His main interest lies in the question what the word "self" means here.

The standard account of a *self-relation* as a relation of some x to x would be nonsensical if it were not in fact a relation of Hegel's category "being for itself". Hegel calls relations xRy with *different* x and y "Being-for-Other-Things", *Für-Anderes-Sein*. For such relations, $x \neq y$ follows from xRy. Hegel's label "being-for-itself" applies to relations xRy for which xRy implies $x = y$. Such relations are de-

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18 Cf. Stekeler (2014, vol. 1, p. 661): "Es ist ein *Selbstbewußtsein für ein Selbstbewußtsein.*"

fined *below* the identity of the *D*-objects, for example when some equivalence relation $x \approx y$ (for example between ratios) in a domain $D^\star$ is turned into an identity $x = y$ (for example of rational numbers) in D.

Paradigmatic relations of the type "being for itself" are self-love or self-hatred, self-knowledge, self-determination or autonomy. In all these cases, I love, hate, know, or determine something *that is mine* in such a strong sense that I can be identified with it. In the case of self-love, I might love my body or my assumed intelligence too much. When I hate myself, I might hate what I have done. In the case of knowing myself, I might know what I am able to do, how I look, or how others perceive and evaluate me. Virtually any partial knowledge of my world can turn into such self-knowledge by logical procedures explained above.

Personal autonomy, self-determination, autopoiesis or self-making are, accordingly, (systems of) actions in which I produce something, some x, which also can count as parts of me. This holds, for example, for any self-formation or learning by which I change from a personal subject unable to do something into a person, as we say in short, that has the faculty to do it.

Self-consciousness then is being conscious of some y that I am, have been, or might be in the future. According to Hegel's structural analysis, self-consciousness is an active cognitive attitude to some y that is only in a certain sense the same as this attitude. As a result, self-consciousness splits into an active and, as such, subjective or performative moment x and a passive or objective moment y, but such that $x \approx y$. How can we understand these two moments of self-consciousness more precisely and which of the cognitive self-relationships really hold and are not simply self-declared or expressively claimed to hold?

Hegel's starting point in the chapter on self-consciousness had been *desire* as animal appetite. Satisfying my hunger by eating is a case of practical self-relationship. Here, the feeling of satisfaction and being satisfied coincides; but this does not hold for self-knowledge and active self-determination. The truth conditions of judgements about my intentions, for example, are normally not yet fulfilled when I only feel satisfied with my doing; there still can be tensions between the merely subjective feeling of satisfaction about my self-judgements and their fulfilment as true. The same holds for actions as alleged fulfilments of my alleged intentions.

What or who is now the master (performing subject) in self-judgements? In such judgements, we evaluate propositional contents as true and intentions as existent. But what or who is the object (subject matter) that is judged about, such that the judgement can be evaluated as true or good in view of this object? Again, we see the different meanings of "subject", especially since being

a subject (in a state) can also mean being subjected to some master (for example a king).

We might already muse that not the ideal "master" who only expressively thinks, speaks, plans and intends in the mode of mere declaration, but the "bodily servant" that actually does things (and is subjected to the judgement of the reflecting master) decides by his real performing about the truth or goodness of the self-judgement. In expressive declarations, an act is meant to have this or that content. There are "objective" conditions that decide if it really has this content.

It is only a short step from here to see in which sense there can be a struggle of death or life between the master and the servant: With respect to the self-ascription of intentions-in-actions the question "to be or not to be" of Hamlet applies. Intentions that are not performed are mere wishes; actions performed under main orientations to *other* intentions cannot be explained, justified or understood by appeal to more cherished intentions, even if they are explicitly self-attributed. I can, in a sense, deceive myself here, if I do not accurately control my real, leading, intentions – and what I should know or should learn if I really want to be a sufficiently "perfect" person in my intentions and actions.

On the other hand, really having an intention to perform a certain generic action is more than self-ascription – or getting such intentions attributed by other persons. The very notion of personal intention rests on the notion of conscientious self-consciousness, as Hegel will show in quite some details in the chapters on Reason and Spirit.

Conscience always stands in some dialectical tensions between an always possible subjective arrogance in self-righteous self-evaluation and humble recognition of evaluation of others, but also between what we could call conventional cowardice and authentic bravery. The counterfactual idea of a transcendent God solves this tension in a way that clearly *limits* our finite access to invariant truth (about ourselves) in a way that might be difficult to understand schematically but is necessary for logical reflection on the very notions of knowledge, self-knowledge, and truth. Mere consensus is not good enough. Since *recognising* other humans as *persons* means to *respect them freely*, it is more than unclear how anybody who is not already insane could *fight* for recognition or respect (as some Russians actually seem to do).

9 My World and the World

> That the world is *my* world is shown by the fact that the limits of that language,
> which only I understand, signifies the limits of *my* world.
> (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *TLP*, 5.62)

Wittgenstein's oracle is at least ambiguous – if not actually wrong. My world is not the world. There is no language that only I could understand. Insofar as I am my world, it is trivially true that I, as the subject of my world-relations or references to the world, am not a part of, or object in, the world. However, I am a personal subject that knows about other personal subjects. I know that each of us has a different perspectival access to the world, such that my world is different from yours. All this brings us back to our distinction between subject and person.

a) My access to the world is always an access to my world. The rose I see here is "my" rose in the sense that it is the rose seen by me. It is "in me" in the sense explained above, and it is in the outer world in the sense as you and others have access to the rose as well. Some philosophers talk about *qualia* as if they were entities, but there are no identities defined.

b) There are things that are only "in me" – for example my sensations and dreams – that you do not have independent access to. They are called "merely subjective".

c) The world to which I have access by intuition and thinking from my point of view is my world.

d) Talking about the objective world involves an *abstraction* that brackets all relations *merely* to me. This means that we evaluate relations between me and my world resp. us and our world as *equivalent* to some relations of you to your world. Such an *abstractive translation* is the only method of constituting *trans-subjective objectivity*.

e) The limits of my language are limits of my generic beliefs about my world. Cognition of my world is more or less the same as the system of more or less self-controlled "intuitions" and sincere and hopefully accurate "contentions" that I use as presuppositions in my subjective understanding of fulfilment- or truth-conditions expressed in my thoughts and speech acts. However, correct understanding and objective truth always transcend subjective understanding and belief.

f) Hegel's absolute idealism is an objective subjectivism. It is the insight that objective reference and knowledge is an ideal idea of co-variant access to the world. A manifold of different "subjective" accesses form a basis for practical and theoretical ways of constituting relative objectivity, namely

by perspectival changes which define the identity of objects via the equivalence of their different (re-)presentations.

10 Plato's Detached Soul as the Whole Person

> All divisions of theology arise from ignorance of grammar.
> (Joseph Justus Scaliger, *Quotes*)

It is now highly interesting to see how our logical insights pertain even into our moral and religious self-understanding and self-images. Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, for example, have distinguished three "parts" or "moments" of the living soul. The first is the vegetative soul of all living organisms – which we share even with plants. The second is the sensual soul of enactive perceptions or intuition-guided reactions as we share it with animals. The third is the thinking soul or *psychē noētikē* as the subject of all spiritual or intelligent competence, as we have to develop it by education and self-formation.

However, Socrates and Plato claim that there is a fourth soul. This soul is assumed to be "separated" from the living body and is said to be "immortal". This "eternal soul" can and should be identified with the totality of my personal character, the *eidos* of me as a *whole person – post mortem*.[19] As such, it transcends the first three moments of the soul. However, neither Simmias and Kebes, the relevant dialogue partners of Socrates at the end of the *Phaedo*, nor Glaukon and Adeimantos, the partners in the (tenth book of) the *Republic*,[20] nor Aristotle seem to appreciate what Plato's Socrates teaches here. This holds even more so for modern self-declared Anti-Platonists. Most often they are, ironically, hidden Pythagoreans, that is the real "Platonists", namely in their physicalism and its overestimation of mathematical structures. True enlightenment must get rid of such materialism or naturalism.

Plato's teachings on the "fourth soul" was not taken up by academic philosophers or, for that matter, Stoic writers like Seneca or Marcus Aurelius, but by religious teachers like Jesus, St Paul, St Augustin, or Boethius, just to name some leading figures. They have transformed the intellectual belief in an "eternal", time-general "being" of the (fourth) soul by developing the Platonic ideas of "Pharisaical" Jews into a religion for ordinary people. The eternal

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[19] With respect to the role of time and death see the parallel thoughts and differences to Hutter (2019, pp. 219 – 236).

[20] Plato's title *Politeia* stands for the "Constitution of the Soul and State" in their mutual relations of analogy and influence.

soul turns into a kind of truth-maker for statements about the person as a whole, that is about all of its deeds and intentions in life, from a God's point of view beyond time – or better: just after death.

In order to make this divine judgement understandable for "normal" people, Plato and all the religious teachers that follow him talk about the "Last Judgement" after the "End of All Days". We can easily re-translate this mythological image into a more realistic and less mystical language. Any *imitatio Christi*, for example, means taking Jesus as a paradigm. Ironically, the expression *son of man* that just means *man* has been turned into *Son of God* – perhaps for the purpose of *propaganda fidei*, that is the Christian mission.

However, all this amounts, in the end, to nothing else than what Heidegger had famously expressed by two labels, *Vorlaufen-in-den-Tod* (forerunning to death) and *Gewissen-haben-Wollen* (striving for conscience). The first label names the fact that each of us can think and talk as a personal subject during his life in the grammatical mode of *futurum exactum* about which person he or she today wants to have been after death. The second label says that only those deepen their personal life, who really actualise the said form of self-reflection and want to evaluate all their doings under the guide of what Christian tradition calls *conscience* – as a particularly *moral* translation of Latin *conscientia*, Greek *syneidesis*, sometimes wrongly copied as *synderesis* or *synteresis.*

Conscience is the internalised voice of the generic community of persons in their joint process of developing their own free form of cooperation and life. As the voice of the Father in Heaven, it is what cultural tradition teaches us about the ideal forms and norms for being a good (or even relatively perfect) person. As long as we have only (spoken or written) words, we still need Spirit or Reason for good understanding and good judgement.

In other words, we can and should understand the talk about the immortal soul as talking about the whole person-before-God. As such, it is a merely logical or grammatical subject about which we think and talk when we want to evaluate us as full persons. If I am this person myself, I speak or think from the vantage point of my own life and from my own limited and finite perspective, as anybody who writes an autobiography. At least some "pages" of my actual life are then always still missing – and the wish to be evaluated by others in the same way as one evaluates oneself is often enough not fulfilled.

Biographies and autobiographies miss many details, especially intentions that the persons actually, but silently had in their deeds without making them public. It is therefore a wise advice to stay content with the idea that "God" knows of all our (hopefully good) intentions and deeds.

With respect to the person as the type or character which I form by my self-developments, we can distinguish different kinds of "privations" of personhood,

as it were. A *homo oeconomicus* as a human being with only an instrumental use of rationality is such a privative half-person. Such a merely rational man is still a member of a spirited animal kingdom (*Geistiges Tierreich*). However, a "religious person" in the classical sense of the word can also still live a privative life of "unhappy consciousness", as Hegel calls it. Such a person "believes" in a "real eternal life" and an "ontic God" and actually "hopes" for divine justice after the life in this world. Such a belief and hope are not authentic enough to cope with all finitudes of the one and only non-fictional world there is, the world of (empirical) becoming. In other words, an unhappy consciousness does not accept or understand the fact that God stands for all our own ideals, not merely as a "regulative idea" in Kant's sense as a fictional narrative for moral edifice, but as a real part of our institution of a personal community. In other words, religious talk about God must be understood in the context of constituting the very idea of truth about our whole character, soul, or full person.

However, naturalism and nihilist scepticism are also versions of some privative half-consciousness, confronted with seemingly insurmountable problems in understanding the idea of truth according to Hegel's reconstruction. This shows why or in which sense we need to talk of God whenever we want to make the relation and contrast between objective truth and subjective knowledge or objective laws and subjective rights explicit – as we also can see at the examples of Nietzsche and Musil.

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Heikki Ikäheimo

"Spirit" – or the Self-Creating Life-Form of Persons and Its Constitutive Limits

Abstract: In this chapter I will elaborate on three broadly Hegelian ideas. Firstly, that the subjective and objective aspects of "spirit" (*Geist*), that is to say the psychological and social structures distinctive of persons and their life, are co-constitutive elements of a whole. This whole is the human life-form, or "the life-form of persons". Secondly, that recognition or *Anerkennung* as self-transcendence and inclusion of otherness is ontologically constitutive of both, and key to their internal interrelations. Thirdly, that though freedom as collective autonomy is distinctive of this life-form, thought on the model of abstraction from necessarily determining otherness it is theoretically mistaken, and, put in practice, pathological in a literal sense of a pathology of life with this form.

Keywords: Hegel; spirit; life-form; personhood; humanity

1 Introduction

In the year 2020 Australia experienced the most devastating bush-fire season in recorded history, and right after that the world economy stalled due to a global virus outbreak the severity of which has no modern precedent. Crises tend to speed up paradigm shifts, and the one begun in 2020 certainly will. In this paper I will contribute to a shift that has been gathering momentum for some time now, the need for which the current crisis has made all too obvious. This is a shift in Kant- and Hegel-influenced philosophy from thinking of *Geist* or "spirit" as an abstract realm or dimension insulated from nature – frictionlessly spinning without touching it, or at least with a tendency to do this as essential to it – to thinking of spirit as a life-form, situated in nature at large, just as all life is.

More exactly, the idea that I will be working on, an idea which I adopt from Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer, is that Hegel's term *Geist* or "spirit" is best understood as a "title-word" for the human life-form, or as I will say for reasons that I hope to make clear, the life-form of persons.[1] This translation cuts with ease through both mystifying interpretations of *Geist* in Hegel according to which the term

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1 See, for example, Stekeler-Weithofer (2011). For considerations by a historian for speaking of humanity as a life-form, see Chakrabarty (2009).

stands for some "spooky" metaphysico-theological entity or transcendent principle with causal powers, as well as deflating interpretations according to which it stands for "normativity", "the realm of normativity", "the space of norms", "the space of reasons", and so on. Neither one of these interpretations makes much sense when one takes a serious look at what Hegel actually discusses in his *Philosophy of Spirit*, the third part of his *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences*. Under the title "Subjective Spirit" Hegel discusses the human person in her bodily, intentional, and psychological constitution, under "Objective Spirit" the social and institutional structures of human co-existence (on what Hegel thought of as their ideal arrangement for his time and place), and under "Absolute Spirit" the collective forms of self-representation, philosophy itself as the ultimate form. Spooky entities or transcendent principles have no presence anywhere in the text, and "normativity" and other similar terms are severely limited characterisations of what *spirit* stands for in comparison to what the text is actually about – namely the three interrelated aspects of the life-form.

Though in what follows I will not be talking about Hegel directly, my contribution is inspired not only by Stekeler-Weithofer's proposal just mentioned, but also by three basic Hegelian insights. Firstly, that the subjective and objective aspects of spirit, or the life-form of persons, are indeed aspects or moments of an integral whole. Secondly, that recognition (*Anerkennung*) as self-transcendence and inclusion of otherness is ontologically constitutive of both, and key to their internal interrelations.[2] And thirdly, that freedom, if it is to be real, cannot mean abstraction from what necessarily determines us, but reconciliation with it.[3] Though autonomy in the sense of self-governance by collectively administered norms – as elaborated by recent neo-Hegelian philosophy – is part of what distinguishes "spirit" or the life-form in question from "merely" animal life, thought on the model of abstraction from necessarily determining otherness it is theoretically mistaken and put in practice pathological of the life-form in a literal sense of "pathology". To correct this mistake, self-governance by norms needs to be understood according to a Hegelian holistic, rather than a Kantian dualistic model. Or to use Hegel's wording, it needs to be understood concretely

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2 Recognition is a central concept in what I called the deflating interpretations, and in this they are certainly on the right path, even if they tend to give the concept and the role of the phenomenon in human reality an unduly narrow interpretation.

3 This is what Hegel meant by "concrete freedom", or Hans Jonas by "needful freedom" in his *The Phenomenon of Life* (Jonas 1966, p. 80) – a book that manages to articulate an amazing number of Hegel's ideas about organic life while barely mentioning the name, so much so that it is able to be a central reference in Richard Dien Winfield's book on Hegel's Anthropology and Phenomenology *The Living Mind – From Psyche to Consciousness* (Winfield 2011).

rather than abstractly.[4] What I want to do in this chapter is to present some outlines of a general ontology of our life-form that elaborates on these Hegelian ideas, but is independent of Hegel's own particular ways of utilising them, and draws on ideas from elsewhere as well.[5]

2 Three Distinctive Facts about the Life-Form of Persons

To get started, let me put to you three fairly humdrum thoughts about features that I take to be essential to the human life-form, and together distinctive of it. Firstly, in distinction to simpler animals whose lives are organised by natural instincts, the life of human persons is organised to a large extent in terms of collectively administered norms. Secondly, in distinction to simpler animals, humans are not merely driven by the urge to satisfy immediately given felt needs, but by concerns for future satisfaction, happiness, and maximally the success or goodness of their lives as a whole. Thirdly, humans are, directly or indirectly, dependent on cooperation or collective action for everything that distinguishes them from simpler animals.

What exactly each of these features require or consist of should not be stipulated too strictly in advance, and they need to be seen as allowing for degrees of development, as is required by the fact of the gradual evolution of the life-form.

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4 My ideas on concrete freedom are influenced by the work of Louglin Gleeson in his PhD-thesis *Reconstructions of Hegel's Concept of Freedom: Towards a Holistic and Universalist Reading of Concrete Freedom* at the UNSW Sydney (Gleeson 2019).

5 The reader may sense a distinctly Feuerbachian flavour in my use of Hegel's ideas. As I see it, Feuerbach was no match to Hegel as a philosopher, and his intended patricide of Hegel was fundamentally misguided, even if not thereby any less influential: Feuerbach, a student at Hegel's lectures on anthropology in Berlin, presented – to put it very briefly – Hegel's anthropological ideas as his own. He ramped up the image of his originality by puffing down the mystifying strawman-interpretation of Hegel that he himself set up, one which Marx and innumerable others then bought into. Feuerbach's anthropologising move in philosophy was indeed a healthy one; only it wasn't his, but already Hegel's, a move that Habermas later called Hegel's "de-transcendentalisation" of the Kantian subject. (Habermas' mistake was only to exaggerate the extent to which this move is obfuscated in Hegel's later work after the Jena period, see Habermas 1999.) Unlike that of Kant, Hegel's subject of knowledge and action is not divided into two ultimately irreconcilable "worlds", or "aspects", whichever reading one wants to follow (and ultimately it does not matter as the empirical and noumenal remain equally irreconcilable on both readings): it is without reservations a subject in the world, both embodied and social, a human person or human persons that is.

Also, they are perfectly compatible with the possibility that had evolution taken another path, the animal species whose distinctive features they today are might look somewhat different, as well as with the possibility that some other currently living species may also exhibit them to some degree. In other words, they are at the same time distinctive of Homo sapiens and their ancestors, and conceptually unbound from this or any other species of animals. They are, I suggest, central to what makes us persons, but then they would make members of any species persons. Hence, it is more accurate to say that they are central distinctive features of "the life-form of persons". Each of the three facts – norm-governance, immediacy-transcending concern, and cooperation – involve an internal interconnection of psychological and social structures distinctive of the life-form, or an internal interconnection between what I call the psychological and the intersubjective layer of personhood and what I call the three respective dimensions of the life-form, and of personhood: the deontological, the axiological, and the cooperative.[6]

3 The Deontological Dimension of the Life-Form

As for norm-governance, contemporary neo-Hegelianism has taught us something valuable, namely grasping it in terms of mutual recognition in the sense of authority-attribution. To be governed by norms, one must recognise some others in the sense of taking them as having authority on the norms in question. In terms of psychology or psychological structure, this means a certain kind of self-transcendence, or decentring of the subject's intentionality or intentional relation to everything, both on the epistemic or theoretical and on the practical dimension of intentionality. In short, this "deontological decentring" means subjecting one's life, both objectively and subjectively, to the authority of others and thus under norms that they lend their authority to. On the other hand, to be recognised in this sense is to be attributed, by the recogniser(s), a status or standing of an authority on the norm or norms in question. Though as we proceed things will turn out to be somewhat more complicated, as a first approximation we can think of the self-subjection to others by recognising others as authorities as the person-making psychological feature, and the status of an

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6 For the layers and dimensions of what I call "full-fledged personhood", see Tab. 1 at the end the paper. Here I will not be talking about personhood in the sense of a legal status, nor, to borrow Arto Laitinen, in the sense of a "high and equal moral status" (see chapters 3 and 4 in Ikäheimo/Laitinen/Quante/Testa, forthcoming), but of ontologically foundational intersubjective statuses.

authority that this form of recognition by others attributes one as the person-making intersubjective status on the deontological dimension.

We can usefully think of the deontological dimension in terms of Dave Elder-Vass's idea of "norm-circles". In short (and here I am not following the details of Elder-Vass's elaborations but rather utilising the general idea)[7] each norm bears in the subject's mind the authority of those others – real or imaginary, present or absent, close or distant, alive or dead – that she recognises as having authority over it and thus over the aspects of one's life governed by the norm. Depending on the norm, and the kind of norm in question, who exactly the authoritative others are for a person may be far from definite and may vary across time. In order to be shared and thus actually govern shared life, the subjective norm-circles of individuals only need to be sufficiently co-extensive for there to exist a definite enough "objective" norm-circle for the given norm.

Now, a norm-circle comes with two basic kinds of standings or statuses for the participating individuals: that of someone subjected to a norm, and that of someone having authority on the norm. Collective autonomy in the sense of collective self-governance by norms only adds up to individual autonomy when the individual occupies both roles – those of a subject and of an authority – or in other words when the individual is a "co-authority" of the norms governing her life. Though being subjected to social norms can already be thought of as a minimally person-making intersubjective status (depending on what exactly one thinks it involves) on the deontological dimension, I take it that having authority on the norms is what is required for a full-fledged person-making status on this dimension. This interconnection of the psychological and the intersubjective aspect of norm-governance, and of the two possible standings in norm-circles, is foundational for what I call the deontological dimension of the life-form of persons: the psychological structure or capacities involved in norm-governance is part of what makes something a person psychologically, and the standings in norm-circles are part of what makes something a person in status. They are what I call the psychological and the intersubjective layers of the deontological dimension of full-fledged personhood.

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7 See Elder-Vass (2010).

4 The Axiological and Cooperative Dimensions of the Life-Form

It is important to note that this is not the whole story, however. A philosophical framework limited or too narrowly focused on this deontological dimension – a common feature of philosophical imaginaries that are Kantian rather than Hegelian in basic orientation – easily ends up painting an abstractly "frictionless" picture of "spirit", or of the life-form of persons and thus of personhood. We can start overcoming this abstractness by elaborating on the idea that the deontological dimension is only one of the dimensions of the life-form and thus of personhood. Consider the second and third feature that distinguish human life from simpler animal life: immediacy-transcending concern and cooperation, or the axiological and the cooperative dimension respectively. Here everything hangs together. Not only is it distinctive of persons to have Frankfurtian "second-order" motivations in addition to "first-order" ones;[8] their motivations also have a temporal extension and logical complexity, spanning into the future and involving complex connections of ends and means. And since securing future is for humans impossible without cooperation, the horizon of concerns of a person will include other persons in instrumental roles – a connection between the axiological and the cooperative dimension.[9] In short: I cannot secure my future alone and thus have to acknowledge others as needed or instrumental for securing it. Furthermore, since imagining, preparing for, or planning for non-immediate future requires complex representational capacities and thus linguistically structured thought, and since language involves linguistic norms and thus collective norm-governance, the axiological and the cooperative dimension of the life-form depend on the deontological. Also, since cooperation in the relevant sense is, for the most part, not organised by animal instincts, but by shared norms, the cooperative dimension depends on the deontological in this sense as well.

This, however, does not mean that the deontological dimension is any more fundamental than the axiological or the cooperative, as can be seen by simply considering the fact that without orientation towards and concern for the future, and without cooperation required for securing the future, there would be nothing to govern by shared norms. The deontological dimension of the life-form is

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8 See Frankfurt (1971).
9 For a study in evolutionary anthropology that puts a heavy emphasis on the role of cooperation in the evolution of Homo sapiens, see Sterelny (2012).

not self-standing, or more fundamental, but dependent on the axiological and cooperative dimensions, just as they are dependent on it and on each other. This already goes some way in correcting an abstract or frictionless picture of freedom as collective self-governance by norms.

Let me now introduce two further kinds of "circles" to illuminate the axiological and the cooperative dimensions of the life-form, and the intertwinement of the psychological and the intersubjective layer of personhood in these dimensions. Partly analogically to the deontological dimension where the transition from animality to personhood takes place through the subject's self-transcending or decentring in the sense of recognising others as other centres of authority, on the axiological dimension this happens through recognising them in the sense of acknowledging them as other centres of concern, or in other words other perspectives to value.[10] This *axiological decentring* is necessary for a subject to be a person for a number of reasons. Firstly, sharing a world with others requires sharing relevance structures, and relevances are concern-dependent. Conceptual norms "fix" how to carve the world, but why these rather than those carvings are relevant in the first place depends on concerns, and without a grasp of the concerns of others there are no shared structures to fix. Secondly, there is the question of what in ontogenesis causes transcending immediate desire-orientation or orientation by first-order desires alone. What I take to be the most plausible explanation is in abstract outlines shared by the philosopher Hegel and modern developmental psychology and psychoanalytical theory: namely that it is the resistance or challenge of the other subject or subjects that does this. In Hegel's highly idealised philosophical story, a primitive desiring subject is confronted with another similar subject which curbs the first subject's capacity to immediately satisfy its given need and object-related desire, and forces it into an attitude of postponing satisfaction to the future and thus of concern for the future. The human infant of developmental psychology and psychoanalysis is similarly forced to transcend immediate desire-satisfaction through experiencing the unavailability of the satisfying breast (to speak in psychoanalytic shorthand) and through experiencing the dependence of satisfaction on another subject with independent needs or concerns. On this line of thought transcending the *immediacy* of concern in the sense of extending it temporally

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10 I am describing here dimensions, or aspects, or facets, or moments of one and the same development or transition.

happens through transcending the *solipsism* of concern in the sense of experiencing another subject as another centre of concerns.[11]

Furthermore, both the desiring animal of Hegel's philosophical imagery and the human infant that each of us once was not only experiences the other subject as an independent centre of concerns, but is also forced to include the concerns of others into the complex of its own concerns, or in other words to care about them, to the extent that its (or her) own satisfaction is dependent on or intertwined with what moves the others, or in other words with their concerns. Partly analogically with the norm-circles on the deontological dimension of the life-form, we can talk of *value-circles* on the axiological dimension. The idea is in brief the following: securing future well-being in the sense specific to persons requires cooperation or collective effort, and for any collective effort to get off the ground those participating in it must find it conducive for what they see as good from their individual perspectives. Furthermore, the several individual perspectives of good and bad must be sufficiently in harmony. Those whose individual perspectives of good and bad count in relevant ways in the determination of the "goods" that are collectively aimed at and "bads" that are collectively avoided are members of the given value-circle, in partial analogy with how members of a norm-circle participate in authorising norms. Whereas norm-circles consist of those whose authority a given norm or norm-system embodies (as well as, if you want, those subjected to the norm or norm-system, but without authority over it), value-circles consist of those whose concerns count in determining the goals of cooperative activities. As for personhood in this axiological dimension, at the psychological level it is distinctive of persons to have a structure of concerns that transcends mere immediate desire-orientation, or in other words to be concerned of one's future, and I have suggested that this comes with concern for some others as well. Those others are the ones comprising the subjective value-circles of an individual. At the intersubjective level, being recognised as someone whose concerns matter and thereby being someone whose concerns count in the setting of cooperative ends seems no less important for one's standing in social life than having authority over the norms of co-existence or cooperation. Whereas the psychological structure just mentioned is the psychological layer of personhood in the axiological dimension, this status or standing is the intersubjective layer of personhood in this dimension.

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11 Benjamin (1988) presents this well in (Hegel-influenced) psychoanalytic terms. Hegel's version is best presented in §§ 424–439 of his Berlin Encyclopaedia (1830) (Hegel 2007). I elaborate at more length on the latter text in Ikäheimo (2013).

Finally, as for the closely related, or only analytically distinct cooperative dimension of the life-form, it is useful to think of this dimension, in partial analogy with the concepts of norm-circle and value-circle, in terms of "cooperative circles". Whereas norm-circles consist of those recognised as authoritative over the given norm or norm-system (as well as, if you want, those subjected to it but without authority over it), and whereas value-circles consist of those recognised as someone(s) whose concerns, happiness or well-being matter and thereby count positively in determining cooperative ends, cooperative circles consist of those who are recognised in the sense of acknowledged as contributors to cooperation. Again, two layers of personhood are involved in this dimension of the life-form: the psychological one consisting of capacities for the given form of cooperation, and the intersubjective one of a standing or status of a contributor to the cooperation. As with norm-circles, in order to be shared and thus actually govern shared life, the subjective value-circles and the subjective cooperative circles need to be sufficiently co-extensive for there to exist definite enough "objective" value- and cooperative circles.

5 Less and More Fully Person-Making Membership-Statuses, and Fundamental Ethics

There are further important details about the various membership-statuses in the circles constitutive of the life-form that I haven't discussed so far. Spelling them out introduces what I think of as a "fundamental ethics", or an ethics grounded on the constitutive structures of the life-form. In general, subjects in plural constitute or "create" the life-form of persons, and thereby themselves and each other as persons, by including each other and thus being included into the three circles. But there is a crucially important distinction between two kinds or "modes" of active membership-status in each of the three circles, corresponding to the two different modes of intersubjective recognition that attribute the statuses.[12]

As for the deontological dimension, the status of an authoritative member in a norm-circle comes in a *conditional* and an *unconditional* mode, corresponding to the exact mode of recognition in the sense of attribution of authority by the relevant other or others. This form of recognition can be conditional in the sense of conditioned by prudential considerations on the part of the recogniser(s), whether this means fear or calculation of utility. Hegel's master

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12 See Fig. 1 at the end.

only commands authority in the slave's eyes in so far as the latter has reason to fear the former, and a slave has any authority in the master's eyes only in so far as granting him authority serves the master's purposes (think of granting an intelligent slave authority over how certain tasks are to be executed). Recognition as authority-attribution is in this relationship thus on both sides conditional. But authority-attribution can also be unconditional, not conditioned on prudential considerations on the recogniser's part. Such unconditional attribution of authority is what I understand by recognition as *respect*, and this is the properly moral or ethical mode of recognition (or to be more exact of what I call "purely intersubjective recognition", see Fig. 1[13]) on the deontological dimension.

Analogically, on the axiological dimension, membership in value-circles determining cooperative ends comes in conditional and unconditional variants corresponding to conditional and unconditional modes of recognition as caring about the other and thus about her concerns. It is possible for members of a value-circle[14] to care about their own well-being or life unconditionally, but care about the well-being or concerns of other members only conditionally, only insofar as the latter are important for their own concerns or well-being (or those of third persons they care about). This is the case, for example, when members only care about each other's concerns to the extent that these are important for the contribution of the respective others in cooperative circles. When this is the case, any individual's concern affects the content or direction of collective aims only insofar as she is considered as useful by the others. This may be the case for example in a business-partnership that has a limited, relatively well-defined end, but it is less likely to be the case in families where the individuals are more likely to have recognition for each other also in the sense of intrinsic concern, or in other words love. Since larger social wholes consist of people involved in various kinds of relationships or circles with each other – both the business kinds of relationships and the family kinds of relationships – they are mixtures in this sense, involving both instrumental concern and intrinsic concern between the members.

Thinking of, say, a nation-state from the point of view of value-circles, this distinction bites both in thinking of the particular axiological status of particular groups such as refugees, or immigrants with temporary working visas, and in thinking of solidarity among members of the society more broadly. As for the

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13 This is the ontologically foundational form of recognition, and it contrasts with "norm-mediated recognition", which is recognition of someone as a bearer of deontic powers implied by norms.

14 Individuating value-circles is more difficult than individuating norm-circles since individuating "values" or "concerns" is more difficult than individuating norms.

mentioned special groups, not only may they have very little authority – both conditional and unconditional – over the terms or norms of the society or social life; also their well-being or concerns may count for little in determining collective ends. They may appear too strange or "other" to arouse sympathy or intrinsic concern in the majority population, and this means that whether their well-being or concerns matter much or at all depends wholly on their contributions being seen as useful. As to the issue of solidarity more broadly, the less intrinsic concern there is between citizens, or in the "attitudinal atmosphere" of the society, the more precarious will be the position of those who are seen to have little or nothing to contribute, and whose well-being is hence of little or no conditional importance or "use" for others. Such can be the case, especially, of the elderly or people with disabilities. Analogically to recognition as unconditional attribution of authority or respect on the deontological dimension, recognition as unconditional concern for others and thus their concerns, or in other words *love*, is the properly moral or ethical mode of recognition in the axiological dimension.

Finally, as for the cooperative dimension of the life-form and thus cooperative circles, membership in them similarly comes in two different modes, corresponding to two modes of recognition in the sense of appreciation of someone as a contributor to collective ends: instrumental valuing and *gratitude*. A master recognises his slave in the sense of appreciating him as a useful contributor. This is recognition as instrumental valuing. Since the slave does not work freely, and since he probably has no unconditional or intrinsic concern for the master or his concerns, the master also has no reason for gratitude for the slave. (Needless to say, the slave, as a slave, has no reason for gratitude for the master as a master either.) Gratitude, I take it, is the properly moral or ethical mode of recognition on this dimension, and thus the properly moral or ethical mode of inclusion in cooperative circles. To use the example of immigrant workers with temporary visas again, they may be making a significant contribution to cooperative goals, such as Australian agricultural production, and recognised as making it (otherwise they would not be hired in the first place), and yet they may be unlikely to be mentioned in speeches, erected statues for, or figure in any major way in the collective imagination of the nation or of a given rural community as persons to be grateful to. They are recognised members of cooperative circles, but only as instrumentally valuable, rather than as persons deserving gratitude.

Taken as a whole, on each of the three interrelated dimensions of the life-form and in the three corresponding kinds of "circles", inclusion or membership-status thus comes in two different modes, and I suggest that one of these is more person-making than the other, and hence something without which an individual or individuals lack something important from full-fledged personhood. On the intersubjective layer, full-fledged personhood requires having the

recognised status of an "irreducible" or "original" centre of authority, of an irreducible or original centre of concern and thus perspective to value, and of a free (and not purely selfish) contributor deserving gratitude. Each one of these statuses attributed to an individual by the respective form of purely intersubjective recognition in the unconditional mode by others is, I am arguing, fundamental to the moral or ethical quality of human interaction, or their relative presence or absence decisive for the moral or ethical quality of the "circles" constitutive of the life-form of persons. This is what I see as the core of a "fundamental ethics" of the life-form, an ethics that connects with lived experiences of lack of recognition in the sense of relative depersonification, and that provides a differentiated analysis and articulation of such experiences of depersonification, reification, or dehumanisation. Importantly, it is independent of any particular cultural or institutional form or modification of the life-form, and thereby promises to provide means for immanent social critique with cross-cultural applicability.

6 Autonomy and Concrete Freedom

There will be much more to say about the above topics, but let me now move on to the final theme of this paper: freedom as collective autonomy and abstract versus "concrete" ways of thinking about it, the latter being the properly Hegelian way.

Since the path-breaking work of (narrowly or broadly defined) "neo-Hegelian" thinkers such as Robert Brandom, Terry Pinkard, Robert Pippin, and others beginning in the late 1980s and early 1990s, much has been written about freedom as collective autonomy in the sense of self-governance by collectively authorised and administered norms. Not only has this work introduced Hegel to the philosophical landscape in a new way as a serious thinker, it has also fed important insights into systematic philosophical work in semantics, social ontology, epistemology, and elsewhere. Though it would be hard to overestimate the value of this work, it also comes with certain limitations or problems. As for Hegel, it has encouraged a truncated view of what *Geist* or "spirit" stands for in his *Philosophy of Spirit*, something that does not hold water if one takes a serious look at what is actually going on in the text.[15] But more importantly, there is philosophical trouble, namely trouble that comes with the imagery of *Geist* as the "realm of the normative", thought of as abstractly free from nature – a phil-

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15 See Ikäheimo (2021).

osophical imagery partly motivated by a desire to counter the reductive naturalism or naturalist reductivism common in Anglo-American philosophy.[16]

In the remainder, I will not engage with any of the details of the work that I am referring to, mainly because I am not invested in challenging those details, but rather in contributing to a general shift in the paradigms under which to think of "spirit" or the "life-form of persons" as free, autonomous or self-creating. I will only put forth here two general ideas regarding this theme and elaborate briefly on their interconnections. The *first* idea is that of "concrete freedom" as a principle of a higher order under which autonomy as collective self-legislation should be subjected on the Hegelian view, and, more importantly, arguably on any reasonable view. The *second* idea is that the "normativity" of collectively legislated or administered norms is, so to say, only a surface layer of several levels of "normativity" that govern human life. Together with Stekeler-Weithofer's interpretation of what *Geist* in Hegel stands for, these ideas contribute to what I see as a paradigm shift in Hegel-inspired thought. Paradigm shifts in philosophy tend to reflect the Zeitgeist. Similarly to the way in which the shift in Hegelian thought to *Geist*-as-collective-autonomy reflected the optimism of the era at the end of the cold war, with Fukuyama's "End of History" as liberal democracy globalised in sight, the shift I am talking about to a more grounded or "concrete" conception of *Geist*-as-the-life-form-of-persons reflects our time and its defining concerns. What I mean is of course the global environmental crisis crashing through our door and putting an end to any illusions of abstract freedom of the life-form from natural processes.

To spell out the idea of concrete freedom as a higher-order principle under which autonomy as collective self-legislation should be thought, let me first say very briefly what Hegel means by "concrete freedom". Whereas its opposite, the concept of "abstract freedom" is that of *freedom from* something that determines one, "concrete freedom" means *reconciliation with* something that determines one.[17] And whereas contingent or accidental determinants such as, say, particular annoying other people, particular bad governments, or overweight are something we can *free* ourselves *from*, essential determinants are something we cannot. An individual person cannot be free from determination by others in

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16 The works of each of the three mentioned authors, as well as those of other seminal neo-Hegelian authors such as Paul Redding, are much more nuanced in content then my broad-brush picture allows to account for. But I am more interested here in certain problems in the general discourse or paradigm that their work has given rise to (one symptom of which are casual equivocations such as "spirit or the space of reasons", "spirit or normativity", and so on in the literature) than in the details of their work, many of which I agree with and have accommodated.
17 See Gleeson/Ikäheimo (2019).

general, by social institutions in general, or by internal and external nature in general since these are essential or constitutive determinants for persons. Most relevantly for our times, at a collective level no human community, nor humanity at large or the life-form thought of as a totality can be free from nature, as nature is a necessarily determining, constitutive "otherness" for it. Any way to imagine and try to live a human life, whether at the individual or collective level, without acknowledging this fact is pathological or pathogenic in the literal sense of dangerous to life. Hegel never tires of emphasising the folly of abstract freedom and the destructiveness of attempts to apply it in relation to necessarily determining otherness, whether internal or external nature, other people, or social institutions. What I am suggesting here is that the same goes for the concept of autonomy as collective self-governance by norms, if it is thought in abstraction from necessarily determining otherness over which humans have no legislative power – or in other words from nature. The idea of autonomy as collective self-government by norms is, for sure, a "healthy" one since it articulates a genuine capacity or power of our life-form to organise and reorganise itself, but it can turn into something dangerous, unhealthy or pathological unless it is subjected under the higher-order principle of concrete freedom as reconciliation with what necessarily determines us.

This connects with the second idea that I mentioned – that of levels of normativity. One of the consequences of the predominantly deontological focus of recent neo-Hegelian thought has been a tendency to narrow down Hegel's *Sollen* (the closest equivalent in his vocabulary to the contemporary term "normativity") to the deontological dimension only, when in truth it includes both the axiological dimension of value and thus the good and the bad and the deontological dimension of norms and thus the right and the wrong. Hence "normativity" has come to stand for the realm of norms only, which according to the neo-Hegelians is constituted or created by mutual recognition as authority-attribution. There is much more to Hegel's *Sollen* however, and much in it that our life-form shares with other life-forms. Not only do we need to include the axiological dimension, but also what can be called levels of normativity to follow Barbara Merker.[18]

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18 See Merker (2012). As with Elder-Vass, I am not following the details of Merker's very elaborate presentation but accommodating the general idea in my reading of Hegel's Philosophy of Nature and Subjective Spirit. For the details of my reading, see Ikäheimo (2021). Within Hegel-scholarship I have found Cinzia Ferrini's work on nature, spirit, normativity, and related themes very helpful. See https://units.academia.edu/CinziaFerrini (accessed March 18, 2022).

Firstly,[19] there is what we can call "vegetative normativity" or *Sollen*, which is the "perspective" of good and bad unfolded by the vital functions of any living organism, or the internal and external conditions under which it is able to flourish or survive. Secondly, there is the animal level of normativity, including a complex of both axiological and deontological structures. Animal life includes an experiential (and thus non-metaphorical) perspective of felt or sensed good and bad, or what Hegel calls "the pleasant" and "the unpleasant" (*das Angenehme und das Unangenehme*) (Hegel 2007a, § 401). These feelings serve the animal's vital functions, but do that only in conjunction with an intentional or subject-object form of *Sollen*, or in other words with something in the external world appearing as desirable or rejectable.[20] Here we find not only axiological structures of good and bad of different kinds – vegetative, felt, and intentional – but also deontological structures of right and wrong, or correct and incorrect. It is namely possible that sensation fails to serve its function in the service of the organism's vital processes, or in other words that something that is bad for the animal's well-being or survival feels good, or the other way. Here feeling gets things wrong. Similarly, something may appear desirable that ends up feeling (or tasting) bad, or that is bad for the animal's well-being or survival, or the other way around. This is intentionality getting things wrong.[21]

Thirdly and finally, there are the normative structures specific to persons that I have discussed: an axiological perspective to value or to good and bad that transcends or goes beyond mere animal or first-order desire, and the deontological normativity of collectively self-legislated and -administered social norms. To think of the self-legislative form of normativity concretely, we must not only understand the intertwinement of the deontological dimension with the axiological (and the cooperative), and thus its connection to human concerns; we must also understand these concerns as bound up with the requirements of our life as biological beings, or of our life-form in the biological sense. Whereas the homeostasis of a plant depends on successful exploitation of a particular environment or *Umwelt*[22] and falters when that environment changes too much, and whereas animals are capable of both limited domestica-

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19 See especially Hegel (1970, § 347) on vegetative assimilation.

20 See Hegel (2007a, §§ 427, 470), Hegel (2007b, p. 185).

21 This is where Robert Brandom's more recent account of the birth of normativity in animal life begins in Brandom (2007). See Ikäheimo (2021).

22 This is an expression often associated with Jacob von Uexküll. The expression resonates very well with Hegel's philosophy of nature the 1821/22 lectures of which Uexküll's grandfather Boris von Uexküll attended and wrote down, and which were kept in the Uexküll family library. See Brentani (2015, 24, footnote 7).

tion of their environments and limited moving around when environmental changes dictate this, humans have much greater capacities of modifying both themselves and their environments, as well as moving about, and thereby much greater capacities of flourishing or at least surviving in a great variety of environments. Yet, these capacities are not unlimited, and the basic requirements of biological life apply. The natural levels of normativity are not something we can legislate ourselves free from, but something that normatively constrain what we legislate, and thus something we can only be free in relation to in the concrete sense of reconciled with.

7 Conclusion

Anthropologists often emphasise the crucial importance of relative climatic stability during the Holocene for the transition from foraging to agriculture, and hence from there to our current civilization. That this civilization may just have managed, by its own actions, to bring that period of stability to an end is a truly bewildering thought. There is a long arch of evolution of our life-form from a struggle of immediate survival in and with external nature, though increasing domestication of and mastery over it, to the brief period in certain parts of the planet where illusions of freedom from nature have been able to be entertained. We are now clearly past the use-by date of those illusions, and the time has come to put the philosophical discourse of unlimited self-legislation that uncomfortably resonates with it in its proper context.
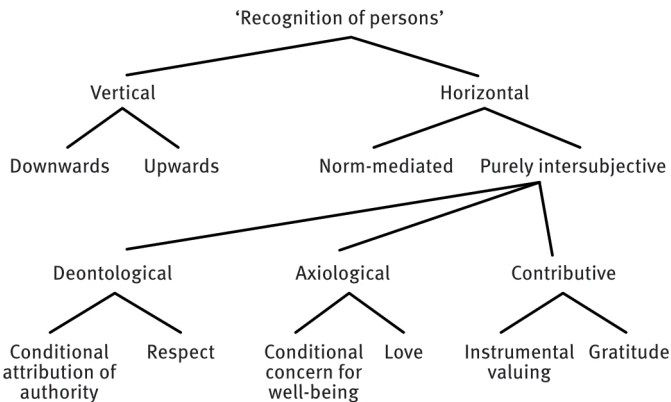
Fig. 1: Recognition of persons

Tab. 1: Dimensions and layers of full-fledged personhood

Full-fledged personhood	*Deontological dimension*	*Axiological dimension*	*Contributive/ cooperative dimension*
Psychological layer of person-hood	Capacities required for norm-governed life	Capacity for immedia-cy-transcending con-cerns	Contributive motivations and capacities
Intersubjective (status-) layer of personhood	Status of someone subjected to norms (minimal) or also with au-thority on them (maximal)	Status of someone whose happiness or well-being matters	Status of a con-tributor/cooper-ation-partner
Institutional (status-) layer of personhood	Person-making institutionalised deontic powers (paradigmatically basic legal rights)		
Moral (status-) layer of person-hood² (?)²³	Person-making informal deontic powers (paradigmatically univer-sal basic rights)		

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23 The point of the question mark is to suggest that whether this is real phenomenon, or a "mere ought" in Hegel's sense is an open question. The answer depends on whether one can offer a plausible ontological account of it on which it is the former. Chapter 3 in Ikäheimo/Lai-tinen/Quante/Testa (forthcoming) tries to offer one such account. See: https://www.academia.edu/38989973/Intersubjective_recognition_and_personhood_as_membership_in_the_life-form_of_persons (accessed March 18, 2022).

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Matthew Nini

The System Must Construct Itself – Narrativity and Autopoiesis in Fichte's 1804 *Wissenschaftslehre*

Abstract: If Fichte's 1804 lectures on the *Wissenschaftslehre* present a monist system in which consciousness is the outward face of an ineffable totality or Absolute, the methods for arriving at this monism are rigorously transcendental, affirming that consciousness is inescapable and experience inevitably credible. Fichte's new system is therefore a transcendental monism, containing an autopoietic or self-creating element, and a narrative one, accounting for subjectivity from within this self-creating system. Fichte's reconciliation of the two elements is presented by means of a theory of manifestation: "The Absolute manifests itself to itself by means of consciousness." Fichte argues for this transcendentally, and this argument structure itself leads to a transcendental monism. This paper traces Fichte's argument in three steps: first, the immediate credibility of experience, or *Evidenz*; second, identifying this immediacy with the Absolute in order to ground transcendental monism; and third, the realisation that understanding is only possible when intelligibility has already been presumed. Crucial to this threefold argument is the fact that one's attention to it is itself a constitutive element: to be aware of the system as self-elaborating is to participate in it.

Keywords: Johann Gottlieb Fichte; German Idealism; autopoiesis; narrativity; Wissenschaftslehre

1 Introduction

To repeat is to make different. This, if anything, is the historical claim to be gleaned from Johann Gottlieb Fichte's (1762–1814) later period. After moving from Jena to Berlin in 1799, Fichte continued to revise the systematic work that consumed his entire career, his *Wissenschaftslehre* (*WL* from hereon). Each new version was meant to be merely a reiteration of an unchanging system, yet each time, Fichte presented his audience with something deeply original. In many ways, the versions that appear from 1804 onward are closer to the author's original intentions than ever: the *WL* was always meant to privilege the practical, and now, Fichte was lecturing instead of writing, though even this is too theoretical a description of what he was doing. The goal was to have the participants

perform the *WL* for themselves, with the lectures functioning as a crutch to be cast away once the goal had been reached. What they were meant to do was pay attention – not to a foundational subjective principle, an *Ich*, as in the Jena *WL*, but to an all-encompassing totality, an absolute principle of which they themselves are the expression. The 1804 *WL* can therefore be described as a monist system, one in which nothing exists outside of a singular totality. Because this One remains ineffable, beyond the grasp of consciousness and its concepts, Fichte has recourse to various metaphors – or rather, different sets of metaphorical language – to describe it: "the same thing is constantly repeated in the most various terms", he says (Fichte 2005, p. 48).[1] It is called at various points *Singulum* or *Truth*, because Truth, as ground of sensibility, is one; *Light*, that which makes seeing possible without itself being seen; *Life*, the dynamic principle that characterises all experience; or simply *A*, the symbol that stands in for the Absolute ineffable principle. For consistency's sake, this paper uses *Absolute*.

Fichte insists repeatedly that oneness is all there is. Philosophy's goal is therefore a tracing-back (*Zurückführung*) of the manifold of experience to preconceptual, ineffable oneness: "[The] essence of philosophy would consist in this: *tracing back all multiplicity* (which presses itself upon us in the usual view of life) *back to absolute oneness*." (Fichte 2005, p. 23) The *WL* is therefore seeking a genetic connection between particular objects and the Absolute. To say that objects are genetic is to affirm that they are derived from the totality. Ultimately, Fichte will posit that objects are manifestations of this totality; the Absolute, in turn, is the condition of the possibility of their appearing. Within Fichte's monism, there exists a delicate balance between totality and the existence of individual consciousness. The task before Fichte is that of making room for subjectivity within the Absolute. In order for this to be credible, the ineffability of the Absolute will have to be respected, as will a necessarily subjective starting point. Fichte's argument, then, will have to be transcendental, and will exploit the very form of transcendental argumentation. Monism is ultimately a consequence of transcendental thinking, moving from the credibility of immediate subjective experience, to the identification of that credibility with the Absolute, and finally to the subject's contingency as an affirmation of the Absolute. If, as Fichte says, the system is autopoietic, constructing itself (Fichte 2005, p. 37), there is a transcendental narrative about that self-construction, one that makes the subject an integral part of it.

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1 The often sudden alternation of these sets of metaphors and how they overlap is largely what makes the text so obscure. One of the goals of this essay is to express Fichte's thoughts uniformly, privileging argument over theme. My in-text citations follow the English translation (Fichte 2005). The German is available in GA II, 8 (Fichte 1985).

2 From "I" to "We": On Monism as Transcendental Philosophy

The foundational problem of the new *Wissenschaftslehre* is how one accounts for subjectivity within a monist system. For while Fichte's evolution seems to have brought him much closer to Spinoza (a name that will appear at several critical moments in the text of 1804), the lack of anyone who can say "I" in a meaningful way in the Spinozist system is problematic for him. Kant changed the philosophical landscape by shifting the focus from objects of knowledge to the conditions of their possibility as knowable for me, and in light of this, Spinoza's dogmatist monism can only yield an uninhabited world. If Fichte is to posit the world as totality, it cannot be a mere collection of facts, but instead must be a place in which a subject can feel at home. This does not mean that transcendental monism involves bringing together two axioms simply taken up from Kant and Spinoza. On the contrary, it is Fichte's investigation into the very nature of transcendental philosophy and what it means to argue transcendentally that founds his new system. If the *Ich* of the earlier *WL* must here cede its place to a single Absolute principle, it is because Fichte has reconsidered what Kant had originally tried to express when he wrote about an I.

Central to Fichte's reinterpretation is the realisation that the immediate "thereness" of what exists – what he will call "*Evidenz*"[2] – is both the starting point and the end goal of any transcendental system. The task is to move from *Evidenz* as a convincingly present, utterly absorbing fact, to *Evidenz* as the absolute ground for the appearing of anything at all, and finally, back to experience. The test of any transcendental argument, and arguably where all previous ones had failed, lies in its final move, when it returns to its starting point in experience, enriched by the exploration of the conditions of experience. It is in the execution of this threefold move that Fichte will introduce a new and thoroughly transcendental methodology. The subject-participant of Fichte's new system, the *Wissenschaftslehrer*, is not performing anything, and therefore is not asking technical questions about how things came to be the way they are. Rather, one

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2 Walter Wright translates *Evidenz* as "Manifestness", which is a gloss. While he properly understands the concept, "the clarity of an immediate mental grasp, certain of its content" (Fichte 2005, p. 14), he fails to take into consideration all the valences of the English *Evident/Evidence*. What is immediately present is what is evident, and transcendentally, it is also evidence of what is there. In other words, the reason why Wright avoids using "Evidence" – the question of rendering the *way* in which something is present – is actually an argument in favour of it.

must actively pay attention to the thatness of *Evidenz*,[3] an active way of being passive that allows for the insight that the system constructs itself, and the subject is not a lone substantial *I*, but rather part of a *We,* the repeated flourishes of activity that constitute true subjectivity.

Hence the task that Fichte has before him is one of exploring the "thatness" of appearing as it relates to apperception. This constitutes a twofold journey from I to We on the one hand and from I to Absolute on the other. The problem here is that there seems to be two valences of the word I, and Kant, implies Fichte, conflates them. This is nowhere more evident than in a well-known phrase from Kant's Critique of Pure Reason: "Das: Ich denke, muß alle meine Vorstellungen begleiten können" (Kant 2011, p. 132). The obscurity of the sentence is twofold: first, the separation between the nominalised I think, a first-person indicative used as if it were in the third-person imperative, and its distance from *my representations*; second, the use of *begleiten können*, as if the mere possibility of the *I* accompanying representations could legitimise them even if, concretely, the I were absent. There seems to be two "*I*"s present in Kant's phrase – or at least two ways of expressing subjectivity: the *Ich* of conditions, and the "mine" of determinate existence.

Reconciling the two is not just a Kantian problem. It is one that all transcendental arguments face going back at least to Descartes. Indeed, both Kant's *Ich denke* and Descartes's *cogito* are transcendental arguments, and both broadly aim at the validity of appearances. Writes Descartes in the fourth part of the *Discourse on Method*, "Thus because our senses sometimes deceive us, I decided to suppose that nothing was such as they led us to imagine." (Descartes 1985, p. 127) It is the quest for a ground for the validity not just of appearances, but of appearances *as they appear to me*, that leads Descartes to affirm *cogito, ergo sum*.[4] The *sum* corresponds to a subjectivity *tout court*, a space in which experience can present itself. A more narrow, individual version of subjectivity, the *cogito*, is the determinate subject whose thoughts are being called into question. The argument therefore has three steps: (1) presupposing sense experiences that present themselves as being immediately graspable, (2) establishing intelligible conditions for these experiences – asking, in other words, why experiences make sense at all, and (3) being able to reflectively return to existence from these in-

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3 For the distinction between "*Wie*" and "*Daß*" in Fichte's post-1800 work, see Green (2007).
4 "But immediately I noticed that while I was trying thus to think everything false, it was necessary that I, who was thinking this, was something. And observing that this truth '*I am thinking, therefore I exist*' was so firm and sure that all the most extravagant suppositions of the sceptics were incapable of shaking it, I decided that I could accept it without scruple as the first principle of the philosophy I was seeking" (Descartes 1985, p. 127).

telligible conditions without losing the immediacy (Kant might say "intuitive quality") of experience. That the movement is circular is evident: conditions make experience intelligible, and those conditions are themselves defined by intelligibility. Thus turns, at least on an epistemological level, the Cartesian circle. The mistake lies elsewhere. The real fault in Descartes's argument lies in his inability to complete the third step. Instead of returning from "sum" (the subjective space of conditions) back to experience (René, who is thinking "*x*"), Descartes reifies the *sum*, moving from the concept of subjectivity to an all-knowing subject *in concreto* – God. In the terms we have been using, the ontological argument is a "detached third", a way of camouflaging that Descartes cannot complete his transcendental argument and move back to concrete existence *as it appears to me.* He not only confuses conditions with essences, but worse still, cannot link his divine *sum* to a concrete instance of *cogito* – which is what he had set out to argue in the first place.

The *Ich denke* follows the same pattern, but with a significant amendment. Kant's version of the cogito ultimately makes the claim that *when* experience is constructed within the space of subjectivity, *then* a unified concrete subject manifests itself. Kant's crucial improvement lies in refining the transcendental structure of the argument: the move from conditions back to experience does not offer any new content, but rather constitutes a meta-empirical *claim:* I am in fact this *Ich* who is doing the thinking.[5] Kant moves from consciousness in general to the consciousness of somebody in particular. And as the *when ... then ...* language of his *cogito* affirms, the mechanism that does this – in other words, that which leads concepts back to concrete existence – is time. Time as the form of inner sense is meant to solve the problem of whose *I* we are talking about. To that end, he writes in the Refutation of Idealism: "For this [that is, the inclusion of a "concrete subject" within the representation "I am"] in addition to the thought of something existing, also intuitions, and in this case, inner intuition, in respect of which, that is, of time, the subject must be determined" (Kant 1990, p. 277). But objects intuited in time, whether inner or outer, are appearances, not things-in-themselves, which are "incognisable" (Kant 1990, p. 239). We only

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5 As George di Giovanni writes (Di Giovanni 2017, p. 50): "The point of a judgement is rather to assert that the combination in question can be found realized in actual fact. The significant synthesis in judgment is not between concept and concept, but between this combination of concepts and what is actually the case. For Kant, in other words, any judgement '*S* is *P*' should be unpacked into the two reflective claims: 'I *say* that *S* is *P*', and 'What I say *is indeed the case*'." But Di Giovanni's description would have to be qualified in order to work: there may be two reflective claims at work here, but for all transcendental philosophy, consciousness itself is a unity. Awareness and awareness-of-awareness cannot be separated.

have access to the world as intuited, with space and time themselves belonging to intuition. Particularly problematic here is the notion of a thing-in-itself, which affects us via appearances, but in a way that remains obscure. If so-called "noumenal affection" is really a relationship of cause to effect, then Kant, like Descartes, has given us a super-subject rather than a field of possible experience, one that is necessary for cognising particulars, but yet doesn't account for precisely the thing that makes them particular in the first place: their immediate cognisability.[6] Kant's problem is twofold: first, his dogma of intuition doesn't allow us to ask the most fundamental question about epistemology – why are experiences immediately meaningful to us? Second, and most importantly, there is a gap between lived and reflected experience. This second objection is essentially another version of Maimon's accusation of cognitive dualism – if there is no common measure between intuition and concepts, neither is there one between facts of experience and the thinking of those facts.

In Fichte's terms, the sensible x and the supra-sensible z have an untraceable common root (Fichte 2005, p. 36). Because Kant's account of the ground of knowledge is *ex post facto*, he posits a third external thing "y" as the common root of the two (Fichte 2005, p. 31). In terms of transcendental argument structure, Kant's third step does not return to the starting point in experience, but like Descartes, posits a super-subject. Fichte's fundamental objection to the *cogito* of his predecessors is that they posit something external at precisely the moment when they should have been looking for a common root internal to Thought and Being, operating a tracing back (*Zurückführung*) instead of an infinite regress. This act of tracing back is what Fichte calls *genesis* or a *genetic deduction*.[7] A transcendental argument is always also a genetic one, since a passage from experience to intelligible conditions and back again requires a common root for both: "The primordially essential knowing is constructive, thus intrinsically genetic [*Evidenz*] in itself is therefore genetic." (Fichte 2005, p. 37)[8]

Here is where monism becomes crucial. Trying to think what is given in *Evidenz* is to subject it to judgement – conceptualisation's *modus operandi* – and

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6 Jacobi said as much in his famous objection, "without the presupposition of the [thing in itself] I cannot enter the system, and with that presupposition I cannot remain in it" (Jacobi 2004, vol. 2.1, p. 304).

7 Isabelle Thomas-Fogiel has highlighted the enduring importance of Fichte's transcendental argument structure for contemporary philosophy, suggesting that transcendental arguments remain an effective bulwark against scepticism (Thomas-Fogiel 2011).

8 Marco Ivaldo has on several occasions made a strong case for transcendental arguments as necessarily genetic arguments. For example, Ivaldo (1984, pp. 364–366).

therefore to project it outside itself. This hiatus between *Evidenz* and conceptualisation will not be alleviated, but rather integrated into the system: the non-genetic products of consciousness will be reconciled into the Absolute precisely *as* non-genetic. The only way to successfully make a transcendental argument about apperception, Fichte affirms, is to posit that the *I* never leaves itself. The Absolute of 1804, then, is a self-enclosed totality that would ground any later appearances of subjectivity. While it is the successor concept to Fichte's earlier *Ich*,[9] it cannot be construed as a particular subject that endures through time (indeed, it would be more accurate to call it "pre-subjective"[10]). The very concept of subjectivity will have to be elided in order to properly construct a transcendental monism. It can then be reintroduced as a derivative rather than foundational concept. Accordingly, one of the epithets given to the Absolute is *Life*, a dynamism that comes to stand for the earlier self-positing (and hence active) *I*. Life is often coupled with the protracted light metaphor at work in 1804, as we shall see in greater detail later (see Fichte 2005, p. 53). To know an object is to have it come to light, and the life of light involves flashes of activity that narrow in on particulars. In this sense, Lichtenberg, who suggested replacing the *Ich denke* with *Es denkt* (it thinks), or even more radically, *Es blitzt* (it illuminates) (Lichtenberg 1968, p. 412), had perhaps better understood apperception than Kant. In Fichtean terms, each particular act of knowing is really a *Blitz* of subjectivity, and the multiplicity of knowing acts and known objects does not indicate a persistent subject through time, but rather a *repetition*. What is repeated is the Absolute, which is both content and container. What manifests itself in these moments of subjectivity is a *We*, the subjectivities that constitute the Absolute (Fichte 2005, p. 117).[11] What's more, this *We* is an *empty* repetition: it has no content of its own, and what it expresses is only the concretisation of its conditions. This *We* will prove to be the self-manifestation of the Absolute to itself. But it remains to be seen both how this self-manifestation is grounded structurally, and how consciousness can be at once aware of it and a part of it.

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9 Andreas Schmidt (2004, p. 65) is right to claim continuity between the *Ich* and the Absolute, astutely pointing out that Martial Gueroult's claim (1930 vol. 2, p. 41) of an inversion by which the *Nicht-Ich* would be identified with the Absolute is wrong.

10 As does Goddard, who claims that Fichte was essentially elaborating a position similar to that of Sartre *avant la lettre* (2009, pp. 4–6).

11 "[...] rather this content [that is, what conscious objectifies = objects] brings only the mere repetition and repeated supposition of one and the same I, or We, which is entirely self-enclosed, which encompasses all reality in itself, and which is therefore entirely unalterable; therefore, it does not contradict the original law of not going out of oneself in essence."

These are the tasks that Fichte will carry out in the *WL*, and that will be treated in the next two sections below.

3 From Many to One: Overcoming the *Hiatus*

The structure of Fichte's transcendental argument shows that the many of appearance is a manifestation or image of the One that is Truth, the multiple articulations of a single ineffable principle. Establishing this relationship is one of the major goals of the 1804 text. In particular, Fichte must account for the fact that the products of consciousness are by definition non-genetic – without origin, as it were. An object of knowing comes from nowhere, and this *nowhere* will have to be integrated into the self-contained whole that is Fichte's system. And indeed, this nowhere is built into the very structure of the 1804 text. The first section of the 1804 *WL* (lectures 1–14) is a theory of truth (*Wahrheitslehre*) meant to ground monism. A second section (lectures 16–28) is a theory of images (*Bildlehre*) or *Phänomenologie*, which reconciles particulars to the Absolute (Fichte 2005, p. 115). Between them is the transitional fifteenth lecture, a gap separating the theories of Truth and Appearance that is the constructed locus where the *hiatus* between conceptualisation and *Evidenz* can be explored, and eventually overcome. Negotiating the *hiatus* – the task at hand in this section – is the critical move in accounting for Fichte's monism, since it reconciles ineffable totality with the multiplicity of experience.

The most efficient way of circumscribing this gap is to evoke a diagram that Fichte himself repeatedly drew during the lecture series:

$$A$$
$$x\ y\ z \bullet S - D$$

(Fichte 2005, p. 40)

The *A* from which all subsequent points are derived is the totality or Absolute principle described as Light or Life. In reality, *A* can only be a placeholder, since Fichte's Absolute is dynamic and ineffable, escaping conceptualisation. *A* subsequently splits into two levels of particularisation. The first and most general is "*S – D*" *Sein* and *Denken*, since the prerequisite for the cognition of an object is the separation of its existence from my perception of it. Concretely, *S* and *D* are broad categories of judgement that allow for multiplicity and its perception. Fichte is more interested in the opposite movement: the unity of *S* and *D* necessarily leads to the positing of an Absolute in which Truth is merely *evident*, or simply there. To posit conditions for appearances – as all transcendental phi-

losophy does – is to posit that their truth lies in the unity of their being-there and their cognition by a subject (Fichte 2005, p. 30). A second and more remote split occurs into x, y, and z. These describe broad categories of experience mediated by S – D, but derived directly from A. They are Kant's three critiques, or in Fichte's language, the sensible (what is mutable), the suprasensible (what is immutable), and their unity. Most important is the point • that separates A, the ineffable Absolute, from the discursive world of experience collectively represented by x, y, z, – D. It is here that the transcendental problem of reconciling *Evidenz* and Conceptualisation will play out. This dot is not itself the *hiatus*; such a gap occurs naturally with the juxtaposition of A and the products of experience (S – D; x, y, z). Discursive attempts at understanding A will always fall short of their goal. Experience is always the product of judgement, and judgement separates rather than unifies. The goal of the point is not to witness some sort of performative failure, as one of Fichte's Jena student might guess; rather, it is a transcendental standpoint that provides insight into how the Absolute relates to experience.

The construction of the point is also largely a response to Spinoza. While Spinozism as monism is indeed the forerunner to Fichte's own, it, like the philosophies of Descartes and Kant, does not acknowledge the incommensurability (as far as judgement is concerned) between Thought and Being, One and Many. Spinoza's Absolute is therefore a reified one, a dead God.[12] This accusation is certainly meant to address objections grounded in Jacobi's affirmation that Spinozism is atheism. For like Spinoza, Fichte's Absolute splits simultaneously and unequally into (1) S – D as immediately given facts of consciousness (in Fichte's terms, existence and awareness, in Spinoza's, the modes), and (2) x, y, z, more determinate subject-matters that allow objects in the world to be approached in thought (for Fichte, transcendental forms of philosophy as embodied by the three Kantian critiques, for Spinoza, the Attributes). But the Fichtean version introduces a major revision: the point. The point is a purely heuristic concept, a sort of schematism that safeguards the ineffability of A by suggesting the existence of the *hiatus*. To do otherwise would be to succumb to the pre-Critical error of conflating A and S, precisely the error that turns it into a dead thing

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12 "Let me note in passing that this is an important characteristic of the science of knowing and distinguishes it, for example, from Spinoza's system, which also wants absolute oneness but does not know how to make a bridge from it to the manifold; and, on the other hand, if it has the manifold, cannot get from there to oneness." (Fichte 2005, p. 41) *Also:* "It is clear and undeniable in his system that every separate existence vanishes as [something] independently valid and self-subsistent. But then he kills even this, his absolute or God. Substance = being without life[.]" (Fichte 2005, p. 69)

(see Fichte 2005, p. 25). It also provides a transcendental standpoint. "The science of knowing stands in the point", writes Fichte (2005, p. 40), and the method employed involves inhabiting this place that oscillates between A and its rupture into $S – D$, x, y, z without leaving experience. More acutely, *We* ourselves are this point. Practically speaking, to inhabit it means bracketing the particulars of everyday experience (the things that fall under the variables x, y, z and are cognised by means of S and D) in order to see *that* experience happens. If one can pay attention to this *thatness*, the following insight (*Einsicht*) will arise: *that* experience happens at all is homogenous. Put otherwise, before it is analysed, experience is One, not as a thing, but as unity itself. At the same time, one knows that one cannot leave experience.

The operative force here is not an activity at all, but an active way of being passive, the situating of oneself in the point. Fichte calls this attitude *Attention* (*Aufmerksamkeit*), and it is at the heart of the methodology of inhabiting the point:

> As far as concerns the first item, the knack for grasping these lectures is the knack of full, complete attention [*das Talent der ganzen vollen Aufmerksamkeit*]. [First] we are required to construct a specific concept internally. This is not difficult: anyone just paying attention to the description can do it [*Jeder, der nur auf die Beschreibung Acht hat, kann es*]; and we construct it in front of him. Next, hold together what has been constructed; and then, without any assistance from us, an insight will spring up by itself, like a lightning flash. The slowness or speed of one's mind has nothing more to do in this final event, because the mind in general has no role in it. For we do not create the truth, and things would be badly arranged if we had to do so; rather, truth creates itself by its own power[.] (Fichte 2005, pp. 47–48)

Attention reveals that no matter how compelling we find the immediacy of everyday experience, objects are always already discursive constructions. The very fact that they are intelligible to us reveals that A the Absolute is their condition, and that given this condition, particular content necessarily follows.[13] But bracketing this particular content and realising that it is a necessary construction allows one to reconstruct it – to project it, Fichte will say – within the no-place that is the point. From here, one can examine it *as if* from without (Fichte 2005, p. 91).

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13 "Thus, the basic character of the ideal perspective is that it originates from the presupposition of a being which is only hypothetical and therefore based wholly on itself; and it is very natural that it finds just this same being, which it presupposes as absolute, to be absolute again in its genetic deduction, since it certainly does not begin there in order to negate itself, but to produce itself genetically" (Fichte 2005, p. 89).

In reality, then, there is no *hiatus* between Truth and Experience: Truth is an immanent self-construction. The problem is that consciousness, the inescapable point of view of the transcendental method, projects the truth of things outside of them – it judges and separates. Writes Fichte, "although *factically* we could never negate consciousness, we will not really believe it when judging truth" (Fichte 2005, p. 110). Consciousness is the only means we have of knowing objects in the world, even if it is not a credible witness to them. Because of the disjunction or non-genesis between the Absolute and objects, the latter seem to be "thrown" from out of nowhere, having no derivative link to a ground.[14] Rather than puzzling over them, Fichte simply throws them back. This is what it means to project the objects of experience into the point. Situated as we are on the side of consciousness (x, y, z, $S - D$), relating objects to their ineffable ground involves abandoning them to reason's abyss (or less theatrically, the meta-rational no-where): the point (Fichte 2005, p. 111). Fichte portrays this crucial moment in dramatic terms:

> This discontinuous projection is evidently the same one that we have previously called, and presently call, the form of outer existence [...]. For what this means, as a projection, concerning which no further account can be given and which thus is discontinuous, is the same as what we called "death at the root" [*den Tod in der Wurzel*]. The gap, the rupture of intellectual activity [112] in it, is just death's lair [*das Lager des Todes*]. Now we should not admit the validity of this projection, or form of outer existence, although we can never free ourselves from it factically; and we should know that it means nothing; we should know, wherever it arises, that it is indeed only the result and effect of mere consciousness (ignoring that this consciousness remains hidden in its roots) and therefore not let ourselves be led astray by it. (Fichte 2005, pp. 111 f.)

The point has become a place of death, the empty storehouse where the ineffable Life that is the Absolute grounds the dead objects of experience. The products of experience are really a *todter Absatz*,[15] a residual by-product. The language here is that of alchemy, the German *Absatz* translating the *caput mortuum* or neutralised remainder of an alchemical operation, a precipitate.[16] If Truth is a self-contained whole, the objects of experience are mere residue, a leftover.

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14 "Or, la caractéristique *ontologique* de l'objet, c'est-à-dire de l'objet-*Projektum* est précisément d'être sans origine assignable, d'avoir, dans l'éloignement de la projection, effacé, pour ainsi dire, son proper trajet, bref, d'être proprement jeté à la face en venant de nulle part." (Goddard 1993, p. 45) Goddard suggests, following Pierre François Moreau, that the object is not a *Gegenstand*, but a *Gegenwurf*, something thrown. See Fichte (2005, p. 111).

15 Fichte (2005, p. 43). For the German, see Fichte (1985, p. 59).

16 This follows the precedent made with regards to Hegel and the concurrence of *Absatz* and *caput mortuum* in Figala (1974).

This is easier to grasp when juxtaposed with the protracted metaphor of light and vision that runs through the 1804 text.[17] The Absolute is Light. Light *enlightens* (*erleuchtet*), establishing visibility, but is not itself a thing that can be observed. To know an object is to have it *come to light*, to insert it into the field of intelligibility created by shining light. This light is perfectly transparent, whereas the things it illuminates are opaque. When something comes to light, it casts a shadow, stopping the constant movement that is the shining of light.

Whether as precipitate or opaque object, Fichte now considers the products of experience to have been traced back to their genetic origins, and precisely as non-genetic. For while pure light cannot be seen, and the opaque object it reveals stops its shining, the act of enlightening reveals the nature of light's activity. Experience, therefore, *is* the very revealing of the Absolute, that which cannot show itself. Objects are images, the particular manifestations of the ineffable One (Fichte 2005, p. 118).

Furthering this hypothesis, the second part of the 1804 *WL* is a theory of image. We must, in other words, retrieve the items that were projected into the point and give them renewed meaning as concrete manifestations of the Absolute. In particular, the *We* of consciousness will also have to come under this regime, for particular consciousness is also an image.

4 From We Back to I: The *Soll*

The second part of the 1804 WL, the theory of images or Phänomenologie, begins with the following assertion: "Being is entirely a self-enclosed singularity (Singulum) of immediately living being that can never get outside itself" (Fichte 2005, p. 121). What will have to occur now is an insertion of the transcendental subject into this as an integral part, a move that will transform the closed Singulum into a more fluid totality, better described as Light or Life.

Fichte considers ontological monism to have been proven by the preceding theory of truth, and that it can serve as a starting point for what is to come. Monism led to an insight into the nature of consciousness, the effect of which is "the absolute projection of an object whose origin is inexplicable, so that between the projective act and projected object everything is dark and bare" (Fichte 2005,

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17 The Light metaphor is introduced as a correlate to the ineffability of the Absolute, as in opposition to the Concept: "The absolute is not intrinsically inconceivable, since this makes no sense; it is inconceivable only when the concept itself tries for it, and this inconceivability is its only property. [...] But it is clear that this quality enters only within immediate [*Evidenz*], within intuition, and thus is only the representative and correlate of pure light" (Fichte 2005, p. 43).

p. 119). This "between" is the point, the place of death in which we have tried to situate ourselves by an act of attention to the *thatness* of knowledge. Consciousness removes us from the Absolute, and from its own origins thereby. The concept therefore has been integrated into the Absolute as its opaque surface, the face of something unseen. But if monism has been proven, the subsequent affirmation about the relationship between Unity and Consciousness has only been presupposed. We know that objects are projected *per hiatum* according to no apparent principle. They can only come from the Absolute, but the principle of their appearing must now be deduced and grounded in the Absolute itself.[18]

Holding fast to the transcendental method, Fichte rejects a direct proof of the genetic character of the non-genetic, or the image-quality of objects. One cannot conceptually articulate anything about consciousness from within consciousness. Fichte will therefore proceed by means of an *indirect* proof, an attestation to the nature of consciousness.[19] Problematic, of course, is that this attestation or testimony about consciousness has to come from consciousness itself, the only point of view possible for us. Yet bracketing what consciousness produces to focus on the fact *that* consciousness occurs shifts the focus. In question is now the internal coherency of the attestation (or indirect proof) that consciousness provides about itself. Given that there is ultimately nothing outside the Absolute, this is enough to make the third step of a transcendental argument, the move back to experience. Fichte is therefore claiming first that transcendental philosophy leads to monism, and second, that because nothing new can be added in the return to experience, a transcendental argument is completed by a meta-claim, or indirect proof. Posit a contingent fact, his argument goes, and certain necessary relationships stemming from it will ensue.[20]

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18 "La déduction n'a donc plus maintenant comme objet la découverte de l'Absolu [...] Elle recherche donc le principe du Phénomène, et comment celui-ci est nécessairement posé par l'Absolu" (Gueroult 1930, vol. 2, pp. 119 f.).

19 "Dem Absoluten wird so auf indirektem Weg eine Weiterbestimmung zugeschrieben, nämlich Ursprung seines Begriffs in der reinen Immanenz des Absoluten zu sein. Es bleibt also dabei, daß das Absolute (jenseits des Begriffs) eine selbständige Größe ist, die des Begriffs nicht bedarf" (Schmidt 2004, p. 86).

20 In Ulrich Schlösser's words, "[...] in the decisive sections of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, we constantly come across analysis of conditional statements the antecedent of which is a statement of belief – that is, something which, as a premiss, can initially be understood only as contingent, but which is to have as its consequent something absolute necessary or (to use the epistemic correlate) certain" (Schlösser 2010, p. 107). This is well put but for the fact that the initial presupposition with which we start is not merely a belief, something one could deem credulous or incredulous on subjective grounds, but rather *Evidenz*, that which is inexorably believable.

Here as ever, Fichte implores us to pay attention. Attention, as we have seen, is itself a sort of presupposition, albeit a second-order one that describes method rather than content. If one pays attention to the manner in which objects come into view, the totality of the system will construct itself before one's eyes. It is *as if* one were standing outside the system – or better still, reconstructing a system within the logical space of the *as if*, and then checking it against the original.[21] The same could be said of the point (•) in which we must situate ourselves. The point is a schematism, and only exists in order *that* projection be seen as possible. Both the *We* of consciousness (the concrete repetitions of subjectivity that are paying attention) and the point or *Lager des Todes* are empty and are in fact the same constructed emptiness. The *We* of consciousness is in essence the point. *We* are the construction that allows us to see the ungenetic, and we do it through Attention.[22] This We-point is contingently constructed, a hypothesis meant to provide a clearer point of view. Within this empty contingency, conditions have been laid so that something necessary can appear – or be seen in a more purely epistemological way, within this hypothetical construction, something certain can be known.

The content of consciousness appears according to conditions. When something appears, then, we can hypothesise that the conditions are present. This is the transcendental theorem that governs the *WL's* theory of appearance. Fichte, however, must adjust this to his monism, inserting into this theorem what was learned from the Theory of Truth. There, it was posited that whatever appears is an appearance *of* the Absolute. Given that the same Absolute is also the condition for the appearing of anything at all, the Absolute then becomes the condition of the possibility of its own appearing. Insofar as particular objects are concerned, this means that the appearance of an intelligible object and its conditions are mutually elaborated, the one impossible without the other; understanding is possible because intelligibility has been presumed, and this pre-

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For a fuller (and more nuanced) description of Schlösser's position, see Schlösser (2001, pp. 102–110; 137–154).

21 Reinhard Lauth (1981, p. 23) puts it well: "The *adaequatio intellectus et rei* of ancient philosophy must be understood as the *adaequatio* of a reconstruction of the mind with its preconstruction."

22 "The gap (*hiatus*), which as a result of the absolute insight is in essence nothing at all, exists only in respect of the We; and, indeed, in case the essence of consciousness, properly so-called, is to consist just in this, no longer in the absolute and pure genesis but rather in the genesis of the genesis, as it appears here, then, if this *We* (or this re-generation of the absolute genesis) were to be deduced, it would be in *consciousness* that it [the gap] could well remain" (Fichte 2005, p. 123).

sumption is made because something intelligible has already been known – this is the true power of *Evidenz*.

Fichte expresses this conditional-hypothetical by use of the word *Soll:*

> If {*Soll*} the absolute insight is to arise, that, etc., then such an ideal self-construction must be posited entirely factically. The explanation through immediate insight is conditioned by the absolutely factical presupposition of what is to be explained.[23]

The *Soll* structure expresses the *As if* of Attention, and encapsulates the whole of the exposition of the Theory of Appearance. The *Soll* is a fivefold movement that can be unpacked as follows:[24]

A) $A\ (X)$,

B) $A \bullet (S - D;\ x,\ y,\ z)$,

C) $A \bullet S - D;\ x,\ y,\ z$,

D) $A;\ S - D;\ x,\ y,\ z$,

E) $[(A,\ X) \bullet (X \bullet A)]$.

The first step expresses the coincidence of the Absolute with objects of knowledge as they are factically present. Since everyday experience is "evident" even before we reflect on the fact of its appearing, there is identity between this immediately credible experience (*Evidenz*) and the Absolute of which it is the manifestation – identity, in other words, between the starting and ending points in Fichte's transcendental method. The second step marks the beginning of the insight into the constructed nature of knowledge. A *hiatus* is noted between truth and experience, or *Evidenz* and consciousness, and a constructed point ($\bullet$) is therefore introduced between the Absolute that is in-and-for-itself, and the twofold construction ($S - D$; x, y, z) that governs facticity. The third point reveals that the *hiatus* is an artificial construction. This became visible due to the standpoint provided by the point ($\bullet$). In reconstructing experience ($S - D$; x, y, z) within this point, we realise the necessarily non-genetic nature of objects, or as Fichte says, the principled absence of principle (Fichte 2005, p. 124). In the

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23 Fichte (2005, p. 125). The sentence is almost impossible to translate, and the German is much clearer: "Soll es zu der absoluten Einsicht kommen, daß u. s. w., so muß eine solche ideale Sich-construction absolut faktisch gesetzt werden. – Die Erklärung in unmittelbarer Einsicht ist bedingt durch die absolut faktische Voraussetzung des zu Erklärenden" (Fichte 1985, p. 250).

24 Fichte insists on the *Fünffachkeit* or "quintuplicity" of the *WL* but has little to say about it. The following diagram is my own, based on the earlier one. It is an elaboration of Martial Gueroult's (1930, vol. 2, p. 120) formula $[(a + b),\ (b + a)]$ using materials from lecture XVII.

fourth step, then, we are left with nothing but projection itself, and everything, including the Absolute, can be incorporated into the point. The fifth step reveals the true nature of the disjunction between truth and experience. If everything is constructed within the point, then the left and right sides are reversible. Put otherwise, seen from the side of experience, the *hiatus* is necessary, and leads to projection. Seen from the Absolute, there is no *hiatus* at all. It is merely the illusory product of consciousness, and the relationship is really grounded by the interdependence of both sides. The *Soll* conclusively shows that there is no real separation between the Absolute and Facticity, between the One and the Many. Such a separation is merely the product of consciousness, which as part of the "many" cannot conceive of the "One" as it truly is. But the fifth step also accounts for the integration of consciousness into the system. The fivefold deduction of the *Soll* was conceivable only be means of attention, which allowed us to deploy it from within. The whole process, in other words, takes place within the space of a *that*, the *as if* that attention produces. Attention to the *Soll* is part of its development, a free beginning that leads to the necessary integration of consciousness into the system (see Fichte 2005, pp. 194–195). This is what Fichte meant all along in affirming that the system must construct itself: consciousness is integrated into the Absolute's self-elaboration by freely positing it hypothetically, and then letting it retroactively prove itself.

5 Conclusion: *Soll* as Transcendental Monism

With the introduction of the *Soll*, Fichte's transcendental argument is complete. If we were to collapse this argument – fully encapsulated by the fivefold movement of the *Soll* – into the three moments of transcendental arguments identified earlier, it could be summarised as follows: first, Fichte posits *Evidenz*, the immediate and credible "thereness" of what exists. This fact, which was not treated so much as an axiom as an alignment with what is, with the world as the locus of philosophy, leads to the question of their origins. Whither experience and its hypnotic presence? Second, in trying to answer this question and establish intelligible conditions for experience, Fichte arrives at the conclusion that the immediacy of experience and that of its conditions are identical: Truth is one, ineffable, and immediate, a *Singulum* that is directly grasped by *Evidenz*. These two steps encapsulate all of the content of Fichte's argument. The third step introduced a meta-content or indirect proof: within the immediacy of the Absolute, contingent facts are posited. That a certain set of internal relations necessarily ensues shows that conditions make experience intelligible, and those conditions can only be defined by intelligibility. This movement is circular, but because ev-

erything is deployed *within* a monist whole, there is nothing problematic about this circularity. It ends not in infinite regress, but in self-manifestation: the Absolute is itself the condition of the possibility of its appearance to itself.

Fichte's description of his own transcendental monism is telegraphic at best, especially where the *Soll* is concerned. But perhaps the most important takeaway, insofar as transcendental monism is concerned, is that the repetition that the *Soll* engenders – that is, subjectivity itself – is not some outgrowth from the absolute, an expansion beyond its borders. The *Soll* must be distinguished from a rational construct that treats experience as something merely external.[25] The goal of Fichte's transcendentalism is to achieve a balance between a self-elaborating whole on the one hand, and on the other, making this system meaningful *for us*, making it *Life*. The *Soll* is not about expanding the borders of a closed system, but rather conceiving of a totality that has no borders at all.

Fichte's system, then, is not only a theory of knowledge as *autopoiesis*, but a self-creating whole that knows itself. Unique to Fichte's vision is a certain narrative quality that only subjectivity can bring: consciousness must give an account of its role within a monist whole without transgressing the limits that such a whole imposes on it. The whole point of epistemology, Fichte wants to say, is *insight* into the whole, a purely subjective quality that comes to colour all subsequent experience. More than this, Fichte intends this insight, this meta-fact, to itself have an impact on the repetition of particulars. To pay attention and achieve insight into transcendental monism does not imply leaving the totality or achieving some sort of enlightenment that makes the world disappear into irrelevance, but rather a return to experience with a difference. In narrating autopoiesis, the telling counts just as much as the content, and to tell the same thing is always to say something new. Subjectivity may be empty repetition, but this rep-

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25 An example of this would be the description of Fichte's work as recursive reflexion first advocated by Livet (Livet 1987) and taken up by Jean-Christophe Goddard (Goddard 2003). Inspired by the evolutionary biology of Francisco Varela (1979), Livet posits a structural framework (not necessarily a complete whole) in order to articulate the parts that demonstrate the framework. Yet if recursive reflexion differentiates and repeats itself by means of self-reference, Fichte would object that this is not fully transcendental. Imperative would be accounting for the system *from within*. The very realisation that one is within the system is a meta-content that functions as constitutive of the whole, and requires the constructive powers of subjective attention in order to be carried out. It is in this that Fichte could be said to be already post-modern. If Deleuze claims that "la representation est le lieu l'illusion transcendentale" (Deleuze 1968, p. 341), Fichte's position is that the illusory nature of representation and our awareness of it are constitutive of "the Truth". To an already post-modern conception of reality, Fichte adds an element of metacognition via awareness that is absence in Deleuze.

etition counts for more than what we may initially surmise – in it, anything is possible.

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David James

Autobiography and the Construction of Human Nature: Rousseau on the Relation between Self-Love and Pity

Abstract: The concept of human nature implies the existence of something objective in that it concerns features that are held to characterise the human being as such. These essential features can then be used to explain human psychology and behaviour. Yet our access to human nature, assuming that there is such a thing, has a subjective dimension in so far as the identification of these features is undertaken from the standpoint of the individual who infers what they are, both from his or her own thoughts and behaviour and from the thoughts and behaviour of others. I highlight this subjective dimension and use it to show how a theory of human nature can function as a type of self-justification by examining Rousseau's claims concerning the value of his own autobiography, the *Confessions*, as a guide to human nature in connection with one incident described in it. This incident reflects the primacy of self-love in relation to pity that follows from Rousseau's theory of human nature.

Keywords: autobiography; human nature; pity; Rousseau; self-love

1

The concept of human nature implies the existence of objective features that define the human species and explain human behaviour in general. Yet, assuming that there is such a thing as human nature, our access to it can be said to be inescapably subjective, in that the identification of these allegedly objective features is undertaken from the standpoint of individuals who infer what these features are from their own behaviour, beliefs, desires and their experiences of the behaviour and traits of other human beings. This self-observation and the judgements based on the experience of how others behave and the traits that they exhibit may be informed by some form of objective knowledge that an individual claims to possess, such as the knowledge provided by an independent scientific theory. Even then, however, one may doubt that the subjective aspect can be completely eliminated, for the choice to explain human nature in terms of a particular theory might itself be influenced by how this theory favours the view of human nature that most closely corresponds to an individual's beliefs, desires or

experiences. The preferred theory of human nature may then serve to justify these beliefs, desires or experiences, and, in particular, certain past actions that can be explained in terms of them.

In his *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men*, or *Second Discourse* as it is otherwise known, Jean-Jacques Rousseau provides an account of human nature that is claimed to be an independent one. Rousseau claims that such a theory requires engaging in a series of hypothetical reasonings concerning what human beings must have been like prior to the existence of any needs, ways of thinking, practices and institutions that presuppose social relations. We must instead attempt to abstract from all such relations and their effects, in order to discover the human being as a purely natural being in which the fundamental features of human nature manifest themselves in an undistorted way, thereby enabling us to gain clear and secure knowledge of them. In the following passage, Rousseau identifies the basic features of human nature that he has discovered by employing this method, namely, the desire for self-preservation and well-being and an aversion to the suffering of any sentient being, especially another human being:

> Hence disregarding all the scientific books that only teach us to see men as they have made themselves, and meditating on the first and simplest operations of the human Soul, I believe I perceive in it two principles prior to reason, of which one interests us intensely in our well-being and our self-preservation, and the other inspires in us a natural repugnance to seeing any sentient Being, and especially any being like ourselves, perish or suffer. (OC 3, pp. 125–126; DI, p. 127)[1]

Although the *Second Discourse* adopts a quasi-scientific approach, in that hypotheses are formed and then shown to explain that which forms the object of inquiry, Rousseau suggests that self-observation plays a crucial role in connection with *his* privileged access to human nature, when in his *Confessions* he announces the following intention: "I wish to show my fellows a man in all the truth of nature; and this man will be myself" (OC 1, p. 5; C, p. 5). On the one hand, when Rousseau speaks of "the truth of nature", he may be thought to have in mind only the accurate portrayal of himself as a *unique* individual, rather than an accurate portrayal of human nature that identifies what is *common* to humankind. On the other hand, Rousseau appears to claim that his uniqueness is precisely what enables him to know human beings in general because of the

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1 Here and hereafter, Rousseau's *Œuvres complètes* (Rousseau 1959–1995) are cited as OC by volume and page number. In the following, C refers to *The Confessions and Correspondence* (Rousseau 1995), DI refers to *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men* (Rousseau 1997), and E refers to *Emile, or on Education* (Rousseau 1979).

knowledge provided by the sentiments that he himself experiences: "I feel my heart and I know men. I am not made like any of the ones I have seen; I dare to believe that I am not made like any that exist" (OC 1, p. 5; C, p. 5).

There appears to be a paradox: human nature concerns that which is most general to humankind, and yet, according to Rousseau, the discovery of human nature is to be undertaken by a human being who claims to be different from other human beings and tells us the story of his own life. The removal of this paradox would require an explanation of how this individual's uniqueness provides him with privileged access to human nature.[2] In what follows, I shall not concern myself directly with this paradox. The focus will instead be on how Rousseau's actions in connection with a particular incident described in his *Confessions* can be construed as an expression of his theory of human nature, and thus as corroboratory evidence of this theory itself and the claim that original human nature has become corrupted and disfigured by social relations. For this incident manifests the two fundamental features of human nature mentioned above, self-love (*amour de soi*), albeit in a modified form, and pity (*pitié*). Moreover, Rousseau's actions manifest the natural *ordering* of these two fundamental features of human nature.

In this way, Rousseau's account of human nature can be traced back to experiences connected with the story that he tells of his own life and the kind of self that this story reveals to the reader. We might then speak of the construction of human nature by means of narrative, in contrast to a theory that establishes objective facts concerning what human beings in general essentially are. This chimes with an argument that has been made in connection with the opposition between being and appearance that is an integral feature of Rousseau's thinking, namely, that although Rousseau appears to adopt the disinterested, objective standpoint of a naturalist philosopher who translates his observations into concepts and seeks the grounds and the causes of the phenomena that he is attempting to explain, one may suspect that he is, in fact, seeking to rationalise opaque emotions and selfish sentiments in an attempt to justify his own life, character and behaviour.[3] The way in which the incident in question can be

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2 One explanation is that Rousseau regards himself as a "man of nature" who is thus able to discover the human being's original constitution by consulting the internal evidence provided by his own heart and sentiments. See Starobinski (1971, p. 341). Rousseau himself appeals to the unique circumstances of his life, which have provided him with access to all the main spheres of French society from the lowest to the highest without his becoming part of them, thereby leaving him free of the prejudices connected with each of these social spheres (OC 1, pp. 1150 – 1151; C, pp. 586 – 587). See also Starobinski (1971, pp. 222 – 223).

3 See Starobinski (1971, pp. 16 – 17, pp. 50 – 51).

mapped on to Rousseau's theory of human nature supports this argument in that this theory can then be understood as a form of *self-justification*, because Rousseau's own behaviour can be justified in terms of how it corresponds to human nature and the actions that it can be expected to produce under certain social conditions and pressures.

I shall first say something more about Rousseau's account of the two fundamental features of original human nature before relating them to the incident described in his *Confessions*. I shall then explain the relevance of this incident with respect to the natural ordering of self-love and pity. Particular attention will here be paid to Rousseau's account of pity in his educational treatise *Emile* because of how it illuminates the way in which the story that he tells of his own life reflects his theory of human nature. Moreover, the type of educational programme that Rousseau proposes will be shown to aim at the establishment of a harmony between the two fundamental elements of human nature that would allow human nature to manifest itself in moral actions and conduct, whereas it did not manifest itself in this way in the incident described in the *Confessions*.

2

In the *Second Discourse* human beings are portrayed in such a way that they do not significantly differ from other animals. They instinctively seek to preserve themselves, and even with respect to those desires that cannot be explained purely in terms of the desire for self-preservation and the desire to experience a sufficient sense of well-being, human beings show themselves to be like other animals. This is true of the desire for freedom. Rousseau explains the human being's original lack of any sense of alienation in terms of how the innate desire for independence is not frustrated because of the natural freedom that he or she enjoys. Other animals can be seen to manifest the same desire in their responses to situations in which the desire for this freedom is frustrated by some constraint on their freedom of movement, and from this it can be inferred that the enjoyment of a state of natural independence contributes to their sense of well-being. Given how the satisfaction of the desire for independence is integral to the sense of well-being enjoyed by human beings and some non-human animals, the need to satisfy this desire can be viewed as a manifestation of self-love, which is not, therefore, reducible to the desire for self-preservation.

A second original feature of human nature manifests itself in an aversion to the suffering of other sentient beings. This aversion is explained in terms of the empathetic emotion of pity. This emotion is not sufficient to distinguish human beings from other animals because it is a natural sentiment that does not require

reflection. It is therefore something of which other animals can be considered capable and they do, in fact, show themselves to be capable of it (OC 3, p. 154; DI, p. 152). Reflection poses a threat to this impulsive "pure movement of Nature", which is how Rousseau describes "the force of natural pity" (OC 3, p. 155; DI, p. 152). Reason is here viewed as nothing more than a faculty that identifies and employs suitable means to given ends, and thus presupposes the value of the immediate ends of self-love. These ends include the avoidance of the discomfort caused by witnessing the suffering of other sentient beings. At a more advanced stage of human development, they also include the avoidance of the discomfort caused by feeling oneself obliged to help another human being or creature when fulfilling this obligation may involve significant costs to oneself and no benefits that outweigh these costs. This leads human beings to rationalise matters in such a way that they come to suppress the pure natural movement of pity so as not to experience a sense of discomfort or a burdensome feeling of obligation, leading Rousseau to speak of how reason "turns man back upon himself [...] separates him from everything that troubles and afflicts him" (OC 3, p. 156; DI, p. 153).

The way in which reason requires the suppression of the natural sentiment of pity becomes manifest in the behaviour of educated, civilised human beings, whereas, or so Rousseau claims, uneducated, simpler – and thus more natural – people are the most willing to prevent, or at least to minimise, the suffering of others (OC 3, p. 156; DI, pp. 153 – 154). This shows that the natural sentiment of pity can be strong enough to motivate individuals to seek to relieve the suffering of other human beings, or even to remove the causes of suffering, if they have the power to do so. Thus, although the role of pity is sometimes portrayed as a purely negative one that stops human beings behaving in ways that are harmful to others,[4] and while Rousseau himself speaks of how a human being "is restrained by Natural pity from doing anyone harm" (OC 3, p. 170; DI, p. 166), pity also has the more positive role of motivating people to perform spontaneous benevolent acts: "It is pity that carries us without reflection to the assistance of those we see suffer; pity that, in the state of Nature, takes the place of Laws, morals, and virtue, with the advantage that no one is tempted to disobey its gentle voice" (OC 3, p. 156; DI, p. 154).

By moderating the force of self-love in these ways, pity helps to make the state of nature a generally peaceful place, thereby serving the ends of self-love by preventing human beings from harming one another. This does not mean, however, that a conflict between self-love and pity becomes possible only with

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4 See, for example, Althusser (2015, p. 118).

the emergence of reflection, as if they were originally in complete harmony with each other. Even before then, self-love and pity are only contingently aligned in that the sources of their incompatibility happen to be absent. These sources include social relations of dependence, the absence of which Rousseau explains in terms of the isolated and materially self-sufficient mode of existence that human beings originally enjoyed.[5] Another source concerns the exercise of the capacities for reflection and imagination. Given the original absence of reflection and imagination, human beings are unable to develop needs that extend beyond their purely natural ones, and since they can satisfy these natural needs without the help of others, there is no incentive for them to engage in forms of social corporation that create bonds of mutual dependence and thus social relations of dependence.

If the relevant conditions had been present, then the natural, but ultimately contingent, alignment between the demands of self-love and the natural sentiment of pity would have been constantly threatened, for human beings may well have been motivated by self-love to suppress this natural sentiment and to perform actions that directly harmed others, so as to secure or further their own interests. Even in the absence of these conditions, the alignment of self-love and pity is by no means guaranteed, for although the primitive human being will never harm another sentient being "as long as he does not resist the internal impulsion of commiseration", an exception to this rule is "the legitimate case when, his preservation being involved, he is obliged to give himself preference" (OC 3, p. 126; DI, p. 127). Thus, there is a natural *ordering* of self-love and pity that means that actions motivated by the sentiment of pity are conditional on whether they conflict or harmonise with the demands of self-love. The incident described in Rousseau's *Confessions* to which I shall shortly turn shows how this ordering of self-love and pity can explain Rousseau's own actions. First, though, the concept of self-love must be broadened.

Rousseau distinguishes between the natural sentiment of self-love, which concerns the desire for self-preservation and the desire for basic physical and psychic well-being, and *amour-propre*. The latter is described as a "relative" sentiment, that is, a sentiment that, by its very nature, involves a relation to someone other than oneself and the act of comparing oneself with him or her in some

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5 "[E]veryone must see that since ties of servitude are formed solely by men's mutual dependence and the reciprocal needs that unite them, it is impossible to subjugate a man without first having placed him in the position of being unable to do without another; a situation which, since it does not obtain in the state of Nature, leaves everyone in it free of the yoke, and renders vain the Law of the stronger" (OC 3, pp. 161–162; DI, p. 159).

way.[6] A sentiment of this kind can only be "born in society" (OC 3, p. 219; DI, p. 218). Moreover, it presupposes the existence of certain cognitive capacities, such as the ability to draw conclusions based on comparative judgements, and the development of these latent capacities through the exercise of them. As a social sentiment, *amour-propre* does not belong to original human nature. Yet it becomes a characteristic and constant feature of human psychology in society, and it is thus essential to explaining human social behaviour. *Amour-propre* can in this respect be said to *become* part of human nature, or even to be a latent feature of original human nature that will manifest itself once certain conditions are in place.[7]

Although in the *Second Discourse amour-propre* assumes the "inflamed" form that consists in the desire to appear superior to others and that inclines individuals to seek to obtain from others sufficient evidence of their recognition of this superiority, it more generally concerns how one thinks one appears to others, regardless of whether one wants to be considered equal or superior to them. *Amour-propre* can then be associated with such phenomena as feelings of shame. A negative response on the part of others to one's desire to be recognised by them will tend to result in a diminished sense of well-being, given its undesirable emotional or psychological effects, whereas a positive response is likely to result in an increased sense of well-being because of its desirable emotional or psychological effects. *Amour-propre* can therefore be classed as a form of self-love which may, like the purely natural form of self-love, come into conflict with the natural sentiment of pity.[8] We shall now see that a conflict of this kind helps to explain Rousseau's account of a particular incident described in his *Confessions*.

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6 This must be qualified, however, because Rousseau speaks of a form of *amour-propre* that "has no necessary relation to others", and that appears to be an expression of self-love (OC 4, p. 322; E, p. 92). This suggests the possibility of a type of self-evaluation that does not depend on the judgements, opinions or behaviour of others.

7 For more on how *amour-propre* can be classed as an ineradicable feature of human nature in this expanded sense, see Neuhouser (2008).

8 Rousseau himself implies that *amour-propre* is an extension of self-love when he describes it as emerging from the latter: "you will see where our *amour-propre* gets the form we believe natural to it, and how self-love, ceasing to be an absolute sentiment, becomes pride in great souls, vanity in small ones, and feeds itself constantly in all at the expense of their neighbors" (OC 4, p. 494; E, p. 215).

3

The incident in question occurred during Rousseau's youth and the dissolution of a household in which he was a menial servant after the death of his employer. In the ensuing confusion, Rousseau stole a ribbon and was subsequently found to be in possession of it. Instead of owning up to the theft of the ribbon, he blamed it upon the person to whom he had intended to give the ribbon. This was the young cook Marion, whom Rousseau describes as someone with "an air of modesty and sweetness that made it impossible to see her without liking her" and "a good girl, well behaved, and of a completely reliable fidelity" (OC 1, p. 84; C, p. 70). Marion's response to the false accusation that Rousseau had made against her accords with this picture of her. She protests her innocence "with self-assurance, but without anger", she reproaches Rousseau for accusing her of something of which he knows her to be innocent, she pleads with him not to bring disgrace upon an innocent person who has not harmed him in any way, she begins to cry in the face of his constant refusal to admit his guilt and finishes by saying to him, "Ah Rousseau! I believed you had good character. You are making me very unhappy, but I would not want to be in your place" (OC 1, p. 85; C, p. 71).

What can explain Rousseau's refusal to admit his guilt and his accusation that it is in fact Marion who has stolen the ribbon when he himself provides such a sympathetic and moving portrait of this girl apart from the overpowering urges of self-love? And indeed, Rousseau himself explains his refusal to own up to the theft of the ribbon in terms of one such urge, for he claims that "the presence of so many people was stronger than my repentance. I did not fear the punishment very much, I feared only the shame; but I feared it more than death, more than crime, more than everything in the world" (OC 1, p. 86; C, p. 72). Since this sense of shame concerns how Rousseau would appear in the eyes of others if he were to admit that he himself had stolen the ribbon after having accused Marion of stealing it, the motive can be identified as his *amour-propre*. It is significant, moreover, that although Rousseau's description of the incident contains expressions of deep remorse, it appears that no feelings of pity for the innocent girl were immediately awakened in him by her words and her tears. Rather, it was only later that Rousseau began to be tormented by the picture of the wretched fate that the innocent girl may have gone on to suffer painted by his imagination.

This is precisely what Rousseau's account of human nature and the changes that it undergoes with the emergence of social relations would lead us to expect, given how self-love requires the suppression of the natural sentiment of pity

whenever these two sentiments turn out to be incompatible in a specific situation. The suppression of the natural sentiment of pity can also be explained in terms of how it can no longer express itself as an impulsive, spontaneous movement in society, because of the obligation to obey social norms, on the one hand, and the necessity of violating them while appearing not to do so, on the other: "With conventions and duties are born deceit and lying. As soon as one can do what one ought not, one wants to hide what one ought not to have done" (OC 4, p. 334; E, p. 101). Indeed, Rousseau attempts to shift the blame from himself to someone else, by implying that an external influence that did not in fact obtain would have been required to awaken the sentiment of pity in him: "If M. de la Roque had taken me aside, if he had said to me, 'Don't ruin this poor girl. If you are guilty admit it to me,' I would have thrown myself at his feet instantly; I am perfectly sure of it" (OC 1, p. 87; C, p. 72).

The incident above provides an example of how the story of his own past actions and the significant events of his life that Rousseau tells the reader illustrates what human nature has become in society, and this presupposes an understanding of what human nature originally was. The explanation of Rousseau's actions provided by his theory of human nature suggests that this theory serves to justify the same actions. For how could Rousseau, in whom human nature reveals itself more clearly than in anyone else, have acted otherwise, that is, not in accordance with what human nature has become in society? If the older Rousseau is able to understand what motivated him to act in the way that he did, now that he himself has knowledge of original human nature and what human nature has become in society, then the following question arises: is he not also able to explain how an incident of the kind described above, one that torments him so much, can be prevented from occurring even if human beings cannot hope to return to a condition in which the demands of self-love and pity are so aligned that only rarely do they come into conflict?

I shall now argue that an attempt to explain precisely how an *alignment* between self-love and pity can be artificially achieved is found in *Emile*, where the correct *ordering* of self-love and pity is also respected, as indeed it must be if Rousseau's educational proposals are to be compatible with human nature. Thus a different story is told, a story that takes the form of the description of a process in which an alignment between self-love and pity is established and preserved in such a way as to recreate the original harmonious condition of the purely natural human being. If this story had been true of Rousseau's own life, the incident described above may not have occurred and Rousseau would not have been tormented by the memory of it, thereby removing the need for the type of self-justification provided by his theory of human nature.

4

The educational programme set out in *Emile* seeks to unite the following types of education:

1. An education from nature, which concerns the "internal development of our faculties and our organs" (OC 4, p. 247; E, p. 38). The object of this education is the natural cognitive and physiological development of a human being.
2. An education from things, which concerns the knowledge of external objects that a human being acquires from the correctly ordered experience of such objects.
3. An education from human beings, which concerns one human being teaching another human being how to make use of his or her physical and mental powers and how to understand and employ external objects for his or her own benefit. As we shall see, this education must also aim at establishing genuine moral relations between human beings.

Type of education (3) ensures that type of education (1) and type of education (2) proceed in the order demanded by nature. This requires careful control of the pupil's exposure to physical objects and human relationships, so that what is experienced is compatible with the relevant stage of physical, emotional, mental or moral development, for only in this way can an individual remain in harmony with him- or herself and realise his or her full human potential: "He alone in whom they all coincide at the same points and tend to the same ends reaches his goal and lives consistently. He alone is well raised" (OC 4, p. 247; E, p. 38). This in turn requires the kind of absolute authority and control over the pupil that can be achieved only by isolating him or her from society, whose corrupting influences are thereby avoided, whereas it cannot be hoped that a human being subject to these influences in an unregulated way will be able to develop in conformity with the natural order:

> In the present state of things a man abandoned to himself in the midst of other men from birth would be the most disfigured of all. Prejudices, authority, necessity, example, all the social institutions in which we find ourselves submerged would stifle nature in him and put nothing in its place. Nature there would be like a shrub that chance had caused to be born in the middle of a path and that the passers-by soon cause to perish by bumping into it from all sides and bending it in every direction. (OC 4, p. 245; E, p. 37)

The final goal is nevertheless to prepare the pupil for life in society, as is indicated by Rousseau's statement that "although I want to form the man of nature, the object is not, for all that, to make him a savage and to relegate him to the

depths of the woods" (OC 4, pp. 550 – 551; E, p. 255; see also OC 4, pp. 483 – 484; E, p. 205).

The appropriate type of education must therefore prepare the individual for society in such a way that the natural order established by this education is maintained instead of being disrupted and even destroyed altogether by social influences. Given how the natural order is understood in developmental terms, and thus as something that must to some extent be constructed, it cannot be identified with an uncontaminated origin in which it already manifests itself. Since self-love and pity form the two most basic elements of human nature, they must both find their place in the developmental process in such a way that they remain in harmony with each other. This process implies a temporal sequence. We should not, therefore, expect self-love and pity to form the direct object of education at one and the same time.

Rousseau describes various ways in which self-love forms the first object of education. The concern here is to develop in the pupil the aptitudes required to satisfy his physical and material needs without making him dependent on others, whereas only later is the attempt made to arouse feelings of pity in the pupil and to direct this sentiment towards the right objects. This temporal order reflects the natural order, in that self-love is primary and the aim of satisfying its demands must be achieved first. Since the alignment of self-love and pity is essential to the achievement of an inner harmony, the question arises as to how Rousseau explains the absence of conflict between these two fundamental elements of human nature within one and the same individual, despite the primacy of self-love.

In *Emile* the theme of pity is introduced in order to explain the development of a distinctively moral form of reasoning. Pity therefore no longer has the purely instinctual character that it has in the *Second Discourse*. Rather, Rousseau adopts a more intellectual conception of pity in that this sentiment depends on reason in the form of the ability to judge. Thus, towards the end of the third book of *Emile*, he remarks that, "We have made an active and thinking being. It remains for us, in order to complete the man, only to make a loving and feeling being – that is to say, to perfect reason by sentiment" (OC 4, p. 481; E, p. 203). This statement indicates that the capacity to reason has already been developed in the pupil, but that the achievement of this end by no means constitutes the pupil's development as a *complete* human being. This further requires the awakening of certain sentiments, including pity, within the pupil with the aim of establishing moral relations between him and other human beings. I shall now say something more about the prior development of reason and then show how the sentiment of pity is essential to moral reasoning.

With the aid of the various measures and practical tasks outlined in the second book of *Emile* the pupil becomes able to judge objects in their causal relations with one another and in relation to his own body, leading to the development of foresight. In the next book, Rousseau proceeds to show how the pupil's ability to judge objects according to their utility leads to the discovery of laws that explain the necessary relations between things, so that it is no longer a matter of how they merely appear to the pupil. In each case judgement serves the desire for self-preservation and the desire for physical well-being in so far as the satisfaction of these desires depends on the pupil's ability to interact with nature effectively and in a genuinely independent manner. This is appropriate to the relevant stage of the educational process: "It is by their palpable relation to his utility, his security, his preservation, and his well-being that he ought to appraise all the bodies of nature and all the works of men" (OC 4, pp. 458–459; E, p. 187). Reason here has a purely instrumental character, whereas if the pupil is to judge in a correct manner the moral relations in which he stands with other human beings, he must be able to think of others and to treat them as more than mere means to his ends:

> So long as his sensibility remains limited to his own individuality, there is nothing moral in his actions. It is only when it begins to extend outside of himself that it takes on, first, the sentiments and, then, the notions of good and evil which truly constitute him as a man and an integral part of his species. (OC 4, p. 501; E, pp. 219–220)

The task of guiding the pupil beyond this purely instrumental way of judging and acting forms the topic of the remaining books of *Emile*.

Moral relations presuppose the ability to judge what is morally good or morally bad, for they concern appropriate ways of treating others and our expectations about how they ought to treat us. This implies a higher form of reasoning which has moral ideas as its content. For Rousseau, the sentiment of pity plays an essential role in the production of moral ideas and in judging in accordance with them. This sentiment rests on or, to be more precise, is reinforced by a proper understanding of the human condition, which consists in an awareness of the evils that human beings, including oneself, suffer or can suffer. It is by making the pupil aware of these evils that the latent sentiment of pity is awakened in him, enabling him to enter a moral order made up of relations that unite him and his fellow human beings in ways that cannot be explained in terms of self-interest alone. This is possible because the pupil has, like any sentient being, experienced suffering in the form of physical pain. This personal experience of suffering is a necessary condition of empathy, whereas "The man who did not know pain would know neither the tenderness of humanity nor the

sweetness of commiseration. His heart would be moved by nothing. He would not be sociable; he would be a monster among his kind" (OC 4, pp. 313–314; E, p. 87).

Experiencing this type of suffering is not, however, a sufficient condition of moral relations founded on empathy, for the pupil knows only what it means to suffer in his own person. The pupil must therefore also be made to sense that other human beings experience the same suffering. The tutor's task here becomes that of making the pupil aware that it is the miseries of life, not happiness, that is the common lot of humankind, and that the miserable conditions in which other human beings, especially the poor, find themselves are not ones that he himself will necessarily avoid during his own lifetime, for despite his present good fortune, his position in the world may undergo a radical reversal because of factors beyond his control. This shows how awakening the sentiment of pity in the pupil depends on an appeal to a sense of well-being that, at the very least, requires the absence of pain or a preponderance of pleasure over pain. Yet a responsiveness to the sufferings of others implies that there is a natural sentiment of pity which must, however, be awakened now that it no longer spontaneously manifests itself. Once this sentiment has been awakened, the pupil's reactions to the suffering of other sentient beings will be similar to the reactions of primitive human beings, for he will experience "gut reactions at the sounds of complaints and cries, the sight of blood flowing will make him avert his eyes; the convulsions of a dying animal will cause him an ineffable distress before he knows whence come these new movements within him" (OC 4, p. 505; E, p. 222).

Pity is no longer a matter of impulse because the pupil's reason has developed beforehand in such a way that it has a purely instrumental, and thus nonmoral, character. The following passage encountered shortly before Rousseau's account of pity explains why reason in this way prevents pity from having the same spontaneous, impulsive character that it had in the case of the primitive human being:

> The child raised according to his age is alone. He knows no attachments other than those of habit. He loves his sister as he loves his watch, and his friend as his dog. He does not feel himself to be of any sex, of any species. Man and woman are equally alien to him. He does not consider anything they do or say to be related to himself. (OC 4, p. 500; E, p. 219)

This passage describes an indifference towards a distinctively *human* world. Although the pupil perceives other human beings, his understanding of them is such that they appear to him as mere things or, at most, as animals in relation to which he experiences an ill-defined emotional attachment. It would not be

true to say, however, that the pupil is completely indifferent to other human be-
ings, for they possess an instrumental value for him.

The emotional attachment to his sister or to his friend that is a product of
habit suggests that he does not, in fact, value them merely because they are use-
ful to him. Nevertheless, this attachment can ultimately be explained in terms of
how their presence contributes to his sense of well-being. The presence of others
matters to the pupil, therefore, only in so far as it contributes to this sense of
well-being, whereas there is no indication that he would continue to desire
the presence of his sister or his friend if it no longer contributed to this sense
of well-being. The pupil might, in fact, end up discarding his sister or his friend
as he would a watch that no longer works or a pet dog that has begun to annoy
him. Thus the relations that exist between the pupil and other human beings can
ultimately be traced back to self-love and how reason guides him when seeking
the means to satisfy the desires that it produces in him. Experiencing the senti-
ment of pity, in contrast, leads the pupil to *care about* other human beings and
to develop an interest in how well or how badly *their* lives are going. From this
we can see how awakening this sentiment in the pupil is necessary to counteract
the type of reasoning that threatens to reduce everything to the status of a means
to an end, including other human beings whose value is made to depend on
their relation to our own happiness and interests.

Does Rousseau succeed in explaining how education can bring about an
alignment of self-love and pity in society in such a way that the incident de-
scribed in his autobiography described earlier would no longer have to be
seen as an inevitable consequence of human nature whenever an individual
finds him- or herself in the same or a similar situation? Let us now imagine
that Rousseau himself had undergone the educational programme proposed in
Emile before joining the household in which he stole the ribbon and then falsely
accused Marion of having stolen it. One might object that Rousseau would not
then have stolen the ribbon in the first place because it would have made no
sense for him to steal it. But let us assume that he did so, on a sudden, uncon-
trollable whim, say, but then immediately gained control of himself before being
accused of stealing the ribbon. Would he still have falsely accused Marion of hav-
ing stolen it? There are at least two reasons for thinking that Rousseau would not
have done so.

The first reason is that the sentiment of pity coupled with his ability to fore-
see the suffering in store for Marion if others were to consider her guilty of the
theft of the ribbon would lead him to experience an affective identification
with Marion that was powerful enough to prevent him from falsely accusing
her of having stolen the ribbon, despite the harm that he himself would suffer
as a consequence of admitting that he himself had stolen it. The second reason

concerns his justification for accusing Marion of the theft of the ribbon, namely, his fear of the shame that he would have to suffer if he admitted having stolen it and the lack of any influence that might have countered this fear. This time Rousseau would arguably not experience this fear, whose source is prejudice and social pressures, simply because of the unnaturalness of such a feeling. Indeed, Rousseau defines nature in terms of natural dispositions prior to their corruption by opinions whose source is social institutions (OC 4, p. 248; E, p. 39).[9] In this alternative scenario self-love is subordinated to the sentiment of pity. One might ask, though, if this alternative outcome is in fact consistent with Rousseau's views on human nature, given the primacy of self-love and how the account of pity provided in *Emile* also indicates that the sentiment of pity cannot override the natural order in which obedience to the moral demands of pity is conditional on their compatibility with self-love.

Rousseau describes pity as "the first relative sentiment which touches the human heart according to the order of nature" (OC 4, p. 505; E, p. 222). Yet the fact that pity is the *first* relative sentiment does not mean that it precedes and overrides all non-relative sentiments, that is, sentiments that do not depend on relations to others in so far as the possibility of experiencing them is concerned, and the most fundamental of which are the desire for self-preservation and the desire to experience a sufficient sense of well-being. The way in which the alignment of self-love and pity ultimately remains a contingent matter is shown by how, according to Rousseau, we can pity others only when we ourselves are not suffering to the same extent as they are, for if we ourselves were suffering as much as they are, then our self-love would demand that we attend only to ourselves. This shows how the identification with others that we experience while pitying them is based on an imaginary kind of suffering. We are capable of such imaginary suffering because we ourselves have suffered in the past and retain the memory of it. We are also aware that we may experience the same, and possibly even worse, suffering in the future: "To pity [*plaindre*] another's misfortune one doubtless needs to know it, but one does not need to feel it" (OC 4, p. 514; E, p. 229).

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9 Although it is described as "the first and most natural of all the passions", *amour-propre* is said at the relevant stage in the educational process to be "hardly aroused" in the pupil, who instead "considers himself without regard to others and finds it good that others do not think of him" (OC 4, p. 488; E, p. 208). The later stages of this educational process must accept the emergence of *amour-propre* while ensuring that it manifests itself in beneficial ways, instead of in the form of vanity; hence Rousseau's description of *amour-propre* as "a useful but dangerous instrument" (OC 4, p. 536; E, p. 244).

Rousseau accordingly stresses the importance of imagination as the means whereby one human being is transported outside him- or herself in such a way as to be able to identify with the sufferings of another sentient being, so that it "is not in ourselves, it is in him that we suffer" (OC 4, pp. 505–556; E, p. 223). He suggests that there is nevertheless some sense in which the human being who pities another human being suffers with him or her, as when he states that the pupil "suffers when he sees suffering" (OC 4, p. 545; E, p. 251). Moreover, one human being's identification with another human being's suffering must be sufficient to motivate him or her to come to the aid of this other human being, despite the costs involved, including time and effort, and to make him or her aware of what needs to be done to alleviate the suffering and even remove it causes: "I have not supposed that when he sees unhappy men, he would have only that sterile and cruel pity for them which is satisfied with pitying [*contente de plaindre*] ills it can cure. His active beneficence soon gives him understanding [*des lumières*] which with a harder heart he would not have acquired or would have acquired much later" (OC 4, p. 545; E, p. 251).

The claim that we suffer together with the person whom we pity can, however, be interpreted to mean only that although we may not experience the same immediate suffering and the same degree of suffering, we are able to put ourselves in the position of this person because we ourselves know what it means to suffer, and we can reproduce the experience of suffering within ourselves. Moreover, the suffering of another human being causes us emotional and physical types of disturbance that represent forms of suffering that our desire for well-being will motivate us to seek to remove. In those situations in which the suffering is not of an imaginary kind and is at least equally intense as the suffering experienced by the other person, one will be so concerned with one's own suffering and the desire to alleviate it or remove its causes that one will remain unresponsive to the suffering experienced by others: "When one has suffered or fears suffering, one pities [*plaint*] those who suffer; but when one is suffering, one pities only oneself" (OC 4, p. 514; E, p. 229).[10]

This implies that the pupil who undergoes the educational programme outlined in *Emile* will suppress the natural sentiment of pity whenever it proves to be incompatible with the equally natural, but more immediate and forceful, sen-

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[10] One may therefore doubt that Rousseau provides a successful account of how one human being may pity another one for the right reasons, especially since the way in which pitying others requires that one is not suffering as much as they are leads him to speak of the "sweet" (*douce*) experience of pitying others that concerns how we are conscious of not suffering in the way that they are and thereby come to experience a sense of our own well-being (OC 4, p. 504; E, p. 221).

timent of self-love, even though he will not succumb to the artificial form of self-love that led Rousseau himself to suppress the sentiment of pity when confronted with the innocent Marion's tearful pleading. For example, if stealing a ribbon were necessary to attain something essential to the pupil's well-being and the punishment facing him for stealing it were so harsh as to be incompatible with his well-being, then the same type of incident would occur because of how the sentiment of pity remains subordinate to the demands of self-love. From this we can see that the sequential order in which self-love and pity form objects of the educational programme presented in *Emile* is not only a consequence of the developmental nature of this programme and how it is therefore subject to temporal constraints. Rather, this sequential order reflects the natural order in which pity is subordinate to self-love, so that harmonising these two fundamental elements of human nature will consist in ensuring their alignment as much as is humanly possible. In some situations, however, this alignment will not be possible, and the primacy of self-love will then manifest itself.

This shows the extent to which Rousseau assumes that self-love will override the natural sentiment of pity whenever they come into conflict with each other and how central this claim is to his account of human nature. It is consequently natural for an individual to prefer him- or herself to others in such cases, and it is thus "good" that he or she does so: "The love of oneself is always good and always in conformity with order" (OC 4, p. 491; E, p. 213). Yet why should we accept these assumptions? What about the example of people whose actions provide evidence of a spontaneous willingness to risk or even to sacrifice their own lives for the sake of the lives and well-being of other, more immediately vulnerable human beings? Can these assumptions not instead be explained in terms of Rousseau's own character and his wish to justify the type of action that he himself describes in connection with the incident concerning the stolen ribbon? If they can be explained in this way, Rousseau's theory of human nature begins to look like an attempt to justify such actions rather than an objective account of what human beings essentially are.

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II Social Self and the Modern World

Jean-François Kervégan

Is the Grand Narrative of Rights at Its End?

Abstract: Following the collapse of the Soviet bloc, human rights were considered to be indisputable, as the values on which any human society should be based. The rise of populist and authoritarian regimes shows that there are "alternative" proposals according to which rights may have to be relativized in the name of national cohesion or ethnic identity. How can this reversal be explained? Luhmann's analysis of the emergence of the human rights may provide some answers to this question. The definition of individuals as holders of certain "inalienable and sacred" rights is a consequence of the phenomenon of self-differentiation of social systems that characterises modernity. So, the observable decline in the valuation of these rights is itself a collateral effect of a phenomenon of "dedifferentiation" which would be one of the characteristics of postmodernity. This phenomenon may explain why the great narrative of rights has lost, for many people, its attractive force.

Keywords: autopoiesis; Niklas Luhmann; rights; populism; social differentiation

1 The Decline of Rights

When, in 1989, the "human rights revolution" was celebrated (Gauchet 1989), the bicentenary of the French Revolution and the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* were not the only ones in mind. We were also thinking of the major event that was taking place in Eastern Europe and that would, in the following years, change the face of the world: the disappearance of the Soviet Union and its satellites. One could reasonably think that what was emerging was the end of the bipolar world resulting from the Second World War, it was above all the undisputable victory of democracy and what appears to be its necessary correlate, human rights, it was even, perhaps, the end of history (Fukuyama 1992). Even if we feared a possible "clash of civilisations" and the arrival of new political frontlines (Huntington 1996), the dominant belief, at least in the former "Western bloc", was that the fundamental values of modern democracy, enshrined in major founding texts such as those of 1776, 1789, 1848 or 1948, no longer had credible competitors, except for the barbarism of the new absolute enemy of civilisation, whether it is called Al Qaeda or Daesh. The "society of individuals" whose genesis has been described by Norbert Elias (1987), the reign of *homo aequalis*, whose singularity Louis Dumont demonstrated by comparing it

with the *homo hierarchicus* of caste societies (Dumont 1966; 1983; 1985; 2013), all this is based on the idea, first formulated as a purely theoretical hypothesis by modern theorists of natural law and social contract, that human individuals "are born and remain free and equal in rights" (*Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen*, Article 1). This normative hypothesis has also become the outline of a social and political agenda, which has been called first and foremost the rule of law (*Rechtsstaat*), then, under pressure from the working class, the republican, democratic and social rule of law (*republikanischer, demokratischer und sozialer Rechtsstaat*), as defined, for example, by the Federal Republic of Germany in Article 28 – 1 of its Basic Law. With variations of interpretation that are certainly not insignificant, this programme was that of the great democratic states of the post-war period, at least until the "neo-liberal revolution" of the 1980s shook some of its main pillars. This "revolution" undermined, it seems, what was called the "social-democratic model". But, in any case, nothing seemed to call into question the absolute value conferred on rights (individual and/or collective) and the idea that what defines the modern individual is his position as a rightsholder, whereby rights were conceived as "moral capacities for putting others under obligations" (*moralische Vermögen, Andere zu verpflichten*) (Kant 1996, p. 393; 1968, p. 237). To conceive of society as an association of rightsholders (whether these rights are "by nature" prior to any social convention or defined by these conventions themselves) is to conceive of it as a web of powers and obligations binding individuals who, whatever their properties (wealth, social position, or moral virtue), are equal. Equality in liberty or, as Étienne Balibar says, *l'égaliberté* (Balibar 2010, pp. 55 – 89), is thus the distinctive character of the normative model claimed by democratic societies, even if reality is sometimes very far from the model (Moyn 2018).

However, it is clear that this model of rights-based democracy has recently ceased to enjoy consensus *as a model* (regardless of the fact that its realisation has always been partial). On all continents, including Europe, the birthplace of modern democracy, there is a questioning of what seemed to be, after 1989, the normative basis for a unified world. Criticism of the "human rights politics" (Gauchet 2002a, 2002b) has paved the way for an open challenge to the relevance of this model, and more precisely to the linkage that seemed self-evident, including among the neo-conservatives, between the universalism of rights and the particular (national) base of democracy. To designate the "alternative" normative device that takes place and the mode of governance of the *polis* that results from it, it was necessary to revisit an existing lexicon that remained and

perhaps remains politically amorphous, such as that of "populism",[1] or invent a vocabulary that reflects the trouble of observers, like "illiberalism" or (in French) *démocrature*.[2]

I make a remark incidentally: whereas, in the debate that developed in political philosophy following the publication of the *Theory of Justice* (Rawls 1971), the main alternative theories to Rawls' liberalism appeared to be on the one hand the so-called "communitarianism" (Michael Sandel, Michael Walzer, Charles Taylor ...) and on the other hand the libertarian thinking (Robert Nozick, Murray Rothbard, Ayn Rand ...), the most effective challenge (and the only one that has seen political achievements) has been from currents that, although some of them (the "right-wing populists") borrow certain aspects from the libertarian and communitarian programmes, are defined above all by their mistrust of the liberal conception of democracy, which the first mentioned currents only occasionally called into question; for example, when Friedrich Hayek, one of the spiritual fathers of libertarianism, considered that it was necessary to "protect democracy against itself" (Hayek 1979, p. 150). What contemporary illiberalism fundamentally questions is the proposal of equal liberty, formulated in article 1 of the 1789 *Declaration:* according to it, not all men are necessarily "free and equal in rights". As we know, populism has never feared to worship its leaders; this is even one of its main driving forces. We are therefore tempted to focus criticism on the garrulous and demonstrative personalities in whom it is embodied: Trump, Johnson, Salvini, Orban or Bolsonaro. But we cannot content ourselves with a sad description of the feats of such bad boys if we want to explain the success they encounter and the attraction of large sectors of the people for some variant of contemporary illiberalism. The social sciences are developing enlightening analyses of the renewal of this populism that was wrongly thought to be reserved for the "periphery" and foreign to a putative firmly rooted democratic culture, despite the "episode" (!) of the 1930s (see for example Müller 2017; Mounk 2018; Mény 2019; Norris/Englehart 2019; Urbinati 2019; Rosanvallon 2020).[3] For their part, other scholars question the relevance of this type of category to understand the lack of support from which the institutions and values of

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1 The notion of populism is ambiguous: it refers to very different, even incompatible, currents that are schematically classified as "right-wing populism" and "left-wing populism". For a defence and illustration of the latter, see Mouffe (2019). For a highly critical presentation of right-wing populism, see Traverso (2019).

2 For a study of the German origins of illiberalism, see Stern (1992). See also *"Les démocratures"* (2019).

3 For an "impressionistic" study of the resemblances between the present situation and the 1930s, see Foessel (2019).

liberal democracy clearly suffer, and question the sources and reasons for this disaffection (see for example Colliot-Thélène 2011; Lacroix/Pranchère 2016).

For my part, I would like to approach the issue in a different way; I will rely on Niklas Luhmann's analyses on the meaning and function of the subjective rights and, in particular, of "human rights" in the context of social and political modernity, that means of the separation of "civil society" and the more or less "democratic" state. These analyses elucidate some of the reasons for the (relative) discredit of the link between rights and democracy which, since the American and French revolutions, has been the core of the modern political project, a project which for thinkers like Habermas remains to be accomplished (Habermas 1980; 1985). From this perspective, the current success of populist themes can be understood as a symptom of the exhaustion of the modern project. Can we imagine alternatives other than those currently proposed: on the one hand, the transformation of politics into managerial technique, "governance by numbers" (Supiot 2015), on the other hand, the "populist simplification" which imagines the people as a homogeneous block facing the political, economic, or cultural "elites", whereas people has always been, since the revolutions of the eighteenth century, the result of a legal-political construction (Rosanvallon 2014; 2020)?

2 Law as Autopoietic System: Normative Closure and Self-Reference

When we consider the question of subjective rights by rejecting both the classical "jusnaturalist" conceptions, as they developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and nourished the first Declarations of Rights, and the positivist conception that rights are nothing more than the "reflection" of an antecedent obligation defined by the legal norms (Kelsen 2000, pp. 132–133), it is in my opinion appropriate to consider Niklas Luhmann's writings. Indeed, since his first book, *Grundrechte als Institution* (1965), he has constantly deciphered and deconstructed the mythical vision of rights that dominates our understanding of "eternal human rights" and modernity. To these "supra-positive norms of mysterious origin" (Luhmann 1965, pp. 12, 23 ,my translation), he contrasts a systemic conception of rights that gives great importance to their institutional context, that of an increasing differentiation of society into subsystems with specific modes of functioning and coding. Luhmann's view of rights therefore combines a systematic analysis of the function of rights in the functioning of the legal subsystem of a complex society with a historical analysis of the meaning of rights in classical legal theories. Before examining this theory of rights more closely, it is

necessary to specify its context, the general theory of social systems developed and constantly revised by Luhmann until his death.

System theory acknowledges the irreversible decoupling of social systems and normative complexes caused by the process of differentiation (*Ausdifferenzierung*), specific to complex societies (and perhaps to any dynamic system), and intends to draw all the consequences from it. Like language according to Ferdinand de Saussure, society is a "system of differences", and the primary differentiation is the one by which a system distinguishes itself from its environment (and is itself part of the environment of the other systems constituting its own environment) (Luhmann 1987a, p. 35). *Das Recht der Gesellschaft*, Luhmann's last published book on law, develops with a high degree of sophistication the theory of differentiation (both external and internal) of the legal (sub) system established in previous works.[4] The core of this construction is the notion of operative closure (*operative Geschlossenheit*), which is the subject of the second chapter of the book. To expose it very roughly: any system, such as a monad, is closed not in the sense that it has no outside or is deaf and blind to what is happening there, but in the sense that, for it, the environment can only ask the system to implement specific "translation" procedures, which are in fact selective operations based on binary code, in this case: legal/illegal. In other words, operative closure means that an event or fact only "exists" for the legal system if it is a legally relevant information; and it is a relevant information only if it is likely to be "internalised" through a coding operation that is strictly internal to the system. That means that only the law (positive law, there is no other kind of law) decides what is law (Luhmann 1993a, p. 50), and it does so by separating the legal "facts" from the environment that forms everything the law treats as non-legal.

The above could be said of any system, social or biological. The theory of self-organised systems does not establish a break between them; it only distinguishes them in their degree of complexity. As a system, the law has the structural and functional characteristics of any complex system, namely autopoiesis or self-organisation. A system of norms is a system like any other – this point against all forms of idealist separation of *Sein* and *Sollen*. If it has a proper characteristic, it is the "normative closure", as a specification of the general characteristic, common to all systems, of the operative closure. But this is a functional,

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4 As a reminder: Luhmann (1965); Luhmann (1981); Luhmann (1987b); as well as some articles collected in the six volumes of *Soziologische Aufklärung* or the four volumes of *Gesellschaftsstruktur und Semantik*. Several manuscripts on legal issues have been published since Luhmann's death, demonstrating his particular concern for the sociological theory of law.

not a cognitive closure (Luhmann 1993a, p. 77):[5] the legal system is of course able to "process" (thanks to its specific coding mode) new data (otherwise it would be unable to produce norms for new existing situations, such as assisted human reproduction), but it can only do so from its own resources, thus in the terms implied by the definition of what is the law, as it results not from a transcendent (external, "environmental") decision, but from the very conditions of the auto-poietic working of the legal system itself.

Luhmann points out that the thesis of the normative closure of law "is above all against the claim that morality could be immediately effective within the legal system" (Luhmann 1993a, p. 78, my translation). Indeed, in a complex society, the material criteria for implementing moral coding (the definitions of what is "right" and what is "wrong") can no longer receive a shared definition. In other words, the normative closure of the law reflects the fact that, in such a society, only legal norms can successfully be tested for universalisation. Basically, the thesis of the normative closure of law only radicalises a fundamental intuition of classical legal positivism: as Hart says, "it is in no sense a necessary truth that laws reproduce or satisfy certain demands of morality, though in fact they have often done so" (Hart 1994, pp. 185–186). In the nineteenth and twentieth century, positivist scholars already considered that natural law, as opposed to positivism, does not mean anything other than a subordination, masked or acknowledged, of the law to morals (Kelsen 1959, pp. 64 ff.). Systems theory provides strong theoretical reasons for this rejection. The production and evolution (by internal differentiation) of the legal system is carried out exclusively through recursive operations: the characteristic of a system is indeed to perform operations not only on its elements, but also on its own operations, which corresponds to what in mathematics is called a recursive function. This means that the law, like any autopoietic system, produces and transforms itself by "internalising" everything in its environment that would, if it were not so coded, be nothing more than a meaningless "noise". Using the vocabulary of Heinz von Förster, one of the pioneers of cybernetics, Luhmann considers that the legal system is not a trivial machine (that is without the characteristic of autopoiesis), but a "complex machine". It is in fact a "historical machine", since any operation (issuing or applying a norm) transforms the system and thus modifies the conditions under which subsequent operations (including another application of the same rule) may take place (Luhmann 1993a, p. 58).

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5 On the difference between normative and cognitive closure, Luhmann says that a cognitive expectation must be revised when it is disappointed, while a normative expectation does not need to be revised (Luhmann 1983, pp. 138–139).

Paradoxically, it is because it is *operationally* (functionally, recursively) *closed* that the legal system is *cognitively open* to its environment, in traditional terms: to "society". But this openness is not to be thought of in the sense of determination or influence, or as a causal relationship. The external reference is only meaningful or relevant from the self-reference: "openness is only possible on the basis of closure" (Luhmann 1993a, p. 76, my translation). Not only is normative closure consistent with the cognitive openness of the legal system to its environment, but it is also a condition for it, because this closure makes it possible to process external information, that is its translation or internalisation through learning processes that transform themselves, as in any complex machine: "Law does not hold its reality from some stable ideality, it holds it exclusively from operations that produce and reproduce the specifically legal meaning" (Luhmann 1993a, p. 41, my translation).

The anti-normativist orientation of Luhmann's theory of normative systems is illustrated by the following quotation: "Normativity is, from a sociological point of view, nothing more than a counterfactual stability or a very challenging form of factuality" (Luhmann 1993b, p. 57, my translation). Luhmann's commitment to a radical form of legal positivism is not a metatheoretical option; rather, it is the result of the very evolution of the legal system. The "complete positivisation" of law is a process that began at the end of the eighteenth century and was first described in the language of natural law. This positivisation was necessary because positive law has "enhanced selectivity" which allows it, better than the old jusnaturalist axioms, to proceed to the legal encoding of a complex and differentiated society (Luhmann 1987b, p. 190 sq., in particular pp. 195–196 and 203–204). This has implications for how rights, in particular basic rights, are understood.

3 Social Function and Historical Meaning of Rights

A constant concern orientates Luhmann's approach to rights: avoid both the paradoxical mythology of human rights (it is a mythology, as long as these rights are disconnected from the jusnaturalist problematics that originally justified them and when their affirmation becomes a respectable moral proclamation without scientific value: see Luhmann 1995) and counter-mythologies, for example Marxist mythology which makes human rights an accompaniment-distorting of ex-

ploitative relationships within a class society.[6] The inclusion in constitutional texts of *Declarations of Human Rights*, in other words the positivisation of these rights, initially understood as natural rights, has certainly made it possible to "normalise them juridically" (Luhmann 1995, p. 233, my translation). But it has not solved the paradox, which perhaps needs to be resolved less than to be managed: how can we recognise intangible individual rights while considering that the law is basically a set of necessarily variable social norms?

This issue of the "ontological" status of basic rights is the focus of Luhmann's first book, *Grundrechte als Institution* (1965), whose purpose is to describe basic rights in a "non-normative" way; the aim is to demonstrate that these rights are not "supra-positive norms of a mysterious source", but an institution that performs a "social function" (Luhmann 1965, p. 12, my translation). This issue continues to have a major role in Luhmann's further exploration of the legal system, although in quantitative terms it does not have a significant place (about 30 pages out of a total of 600 in *Das Recht der Gesellschaft* [1993a]). Broadly speaking, Luhmann's point is as follows: the development of "subjective rights", first under the form of the "natural rights" of the individual, dismissively described as "transitional semantics" (Luhmann 1993a, p. 151, my translation), then under that of constitutionally guaranteed basic rights, is an effect of the process of social differentiation, in particular of the differentiation-autonomisation (*Ausdifferenzierung*) of the legal subsystem, which now has the characteristics of a system (coding, operational closure, cognitive opening). Having become self-reliant (in particular with regard to moral evaluation and its specific coding), the law is under the need to provide individuals (defined by it as legal persons) with certain characteristics (rights) that make it possible to replace the symmetrical logic of *reciprocity* that prevailed in earlier forms of law (in particular in Roman law, where *jus* always refers to a relationship where rights and obligations are linked), by an asymmetrical logic of *complementarity*. This logic allows a right such as "liberty" to be thought of asymmetrically or unilaterally, without having as a correlate an obligation coupled with rights on the part of other people.

> The modern legal figure of (subjective) right breaks out from tradition. In order to identify – and consequently legitimise and guarantee – a subjective right, reciprocity is no longer required: it only requires complementarity. Integration into mutual legal relations, genesis of rights by mutual contract, commitment to the corresponding obligations, are however by no means excluded, nor even discredited. But they are no longer primarily linked to the

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6 This mythology obviously goes back to Marx' *On the Jewish Question*, a text that is often misunderstood by the prevailing Marxist tradition.

right as a right. It is now possible to think of a justification for a right that is no longer balanced and limited by parallel obligations towards the partner. The outrageous idea that liberty is a right is to be conceived. (Luhmann 1981, p. 364, my translation; see also Luhmann 1993a, p. 483)

Rights, in particular the basic rights of the first generation (*Freiheitsrechte*), are structurally asymmetrical, at least as regards the performances that are requested from the addressees of the claim to these rights. These addressees are fewer other individuals with whom I have symmetrical complementary relationships (at least in the context of private law) than "society" or "the State", in other words the entire social system or certain specific subsystems that need to be made subject to a "translation" in accordance with the specific legal code *recht*/*unrecht* (legal/illegal). When I claim, for example, the enjoyment of my right to freedom of movement, I expect that others (and in particular public institutions) will not oppose its exercise, but I do not offer anything in return. This is why the idea of liberty as a right is "outrageous": it is not associated with any obligation on behalf of the person claiming it, that is to say, of each individual as a rightsholder, as a legal person. The classical concept of *jus* referred to a twofold symmetrical relationship (right of *A* corresponds to obligation of *B*, but also right of *A* corresponds to obligation of *A* himself)[7] within the framework of a well-defined legal institution, a *Rechtsinstitut* in the sense of Savigny (like ownership, marriage, contract).[8] "Subjective rights" are asymmetrical (in terms of entitlements, if not in terms of expectations) because they require from others abstention rather than positive performance, and they do not seem to be accompanied by any obligation on the part of the holder of this right. Others, and more especially the State, must abstain from intervening in the sphere of freedom defined by my rights, a sphere that does not seem to have any internal limitations. Or, if it wants to interfere, the definition of these rights and the sphere of privacy (*Privatheit*) that they define must be modified through the law, that is by legislation or judicial decision. This is why Luhmann provocatively argues that basic rights are a "paradoxical institution", and even "the unjust law": indeed, this type of right "does not have a corrective in itself" (Luhmann 1981, p. 365, my translation). It can be said otherwise: basic rights, which are moral rather than legal rights, are not opposable rights; they only create a one-sided obligation.

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7 This is a point that Hegel had already emphasised: there is no right without obligations not only for others, but for the holder of that right himself (Hegel 2009, § 261, pp. 208–210).
8 Unfortunately, the other languages do not allow a translation of the distinction made by the German legal language between *Institut* and *Institution*.

This vehement criticism of "subjective rights", whose "outrageous" character Luhmann opposes to the symmetry and moderation of the ancient (pre-modern) law, is at first sight close to that of Michel Villey, whom he also cites favourably (see Villey 1983). But, unlike Villey, Luhmann did not simply reject the modern world and its law. For him, there is in the very development of the legal system a characteristic that made necessary the prominent position of rights (particularly since the end of the eighteenth century), namely the sheer logic of the *Ausdifferenzierung*, of functional differentiation:

> The legal figure of subjective right aims to respond, through its higher degree of abstraction, to the requirements of an increasingly functionally differentiated society. (Luhmann 1981, p. 370, my translation)

Indeed, more "abstract" rights, no longer correlated with strict obligations and no longer linked to legal institutions that resist change, are more suitable for societies where the mobility of persons and the fluidity of the statuses have become a precondition for being. Such rights are, on the one hand, a tool for social change, whose functional requirements they establish as norms (see the developments in "human rights": first, second, third,… generation). In this respect, Luhmann has amended his basically free-marketeer thesis in *Grundrechte als Institution*, where he argued that only *Freiheitsrechte*, freedoms, are real rights, while social and political rights are not genuine rights, since they define obligations on the part of the State or society and not a right to action on the part of the individual who is entitled to that right (Luhmann 1965, pp. 164–165). Luhmann subsequently recognised that rights, in their evolution and diversity, legally satisfy the requirements of an increased functional differentiation of the environment of the legal system, in this case that of the economic subsystem to which the legal system is "structurally coupled" (Luhmann 1993a, pp. 452f.). "Structural coupling" is not a relationship of influence or causality; it is the fact that a system, while operationally closed, "presupposes certain characteristics of its environment and adapts to it in a structural way" (Luhmann 1993a, p. 441, my translation).

But rights are also, on the other hand, a protection against change and mutability, because one does not redesign rights and their hierarchy as one changes shirt: rights have a systemic "density" that preserves them against brutal evolutions and allows the legal system, through academic doctrines and judicial practice, to continually stabilise itself (Luhmann 1993a, pp. 274–281). In short, rights, due to their abstraction (criticised from the nineteenth century by counter-revolutionary opponents to "human rights": see Lacroix-Pranchère 2016, pp. 175–214), provide the legal system with "a sustainable balance between conservation

and transformation" (Luhmann 1981, p. 369, my translation), because they allow "abstract system regulation possibilities" to the risk of fostering a "lethargy of the law" (Luhmann 1981, pp. 369, 373, my translation). To this extent, these rights are not to be seen as a simple "programme complementary to the positivisation of the law", consisting in erecting, by means of "specific captors", "barriers" to "the order of the objective law, as defined by the legislator" (Luhmann 1984, pp. 133–134, my translation).

Such a demystifying view of rights has some merit. But for Luhmann to stand by this point would mean not seeing how the expansion of "abstract" rights is part of the logic of social system differentiation, which is itself a logic of increasing abstraction. In other words, in a complex society, the legal system needs rights as fixity points that escape the constant logic of recursive re-problematisation of operations within the system, or that are not impacted by the constant shifting of the binary code legal/illegal. Indeed, the peculiarity of rights is that they enjoy enhanced protection regardless of their legal basis, in other words their "deductibility" within the network of operations to be defined as legal (Luhmann 1981, p. 369).

Luhmann's analysis is instructive: it shows that the legal system, despite its "closure", requires marginal conditions of actuality that are not purely legal. Basic rights, a positivised figure of moral human rights, are perhaps the main one of these conditions. The question which then arises is the following (but Luhmann did not address it frontally): if it is true that the emergence, then the "bunkerisation" of subjective rights was a correlate of the modern differentiation of the social system into autonomous subsystems, is it possible that a counter evolution may deprive them of the structural necessity which is, or was, theirs?

4 Social Dedifferentiation, a Twilight of Rights?

One of Luhmann's main thesis is that the evolution of social systems (and systems in general) is driven by a logic of *differentiation*. This differentiation entails an *increase* in complexity (and therefore in the capacity to adjust to change) and a *decrease* in complexity (by "internalising" the constitutive difference between system and environment, which is diffracted as this environment is modified): "Systemic differentiation necessarily leads to an increase in the complexity of the entire system. It also allows new forms of reducing complexity" (Luhmann 1987a, pp. 261–262, my translation). Indeed, "the environment is always more complex than the system itself" (Luhmann 1987a, p. 250, my translation). From this perspective, the differentiation of the global social system into increas-

ingly specialised subsystems is both the product of the increasing complexity of the system and its environment and the way to manage it, to "domesticate" it. To my knowledge, Luhmann never considered that this process of *Ausdifferenzierung*, which is a constituent of modernity, could be stopped or overturned. He considers the process of differentiation as irreversible; I would even say that his whole theory of social systems and their evolution is founded on the premise of this irreversibility. Moreover, while considering as "outrageous" the modern valuation of rights and while criticising their devotees (Habermas at first), he has never or almost never envisaged an alternative to the devotion to human rights that he is only observing with an ironical distance.

However, globalisation – the formation of a global society – poses a challenge to this theory. If it is true that "one cannot think of a limit without at the same time considering what lies on the other side of the limit" (Luhmann 1998, p. 153, my translation), what can the society that has become world be different from? Luhmann's answer is the following: only from itself, by criticising itself, by "refuting" itself; the world society is a "self-substitutive order" (Luhmann 1998, p. 158, my translation). Globalisation is also likely to produce in turn "anachronistic trends", such as national or ethnic tensions (Luhmann 1998, pp. 170 – 171). But any other perspective than that of global society is now scientifically irrelevant. The "global" has definitively supplanted the "local", that means not only regional areas, but also subsystems that have until hitherto operated autonomously because of their operational closure: politics, economy, education, culture, or science. However, this border erasing of the subsystems differentiated by modern society in order to meet the increasing complexity of the environment of each of them, raises questions that Luhmann has seen, but which he had no opportunity to systematically address. He incidentally notes, for example, that the difference between inclusion and exclusion, resulting from the functional differentiation of global society, "excludes large segments of the population from the legal system, so that the legal/illegal coding no longer applies, or applies only in a very restricted way" (Luhmann 1998, p. 169, my translation). This is the kind of processes that I refer to as dedifferentiation.

There are many manifestations of this trend. The autonomy of the political system, which had adopted specific operating rules (grouped under the label "democracy") is undermined by the requirements (perceived as constraints) of the economic system, the market (now regarded as a quasi-political subject). In turn, the economy (and the financial sphere) are under political injunctions that are said to disrupt the market, but also have tangible effects, at least in the short-term (I mean for example the punitive taxation policy implemented by the Trump administration). For its part, the science system (academic knowl-

edge) is under the "evaluative" pressure of societal or political demands, so that its autonomy (and the ethical norms it implied: *Wissenschaft als Beruf*) is *de facto* undermined. For example, it may be stated that certain research areas are socially, economically, or politically inopportune, or "objectives" may be designed according to a different normative scale than that of scientific research may be prescribed... These are only examples of a general opacification of the borders between the different social subsystems, corresponding to what Carl Schmitt had polemically called "the total state by weakness" (Schmitt 1958 [1933], pp. 361–362, my translation).

I would like to highlight in particular the implications of this dedifferentiation for the law (and for the position of rights within the legal system). That globalisation has a strong impact on the sphere of law (on legal norms and practices) is nowadays uncontested. Globalisation puts on the agenda a redesign of certain fundamental legal concepts. Thus, Gunther Teubner suggests extending the use of the concept of constitution far beyond the strictly political sphere and proposes the notion of "societal constitutionalism" (Teubner 2012, pp. 18 f.). The growing popularity of the theories gathered under the label "Law and Economics", the increasing penetration of Anglo-Saxon legal techniques such as bargaining into European continental law are manifestations of this transformation of the legal system and its doctrinal bases. This phenomenon can be observed in the changes in European Union law (Frydman 2011; Berns 2007). However, there are grounds to think that this kind of phenomena will have important repercussions on the position of rights. To put it roughly: from the conception of rights as barriers to the arbitrariness on the part of others and making their holder "a small-scale sovereign", to use Herbert Hart's words (Hart 1982, p. 183), one may move toward a vision of rights as tradable goods, interests that can be sacrificed to other more powerful interests. This win of "interest theory" over "choice theory" of rights, whatever one thinks of the theoretical relevance of both approaches (see the discussion between the proponents of the two conceptions in Kramer/Simmonds/Steiner 1998), is not only a matter of debating ideas: in American civil law, but tomorrow also in other states, the bargaining of rights has become a reality; this can be seen in the Strauss-Kahn case where, notwithstanding the criminal prosecution, the victim's lawyers have bargained a financial agreement to close the civil action. There are reasons to believe that, if rights are only protected interests, according to Jhering's famous formula, they will gradually lose their "inalienable and sacred" character. Of course, the constitutional system has the resources to "sanctuarise" those of these rights that it considers to be fundamental. But if this system itself, as well as the objective law as a whole, becomes "negotiable", if the constitution, hitherto strictly structured within the State framework (national or federal), must "be adapted to the condi-

tions of a fragmented global society" (Teubner 2012, p. 31, my translation), why not consider, for example, that certain forms of slavery are tolerable when they make it possible to save individuals from poverty?

In my view, such a move in the status of rights would be a manifestation of social dedifferentiation. If basic rights can, in the long run, be partly deprived of the stabilising function that Luhmann claims was theirs in the modern legal system, it is because the legal system becomes "pervasive" to incentives from other social subsystems (economy, but also politics, religion,…); in other words, because the legal system is losing the operational closure that allowed it to continuously differentiate itself from its environment, while at the same time "listening" to it. Dedifferentiation can lead the world society to erase some of the consequences of the slow *Ausdifferenzierung* process that the modern world experienced. In the long run, what is emerging may be the end of the great narrative of rights. The affects that nourish the various figures of contemporary populism work tirelessly towards this result.

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Benno Zabel

Post-Metaphysical Right?
Modernity – Between Self-Reflection
and Crisis

Abstract: Law and equality are the promise of liberal modernity. Law and equality are supposed to guarantee freedom and to help contain social experiences of contingency. They are supposed to provide coherence where, in Hegel's words, the state of necessity and the state of understanding, (Not- und Verstandesstaat) the system of needs (System der Bedürfnisse), prevail. The dialectic that goes along with this still characterizes the legitimation problems of the constitutional state today. For law (the law of equality) simultaneously establishes autonomy and authority, enables emancipation and subjugation, initiates participation and alienation. Understanding the law of modernity means productively bringing this dialectic to bear: Law must be reconstructed as a practice that produces shared knowledge and processes controversial expectations, but at the same time is exposed to or reinforces the power interests of society. This consciousness of one's own power and powerlessness, however, can only become effective in terms of freedom if law is present in the political coexistence of the subjects of law, if it reflects on its own crises and thereby becomes critical.

Keywords: subjective rights; the constitutional and bio-political regime; ethical life; judgement; resistant democracy

1 The Promise of Right

Without the *promise* of right, the concept of legitimacy inherent in modernity is not intelligible. The promise of right is the promise of universal equality and freedom, of individual self-realisation and collective self-government. This promise sets the coordinates for a democratic project that binds community and society, state and the individual to a *post-metaphysical thinking*, to a *disenchanted world* (Habermas 1992; Weber 2004). This world is post-metaphysical and disenchanted because it has done away with grand narratives, with God, a universal morality, and can now be grasped only in the semantics of a liberal language geared towards plurality (Lyotard 1984). Seen in this light, the promise of right has at least two functions: to secure the living conditions in the form of legal relations, and to ensure social stability and normative coherence. Right is the medium of reli-

able orientation. The promise of right is not only based on certain ideas and principles (mobilised in the constitutions and ideas of an encompassing protection of basic rights and human rights), but is realised through institutions and bureaucracies, and through a wide-ranging intervention management. In other words, right is the expression of a self-reflective culture, the result of ideological struggles, individual interests, and collective expectations. This interplay of facticity and validity has been pointed out time and again. According to Jürgen Habermas, for instance, the right of pluralist societies connects the promise of freedom of democratic constitutions with an effective power of control and intervention. "In the legal mode of validity, the facticity of the *enforcement* of law is intertwined with the legitimacy of a *genesis* of law that claims to be rational because it guarantees liberty" (Habermas 1996, p. 28). Yet right must not only mitigate the antimony of autonomy and authority, freedom and subjugation, but also internalise the accompanying tension between normative orientation and social reality. It is essential, then, that a legal order recognise and normatively process the empirical impulses, the needs and expectations of the subjects, the perspective of the lifeworld. Habermas believes he can reconstruct such a democratic culture because he grasps right as a mediator between the administrative system – that is, the so-called state authorities, legislation, administration – and the lifeworld. Right is an integrative, legitimate and reflexive order that belongs, according to Habermas,

> to the societal component of the lifeworld. Just as this reproduces itself only together with culture and personality structures through the flow of communicative actions, so legal actions, too, constitute the medium through which institutions of law simultaneously reproduce themselves along with intersubjectively shared legal traditions and individual competences for interpreting and observing legal rules. (Habermas 1992, pp. 80–81)

One need not agree (entirely) with an account of the democratic constitutional state from the perspective of discourse theory; in fact, such an account has been criticised for various reasons (Wellmer 1993). We should nonetheless not overlook the fact that, beyond the diverging models, the binding forces of modern right are rarely cast into doubt (Menke 2015; Loick 2017). If there is talk of binding forces or an integrative factor, one is concerned mainly with emphasising the universally recognised capacity for orientation. But can such a facilitating role and function of right do justice to the interplay of facticity and validity sketched above? Doesn't right belong to social developments as a contributing cause or co-producer and not as their neutral moderator? At any rate, we can observe in liberal communities a momentum resulting from post-metaphysical thought, the disenchantment of modernity and the loosening of metaphysical semantics (identity/truth/reason/subject) (Gamm 2002). Against this background,

the ongoing challenge of right is to provide coherence and normative orientation. Right is not merely connected with a community that understands itself as liberal and pluralist, as enlightened and democratic; right also faces a society that experiences fragility, alienation, vulnerability, and contingency in its post-metaphysical freedom. One can certainly cast into doubt, then, Habermas's reconstruction, according to which (civil) society, the lifeworld and right enable a reflexively balanced order. On the backside, the resources of legitimation of liberal modernity brought about by the bourgeois revolutions of 1776 and 1789 have always been accompanied by new needs and doubts of legitimation, by insecurities and disillusionments that must be contained. If one wants to follow Habermas and view right as a medium and means of communication of modern forms of freedom, then it is crucial that these forms of freedom realise, or at least enable one to realise, convictions of social values. Appealing to values today fills the vacuum that the decline of traditional resources of legitimation and meaning such as religion and morality left behind (Schnädelbach 1983, p. 198 ff.). Whether as security, solidarity, well-being or freedom and equality, these values appear in place of virtues, displacing the metaphysical notion of the good. Values have the task of bringing to bear what is essential and valuable in the needs and condition of the immediate spiritual life (Lotze 1841, p. 2).[1] This applies to how one deals with fears just as well as with existence in general: without values, one has no normative compass. Today we speak of communities of liberal values, of the defence of democratic values (Joas/Wiegandt 2005). What is meant is especially the *reproduction* of societies in a way that is *sensitive to values and contingency.*

And what about right? Right qualifies as a catalyst of this reproduction. (What this means concretely should become clear later.) To the extent that it evolves into a prevailing social medium, it must, on the one hand, contain the social insecurities as far as possible, and on the other hand ensure that values are effectively realised. This reproduction of societies is an expression of a transformed understanding of legitimation. Right and state can no longer rely on the inner ethical force of the lifeworld (or do so only at the cost of losing legitimacy). Rather, they find legitimation in being geared to an encompassing regime of achieving and maintaining values, supporting this regime with a network of regulating techniques (legislation, the administration of justice, police). In this way, a project of *normative full competence* becomes visible that is supposed to redeem the post-metaphysical promise of freedom. Right acts self-referentially and he-

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1 Compare with Friedrich Nietzsche: "man designated himself as the creature that measures values, evaluates and measures, as the 'valuating animal as such'" (Nietzsche 1989, p. 70).

gemonically.[2] The power that thereby arises, revealing itself above all in positivity (and secured ideologically by a scientific positivism), unites a multiplicity of forces and interests, a fabric that Michel Foucault famously designated as a *dispositif* (Foucault 1980). Also visible in this reconstruction of right, however, is the increasing significance of the *effects* that are intended or demanded by this power. Legal communication ought to generate social impressions or effects of a normative, psychological or cultural kind, against which legal communication is measured. One need only think of the manifold legal practices of social control, neoliberal interventions in the welfare state or the penal regime. Thus legal communication is not merely mediated through society; it is also dependent on individual, collective and often particular interests. This, at least, is the thesis that I intend to develop here: *the notion of right designates at once social power and social powerlessness.* To gain a better grasp of this paradox and the associated social consequences, it is worth discussing some of the structural moments of liberal thought in more detail (2). Then it will be possible to proceed to a philosophical theory of right that is responsive to freedom and suitable to our times (3).

2 The Care of Right

2.1 The Birth of the Subject Out of the Spirit of Power

Let us first focus on the emancipatory perspective, on the empowerment of freedom of the individual through right, which will enable us to push forward the *analytic of the promise.* The common narrative is well known. It states that all political and legal decisions find their ultimate justification in reference to individuals that are subjected to authority. Individual interests restrict, bind and mobilise the action of the sovereign state. In short, autonomy and recognition are the basis of legitimation.[3] According to this understanding, interests and values acquire their binding form *in the shape of rights*, specifically in the shape of *subjective rights* (Luhmann 1981). Max Weber believes that subjective rights justify sources of power (Weber 1980). They establish zones of the permissible, concrete demands that can be positioned as rights of resistance and participation against the power of the existing order (or can at least set this order in motion) (Menke

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2 On the thesis of colonisation, see Habermas (1984, p. 470). For this development, Niklas Luhmann coined the apt concept *Kompaktkommunikation* (Luhmann 2008, p. 146).

3 On the paradigm of normative and methodological individualism, see von der Pfordten (2011).

2015, pp. 19 ff.).[4] Early on, objections were raised against this model of interpretation and legitimation. Critiques of right that draw on Marx, Adorno and Foucault argue that this conception of individual (and social) emancipation goes only halfway and that it is ideologically motivated. According to this critique, the concept of autonomy inherent in liberal right, with its notion of subjective rights, presents two notable dangers. On the one hand, there is the danger of an erosion of human agency, a disinterest of the individual in the public affairs of the *res publica*. Subjective rights privilege the private self-will, the given freedoms (existing property relations or social statuses) and push forth what Hegel called the emergency state or understanding state (*Not- und Verstandesstaat*) (2009, §§ 183 ff.) On the other hand, there is the threat of losing integrative normativity through laws and right that are now oriented only to the governability of the subjects and not to the self-government of the citizens. In Foucault's words, "Liberalism is not what accepts freedom. Rather, liberalism proposes to manufacture it in each instance, to arouse it and to produce it with, of course, [the entirety] of constraints, problems of cost raised by this manufacture" (Foucault 2004, p. 63).

Subjective rights stand for a new coding of the spheres of the political, social and normative. This critique makes us aware of a central premise and connected problem of the liberal understanding of right: underlying its concept of legitimation, whether visible or not, is an unenlightened *social empiricism* (Menke 2015, pp. 164 ff.). Once again, according to Foucault, a subject is presented "who appears in the form of a subject of individual choices which are both irreducible and non-transferable" (Foucault 2008, p. 272). The conception of a choice that cannot be further deduced, of an authentic will, begins with the single ("natural") individual. Choice and will are *preferences* and in this respect social *facts* unique to the subject.[5] Not reasons, not rationality nor common judgement constitute the social subject but rather the fact of immediately experiencing the world and the power of agency that is generated from this immediate experience.

This is not to say that liberal right disregards entirely the reflectivity and social construction of the subject or the individual will – quite the contrary. But its

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4 On a socio-philosophical interpretation that is still influential to this day, see Strauss (1956).
5 Thus, in John Locke's formulation of the liberal agenda (of English empiricism), "man, by being master of himself, and 'proprietor of his own person, and the actions or labour of it, had still in himself the great foundation of property'" (2003, § 44, p. 119). Here it should simply be noted that this contemporary idea and staging of the embourgeoisement, the socialisation of the individual can also be found in the aesthetics of art, for instance, in the *fêtes galantes* of the French painter Antoine Watteau. (A similar situation can be shown for the galant and bourgeois novel.)

focus lies elsewhere. We can observe this in reference to the logic and social function of rights. By logic of rights we are to understand the link between form and content that is typical of liberal right. Rights are accordingly the legal *constitution* by means of which interests of freedom and the will of freedom are generally articulated and expressed in society. Consider common personal rights, equality rights, and (negative and positive) freedom of religion. Subjective rights determine the opportunities for individual freedoms to be realised. But that is not all: the constitution of rights also guarantees their social function. Freedom and politics (which constitute the ethical world, as Hegel would formulate it) are freed from each other or placed in a new relation – and in any case the self-will becomes the centre for aspirations of legal coherence (Menke 2018a). If there is talk, then, of the government or governmentability of subjects, this relates to the subversion (the difference) of freedom, that is, to *the birth of the subject out of the spirit of a self-restricting power* (Böckenförde 1991). The individual subject and the socialisation of individuals cannot be conceived and realised without political power. It is equally important, however, that the development of social autonomy, of self-organisation, of the market (with regard to the economy), of existential concerns, or of education proceeds in a way that is both functional and unstable. The socialisation is regularly related to the private subject, to private autonomy, to his or her needs and interests. This designates the functional element. On the other hand, the areas of society cannot fall back on an *ethical force* that specifically confines the dynamic constellation of controversial interests, needs and expectations (that is, of potential conflicts and real fights). Herein lies the moment of instability. State or political power can secure the subject and legal status of the individual only through constant interventions and corrections to the arrangement of social freedoms – techniques that are represented by talk of steering, regulation and intervention. In this regard, the reflectivity of the promise of right must "catch up". Coherence is made possible by a concept of right that integrates existing interests and needs in an order that can be experienced normatively and communicatively.

The critique of liberal right has, if nothing else, highlighted the paradox contained in the promise, namely, that emancipation of the subject is tied to constantly evolving models of subjugation and authority (practices of disciplining, regulatory powers, and interventions of the state). While Émile Durkheim looks to resolve this paradox by abandoning the primacy of rights, thereby undermining, however, the central point of liberalism – "the stronger the state, the more the individual is respected" (Durkheim 1992, p. 57) – Foucault, for instance, and recently Wendy Brown, Judith Butler and Christoph Menke, seek to reconstruct the paradox of right and rights as a constitutive element of liberalism. Two insights in particular stand out. First, the primacy of rights and thus

of the reference to legitimation (the dependence) of political power not only generates a current of regulation and intervention, but also results in what Foucault describes as "a whole continuous and clamorous legislative activity" (Foucault 1978, p. 144). This autonomy-securing legislative activity leads to the phenomenon that we have called the all-encompassing competence of the legal order. The second insight consists in the fact that the relation between the subject, right, ethics and politics has become precarious in an entirely new way. Meaning is to be stabilised by right(s), thereby accelerating the crisis of liberal societies.

2.2 The Anthropological Turn of Right

We can designate the paradox of legitimation that has been reconstructed in this way as the *care of right*, which extends the practices of *care of the self* (following Foucault's analysis) to society. One gains sight of a transformation process that the concept of right has undergone and which it has, in turn, internalised. But there is an accompanying phenomenon, or better a dimension of this social project of freedom, what I shall call the *anthropological turn of right*, that is visible only at a distance. The anthropological turn represents a new evaluation of the facticity, of the interests and preferences that are contained in the concept of right. Reference to the anthropological turn by no means implies that the basic constitution of humans were not relevant in the premodern era.[6] Natural dispositions, feelings, and experiences of fear have always been part of everyday life and expressed in manifold ways. At the same time, questions of meaning and sensibility were imbedded in a tightly knit social ethics that was supposed to ensure a sublimation appropriate for the order. And even there where right entered the picture as something worldly, it remained linked to the idea of the good or a conception of God (Prodi 2000). The anthropological turn, or what we may also call the *naturalisation of the self* in reference to the individual, is above all a code for the irreversible break with the traditional social-metaphysical preconditions.

This break manifests itself paradigmatically in a new relationship of dependence: the dependence of the rational being on the sensory-experiential being. Georg Lukács aptly designated the effect of this revaluation as "transcendental homelessness" (1974, pp. 32, 52). Directly connected with this development is the fact that the possibilities of realising freedom are more aggressively linked to real conditions, to the agents' experience of contingency (Luhmann 1992). It

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[6] The anthropological concept of pre-modernity is discussed, for instance, by Gernot Böhme in Kamper/Wulf (1994), Le Goff/Truong (2007, pp. 9 ff.) and Delumeau (1985).

is not the eternal but rather the finite, earthly life that governs the subjective horizon of expectation. This is also why freedom no longer appears merely as a question of transcendence or of creation in the image of a transcendentally conceived God, but also as a question of the immanence of experienced neediness and individual experience in the world. Right must govern life itself with greater regularity. Does right designate, then, the one integrative factor and thus belong as a reflexive order to the social component of the lifeworld, as Habermas believes? Doubts persist. The fact that the relation between right, society and life can be spelled out in a discourse grammar spanning all fields of freedom has been shown by Foucault in reference to Canguilhem. For this purpose, Foucault introduced the thought and semantics of *governmentality* (Foucault 1991; Canguilhem 1989). There is no need to discuss in detail the general project. What is relevant here is the dynamics summarised under the concept of government, for instance, the dynamics between subject and subjectivisation, between norm and nature, or between politics and the police. What emerges is a contrast, an alternative to the common understanding of democratic legitimation, of the normative coupling of self-government and authority, of subject and law. Government refers to an individual and a society in which normativity no longer asserts itself against nature. Naturalisation of the self means the dominance of interests and preferences as social facts in the legal system. And as the individual and society no longer mediate the difference between the rational being and the experiential being, it is possible for a bio-political regime to unfold its concrete effects. Here is where Foucault's analysis of the most diverse constellations of power has its basis, including his preoccupation with power relations and power types. One need only think of his treatment of knowledge, discipline and self-management, of cultures of transparency and control (Foucault 1994, pp. 403 ff.). We can now see how the basic constitution of humans, their bodies, needs and feelings, their suffering and experiences of vulnerability are playing an ever-greater role. The task of right consists in providing orientation in the almost impenetrable field of empirical-anthropological events.

2.3 The Amalgamation of the Constitutional and Bio-Political Regime

What does this "double government" of right, this amalgamation of the constitutional and bio-political regime mean? This is often rehearsed in reference to the practices of the police. The police qualify as the prime example for illustrating a notion of right geared towards power. Transformation of the "good police" (as the *Ancien Régime* had established it) into the arrangement of an effective inter-

vention management connects the classical constitutional principle of the *rule of law* with a ubiquitous demand for controlling and shaping politics.[7] In the common legal construal, this tension is defused by connecting the "rights to intervene" of the state, but also the rights and duties of the individual, to a *reservation of the law.*[8] State authority is bound by the constitution, and it is through this very same constitution that subjective rights are guaranteed: this is precisely what the concept of a state under the rule of law means. Yet this construal disregards something essential, for we can see that the regulations and interventions address natural freedom, the experiential subject. The common conception of legitimation thus reinforces only the dependence mentioned above of the rational being on the experiential being and confirms the intertwining of norm and nature, of the naturalisation of the self and the social. Even if the normative promise of equal freedom is formulated as a dominant motive of legitimation, it is often overlapped in public space, in some cases suppressed, *with techniques of influence that are saturated in experience.* One need not respond to insecurities and fears with new interventions, new mechanisms of control, commitments of protection or intentions of regulation. Rather, important is that these forms of intervention in the public are visible. For this reason, the impact and shaping of right must be represented, communicated and symbolically strengthened in the action of the institutions, of the political actors.

In reference precisely to the police and the management of intervention, it is undeniable that there are points where emancipation turns into regression, successful social practices into pathological orders. And yet the situation is more complex than that. Two factors in particular are decisive, the first of which may be designated as society's *demand for intervention.* The demand for intervention is the flipside of the anthropological turn, of the naturalisation of the self and of the social. To the same extent that freedom or subjective rights are recognised as given facts, the individual and social interests it guarantees are addressed, *from out of the same perspective*, to the legal system and the state. When, for instance, the legal system and the state (and no longer only religion, the church or other sources of morality) treat individuals in the first instance as subjects of fear and claim to effectively address their fears with *laws of fear* (Sunstein 2005), it is hardly surprising that this "offer" is taken up and converted into a *liberalism of fear* (Shklar 1989). Thus, the management of interventions is not comprehensible without this form of addressing that makes reciprocal reference.

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7 For a classical legal analysis, see von Mohl (1866); on the current philosophical debate, see Balke (2010); on the idea of the *rule of law* from a classical perspective, by contrast, compare with Neumann (1980) and recently Pettit (2015).

8 One finds a clear analysis of the reservation of the law in Böckenförde (2003).

This reciprocal reference in the demand for interventions and the management of interventions leads to the second factor: the omnipresence of the orientation to consequences in right. Orientation to consequences in and through right is necessarily tied to micro- and macrophysics of power: without power, no consequences. The increase that was initiated in the significance of *psycho-cultural* government forms refers to an entire web of patterns of thought, language and action, which aim to make legal orders more fluid and to generate a sense of coherence. The aim is clear: In addition to the classical *provision* – preventing violations of freedom and rights of every kind (Ewald 1986) – it deals more intensely with social crises, damages and other destabilising effects expected in the future. Thus a whole field of *practices of care* for right are opened up, beginning with the care for existence, extending to the provision for crime and risks, economic care up to what we may call the ethical care of right, care with regard to the meaning of society. The semantics of care takes up the interests and needs, experiences and feelings of the individual, while promising at the same time remedial action. At stake, as is now plain to see, is the future and the expectations of normality of a modernity that presents itself as post-metaphysical (Luhmann 1991).

These developments lend a dynamic quality to positive right, the laws, and also the constitution in general. Yet the idea is to harmonise the concept of autonomy, the person as an end in itself (Kant), with the project of a micro- and macrophysics of power and a ubiquitous intervention management. This also lends a dynamic dimension to the classical liberal relation between rights and duties. Encompassing claims of right and care on the side of the subject and society demand an encompassing *regulation of duties* on the other side. If the wide-ranging safeguarding of interests, goods, and values – of life, property, subsistence or the public order – is the declared aim and duty of the state, then threats of right and freedom must be avoided at all costs. Yet violations of right and freedom can only be effectively avoided insofar as the practices of care are continually optimised by laws, and the security *dispositifs* (Foucault) can be aligned with fears, insecurities and consequently expectations of societies with regard to what qualifies as normality. Nowhere is this more visible than in the areas of crime prevention and averting dangers, in which proclamations of a state of emergency, of a connected *communication of fears and affects*, are increasingly the norm (Zabel 2017). By the same token, individuals themselves are expected to fulfil their duties. Caring for the existence of the individual, for instance, in providing basic security, is tied to strict demands of behaviour, which is why the individual at issue in the case of violations can expect to face appropriate sanctions and disciplinary measures. Provisions to prevent crime and dangers in the defence against terror, for instance, demand in turn the willingness to ac-

cept severe restrictions to one's private sphere and highly personal data. The coherences and the *sentiments of coherence*, which the legal practices of care aim at, thus complement or replace traditional symbolic politics.

By now we can see how "modernity of the constitutional state" leads directly into a dilemma. Establishing subjective rights has freed the individual, has made the individual into someone who is free and equal before the law. Yet this emancipation as free and equal delivers the individual to a new neediness generated by the legal order itself. As a subject of right and society, this individual not only enjoys general esteem but must also learn to manage the *transcendental vacuum* that he or she constantly faces. In conjunction with liberal societies' claimed metaphysical abstinence, positive law and the state with its monopoly of violence assumes a *duty to protect and regulate*, a duty that is familiar to us from the political theory of Thomas Hobbes (2010). Even if the drafts of society throughout history may differ substantially, one cannot overlook the fact that the liberal and emancipatory idea of right not only produces a large degree of *insecurity and potential for regression*, but at the same time remains a particularly risky and threatened promise. Social power and powerlessness of right, as identified here, always refer at the same time to the power and powerlessness of rights.

3 Freedom, Crises of Freedom and Responsive Right

3.1 The Lifeworld and Judgement

Is there a way out of this dilemma? Let us first summarise what has been said thus far. Our point of departure was a kind of modern thinking that understands itself above all as post-metaphysical. It is post-metaphysical because it deconstructs traditional semantics (identity/truth/reason/subject) and in this way presents a new arrangement for securing individual freedom. This leads – whether theoretically intended or not – to a new dependence of the rational subject on the experiential subject, to a naturalisation of the subject and sociality. Right responds to this drift with an anthropological turn and a focus on the "natural interests" of the individual. Linked to this is an expansion of the practices of care, which, while drawing on techniques of care of the self, go well beyond it in their effects. The care of right becomes a code for a government of freedom, which constantly codifies anew the rights and duties of the state and the individual, and in this way brings about shifting relations of power. The power of right

and of rights devolves into a powerlessness, and vice versa. But is this the only way to conceive of modern critical right? Here we can only sketch the rough outlines of an alternative position.

We can draw on the conviction that right is itself the result of a cultural understanding – an understanding concerning the relation between norm and nature, between legal form, society and the lifeworld. This notion of understanding is to be interpreted differently, however, in reference to the modern critique of right. Accordingly, it comes down to thinking of law, the individual and society in terms of their political and social productivity. For this reason, legal processes of government and subjugation should not be simply tolerated or endured, but redirected in *capacities that shape politics from out of freedom*. To highlight the expressive character of right, one may also appeal to a kind of communication that secures right and shapes freedom. Yet in contrast to Habermas, for instance, this culture of communication may not resort to a discourse based on rationality. Communication designates a fragile language and power game that brings to light the standards of institutions and the lifeworld, but also the corresponding crises and conflicts, while enabling a kind of balance, if only temporarily. For that reason, this form of communication cannot presuppose right as a "natural" stability factor (which does not rule out the fact that right can be this stability factor).

But how does such a communication, such a legal culture deal with the precarious relation between the rational and the experiential subject? And how can right do justice to the need for meaning in sensibility? One thing at least is clear: reference to the experiential subject should not be rejected as such, nor marginalised. Our corporeal nature, feelings, empathy, insecurities and even fears, however they are perceived, belong to the basic make-up of every human. They are expressions of the *condition humaine*. This basic make-up must take seriously every social medium and process it in a form appropriate to the medium. This holds above all for a project that is concerned with a new social and political definition of democratic legal constitutions. But in contrast to the liberal regulation of rights, such a project cannot allow the anthropological basic make-up of our life and legal forms to qualify as a *naturally given precondition of the culture of freedom* (Khurana 2017). Instead, in a post-liberal concept of order, the anthropological basic make-up and the knowledge of freedom of our life and legal forms are two sides of the same coin. This does not undermine the status of the individual in *Law's Empire* (Dworkin 1986). It is not a matter of illiberal or anti-liberal resentments. Yet there is an emphasis on the idea that norms and nature, rationality and neediness, reason and affect can only be grasped as a dynamic field of forces. In this respect, Christoph Menke writes:

> [...] the freedom of the moderns consists in letting the formlessness and negativity of nature to act as a force in spirit. Being free does not mean building up and maintaining the symbolic, normative order of spirit in the face of nature; freedom is not the normative order. Rather, being free means constructing the symbolic, normative order of spirit *and* being able to interrupt it, to suspend it. The process of freedom is the shift, the interplay of building and destroying order. Spirit does not have this force of freedom as its own, but only insofar as it repeats in itself the empty form of nature with which it begins. (Menke 2018b, pp. 36 – 37)

This is the dynamic that we recover in the practices of individual and collective *judgement*. Our everyday practices of judgement, both amateur and likewise professional, give expression to an interplay of nature and spirit, sensibility and meaning, opening up the possibility of thinking and acting in accordance with *reasons*.[9] While sensibility, sentiments and feelings represent the natural element of human life, one is not helplessly at their mercy; rather, one can maintain a distance by means of the (social) faculty of imagination, that is, by reflecting. This distance, according to Hannah Arendt, is necessary for judgement:

> Only what touches, affects, one in representation, when one can no longer be affected by immediate presence [...] can be judged to be right or wrong, important or irrelevant, beautiful or ugly, or something in between. One then speaks of judgment and no longer of taste because, though it still affects one like a matter of taste, one now has, by means of representation, established the proper distance. [...] By removing the object, one has established the conditions for impartiality. (Arendt 1992, p. 67)

We may say that imagination or judgement is an activity that ensures free and normatively flexible orientation in the experiential spaces of the reality of life. Yet judgement should not be misunderstood as a psychological fact: competence in judgement is not something that develops only in the interiority of the subject. We can see in the political and legal activity of judgement that judgement takes place conceptually through the use of concepts (Esser 2017). Such an activity is only possible, however, because we as judging subjects always presuppose the common and universally managed application of concepts – because we may presuppose an understanding of *justified* feelings, that is, of justified fears and social insecurities. In other words, every single competent subject possesses the power of judgement, though the conditions for successful judgements are de-

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9 A classical justification of a world-shaping power of judgement is the Kantian formulation: "Judgment in general is the ability to think the particular as contained under the universal. If the universal (the rule, principle, law) is given, then judgment, which subsumes the particular under it, is *determinative* [...] But if only the particular is given and judgment has to find the universal for it, then this power is merely *reflective*" (Kant 1987, pp. 18 – 19).

termined in the first instance by the respective *judgement community*, as we experience them in our life world in our social roles and statuses, that is, as we discuss them controversially and integrate them into our institutions.[10]

3.2 Resistant Democracy

If one applies this idea of judgement to the concept of democratic communities, then one can see the accompanying potential for reflection. What is meant is the insight that we, as free subjects, fundamentally recognise the normative force of right. This does not mean denying the life experiences of the individual, of everyday existence. A concept of right that displays interest in the public and political affairs of the community does not cause these experiences to disappear (and should not try to). Quite the contrary, these experiences become forces in right that need to be processed time and again, but which also expose the latent tensions between right and life. For this reason it is crucial that the infrastructures of right not be defined by an administrative expertocracy alone. The (political) society itself must assume responsibility; it must introduce its own conceptions concerning the justification of needs of order and stability, concerning guarantees of rights and commitments of protection in the process of cultural understanding.[11]

This seems possible if society and its citizens are understood as part of an *institutional network*. Then it also becomes clear that institutions are more than merely powerful formations or structures, things we generally associate only with bureaucracy, management or state administration (as we introduced them at the beginning). Rather, institutions are life forms and storehouses of knowledge, cultures for negotiation and crisis management that have been translated into reliable infrastructures. They denote, as Rahel Jaeggi puts it, the backbone of the social (2009). They are the essence of what we understand by freedom and equality – orientation media that are never taken for granted and must themselves be formed. These cultures include families, schools and citizens' groups, along with unions, universities and human rights organisations. In the notion of institutional practices, one finds legal, social, and political standpoints and interests intersecting and confronting one another (Zabel 2014).

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10 In this sense, Immanuel Kant speaks of a *sensus communis*, of a common sense, in order to make clear that we as humans must think in the plural specifically in reference to judgement.
11 For an analysis of these techniques as cultural techniques of right, see Vismann (2010).

The tensions generated and upheld by this network of institutions, forms of knowledge, discourses and practices can be brought to bear in the concept of a *resistant* democracy, of a *resistant* freedom. Talk of a new resistance should make one sensitive to the fact that constitutions of modern communities are at the root of many social problems, and that there is need to deconstruct classical liberal self-assurances (which also means, however, recognising the competencies that bring about coherence). We should see more clearly than previously that the established social language – concepts, semantics and practices – generates encrustations and crises of legitimation. One is reminded of the spheres of economics, of work or of the possibilities of political participation. Resistant democracies and resistant freedoms insist on the fact that modernity knows better than any other epoch the transition points of freedom into unfreedom, of self-determination into subjugation, of protection and repression. A thinking of resistance also insists that there are productive forces (a morality, if one likes, geared towards unity *and* difference) that expose and reinterpret conflicts and contradictions. Such a thinking not only integrates the perspective of the state and society in the sense of a network of reciprocal responsibilities, but also creates spaces in which critique of social pathologies and regressive tendencies is possible in the first place.

For the concept of right, this means that it can exist only as *responsive right*. Responsivity of right points to a reflected *legal* power of judgement. At issue is a sensitivity and openness of right towards the manifold lifeworld – and an openness even to fears, insecurities and needs. This does not mean that right would have to relinquish its own rationality and powers of integration. We should not undervalue the possibilities of a conflict resolution that is for the most part morally neutral and of a constitutionally guaranteed division of powers. And yet such a responsivity can, firstly, ensure that the existing legal culture, science, theories and the application of law are evaluated, monitored and questioned time and again. Secondly, paths for social interventions are opened or fashioned more openly. And this means, thirdly, that there is a consciousness among the legal staff that the application of law always entails a thorough *subjugation of the subjects*. The acts of applying law and reaching a verdict are not merely forms of legal communication but often political communication. There is need, then, for a legal consciousness that is *perspectival* and *integrative*, so that right may be an argument for freedom and for the rights of freedom without itself transforming into an authoritarian technique. Responsive right – to come back to the beginning of our reflections – is at once metaphysical and post-metaphysical. It is post-metaphysical because it recognises the natural side of life and everything that is connected with it. And in an emphatic sense it is political and metaphysical because it integrates (and thereby also emancipates) life and

the lifeworld in a process of productive and controversial freedom. In becoming reflective of its own power, the reason of right reveals itself.[12]

Translation: This contribution has been translated from the German by Aaron Shoichet.

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12 In this sense, it can be taken as given for Hegel that its reason must accommodate humans in right (Hegel 1974, p. 96).

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Tereza Matějčková

Autopoiesis and (Prosaic) Heroism: Of Gods and Overmen (and Giant Insects)

> With regard to the hero, I do not think as well of him as you do. At any rate: he is the most acceptable form of human existence, especially if one has no other choice.
> (Nietzsche's letter to Heinrich von Stein)

Abstract: Autopoiesis lies at the centre of what we understand as modernity – the individual and society build themselves up from themselves, or so the narrative goes. This modern effort of the self-made man and the world is linked to a peculiar form of heroism, which is reflected by modern authors. In Hegel's work, we encounter the "world-historical individual", and in Nietzsche's work, we encounter the "overman". Their heroism is of a specific kind; it is founded on the dialectic of power and powerlessness. Man creates himself in his own image and then, having achieved this, realises that he, as an individual, holds no power over the world that he has created, that is, over society. Eventually, this emerges even in the most unheroic, even antiheroic, author of modernity, Franz Kafka. In his *Metamorphosis*, he presents a model that appears, though on the surface, to be a decisive separation from any form of heroism.

Keywords: world-changing individual; will; time; overman; creation story; reconciliation; regression; history; failure; Kafka; Nietzsche; Hegel

1 Introduction

If the classic philosophical injunction is to "know thyself", modernity, with its emphasis on action, phrases the imperative differently; it says "make thyself". In this respect, a form of autopoiesis is the very foundation of modernity. Both the individual and modern society build themselves up from themselves, or so the narrative goes. One creates oneself and one's world out of one's thoughts, turning one's back on transcendence. Hegel expresses this self-made aspect of modern thought and its world in a dense remark – his goal is to conceive of the true "not only as Substance, but [also] as Subject" (PS, p. 10). In our context, this means that the world is not constituted by divine laws; instead, our freedom consists in our willing subjection to legislation passed by the government. Our duties do not precede us; rather, they are born out of our collective mindedness and actions, and they must be, at least theoretically, open to criticism or revision.

With the constitution of the realm called society, the world changed and, with it, man's self-understanding. The self is no longer defined by the ability to use language, to relate to God, or to think in universals, neither is the individual determined by his or her position in the hierarchy. Henceforward, it is the Cartesian "I think", or even the Fichtean "I am I", which is considered the essence of the self and substantial for its proper relationship with the world as well.[1]

It is here that a peculiar and paradoxical form of heroism steps in. I will analyse the relation of modern autopoietic structures and heroism primarily in motifs taken from two thinkers – Hegel and Nietzsche. I am aware of the principal differences between them. These differences found a classic portrayal in Löwith's monograph *From Hegel to Nietzsche: The Revolution in Nineteenth-Century Thought* (1964). Here, however, I will offer a different approach. Focusing on the concept of heroism, wherein I will uncover a specific junction of will and time, I want to highlight distinct similarities between both thinkers.

That both were fascinated by Greek tragic heroes is well known. Rather than analysing this fascination that they shared with (at least) the entirety of the nineteenth century, I want to focus on the manner in which they relate the classic concept of heroism to modern greatness. Here, we will witness a peculiar uneasiness stemming from the fact that modernity is heroic and prosaic at the same time. Heroic is the injunction "make thyself"; prosaic is the insight that apart from this self-creation, there is not much else to create, to change, or to impact. This notion is adequately expressed in Niklas Luhmann's statement: "In modernity, anything could be different, and you can change nothing" (Luhmann 1971, p. 44).[2]

Hegel's thought on world-changing individuals is symptomatic. *As* individuals, they do not change anything, since *as* individuals they do not possess the means to do so. Instead, their achievement is noticing a distinction that has already appeared and making it explicit by acting in accordance with that. Thus, in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, Hegel says: "It was theirs to know this nascent principle; the necessary, directly sequent step in progress, which their world was to take; to make this their aim, and to expend their energy in promot-

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1 Based on this self-positing I, Fichte later develops an evolved concept of heroism. "Whatever name they may have borne, it was Heroes, who had left their Age far behind them, giants among surrounding men in material and spiritual power. They subdued to their Idea of what ought to be, races by whom they were on that account hated and feared; through sleepless nights of thought they pondered their anxious plans for their fellow men; from battlefield to battlefield" (Fichte 1847, p. 45).

2 Translations are – unless stated otherwise – my own.

ing it" (Hegel 2011, p. 31). In other words, the significance of the world-changing individuals stems from the fact that they understand the conditions and inner structure of the present better than others.

Accordingly, they share a more intimate relationship with these principles, which, in turn, means that they are, in a sense, less free, and their knowledge restricts their actions. However, this is precisely where their uniqueness steps in. Through their actions, they make the necessity of the present, the dynamic towards which it gravitates, explicit. In this regard, coinciding with necessity, they, in fact, are the freest.[3]

Nietzsche's conception of the overman stems from a rather similar idea. The overman stands over others precisely on account of his knowledge that his task is to succumb to the world or even to, according to Hegel's words, "revere one's fate" (Hegel 1986, p. 533), or, in Nietzsche's words, to love one's fate (Nietzsche 2007a, p. 87). I will interpret this fate as the necessity one incites by one's own actions. We, thus, notice a provoking entanglement of power with powerlessness.

Upon self-creation, one realises that all has been accomplished and that what has not been accomplished has not been done as it could not have been accomplished, at least not by an individual. This is the ambiguous essence of modern heroism; the best create themselves in the image of powerlessness. In this regard, Hermann Melville, a reader of Hegel's work,[4] presents the essence of modern heroism aptly: "Seeking to conquer a larger liberty, man but extends the empire of necessity" (1987, p. 174).

In certain respects, the situation appears even more dramatic. In modernity, trust becomes a scarce commodity – in oneself and in others. In this regard, both my concept of modernity and what I call modern heroism are different from the victorious portrayals of modern humanity as found, among others, in Lyotard, who suggests that "the hero of knowledge works towards a good ethico-political end – universal peace" (1984, pp. xxiii–xiv). While I do not doubt that such naïve visions and self-conceptions are present too, I dispute that they were mainstream modernist narratives, and although this victorious narrative is often

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3 In this regard, I do not agree with the thesis put forward by Dieter Thomä in his otherwise very insightful book *Warum Demokratien Helden brauchen*. Thomä argues that Hegel formulates a heroism in the context of the philosophy of history while withdrawing from it in his lectures on aesthetics; in the latter lectures, he emphasises the fact that modernity is essentially prosaic and, consequently, anti-heroic. Instead, I claim that Hegel's concept of the world-changing individuals is already prosaic. See Thomä (2019, p. 195 f.).

4 At least one journal entry (Melville 1989, p. 8) testifies to the fact that Melville was a reader of Hegel's work.

linked to Hegelianism, it is difficult, if not impossible, to relate it to Hegel's work itself.

My approach will also differ, in that, throughout my article, I will follow the loss of trust experienced in its various forms, especially as it relates to time and will. Humans lose trust in their past, in their history, and curiously, in their memory, nor do they trust their beginnings – events traditionally invested with hope. Modern beginnings are awkward to such an extent that they may be viewed as "proemia of mistrust" (Mayer 2015, p. 97). While classical tragic heroes have only retrospectively learned that they have failed, modern heroes know it even before they start to act.[5] In this respect, the cardinal question that the modern hero faces is not how to deal with success but with failure. Certainly, this skill cannot be ignored by the classical hero either. The enticing aspect, however, is that the question of failure and the manner of confronting it is the very essence of what I call "modern heroism".

In regard to Franz Kafka, Walter Benjamin noticed that "once he was certain of eventual failure, everything worked out for him en route as in a dream" (2007, p. 145). This inspires me to take the audacious step of introducing the figure of Kafka into the dialogue between Hegel and Nietzsche, with Kafka being *the* modern expert on failures and lost combats – with his family, with the other sex, and with oneself. In doing so, I do not suggest that there is a significant intellectual alliance among these three thinkers. Rather, I intend to use Kafka's perspective to shed light on the many forms of regressions and devolutions that are essential to modern heroism, as instantiated in the world-historical individual or the overman.

2 Modern Myth: Basic Structure

To grasp modern heroism, it is important to understand the slippery concept of modernity. I will elucidate its essence by contrasting modernity's "creation story" with the Western classical creation story. First, we notice that, traditionally, the act of creating takes effort. Gods and heroes had to kill primordial beasts and form the world out of their corpses; such is the Babylonian epic of creation, a work of some one thousand verses on seven tablets, probably composed

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5 Kleist offers a nice illustration of a related fact in his play *Broken Jug* (Kleist 1986). The play adopts the structure of Sophocles' *Oedipus*; however, as opposed to Oedipus, the judge Adam already knows from the time he embarks on the investigation that it is he himself who is guilty. Kleist's biographer, Günter Blamberger, comments on this modern adoption of the topos: "In modernity, tragedy and knowledge are not mutually exclusive" (Blamberger 2011, p. 254).

around the year 1200 BC in Babylon. In this story, Marduk first slays the primordial beast Tiamat. He bursts her belly and severs her internal parts, after which "he flung down her carcass, he took his stand upon it" (Heidel 1963, IV 103 f.) and, eventually, "split [Tiamat] in two, like a fish for drying" (IV 137). From the corpse of the defeated enemy, Marduk establishes the world. For this heroic feat, he is promoted to the head of the pantheon since he saved other gods from the mortal dangers of the primordial Tiamat (cf. Bottéro 1995, p. 243).

With the Judeo-Christian God, the narrative changes profoundly. Here, creation does not take work. It is, in a sense, prosaic as God does not have to face a competitor, and hence, the story lacks drama – "And God said, 'Let there be light', and [then] there was light." In Luhmann's words, we may claim that we witness a process of an unprecedented "trivialisation" of the creation story; God invests neither effort nor works, and the fact that he rests on the seventh day is likely for the purpose of contemplation than as a day of recovery from intense labour. Although God was indeed active during the days of creation, He does so without any struggle or effort – he creates through performative speech.

How do the aforementioned stories relate to modernity's "creation myth"? Or, more importantly, what is modernity's creation myth? I suggest taking Nietzsche's pronouncement of God's death as the "narrative incipit" of a new era. Not only does Nietzsche stand – with his work *and* life – at the beginning of a new era from the philosophical perspective. I consider it to be an even more important fact that the figure of the Persian prophet and his announcement of God's demise have proven culturally and socially pervasive, in a sense, even convincing for the moderns. In this respect, Western modernity in its cultural and social forms considers itself an offspring of this philosophical poet and his metaphysical crime story.

If we accept this suggestion to trace modernity's cultural beginning from Nietzsche's Zarathustra, we notice that the modern creation story is, in a sense, archaic, even anti-biblical. The new era is inaugurated by the death of the previous divinity. While this divinity is considered in many respects just as much a tormentor as the poisonous Tiamat, the nature of the torment has transformed profoundly, or, to be more precise, it has been dedramatised. In the Babylonian creation story, Marduk kills Tiamat who, with her poisonous blood, threatens other gods. In the modern creation story, the victim has a lesser offence to answer for: "It is his gaze, his curiosity, his superobtrusiveness. The witness of our disgrace has to die" (Z, p. 216).

Both the threat and its treatment have been sublimated. The Judeo-Christian God is killed not by aggression but by indifference, and the divine torments do not threaten the integrity of our bodies but our peace of mind, infringing on our sense of privacy. However, we notice another interesting aspect in that the begin-

nings fail to be bearers of real hope. In fact, initially, those responsible for the killing do not even notice that they have killed their divinity. Why does such a world-changing beginning pass unnoticed? It is because it is not a real beginning. The moderns already know that they are not the true beginners; rather, they are doomed to exist with their competitors, whose energy is never exhausted and who, on the contrary, furnish the necessary energy for further development. Both Hegel and Nietzsche approach this idea from differing perspectives. Everything is thoroughly historical, which means, among other things, beginnings also escape us – they too have a history, and thus, nothing ever truly begins. We thrive and suffer from a battle that we have not initiated, which we have to carry on without the hope of arriving at any conclusion.

Recall that in the biblical tradition, God speaks, and by his thought, he sets objects into the world. Modern man finds himself in a situation, not dissimilar to God's,[6] where he believes it is possible to create a world out of his thoughts and actions. However, this new world is not a world of mountains, rivers, and horses. It is a human – indeed, all too human – world. It is a historical world of markets, laws, divorces, and subjects. In modernity, we, thus, witness a profound subjectification. Divine laws turn into laws gleaned from public discussions and political procedures. With this, the world is, in the original sense of the word, debilitated or ontologically weakened.

Put provocatively, this very debilitating process *is* the modern collective mindedness of the modern spirit; whatever is built on social consensus, collective mindedness, language, and mutual recognition is ontologically weak. In this ontological sense, modernity is the apex of weakness. At the time of creation, that God creates something out of nothing, in the absence of an enemy, is, in a certain sense, a sign of weakness and, from a different perspective, a sign of power since His divine logos can create nonlinguistic things, and thus, linguistic and nonlinguistic objects coincide. As opposed to this, our language and objects coincide only in certain aspects, exclusively related to society; marriage, murder, money, and poetry are what we permit them to be or what the respective systems permit them to be. Modernity selfconsciously bases itself on human categories of

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6 Hegel's appreciation for the creation story is well known. As he has shown, it fits perfectly into the context of his own philosophy and his "provocation": "what is rational, is actual, and what is actual, is rational" (see Hegel 2010, § 6, p. 33). If we are capable of understanding the world, it is because it has already been of thought before – by God. Analogously, the understanding of the human, that is, the social, world stems from the fact that something has already been thought about by someone else. Thinking is thinking of what has already been thought – yet, in modernity, we do not think the thinking of God (either the Judeo-Christian or the Aristotelian) but the thinking of others.

thought and language. It is no coincidence, therefore, that it is a time that simultaneously witnesses the birth of comparative grammar, the hypothesis about an Indio-European language, and the publication of the *Science of Logic* (see Steiner 2001, p. 11).

3 The Impotence of World-Changing Individuals

The moderns realise that language itself is time sedimented, and consequently, this linguistically founded world is essentially historic. The meanings of words are their history – recorded and unrecorded – with their own usage (Steiner 2001, p. 19). In this context, the traditional idea that God is beyond time, that he is eternal, appears difficult to both bear and understand. Accordingly, Hegel and Nietzsche refuse a certain concept of eternity and, instead, offer an "innovated" version thereof. From the perspective of ("traditional") eternity, the human life is a moving shadow, a "moving image of eternity" (*Timaeus*, 38c), the "telos" of humans being to liken themselves to eternity already during their life – to become timeless over time.[7]

Hegel and Nietzsche reject this idea and, instead, regard the ability to live up to the challenge of time to be something that testifies to greatness. Rather than resisting time, a person exhibits greatness by embracing the weakness built into the temporal; exceptional individuals express time itself, and thus, they are embodiments of the fleeting – their life is shorter than that of the average man, and they suffer more immensely. Hegel even applies this modern concept of heroic "being in time" to classical ancient heroes:

> That which endures is regarded more highly than that which soon passes, but all blossom, all that is exquisite in a living being, dies early. Achilles, the flower of Greek life, and the infinitely powerful personality of Alexander the Great, are no more, and only their deeds and influences remain through the world that they have brought into being.[8] (PhN, p. 232)

Why are people who are capable of great deeds so easily consumed by time? There is one obvious answer – for Nietzsche, "living dangerously" is dangerous.

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[7] This too receives a paradigmatic portrayal in Plato's *Phaedo* (64a), "those who pursue philosophy aright study nothing but dying and being dead".

[8] Cf. PH, p. 31: "They die early like Alexander; they are murdered, like Caesar; transported to St. Helena, like Napoleon... They are *great* men, because they willed and accomplished something great; not a mere fancy, a mere intention, but that which met the case and fell in with the needs of the age."

On the other hand, Hegel expresses a subtler point – heroes wane quickly because they act. Acting, the precipitation of change, accelerates time, and with it, one's vulnerability; one is consumed by the changes one incites. This is even more true in the case of modernity with its accelerated time consciousness. In accelerated modernity, everyone lives long enough to witness one's strengths and victories fade.

Man is historical because he acts.[9] By acting, he disturbs the link between cause and effect and introduces unpredictability, making the world less stable, even introducing misunderstandings and newness. This newness is of a specific human kind, not the godly *creatio ex nihilo* that is seminal for understanding heroes in the Hegelian reading. In the Hegelian worldview, heroes do not "have" ideas; rather, they see that ideas have already materialised without being noticed by the multitude. Thus, world-historical individuals act out differences in the world and, by this, transform not necessarily our world but our understanding of time. In the present, they reinterpret the past and, thus, stand at the origin of the future.

That human action is not a creation out of nothing is reflected in the fact that revolutionaries often only retrospectively learn what they have enacted. The wonder of action is that its meaning often appears only after the performance. The reason for this is that human actions never belong exclusively to an agent but equally to the space of action that responds to the agent. In Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, we encounter a poetic image of what happens if one misunderstands this aspect of human action. Revolutionaries, representing a certain type of heroism, although a misguided one in Hegel's eyes, strive to create a new society from scratch. They confront the world with the idea that their society should be whatever they think it to be. This, however, cannot be the case since humans bear no potential for the immaculate. In fact, humans have the ability to think precisely *because* there is something that transcends thought, something we necessarily fail to capture, and therefore, both thought and action tend to be unsettling. Once one acts, one commits "to the objective element and risk being altered and perverted" (PS, p. 193).

Revolutionaries are not prepared to endure these twists, and thus, their action opens the gates to nihilism, according to which, today has no meaning in itself, it is tomorrow that is decisive. Furthermore, such a conception awakens wishes and hopes that the present fails to stabilise and the future fails to satisfy. The problem of this conception is, in short, that it misses the present. Hegel ex-

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9 Of course, this is not a new insight; what is new is that action and change brought about are now embraced as the essence of human nature.

presses this in an overtly poetic language – the revolutionary form of consciousness that he calls "absolute freedom" turns the present into a "fury of destruction" (PS, p. 359).

Why is this so? Thinking and acting take time, which is precisely something that we might not be prepared to invest in the periods we deem to be revolutionary. Therefore, such a relationship with the world can "produce neither positive work nor a deed; there is left for it only negative action" (PS, p. 359). This destruction is precisely caused due to excessive attention to the future. Nietzsche, who has been critical of modern forms of progressivisms, dubs this tendency the "phantasmagoria of anticipated future bliss" (GM, p. 29). In addition, against this, both strive to reconcile with the present.

Yet, how? Hegel's portrayal of revolutionaries offers a clue to this question. They are what we might call "neurotics of thought"; they insist on having absolute control and absolute will over the world. Significantly, they are neurotic about time as well. They want it to start with them, as attempts at constructing revolutionary calendars bear witness. Against this, Hegel and Nietzsche address the past in a different manner, calling on us to love our past as it is precisely the way to reconcile with the present – the past being the present's structure. The essence of time rests neither in the future nor in an unmoved present, but in a past captured, understood, and remembered here and now.

However, we have seen that a peculiar neurosis is linked to both time *and* will. For Hegel, ontologically speaking, the will has different layers. The first, from which ontological evolution proceeds, is the stage of "pure indeterminacy". Applied to the individual, one might at this stage experience an "unrestricted infinity of absolute abstraction or universality, the pure thought of oneself" (PR, § 5, p. 28). This is a highly abstract formulation that expresses the above-mentioned stage of the absolute will of revolutionaries or, to put it in more general terms, of all those who believe that the world is something to be subdued. We have noted already with regards to the revolutionaries that Hegel considers this stage something that one needs to overcome, lest it should take on the form of "fanaticism of destruction", even the "elimination of individuals" (PR, § 5, p. 29).

Rather than submitting to the fantasy of the all-powerfulness of one's own reason, one needs to limit oneself, which requires determination and, thus, submission to given conditions rather than conjuring up an ideal world for the future. In other words, one needs to be able to "make oneself" finite and, therefore, accept one's past and take into account the restrictions of the present. Inevitably, this is linked to a loss of a certain kind of freedom. However, this very loss is constitutive of the self in its actuality (and thus finitude). In this sense, it is the task

of the individual to realise that a negative impediment, that is, external heteron-omous determination, is also a positive condition of being a free self.

Applied to the context of the world-changing individual, we learn that this individual does not change the world but, in fact, changes himself or herself and, in doing so, gains a unique insight into the present. Acting on this insight is "world-changing" insofar as the individual functions as an accelerator of change, rather than the creator of change. In other words, in the case of world-changing individuals, the world transforms once they enter the dynamics of self-negation. Thus, the will, the organon of the world-changing individual, is to be, to a considerable extent, *not* willing; it grows by means of abnegation, which, however, does not entail asceticism or quietism. In contrast, this abnega-tion opens the realm of action. World-changing individuals are heroic due to the fact that they identify with something beyond mere self-centredness, beyond even personal achievement, and thrive from the realm opened by this very res-ignation.

4 The Subjection of Overmen

While Hegel went as far as to stylise himself as the philosophical counterpart of Napoleon, Nietzsche does not discern anything heroic in himself. In fact, he con-siders himself the "very opposite of the heroic nature" (EH, p. 32). Although he is not above admiring a certain form of heroism, he is hesitant to consider it some-thing one should strive for. The main reason for this ambivalent relation is that Nietzsche considers heroism to be indebted to metaphysics or to a metaphysical-ly conceived reality, to be more precise. Heroic is the destruction of those who strive for a supra-individual truth; the better their instantiation of truth, the more fatal is their failure since *as* individuals they are shattered by the weight of the supra-individual truth. In this regard, Nietzsche adopts Schopenhauer's conception of the individual, that is, the individual's very particularity is an of-fence to the impersonal will. Similarly, tragic heroes perish due to their ineluct-ably one-sided expression of truth.

Nietzsche does recognise the merits of this perspective, but he eventually re-fuses this heightened form of subjectivity feeding on a metaphysical narrative.[10]

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10 Cf. esp. GM, p. 111. "These 'no'-sayers and outsiders of today, those who are absolute in one thing, their demand for intellectual rigour [*Sauberkeit*], these hard, strict, abstinent, heroic minds who make up the glory of our time, all these pale atheists, Antichrists, immoralists, nihil-ists, these sceptics, ephectics, hectics of the mind [*des Geistes*] (they are one and all the latter in a certain sense)... These are very far from being free spirits: because they still believe in truth..."

From this perspective, Nietzsche's Zarathustra is the antithesis of the heroic trope. As we can find in "On the Three Metamorphoses" from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, the hero's merits lie in the fact that he rejects the "thou shalt" that feeds from the past in favour of the future-orientated "I will". Despite the praiseworthiness of the metamorphosis into the symbolical rendering of the lion who "wants to hunt down its freedom and be master in its own desert", this is not the last stage (Z, p. 16). Eventually, the highest form of individuality resides in one's ability to utter "I am". Nietzsche does not encounter this ability in the roaring lion, but rather in the innocent laugh of the playing child: "The child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a wheel rolling out of itself, a first movement, a sacred yes-saying" (Z, p. 17).

Despite Nietzsche's detached attitude towards the heroic lion, I will not give up on my concept of "prosaic heroism". Instead, I want to reserve it for the awkward modern attempt to reach individuality, not in the form of heightened will and anticipation of the future, but in the form of reconciliation. In my reading, it is this peculiar concept of heroism that Hegel and Nietzsche share, one that well captures the ambivalence of the self-conception of the modern man.[11]

Moreover, as in Hegel's case, we encounter in Nietzsche's work a distinct link between will and time. Nietzsche grippingly describes the problem that moderns encounter in view of their past. However, while Hegel related this "pathology of time" to a limited historical period of revolutionary times, Nietzsche assumed it to be a general trait of human beings. People tend to hate their past, not because something bad had happened to them, but because the past is something that cannot be changed. It is the memento of our incapacity. "'It was': thus, is called the *will's gnashing of teeth* and loneliest misery. Impotent against that which has been – it is an angry spectator of everything past. That time does not run backward, that is its wrath" (Z, p. 111). Thus, *we* are the memento of our impotence, and this memento is very physical and visible – once again, the inner is the outer. Nietzsche elucidates this awareness of our incapacity to move our past through the image of deformed human beings.

The "cripples" ask Zarathustra to exercise his healing powers on them and relieve them of their deformities. However, Zarathustra, a modern saviour, refuses to heal the needy as they are to heal themselves. This self-therapy is phrased in peculiarly Hegelian terms; humans need to reconcile with their deformities, a representation of their accumulated past. Any other healing will result in the destruction of their personality, in the loss of themselves. "If one takes the hump

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11 It is not insignificant that Hegel too expresses the highest form of the individual spirit in the "reconciling Yea" (PS, p. 409).

from the hunchback, then one takes his spirit too – thus teach the people" (Z, p. 109).

As opposed to this false form of time consciousness, true heroes embody memory or recollection; they become who they have been. According to Nietzsche, the past is something to be accepted; we even have to embrace what he calls *amor fati*, the "formula for the greatness in a human being" (EH, p. 87). We recall that Hegel himself emphasises reconciliation with fate. But this is strange. After all, both Nietzsche and Hegel underscore the importance of action, which seems to stand in opposition to the emphasis on fate.

However, taking up the love of fate is a key insight, one that is often mistaken for determinism. What Nietzsche wants to tell us instead is that we must work with what is present. It is a description of our attitude towards what is necessary and what is due to be given; it is the ability to live up to the conditions of the present – a politician needs to work with the population that is present here and now; a poet works with the words of the given language; a gardener nurtures the soil he or she has at his or her disposal. In short, it means overcoming the "neurosis of the revolutionaries" who fail to understand that thought is conditioned by the unthought.

In this regard, Nietzsche's concept of the eternal return, or at least one possible interpretation thereof, is enlightening. Nietzsche claims that what is eternal and what recurs are not *das Selbe*, the same, but *das Gleiche*, the identical (Löwith 1997; see Moore 2006, pp. 311–330). In this reading, what eternally returns is not every individual event but the *eternal* structure of time.[12] In the absence of a human being, "all things are baptised at the well of eternity" (Z, p. 132). Only once a perspective, a will, an intention – in short, consciousness

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[12] Hannah Arendt had already put forward this interpretation in *Between Past and Future* (2006, pp. 3–16). The virtue of this interpretation is that it can be some form of reconciliation between two common, but opposed, interpretations of Nietzsche's teaching (that he himself calls a "riddle"). According to the "cosmological interpretation", the idea of a "cosmos cycle" is a theory about the actual nature of the universe (Löwith 1987). Others suggest that the eternal return is meant to be a thought experiment. In this "ethical interpretation", Nietzsche summons human beings to act "as if" they were to live the life that we live innumerable times (Williams 2001). According to the interpretation put forth in this paper, Nietzsche's eternal return deals with the nature of time; along these lines, his teaching elucidates the nature of a key cosmological aspect, namely, time. However, this cosmological aspect depends on the performance of the human being. In time, there occurs a junction of cosmos and subject, since it is *as* we relate to the cosmos that we constitute time and, through this, bestow meaning upon it. In this regard, I put forward a hybrid interpretation. For another attempt at such a "hybrid interpretation" of metaphysics and psychology, see Dudley (2002, pp. 201–210).

– appears, meaning and time appear with it. Crucially, the structure of personality depends on how we understand time.

Such a reading might suggest that the human being is the "master" of his or her time. However, this conclusion is not inevitable. Through its presence, the agent constitutes a situation that escapes one's power and that, additionally, changes constantly. Therefore, the particular kind of modern heroism is linked to a form of willing subjection to one's deeds, the acceptance of one's fate that is nourished from one's own actions and, thus, is sort of a "homemade fate". This *fatum*, however, has a human, even personal, voice since it arises from the very tissue of action.

5 Of Victorious Insects

Hannah Arendt calls attention to the fact that the Nietzschean eternal structure of time receives a follow-up in Kafka's short story *He*. According to Arendt, in the story, the peculiar portrayal of a battle is to be read as a parable dealing with the nature of time. In Kafka's imagination, time, then, is a fight of three antagonists – more precisely, of one agent and two antagonists: "He has two antagonists: the first presses him from behind, from the origin. The second blocks the road ahead. He gives battle to both."[13]

In Arendt's reading, the protagonist, encircled by the two antagonists, represents anyone who is consciously experiencing a specific moment. Thus, the "He" represents the origin of a perspective, an intention. In other words, "He" is anyone who takes a position, which means blocking the onslaught of the past and future without defeating them. The true victory resides in introducing a gap into time and, thus, creating past and future. In this sense, past and future themselves are forms of achievement – a *martial* achievement. The nature of past and future crucially depends on one's position without being sufficient – a form of a battleground does pre-exist the He, yet it is He who structures it.

If Kafka did indeed portray the essence of time in this story, two points are significant. First, time is related to a battle, and second, it is related to a battle that we would better leave behind. "He will jump out of the fighting line and be promoted, on account of his experience in fighting, to the position of umpire over his antagonists in their fight with each other." Arendt criticised this defeatist ending, suggesting that the fighter should remain on the battleground; after all, it is exclusively here that "every human being... inserts himself between an

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13 I am citing here the translation Arendt worked with (cf. Arendt 2006, p. 7).

infinite past and infinite future" to "discover and ploddingly pave it anew" (2006, p. 13). Arendt aptly notes that Kafka vacillates regarding the temper of the He – once, as in this story, He is promoted to the position of the umpire and, thus, to the conqueror of time, yet in other scenarios, He "dies of exhaustion" (2006, p. 12). Of course, the question is whether the promotion and the death from exhaustion are alternative endings. It rather seems that exhaustion is the counterpart of intense and restlessly executed self-knowledge and self-inquiry. Not fatally wounded but fatally fatigued, modern heroes eventually change their attire and slip into the figure of the triumphant anti-hero who is beyond time.

This "embracing" of time beyond time may be well illustrated by yet another modern story, not a creation story in this case but a "regression story" – Kafka's *Metamorphosis*. It is telling that in Kafka's story, time – the time of work and duties – is omnipresent, the alarm clock never ceases ticking. However, Gregor Samsa wakes up transformed into a "gigantic insect" (M, p. 95) with its own archaic temporality. Due to his retarded rhythms, Gregor cannot catch up to his family's sense of time, and this chronological rupture leads to eviction from the human world that ends in death from hunger.

In this narrative, we witness a strange type of devolution that should not be simply understood as regression. Gregor's descent into solitude opens up a new realm of experiences, a new realm of music. Although he has never enjoyed music, he is the only member of the audience who really delves into his sister's violin playing. This, however, does not attest to his inner humanity but, on the contrary, to the fact that he has, in one way or another, transcended humanity, as expressed in the rhetorical question: "Was he an animal, that music had such an effect upon him? He felt as if the way were opening before him to the unknown nourishment he craved" (M, p. 140).[14] Even in this most severe reversal of humanity, we witness a form of reconciliation – reconciliation with failure. In this regard, we glimpse at greatness, even a "secret victory of the one who chooses failure" (Sontag 2009, p. 189).[15]

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14 It is likely that Gregor's enjoyment of music is Kafka's reflection of Schopenhauer's philosophy, wherein music incites the metaphysical insight into the essence of the Will, while it, at the same time, offers a way to escape suffering and eventually reach, as per Schopenhauer's adoption of Buddhist terminology, samsara (cf. Schopenhauer 1974, ii, p. 302). One may even speculate that Gregor's surname "Samsa" hints to the same Buddhist term "samsara" as Ritchie Robertson does in his "Introduction" to Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* (2009, p. xxvii). For Kafka's engagement with Schopenhauer's philosophy, see Oschmann (2010, pp. 59–64).

15 Eventually, Gregor dies in a "state of vacant and peaceful meditation" (M, p. 145).

6 Conclusion

The fear of reversal, even its anticipation, seems to lurk in modern narratives. However, even more so, what is lurking in them is the idea that some form of reversion might, in fact, be the "formula for the greatness", to use Nietzsche's words. Kafka's *Metamorphosis* is an unlikely illustration of Luhmann's thesis that "[i]n modernity, anything could be different, and you can change nothing" (Luhmann 1971, p. 44).

In contrary to our expectation of an abyss separating Kafka's and Hegel's thoughts, what we find in Kafka's writings is an illustration of a human situation that is quite similar to what Hegel has showcased in his works, but not from the perspective of a successful agent who eventually finds a way to positively reconcile with the fatefulness of the action he himself has initiated. Instead, Kafka shows the stifling nature of this reconciliation, and yet, he equally shows that this very stifling nature might, in fact, be a triumph.

Most importantly, Hegel, Nietzsche, and Kafka all show, albeit from differing angles, that the structure of freedom (and will) and that of unfreedom are related in the most paradoxical ways. For all three, both conflict and combat, in which the will puts itself into action, are essential for understanding reality. However, if modernity stems from this heightened sense of conflict, the nature of freedom cannot be left untouched by this. We notice combat in Kafka's conception of time in the form that all three antagonists find themselves in a firm grip, but it is precisely from this grip – and only from it – that freedom is wrenched.

Paradoxically, freedom and unfreedom share in one and the same structure – that of being in the other, that of escaping oneself, that of shedding one's shape and metamorphosing into something else. Eventually, the injunction of "make thyself" can be translated into "lose thyself". However, the most important thing is: do not allow it to happen to you – do it.

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III Literature – Self and Narrativity

Ian James

Narrative Voice, Heteropoiesis, and the Outside

Abstract: This paper will resituate the question of narrative self-production in its exposure to an "outside" (Blanchot, 1969) in the context of scientific discourse. It will offer an analysis of the first three texts Pascal Quignard's *Dernière royaume* sequence (2002) in order to argue that they self-reflexively perform a logic of heteropoiesis, understood here as narrative self-production by way of a relation to a constitutive exteriority which is at the very same time a temporal dimension of anteriority. This anteriority is posed in naturalistic terms such that human narrative and meaning can be understood as a continuation of natural and biological processes (Maturana and Verala, 1980). The paper will reconfigure the self-reflexive, immanent, and autopoietic "sense" of the living organism as an openness and exposure to an anterior-exterior. It will argue that the heteropoietic logic of Quignard's texts allows for the beginnings of a naturalistic theory of narrative to be sketched.

Keywords: narrative; self; autopoiesis; heteropoiesis; Quignard; naturalism.

1 Introduction

The idea that the self and forms of self-identity are somehow narrated or are the product of processes of reflexive narration is well established within recent and contemporary philosophy and theory.[1] Insofar as the self can be said to be constituted both *in* and *as* narrative, narration and narrativity more generally might be understood as intrinsically *autopoietic* processes.[2] In this way, it could be said

1 In her essay "The Narrative Self" Marya Schechtman (2011) provides an excellent critical overview and assessment of narrative theories of the self, taking in hermeneutic theories (MacIntyre, Ricoeur, Taylor), a range of others (for example, Dennett, Velleman) and challenges to them (Strawson, Zahavi).

2 In this context narrative is understood broadly and in general as the power organising meaning and self through some kind of storytelling or sequencing of events and signification as well

that the self, understood as a "narrative self", is produced, maintained, and re-produced as such from within the processes of self-narration themselves, and through the very act of that self-narration. This might in turn imply, as with un-derstandings of autopoiesis originating in biology (Maturana/Varela) or systems theory (Luhmann), a specific mode of closure, an operative closure according to which the self, in its unity, identity, and agency, emerges in a reflexive self-de-scription that generates selfhood from within the organised structure that the narration of self itself produces.

However, the idea that narrative might be able to produce or articulate an autonomous self or identity by way of a reflexive description that generates in-ternal self-organisation can be set against much twentieth-century literary and narratological theory. Structuralist narratology, for instance, in its quest for an underlying typology or grammar that would offer a universal code or condition of possibility for storytelling as such, suspends the subjective and expressive function of narrative.[3] By this account any instance of self or identity produced by narration would be a mere effect of an anterior structure or system which, as an intersubjective condition of possibility, would itself be radically impersonal or anonymous. The various permutations of structuralism in relation to narrative in its broadest sense are exemplified in the itinerary of Roland Barthes from his early accounts of cultural myth and the structural analysis of narrative, through to his later (in)famous proclamation of the "death of the author" and the more fragmentary final understanding of text as an interweaving of impersonal cultur-al codes (see Barthes 1954; 1964; 1970; 1973). According to such accounts, narra-tion and narrativity, far from implying closure, and specifically the operative clo-sure of a system that generates its own terms of reference and immanent structure, in fact imply a constitutive opening onto an exteriority, onto an ante-rior conditioning outside. They do so insofar as narrative cannot be produced as such without a relation or reference to an external and prior system of codes and structures which acts as its impersonal or anonymous condition of possibility.

In this tension between accounts of narrative understood as the "closed", autopoietic production of the self on the one hand, and, on the other, as the "open" constitution of the self *in and through* a relation to the exteriority and an-

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as, specifically, literary or fictional narrative. Schechtman gives helpful clarification regarding this issue (Schechtman 2011, pp. 409–410).

3 Broadly speaking the reference here is to the structuralist narratology as developed by the likes of Tvetan Todorov, Gérad Genette (Todorov 1971; Genette 2007), and a wider tendency to bracket or suspend authorial intention that one finds variably in Russian formalism or the New Criticism of Wimsatt & Beardsley (for example, their understanding of the intentional fal-lacy and the former's work on the verbal icon [Wimsatt 1970]).

teriority of a conditioning "outside", the reflexive production of selfhood encounters a decisive moment of ambivalence or equivocation. For, in order to be the autonomous and autopoietic self that one is, one depends on self-narration and yet at the same time self-narration itself depends in turn on heteronomous structures that as such are decisively not of the self.

This ambivalence or equivocation of the narrative production of self can arguably also be seen to be at play in biological accounts of the individuality of the living organism. Indeed, the tension between the closure of self-reproducing autopoietic systems and their necessary opening onto an anterior condition of possibility is arguably not only constitutive of all reflexive self-production as such but can also offer a means of discerning the ways in which different modes or ontological regimes of self-production exist in relation to each other. In this context the domains of biological life that sustain the individual organism on the one hand and, on the other, the symbolic and linguistic life sustaining the "narrative self" can be understood in a relation of continuity with each other. In light of this, the "auto" of autopoiesis, as a possibility of self-(re)production and self-maintenance needs to be qualified and also understood as the "hetero" of a renewed conception or logic of "heteropoiesis", understood now as the possibility of self-(re)production and self-maintenance in relation to a constitutive *other*, to an anterior field of alterity and exteriority.[4] This renewed sense of heteropoiesis can illuminate the manner in which any given level of self-organisation or self-production is constituted in relation to an anterior-exterior or to a preceding level as its condition of possibility: thus narrative has as its condition a prior human symbolic order or coded system, human symbolic life has as its prior condition an order of sense and meaning which is that of biological life, biological life has its prior condition in biochemical signalling, genetic coding, and sense-relations that are both immanent to the living organism and externally or environmentally relational.

What follows will aim to elucidate this logic of heteropoiesis as a means of specifying and elaborating the continuity between the symbolic and the biological. It will do so by way of a parallel and comparative analysis of two seemingly distinct and different moments: the status of literary narration in Pascal Quignard's writing and the contrasting theories of biological individuality developed by Maturana and Varela and Georges Canguilhem respectively. In each case

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4 Maturana/Varela make distinction between autopoiesis (self-organisation), allopoiesis, and heteropoiesis (organisation of another). The latter term heteropoiesis has been recast in the context of this discussion and its argument specifically on the basis of the critique of the theory of autopoiesis in relation to Canguilhem such that the "auto-" of poiesis is configured as also being always already a "hetero-".

the "auto" of autopoiesis will be problematised in its relation to a conditioning anteriority and/or exteriority. The beginnings of a novel naturalistic theory of narrative and symbolic meaning can be sketched out here. The naturalism at stake is one which, following the lead given by Quignard in the first three volumes of his *Dernier royaume* [*Last Kingdom*] sequence (Quignard 2002a; 2002b; 2002c),[5] embeds narrative and symbolic meaning in the anteriority of biological life and a non-human, pre-symbolic order of sense and meaning.[6]

2 Narrative Voice and Impersonality

The question of narrative identity and self is arguably inseparable from that of narrative voice and from the conundrum posed by Roland Barthes when he asks in relation to authors and writers: "Who speaks?" (Barthes 1981, p. 147). Whether it is a question of literary or fictional narrative or indeed any mode of narration in any form the question of the who or of the agency underpinning that act of narration is by no means straightforward. It is Maurice Blanchot who perhaps more than any other literary-philosophical thinker in France in the twentieth century stakes out a theory of the impersonality and anonymity of literary narrative in writings of the 1930s and 40s, one which he maintains throughout his long career. His argument is that in literature the voice that speaks in narrative is always in some way or another a destitution of authorial subjectivity and self in favour of an impersonal and anonymous voice of writing. In a chapter of his later work *L'Entretien infini* [*The Infinite Conversation*] (Blanchot 1969) entitled "The Narrative Voice", he extends this anonymity to narration and narrativity in general and makes what for him is by now a typical claim, one which directly challenges the understanding that narrative has an essentially autopoietic function: "The narrative 'he' or 'it' unseats every subject just as it disappropriates all transitive action and all objective possibility" (Blanchot 1969, pp. 563–564). At first sight, and certainly to those not familiar with Blanchot's thought, the claim is a strange one and at best counterintuitive. Counterintuitive because, even if one sets aside the theories of the "narrative self" alluded to at

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5 All references to Quignard's 2002 trilogy will be to the original French editions and will be cited in my translation. All 2002 references are to Quignard's trilogy unless otherwise specified.
6 For a more wide-ranging discussion of naturalism in contemporary post-deconstructive thought see James, *The Technique of Thought* (James 2019). The argument concerning heteropoiesis in this chapter is a further development of that advanced in this book and Quignard's naturalism should be understood in terms of the post-continental naturalism elaborated in the *The Technique of Thought*.

the beginning of this discussion, the most simple definition of any kind of story-telling implies, one might think, some kind of "she", "he", "I", or "it", and with this the transitivity of narrated actions, objective possibility of some kind or an-other, and above all the individual or collective *subjectivity* of the experiences that actions entail, together with that of the narrative act itself. Arguably the ten-sion identified above between narrative as the "closed" autopoietic production of self on the one hand and as the "open" constitution of self in a preceding, anonymous other is clearly discernible in the counterintuitive force of Blanchot's account of narrative voice. Pascal Quignard's characterisation of narration and narrativity in the first three volumes of his *Dernier royaume* sequence resonates very closely with that of Blanchot and can be shown to exemplify the logic of heteropoiesis that is being elaborated here.

3 Heteropoiesis I: Narrative and the Anterior Other

On the face of it the first three volumes of Quignard's *Dernier royaume*, compris-ing *Les Ombres errantes* ([*The Roaming Shadows*] Quignard 2002a), *Sur le jadis* ([untranslated] Quignard 2002b) and *Abîmes* ([*Abysses*] Quignard 2002c) and which were controversially awarded the Prix Goncourt in 2002, may seem an un-likely case study for a general reflection on narrative. The works appear to belong to no particular genre and consist of fragments of reflections and recollections derived from Quignard's personal experience and from the vast breadth of his learning and reading, fragments of memory, of tales, stories, and of cultural and historical references drawn from across huge stretches of time and space. Yet in all this fragmentary discourse and generic undecidability it is precisely the status of narrative and of narrativity that is perhaps most centrally in ques-tion.

The critical reception of *Dernier royaume* has noted its indeterminacy of genre and resolutely fragmentary structure. For instance, in Agnès Cousin de Ravel's biography of Quignard, *Pascal Quignard: Vies, œuvres* (Cousin de Ravel 2017) this generic indeterminacy and fragmentation is clearly acknowledged but is nevertheless subordinated to a greater guiding unity of authorial con-sciousness and intention, one which communicates a disparate yet still subjec-tive affective need according to the threads of personal memory, childhood expe-rience, adult encounters, and readings in literature and which then ties all of these together with history and myth through the agency of this very authorial consciousness (Cousin de Ravel 2017, p. 168). By the same token Quignard's

more general exploration and interrogation of narrative and narrativity has also been noted but has, once again, been related to the activity of authorial intention, consciousness and, indeed, unconscious. So for example, in Bernard Vouilloux's critical account of the status of the image in Quignard's writing literary narration is described as the means by which the mind gives form to a certain opaqueness of (un)conscious life implying once again the centrality of a guiding agency and narrating self: "For Quignard [...] narrativity [...], 'figurative narration' [...] [is] the materialisation of that obscure gesture by which the mind links dreams and phantasms together" (Vouilloux 2010, p. 45). Yet what is perhaps most striking about the first three volumes of *Dernier royaume* is the extent to which they can be taken as a prolonged consistent reflection on narrative in its relation to desire and absence as a fundamental dimension of alterity which *precedes* or is *anterior* to the act of narration and which is also anterior to the authorial consciousness or subjectivity that narrates.

The nostalgic tonality of Quignard's writing in general and of *Dernier royaume* in particular is also very well documented within its critical reception (see for example Sautel 2002 and Margentin 2009). Such a nostalgic tonality and its strongly subjective dimension cannot indeed be denied and clearly marks Quigmard's writing to a degree. Yet the focus on nostalgic affect also undeniably places the emphasis once more on the relation of narration to authorial consciousness, to the self that would be the bearer and site of this nostalgia. This ignores the extent to which a central concern in these texts is the relation of narrative to a dimension of anteriority which decisively precedes authorial consciousness and any identifiable or locatable past, one which is largely impersonal, collective, and anonymous.

In this context, and by way of an initial or preliminary gloss on Quignard's idiosyncratic substantival use of the term "le jadis", it might be noted that its eponymous usage in *Sur le jadis* refers very explicitly to an anteriority which is not simply that of a personal past or indeed of any kind of known past that can be straightforwardly recalled and determined in the present. Quignard puts this in clear terms which relate narrativity in general to posteriority irrespective of any personal affects that may be at play:

> Human fictions are destined to the preterite because narration can only be perceived as being posterior to the story that is recounted. Time precedes all narratives which are the form-by-which-time-becomes-orientated. Every story that is recounted is the past of narrative voice. (Quignard 2002b, p. 162)

In one sense this reflection says no more than the obvious, most simply, that the traditional "once upon a time" of storytelling does not and cannot coincide with

the time of the telling of any given story. But the implications of this temporal non-coincidence are arguably very great indeed and recall Blanchot's formulation regarding narrative voice. For what this temporal non-coincidence means is that narrative is and can only be predicated on the absence of that which it makes present and therefore that what we might take to be its substantive or subjective content, its interiority if you like, is and can only be a void of substance and subjectivity exposed as a radical exteriority. For all its apparently fundamental status as the production of personal affect, of narrative self and subjectivity, narrative here is paradoxically also the production of the radical absence of an anterior instance which will forever evade presence, production, or presentation. "Every linguistic narrative", writes Quignard in *Abîmes*, "consists in inferring from that which is anterior in order make present that which is not there" (Quignard 2002c, p. 123).

If we follow the logic of Quignard's understanding of narrative such as it is given here, then the consequences for the identity of narrative voice and therefore of "narrative self" are far reaching. The self or subjectivity produced in and by narrative are *not* themselves, or at least are not self-identical since they are as much absent as present. The transitive actions and objective possibilities that are narrated are likewise struck by intransitivity and impossibility: that which happens does not happen, that which is *is not* and cannot be. Or again the interiority that narrative is intended to circumscribe, organise, and therefore create as an autonomous closed form, is always already an ungraspable and unpresentable exteriority, is inhabited by and constituted in that which precedes its narrative circumscription and organisation. Interiority and autonomy are constituted in, by, and as exteriority and heteronomy: "We are that which we are not" (Quignard 2002b, p. 148). In short, autopoiesis is always already also heteropoiesis.

The notion that an inside is always marked, affected, or constituted by its outside, that the self is constituted in the other, sameness in difference, identity in alterity is not of course restricted to the domain of the structuralist narratological theory that was alluded to at the beginning of this discussion. It is one of the core assumptions and commonplaces of what has come to be associated, for better or worse, with deconstruction, poststructuralism, or more broadly and loosely, with so-called "French theory".

Indeed, the embeddedness of Quignard's thinking and writing in a specific French milieu associated with modernist and postmodernist aestheticism, with the critique of representation and identity and all the supposed opacity, abstruseness, and elitism with which these are sometimes associated, arguably lies at the heart of the controversies surrounding the first three volumes of *Dernier royaume* and the bestowal of the Prix Goncourt on them in 2002. The Franco-Spanish writer Jorge Semprun was amongst the members of the Goncourt jury

who violently opposed the decision to award the Prix Goncourt to Quignard, re-marking acidly, that *Les Ombre errantes* offered "nothing new" and that it was "very Parisian, chic" (cited in Cousin de Ravel 2017, p. 169). Yet, whilst Quignard's writing here can indeed be situated within, and understood in relation to, a very specific French context and tradition, Semprun's claim that it offers nothing new and that it is simply an avatar of a well-established Parisian postmodern aesthe-ticism appears at best partial and one-sided, betraying a parochial *parti pris* of the very kind he attributes to Quignard himself. For what is most decisive, defin-ing, and original in Quignard's writing on narrative, temporality, and anteriority is what can be called his thoroughgoing *naturalism*, that is to say, his persistent references to biological life and his insistence that anteriority, the "jadis", be ul-timately conceived in biological or zoological terms. Throughout these three works Quignard resolutely and consistently affirms the continuity of humanity and human symbolic forms with the biological and the zoological.

This distinctly naturalist dimension of Quignard's writing, whose originality and novelty Semprun singularly fails to acknowledge or understand, has per-haps not yet found a critical language according to which it can be adequately described and specified. This may be because the term naturalism sits uncom-fortably within this context, associated as it is with Anglo-American schools of philosophy which are aligned and orientated toward the natural sciences (for ex-ample, Sellars, Quine, D. Lewis) and their latter-day avatars in bodies of thought that tend to be eliminative with regard to qualitative experience, and anything that escapes determination by means of empirical science including, at its ex-tremes, the life of consciousness itself (for example, Paul and Patricia Church-land, Ladyman and Ross). As Cousin de Ravel notes with reference to Quignard's collaborative activities around the filmic adaptation of his work he clearly "shares misgivings concerning naturalism and psychology" (Cousin de Ravel 2017, p. 155). This might suggest that on both an aesthetic and philosophical level "naturalism" as we normally understand it is not an appropriate term to apply to Quignard's œuvre.

And yet critics have clearly acknowledged the "zoological" dimension of his work as being fundamental. Vouilloux's account of the status of the image in Quignard's writing notes that it has clear zoological properties that allow the image to reveal what the human animal shares with its non-human counterparts and in such a way that it is decisively "anchored in the zoosphere" (Vouilloux 2010, p. 151). More recently Mireille Calle-Gruber has drawn attention to the way in which Quignard's writing foregrounds "the zoological zone within the human" and the "Primordial, elemental physis" which generates human history (Caille-Gruber 2018, pp. 162, 163). So, whilst acknowledging, that Quignard offers us nothing that can be called "naturalist" in the sense ascribed to the term with-

in the Anglo-American tradition and its contemporary philosophical legacy, this zoological dimension invites us nevertheless to retain the term in relation to his writing. If by "naturalist" we understand a thought or writing that rejects all dualism and thereby posits some kind of explicit continuity between the zoological and the human, the biological and the symbolic, the body and consciousness, then the term not only applies to Quignard's writing but he emerges as a writer who recasts naturalism itself into a decidedly distinct and original form.

Indeed, such a recasting emerges as one of the central preoccupations of the first three volumes of *Dernier royaume*. Evidence of this naturalist orientation and of Quignard's concern to place narrative and story-telling back into a continuity with a zoological world that precedes them abounds in the texts themselves: "Fiction", Quignard writes, "plunges back into the zoologically implicit. Into all that is contained in nature" (Quignard 2002b, p. 160). He maintains this on the basis of a general affirmation of the embeddedness of human life within wider natural and biological life: "I posit that nature, [...] is the terrestrial, luminous, sunlit, atmospheric, natal, and final spectacle of the human" (Quignard 2002b, p. 100). The emphasis on natality and finality here is elsewhere integrated into something like a cyclical, semi-mystical, or ecstatic solar vision where all nature, including all human life, is placed on one extensive and continuum of phototropic and energetic being:

> We come from water just as we come from the sea. First, we descend from bacteria. Then we descend from apes....
> All humans and mountains, all flowers, all fish, all carps, towns, musical instruments, the apes, books, all our faces turn around the sun. (Quignard 2002a, p. 179)

The integration or conjoining of the natural and the "artificial" (towns) or the aesthetic (musical instruments, books) emphasises Quignard's persistent affirmation that art is both continuous with and a retroactive relation to this natural and natal origin of the human within the biological and the zoological.

It would be easy to assimilate these qualities of art and fiction to an exclusively nostalgic affect on the part of the human more generally and of the author of *Dernier royaume* in particular (again see Margentin 2009). If fiction "plunges back into the zoologically implicit" this is because, for Quignard more generally, "Originary natural heterogeneity is the destiny of art" (Quignard 2002a, p. 66). The nostalgic reading of Quignard would discern within this destiny of art a desire to return to a pre-natal state or oneness with nature, to overcome the alienation of the human within nature and a certain melancholy at the impossibility of doing so. Yet the relation of fiction, narrative, and art more generally to nature that Quignard posits is far from exclusively, or indeed principally, nostalgic in its

tonality. The emphasis is rather on the vital and the generative: "narration [...] is alive, or vital, or vitalising, or revivifying" (Quignard 2002a, p. 183).

The emphasis, also, and predominantly, is on the notion that the constitution or the creation of the human per se, of human consciousness, activity, and symbolic life, always takes place in relation to the natural or biological world which precedes it. In this way Quignard's writing presents, not an exclusively or primarily melancholic and nostalgic tonality in his evocation of the natural world, but rather one that affirms the biological, and zoological constitution of the human and of human psychic and symbolic life according to the logic of heteropoiesis such as it is being elaborated here.

In Maturana and Varela's biological theory that will be discussed below a distinction is made between "autopoiesis" as the self-production, reproduction, and *self*-maintenance of a living organism or system and the "allopoiesis" of systems which "have as the product of their functioning something different from themselves" (Maturana/Varela 1980, p. 80). Self-production and the production of something other than oneself give the "auto-" and the "allo-" to these opposing terms. Quignard, however, is very clear that, when it comes to human beings at least, our capacity for self-production is always, and at every level, mediated through a relation to a prior other: "every human creature, born of the other, grounded on the other, educated by the other, only functions *ab alio*, by way of and subject to the chance of an irreducible alterity. We are nothing but derived: language, body, memory, everything within us is derived" (Quignard 2002a, 132). This emphasis on *derivation* is one of the most central and persistent affirmations of these texts by Quignard, indicating the extent to which he affirms self-constitution as heteropoiesis and heteropoiesis itself as belonging to a temporality according to which the past is folded into the present.

So Quignard will insist variably for instance: "We are brought forth by invisible anteriority", "all psychical life is infiltrated by anterior psychical life", and "We are all the indivisible sons and daughters of the anterior Other" (Quignard 2002b, pp. 29, 49, 253). What is at stake here most generally is a dimension of time, and specifically of any given (self-)production in the present moment as being a retention of and constitution via a time past. Once again, the key emphasis Quignard places on time past or on anteriority is less one of nostalgic affect than it is an emphasis on the *constitutive* dimension of time past.

This is particularly so if one takes into account Quignard's insistence, alluded to earlier in preliminary terms, that this dimension of time past understood as "le jadis" is not simply a past present moment that has gone by and that can be recalled, mourned, and thereby reconstituted as such in the present through an act of memory or storytelling. As Quignard himself puts it in *Abîmes*: "There is a time gone by that flows and that cannot be found in the past" [Il y a un jadis qui

s'écoule qui ne se trouve pas dans le passé] (Quignard 2002c, p. 218). The word "jadis" in French is normally an adverbial form meaning "once", "formerly", "erstwhile", or "long ago". Quignard's use of the term as a noun is therefore highly idiosyncratic since it would be more normal to speak of "le temps jadis" which could be rendered a little archaically in English as "bygone days". In this idiosyncratic usage Quignard opposes "le passé" understood as a known or remembered past with "le jadis" understood as an anterior dimension which is unlocatable as a past instance of presence and which, in constituting the present as such, also evades its grasp and is therefore in a sense immemorial. To this extent Quignard's "jadis" is almost impossible to translate precisely into English and recalls the virtual dimension of the past of Jacques Derrida's "trace" (Derrida 1967). Unlike Derrida, however, and as should by now be abundantly clear, Quignard associates the anteriority of "le jadis" unequivocally with nature: "Nature is antique time as that which has always gone before" [La nature c'est le temps ancien comme jadis] (Quignard 2002c, p. 162).

To sum up then, Quignard's writing should be designated as naturalist because narrative and fiction here are always understood as a relation to and product of an "anterior Other", an exteriority and alterity that is always posed as a dimension of natural, biological, and zoological life. This account of narrative and fiction is assimilated into a more general account of the human and of human psychical and symbolic life as similarly related to and produced by this anterior world of nature. For Quignard, nature and biological or zoological life has always already been meaningful, and this before all human possibility of meaning, of reading, writing, and of language per se.

But how are we to understand or make theoretical and *scientific* sense of this naturalist yet still literary-philosophical account of the human and of human symbolic life and their constitution in a biological and zoological anterior Other? Even if Quignard's naturalism remains decidedly distinct from the broadly reductivist or eliminativist philosophical legacy of Sellars, Quine, and Lewis, if it is still to bear the name of naturalism at all one might expect it to be more alignable with or relatable to a scientific theoretical perspective. And is this at all possible without some form of reductivism? If it is true, against Semprun's rather hasty and vitriolic judgement, that there is indeed something distinctly new and original in the opening trilogy of *Dernier royaume*, it may be that a new and original critical language is needed for this novelty to be properly clarified and understood. Here the critical concept of heteropoiesis has been renewed in order to shed clearer light on Quignard's understanding of narrative and its constitutive relation to an anterior Other. Heteropoiesis now needs to be clarified in a parallel and complementary fashion in relation to biological discourse.

4 Heteropoiesis II: Closure and Openness in Biological Individuality

In order to begin the task of a scientific theoretical clarification of Quignard's heteropoietic naturalism, the theory of autopoiesis as conceived by Maturana and Varela will be examined in comparison with the biological philosophy of Georges Canguilhem and contemporary biosemiotics.

In their preface to *Autopoiesis and Cognition* the editors note that what Maturana and Varela's theory proposes is: "a topology in which elements and their relations constitute a closed system, or more radically still, one which from the 'point of view' of the system itself, is entirely self-referential and has no 'outside'" (Maturana/Varela 1980, p. vi). The legacy of this combined emphasis on systemic closure and self-reference arguably haunts the afterlife of the theory of autopoiesis and the critical and polemical debates to which it has given rise. The criticism, of course, often rather crudely made and misplaced, is that the closed self-referentiality of autopoietic organisation, whether it be that of first-order biological systems or second-order social and symbolic systems, directly affirms ontological and epistemological idealism, solipsism, or perniciously relativistic constructivism. Maturana and Varela themselves can offer up sentences which appear to legitimate such criticism. As for instance this well-known line from *The Tree of Knowledge* which appears to affirm a perceptual and cognitive idealism: "We do not see what we do not see, and what we do not see does not exist" (Maturana/Varela 1988, p. 242). Or these lines from *Autopoiesis and Cognition* which point to a form of solipsism: "reality as a universe of independent entities about which we can talk is, necessarily, a fiction" (Maturana/Varela 1980, p. 52).

The charges of idealism and solipsism made against Maturana and Varela's conception of autopoiesis are not really convincing and do not hold water even in relation to the earliest formulations of the theory. They take great pains to refute such charges, of course, particularly in *The Tree of Knowledge* where they do so by way of the distinction between the organisation and structure of autopoietic systems and their definition as organisationally closed but structurally open (see Wolfe 1998, p. 59). It might be more correct and precise to say that the theory of autopoiesis Maturana and Varela elaborate closely resembles a neurobiological materialisation of the Kantian transcendental *a priori*, according to which those elements exterior to the autopoietic system remain as some kind of undetermined noumenal thing-in-itself.

In any case, the more fundamental critical question that can be asked of the theory of autopoiesis is not whether it leads to idealism, solipsism, or relativism,

but rather whether its claims relating to the fundamental closure of autopoietic organisation actually, really, or in any way adequately describe the reality of self-organising systems. The emphasis on the self-referential closure of organisation and the conception of the enclosed boundedness and unity of living organisms that results from this may in fact be fundamentally misplaced.

Take this sentence from Maturana's 1970 essay "Biology of Cognition": "The organism ends at the boundary that its self-referring organisation defines in the maintenance of its identity" (Maturana/Varela 1980, p. 20). This stands in stark and direct contrast to George Canghuilhem's account of the relation of the living organism to its environment given in *Knowledge of Life* a collection of essays dating from the 1950s and originally published in 1965: "The individuality of the living does not stop at its ectodermic borders any more than it begins at the cell" (Canghuilhem 2008, p. 111). For Maturana and Varela the boundary of an organism defines the space of its operative closure and its domain of self-production, maintenance and regulation. For Canguilhem the "ectodermic border" of the organism defines, as will become clear, the organism as a centre of (self-)reference, but it is also a site of exposure to, and relationality or exchange with a surrounding environment which defines the organism in a constitutive openness to its outside. In Canguilhem's biological theory there is simply no closure in the organisation of the living in relation to its environment, or as he puts it:

> From the biological point of view, one must understand that the relationship between the organism and the environment is the same as that between the parts and the whole of an organism [...] the organism [...] lives in a milieu that, in a certain fashion, is to the organism what the organism is to its components (Canguilhem 1965, p. 144; 2008, p. 111).

Rather than being composed of a topology of elements whose relations constitute a closed system of self-reference with no outside, the living organism is, for Canguilhem, constituted in relations of reference that are always orientated *towards* their outside: biochemical processes relate to molecular microstructures, these to intracellular structures, such structures then relate to the cell, those of the cell to the organ, of the organ to the organism, and then, *in the very same way*, those of the organism to its surrounding environment.

Decisively the system of reference articulated by biological relations is, by Canguilhem's account, always an articulation or bearer of a certain kind of meaningfulness. A biological element or instance (for example, process, cell, organ, organism) relates to another element or instance in a manner that that is meaningful *for* it and is so in such a way that in referring outwards in a meaningful relation it also refers back to itself in and thus constitutes itself as a *centre* of reference. The biological relation to an outside is therefore semiotic in a cer-

tain sense but also functional. This functionality bears or articulates a sense which in so doing also constitutes an inside, a level of organisation which in referring outwards organises itself as a centre of reference for which that relation to an outside has a meaning. As Canguilhem writes: "From the biological and psychological point of view, a sense is an appreciation of values in relation to a need. And for the one who experiences as lives it, a need is an irreducible, and thereby absolute, system of reference" (Canguilhem 1965, p. 154; 2008, p. 120). What Canguilhem's thinking offers here is an understanding of biological individuality as being constituted in lived, meaningful, or semiotic relations which are, at one and the same time, both self-reflexive (that is, organising the individual as a centre of reference) *and* a relation to a not-self, an exteriority or outside (the organ in which the cell finds itself, the organism surrounding the organ, the environment surrounding the organ and so on). Where these simultaneously self-reflexive and, one might say, "hetero-referential" relations might be determined by biology as biochemical, physiological, or as behavioural processes, they are always *lived* by the organism as such in the first person as it were, and either consciously or (mostly) unconsciously as meaningful, and this from the "lowest" form of single-cell life to the highest or most complicated forms of self-awareness and environmental interaction.

So, where Maturana and Varela offer a theory of autopoiesis as organisation according to self-referential closure what we find in Canguilhem is, to redeploy the guiding concept of this discussion, an account of the living organism as heteropoiesis. In the context of this biological philosophy heteropoiesis describes the organisation of a living system according to its relations of reference to its exterior environment, its outside, relations which are meaningful to that system and thereby constitute it as a centre of reference that is nevertheless radically open and devoid of closure at the level of organisation.

The difficulties that Maturana and Varela face in framing the epistemological outcome of autopoietic closure as neither subject-independent and objective representation on the one hand nor as subject-dependent idealism or solipsism on the other evaporate in Canguilhem's account of the organism and its environment. As the Canguilhem-influenced philosopher and historian of biology Jean Gayon has put it: "in a biological perspective, and more especially in an evolutionary perspective, what matters is not an independent world, but a surrounding world" (Gayon 2004, p. 171). If the individuality of a biological organism is conceived as the product of relations of sense constituted in a passage through its exteriority or outside then the opposition between subject-dependent and subject-independent knowledge and experience is a false one. Our knowledge and experience of the external world are both adjusted to the relations of sense we have with and through exteriority. Knowledge and experience are

not simply reducible to our epistemic dispositions or categories – we encounter the world as real and not as a fiction or as a simple projection of those categories.

This insight is echoed within the realm of contemporary biosemiotics. As Donald Favereau has noted, according to biosemiotic theory and with regard to biological organisms of any kind: "it is precisely the naturalistic establishment of *sign relations* that bridge subject-dependent experience [...] with the inescapable subject-independent reality of alterity that *all* organisms have to find some way to successfully perceive and act upon in order to maintain themselves in existence" (Favereau 2008, p. 8).

So biological heteropoiesis, such as it is understood here in relation to Canguilhem, implies an openness and constitutive exposure to an "outside" on the level of the organisation of an organism. It also implies a novel realism on the level of epistemology and in relation to the sense or meaning that organisms produce in relation to their environment. Articulating heteropoiesis on the level of biology opens up the way for a clearer and more precise theoretical understanding of heteropoiesis such as it has been discerned in Quignard's zoological and naturalistic account of the human, its psychical and symbolic life, and the status of narrative, fiction, and art.

5 Heteropoiesis III: Sketching a Naturalist Theory of Narrative

Arguably, heteropoiesis conceived of, as it is here, on the level of both living organisms and of narrative and the symbolic allows us to think the continuity of meaning production and self-organisation across first-order biological and second-order symbolic systems without any recourse to analogy or metaphor. Quignard's insistence that narrative is always in relation to an anteriority and an order of sense and meaning which is natural and zoological can now be understood in the context of, or in relation to, the naturalistic sign relations posited by biosemiotics and what one might call the "axiology" of biological life as affirmed in both Canguilhem's and Gayon's understanding of the individual organism. So, bringing biological and narrative or symbolic heteropoiesis together would allow one to hypothesise that the sign relations of biological life extend themselves into the sign relations of symbolic and social life. The former is an anteriority and conditioning exteriority with regard to the latter: the symbolic presupposes the biosemiotic as its prior condition and is therefore in a constitutive relation to it. In this way one might hypothesise more broadly that each

and every instance of self-reflexive self-organisation is constituted in relation to a prior outside, an anterior other, and that anterior instance would in turn be constituted in its relation of exposure to a further outside in a successive layering of subsequent relationality. The logic of heteropoiesis here implies that any given biological world is also always semiotic and liable to engender a symbolic world and that any given symbolic world, form, or narrative is also always rooted in a semiotic biological world that, in making sense, thereby makes possible the symbolic, imagistic, and linguistic, systems of meaning and reference that are posterior to it.

As was indicated earlier, Quignard says as much himself when he writes that "fiction plunges back into the zoologically implicit" and notes just prior to this comment that "books plunge their readers into neighbouring worlds; [...] into the *precession of sense* [...]; into *a semantisation before signs*" (Quignard 2002b, p. 160; my italics). It is by this means, precisely, that he comes to affirm natural heterogeneity as the "destiny of art" (Quignard 2002a, p. 66) and that he can likewise affirm: "There is a way of reading before all writing just as there are signs before all natural language" (Quignard 2002b, p. 167). Similarly, Quignard ascribes the power of the image to a dimension of semiosis and symbolisation that is pre-linguistic and pre-human: "Images are pre-human. They date from before natural languages spoken by human mouths" (Quignard 2002a, p. 105).

It might be worth specifying and clarifying at this point that what is at stake here is not a determinable efficient causality. It is not being suggested that a biologist might be able to determine any given symbolic meaning and objectify it as the causal result of a biosemiotics process. There is no reductivism, scientism, or objectivism at play here and as such heteropoiesis as a concept remains to a degree speculative or heuristic and not, say, strictly scientific. As has been emphasised throughout, the logic of heteropoiesis describes a process whereby self-reflexive organisation or constitution must refer to, or pass by way of, an anterior alterity which is not a cause but a condition of possibility. As such the anterior heterogeneity of sense that heteropoiesis posits is indeterminate for the subject or self that is heteropoietically produced by it. Put more forcefully, it is undeterminable and ungraspable insofar as any instance of lived self-reflexive meaning cannot seize the radical exteriority which for it can only ever also be an absent anteriority.[7]

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7 Wendy Wheeler's work has broken significant ground in this area bringing together biosemiotics and symbolic account of meaning drawing diverse figures in process philosophy, the natural theory of signs, and systems theory (for example, Charles Sanders Pierce, Gregory Bateson, Gilles Deleuze, Alfred North Whitehead, Jakob von Uexküll). See Wheeler (2018). However, the

In this context it can be affirmed once more, and in a final iteration, that the biological and zoological "jadis" that Quignard evokes, is definitely not the determined and known past of a chronological or historical sequence. For such a past is that which we ourselves produce *from* our narratives as they orientate historical time-consciousness itself *as* and *in* narrative sequence. Nor is it therefore a past that can be specified within a scientifically determined order of objective biological, evolutionary, and genetic knowledge. For it is an order of sense and meaning that precedes our human meaning and symbolic consciousness as a kind of deep biological past that makes determinate objective knowledge and subjective consciousness possible as such.

This is a past of sense and meaning, material, biological, naturalistic that has above all been subjectively and inter-subjectively, personally and impersonally, consciously and unconsciously lived. As such it precedes and penetrates all present human narrative and narrativity and all human narrative and narrativity relates to it when it produces determinate symbolic meaning, sequence, and (pace Blanchot) the paradoxical presence-absence of all that is narrated.

This is the critical and philosophical frame with which we can begin to understand and approach what I would call Quignard's post-deconstructive naturalism. It allows his reflections on art and narrative in *Dernier royaume* and the mosaic assemblage of personal recollection and cultural memory to be understood as an attempt to grasp the impersonal anteriority, nonhuman and human, biological and symbolic, that makes it possible *as* narration and *as* narrativity. Yet this anteriority is by definition ungraspable. Therefore, as self-affirming forms of narrative heteropoiesis, *Les Ombres errantes*, *Sur le jadis*, and *Abîmes* produce themselves only *in and as* a proliferation of fragments without identity, totality, or any possibility of completion.

In this way it might be said that the first three volumes of *Dernier royaume* form a self-reflexive and performative *narrative of the possibility and impossibility of narrative*. Insofar as the totality of biological life and therefore also human life is implied or implicated in this performance it becomes clear why the extensive allusions across time and space in their natural and historical dimensions can only be presented in fragmented form. The authorial or narrative consciousness, finite as it is, is lead into an infinite labyrinth of anteriority in a quest to encounter or grasp that which has come before to make it what it is or can be. "Human fiction is destined to the preterite" (Quignard 2002b, p. 162) and *Dernier royaume* plunges back into its own founding and ungraspable absence producing nothing

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logic of heteropoiesis elaborated here difference decisively from that offered by process philosophies or ontologies and is specifically post-deconstructive; again see James (2019).

but scattered shards, images, fragments. It has been argued that this process of narration is, although at times marked by melancholic nostalgia, more generative and productive of narrative as such. Here Quignard performs the essence or destiny of narrative, and of art more generally, not as the nostalgia for a known past, but as the exploration of an infinitely receding past that is encountered at the limits of finite form (consciousness, personality, authorial subjectivity) at the moment of its constitutive exposure to an infinite anterior life. "There is a before the before", Quignard puts it somewhat gnomically, and continues: "A limit before the limit. A without-limit that the limit itself creates retrospectively" (Quignard 2002b, p. 205).

Dernier royaume can be therefore characterised as a distinctly naturalist writing but *only* insofar as it emerges or is produced as a heteropoietic exposure on and at this limit. It thereby exposes also the generative impossibility of human consciousness being able to grasp the world of sense and meaning that precedes and produces the human and all its symbolic forms. In this way impossibility can be seen to strike the entirety of our human modes of story-telling and self-narration; literary, certainly, but also the social, political, philosophical, and metaphysical stories that we have told ourselves and can tell ourselves from the point at which we now stand looking into the opaque past and deep history of our imagination, myths, and self-representations as they withdraw and disappear into their non-human origin.

This then is heteropoiesis: biosemiotically and zoologically rooted human narrativity as that with which we are both made and unmade. It is the process in which we emerge as what we are by way of an immemorial *being-what-we-were* and therefore *are not*, a natural being that is always already outside of itself in the very act of self-creation and self-production.

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Eva Voldřichová Beránková

Paradoxes of Self-Creation and Narrativity in the Symbolist Novel

> The novel can only survive if it becomes something else than what is still called a novel.
> (Huysmans 1905, p. 17)

Abstract: When the Symbolists and Decadents undertook to "break the Naturalist machine for novels", they faced a major technical problem: how to continue to write novels without falling into the old Naturalist recipes? In their struggle against determinism, the new novelists first attacked traditional narrativity, then they deconstructed the characters and the logical background of their stories. Nevertheless, can we still talk about "novel" when a "single man in a tower surrounded by swamps" meditates on his states of mind and the best way to furnish his house, without ever going outside? The solution proposed by the Symbolists consisted in the elaboration of a "novel of the extreme conscience", a philosophic-ontological genre that allows the grasping of the inner life of a subject that self-analyses and builds himself progressively. The purpose of this contribution is to demonstrate that the Symbolist novel has ended up engendering some new forms of modern self-reflection.

Keywords: self-creation; narrativity; Symbolist novel; Naturalism; Determinism; Édouard Dujardin; Remy de Gourmont; André Gide

In the last third of the nineteenth century, at the height of his glory, Émile Zola was a veritable "machine for novels", publishing a new book of several hundred pages each year and gradually setting up the enormous construction of the *Rougon-Macquart. Natural and Social History of a Family under the Second Empire* (1871–93). His "experimental novel technique" (definition of a problem → working hypothesis → observation of the facts → experimentation → confirmation or reversal of the hypothesis → interpretation of the results and conclusion), as well as his legendary work ethic allowed him to reign over French letters, imposing on them a strict determinism, an unshakeable faith in progress and the use of "realistic" narrative forms, the most likely ones to "illustrate accurately mechanisms of human and social phenomena" (Zola 1880, p. 29).

In an interview published in 1891, Zola predicted that the future of literature would undoubtedly belong to the novel:[1]

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[1] Translations of French literature are – unless stated otherwise – my own.

> Wanting to do without the novel is a madness that only childish Symbolists can develop [...]
> The novel is the broadest, the strongest and the most convenient form of modern rhetoric. It
> has replaced the epic poem, and, for the moment, no genre can dethrone it. The one who
> wants to become popular, the one who wants to make money, the one who wants to spread
> a social propaganda, the one who wants to leave a lasting fame, they must all resort to the
> novel. (Gourcq 1891, p. 3)[2]

In his review of *Germinie Lacerteux*, a famous novel by the Goncourt brothers,
Zola deepened this reflection when he linked the golden age of the novel to
the development of the modern European subject:

> This literature is one of the products of our society, which a nervous etherism constantly
> shakes. We are sick of progress, of industry, of science; we live in a fever, and we like to
> search the wounds, to descend always lower, eager to dissect the corpse of the human
> heart. Everything suffers, everything complains in the works of our time; nature is associ-
> ated with our pain, the being tears itself apart and shows itself in its nakedness. The Gon-
> court brothers wrote for men today; their Germinie could not have lived in any other time
> than ours; she is the daughter of the century. (Zola 1906, p. 28)[3]

Although Zola basically accepted in his critical articles the traditional theory of
Hyppolite Taine concerning the triad of factors that determine the nature of a lit-
erary work ("race – moment – environment"), the writer later added the author's
subject and his "sensitivity, his passions, his genius". To some extent, he soft-
ened the black-and-white notion of "realistic writing" as an imprint of the exter-
nal world, and admitted that the author's self shapes and distorts the perceived
reality:

> the artist places himself in front of nature, [...] he copies it by interpreting it, [...] he is more
> or less real according to his eyes; in short, his mission is to return objects to us as he sees
> them, pressing on such and such a detail, creating anew. I will express all my thoughts by

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2 "Vouloir se passer du roman, c'est une folie que seuls peuvent avoir les bambins du symbo-
lisme [...] Le roman est la forme la plus ample, la plus forte et la plus commode de la rhétorique
moderne. Il a remplacé le poème épique, et pour le moment aucun genre ne pourra le détrôner.
Celui qui veut devenir populaire, celui qui veut gagner de l'argent, celui qui veut faire une prop-
agande sociale, celui qui veut laisser une renommée durable, tous doivent recourir au roman."
3 "Cette littérature est un des produits de notre société, qu'un éthérisme nerveux secoue sans
cesse. Nous sommes malades de progrès, d'industrie, de science ; nous vivons dans la fièvre,
et nous nous plaisons à fouiller les plaies, à descendre toujours plus bas, avides de disséquer
le cadavre du cœur humain. Tout souffre, tout se plaint dans les ouvrages du temps ; la nature
est associée à nos douleurs, l'être se déchire lui-même et se montre dans sa nudité. MM. de Gon-
court ont écrit pour les hommes de nos jours ; leur Germinie n'aurait pu vivre à aucune autre
époque que la nôtre ; elle est fille du siècle."

saying that a work of art is a corner of creation seen through a temperament. (Zola 1906, p. 68)[4]

It is interesting to emphasise Zola's lifelong fluctuations in relation to modern subjectivity: At the beginning of his work (see previous quotations), the writer was still subject to the romantic notion of a creative genius who instils his own order and rules in the surrounding world. The greatest French novelist appeared to him to be Saint-Simon (1675–1755), a classicist memorialist to whom he would not dare to refer in the later stages of his thinking.

Towards the end of his life, Zola turned again to a certain "multiplication of perspectives" and, in addition to his own view of art (which he compared in a strange way to Wagner's), he began to admit completely different aesthetics, including the Decadent:

> My books are labyrinths where you would find, looking closely, halls and sanctuaries, open places, secret places, dark corridors, lighted rooms. They are monuments: in a word, they are "composed". But it's not for the sake of beauty. It's all about making life come alive, and I know that life is always a mystery. This is the mystery that serves as my leitmotif. I proceeded like Wagner, without knowing him much at first, and I think, like him, it was the feeling of life that led me to this process. I also use the harmonies obtained by returning phrases, and isn't that the best way to give sound to the silent meaning of things? Symbolist? I think I am. (Mitterand 1999, pp. 140–141)[5]

> The moral of all this? Let's work, work. I am not yet old and soft enough to foolishly convince myself that nothing is true that I don't think. The best benefit of old age is enlightened indulgence, it is hope in a future which is no longer mine, but which still interests me, because I intend to live again among those whom I will never know, thanks to the love I al-

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4 "l'artiste se place devant la nature, […] il la copie en l'interprétant, […] il est plus ou moins réel selon ses yeux ; en un mot il a pour mission de nous rendre les objets tels qu'il les voit, appuyant sur tel détail, créant à nouveau. J'exprimerai toute ma pensée en disant qu'une œuvre d'art est un coin de la création vu à travers un tempérament."

5 "Mes livres sont des labyrinthes où vous trouveriez, en y regardant de près, des vestibules et des sanctuaires, des lieux ouverts, des lieux secrets, des corridors sombres, des salles éclairées. Ce sont des monuments : en un mot, ils sont "composés". Mais ce n'est pas dans une vue de beauté. Il ne s'agit pour moi que de faire vivant, et je sais bien que la vie recèle toujours un mystère. C'est le mystère qui me sert de leitmotiv. J'ai procédé comme Wagner, sans beaucoup le connaître, au début, et je pense que, comme lui, c'est le sentiment de la vie qui m'a conduit à ce procédé. J'utilise aussi les harmonies obtenues par le retour des phrases, et n'est-ce pas le meilleur moyen de donner un son à la signification muette des choses ? Symboliste ? Je crois bien que je le suis."

ways had for life, for youth, and thanks to my work. Do something that my comrades and I
could never have done: I will be the first to applaud you. (Mitterand 1999, p. 149)[6]

However, at the height of his literary and critical career, which dates from about
1879 (the official formulation of the "experimental novel" theory) to 1885, Zola
deliberately abandoned any glorification of an independent subject and reduced
the writer to a scientist in the laboratory or even a measuring instrument. In Nat-
uralism, characters in novels become – at least in theory – guinea pigs, which
the writer marks with a certain genetic burden (alcoholism or ancestral madness)
and then symbolically throws into social events to capture the vicissitudes of
their life (as in some pseudo-laboratory "test") and deduces from them the
exact mechanism of a person's passions. During the experiment, the novelist
is supposed to "observe" the actions of the selected character and, occasionally,
slightly alter or dramatically overturn the surrounding context to "provoke" the
subject's reaction. The ideal result of the experiment should not be "only" a suc-
cessful literary work, but mainly progress in human knowledge in general:

> We have the tool, the experimental method, and our goal is very clear: to know the deter-
> minism of the phenomena and to make us masters of these phenomena [...] One day, phys-
> iology will undoubtedly explain to us the mechanism of thought and passions; we will
> know how the individual machine of man works, how he thinks, how he loves, how he
> goes from reason to passion and to madness [...] And this is what constitutes the experi-
> mental novel: to possess the mechanism of phenomena in man, to show the workings of
> intellectual and sensual manifestations such as physiology will explain them to us,
> under the influences of heredity and ambient circumstances, and then to show man living
> in the social environment which he has produced himself, which he modifies every day, and
> within which he experiences in turn a continuous transformation. (Zola 1880, pp. 18–19)[7]

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6 "La morale de tout ceci ? Travaillons, travaillez. Je ne suis pas encore assez vieux et ramolli
pour me convaincre sottement que rien n'est vrai de ce que je ne pense pas. Le meilleur bénéfice
de la vieillesse venante, c'est l'indulgence éclairée, c'est l'espoir dans un avenir qui n'est plus le
mien, mais qui m'intéresse encore, parce que je compte revivre parmi ceux que je ne connaîtrai
jamais, grâce à l'amour que j'eus toujours pour la vie, pour la jeunesse, et grâce à mon œuvre.
Faites quelque chose que, mes camarades et moi, nous n'eussions jamais pu faire : je serai le
premier à vous applaudir."
7 "Nous avons l'outil, la méthode expérimentale, et notre but est très net : connaître le déter-
minisme des phénomènes et nous rendre maîtres de ces phénomènes [...] Un jour, la physiologie
nous expliquera sans doute le mécanisme de la pensée et des passions ; nous saurons comment
fonctionne la machine individuelle de l'homme, comment il pense, comment il aime, comment il
va de la raison à la passion et à la folie [...] Et c'est là ce qui constitue le roman expérimental :
posséder le mécanisme des phénomènes chez l'homme, montrer les rouages des manifestations
intellectuelles et sensuelles telles que la physiologie nous les expliquera, sous les influences de
l'hérédité et des circonstances ambiantes, puis montrer l'homme vivant dans le milieu social

Tool, mechanism, gears, machine... Literature, the novel at least, seems to be here to illuminate the determinism on which human life is based. Naturalist writers deny free will and conceive the characters of their works as animal machines, acting under the double dictates of heredity and environment. The aim is to "know the truth" about real human motivations and, by revealing all the laws of determinism, to expand our possibilities in the future:

> We show the mechanism of the useful and the harmful, we release the determinism of the human and social phenomena, so that one day we can dominate and direct these phenomena. In a word, we work with the whole century to the great work which is the conquest of the nature, the power of the man multiplied tenfold. (Zola 1880, p. 29)[8]

Zola's historical optimism reached its imaginary peak at that time, and in some texts it degenerated into a kind of aggressive Messianism of science, the only religion worthy of men of the late nineteenth century. The tone became irreconcilably preaching, the logic was reminiscent of Marxist schemes of "progress" in art, which, as a superstructure, copy political-material progress: The rigidly academic classicism of the *Ancien Régime* was overcome by a tumultuous romanticism, which, although it put on a Phrygian cap in the dictionary, remained imprisoned in a vague deistic heresy in the area of values. With the final victory of the Republic, the time of science and of Naturalist-experimenters would gradually prevail. The latter would deny any absolute, and the ideal for them would correspond "only to the unknown, which they have a duty to study and know" (Zola 1880, p. 302).[9]

It was in opposition to Zola's theses from the period of the "experimental novel" that the aesthetics of new generations of poets and novelists were established in France. (I leave aside the question of whether the Symbolists and the Decadents took the writer's theoretical articles too seriously. After all, Zola himself did not really adhere to the principles of the experimental novel in his own fictional texts. Many of today's readers also appreciate a certain baroque, visionary, sometimes apocalyptic vigour in his works. Some even prefer their esoteric interpretations.)

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qu'il a produit lui-même, qu'il modifie tous les jours, et au sein duquel il éprouve à son tour une transformation continue."

8 "Nous montrons le mécanisme de l'utile et du nuisible, nous dégageons le déterminisme des phénomènes humains et sociaux, pour qu'on puisse un jour dominer et diriger ces phénomènes. En un mot, nous travaillons avec tout le siècle à la grande œuvre qui est la conquête de la nature, la puissance de l'homme décuplée."

9 "que l'inconnu qu'ils ont le devoir d'étudier et de connaître".

Either way, from the 1880s, the Symbolists and Decadents undertook to "break the Zolean machine" in the name of free will, self-creation, scepticism in the face of History and the "right to dream". At first, they did not protest against narrativity as such, but against a sort of "machinal determinism", which the Naturalistic narrative served perfectly. Their declared goal was to prove the unrestricted freedom of the author's subject and the modern individual in general. On the contrary, Zola's materialist determinism seemed to them to contradict the complexity of the modern psyche, and his novel experiments were considered by them to be too crude tools to understand the inconsistencies of the world at the end of the nineteenth century.

Some French Symbolists (Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, René Ghil, André Gide, paradoxically even Stéphane Mallarmé and Barbey d'Aurevilly) studied Hegel in depth, but most of them referred rather to the works of Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Nietzsche or Emanuel Swedenborg. After all, their "fight against Zola" was not particularly philosophically based, but rather stemmed from an intuitive rejection of the Materialist and Positivist perception of the world as well as from a very syncretic reading of some modern thinkers.

As Jean-Piere Bertrand mentioned, the main concern of the Symbolists was "how to break free from the determinist gears"[10] (Bertrand 1996, p. 224) in favour of independent (to some extent even random) creativity that would better suit their idea of a fragmented subject and the inconsistency of the modern world. With a degree of exaggeration, we could consider Symbolist and Decadent ideas as a sort of "first wave of the avant-garde", followed a few decades later by the Dada movement and Surrealism:

In 1884 Joris-Karl Huysmans published his *À rebours* (translated into English as *Against Nature*), a very provocative, surprisingly static and fragmented text depicting, almost in the form of a catalogue, how a young single, afflicted by numerous neuroses, is arranging his house and what curious aesthetic experiments he is undertaking in it. There was no action, no classic characters, and no plot respecting the slightest chronology in this parody reaction to Naturalism. In the same way, in *Paludes* (or *Morasses*, in the new English translation), André Gide symbolically responded to Zola's gigantic saga of the *Rougon-Macquart* by "a story of a young single person living in a tower surrounded by swamps" (Gide 2002, p. 9). As we can see, the major technical problem the Symbolists and Decadents faced was how to continue to write novels (required by the public, that even the most fortunate among them could not snub completely) without falling into the old Naturalist recipes; how to get rid of the traditional narrativity (which

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10 "comment sortir de l'engrenage déterministe".

means chronological accounts of events linked by cause-and-effect relation-
ships), replacing it with the exposition of their subtle thoughts and refined feel-
ings, and all this in a prosaic text, while poetry would suit them much better.

First of all, let us have a look at the generic hesitations that accompanied the
literature of the late nineteenth century. As Jules Renard remarked in his *Journal*,
after the end of Naturalism, "the new formula of the novel, [would be] not to
make novel" (Renard 1990, p. 70).[11] Indeed, as long as this genre was closely
linked to Zolean Realism and Determinism, the Symbolists wanted to avoid it
or, at least, to attenuate its narrative essence by special prefaces, forewords or
didactic subtitles: *Very Woman – Sixtine* (1890) by Remy de Gourmont was
thus defined as a "cerebral novel". *Dream of a Woman* (1899) was referred to
as a "familiar novel", which means a type of text consisting in too heterogeneous
elements (pieces of correspondence, pages of diaries, stories constantly inter-
rupted) to be considered as a traditional novel. *The Phantom* (1893), by the
same author, was defined as a "tale" when it appeared in volume, but it was pre-
sented to the readers of the *Mercure de France* revue in 1892 as a "study of pas-
sion", while *A Night in The Luxembourg* (1906) was inspired by a "manuscript
found", a very popular paradigm in the eighteenth century, which allowed
Remy de Gourmont to "make a novel without seeming to do so". André Gide
also desired in his *Counterfeiters* the advent of a new "novel of the being"
(Marty 1987, p. 31) which would be governed by an "aesthetics of the essential"
(Raimond 1989, p. 71).

Nevertheless, to avoid losing their audience, the Symbolists sometimes prac-
tised a more narrative logic and launched some curious advertising strategies,
such as the one Georges Rodenbach used to broadcast his masterpiece *The
Dead City of Bruges* (1998). The book was first published in the form of ten epi-
sodes in *Le Figaro*. At the request of the publisher Flammarion, it was modified
by its author who added 35 photographs and two chapters (VI and XI), which al-
lowed the book to be published as part of a series of "novels illustrated by pho-
tography" (Caraion 2003, p. 211). This very popular and very commercial genre
was however regularly denounced in the *Mercure de France*, official tribune of
the Symbolists, which emphasised the incompatibility of photographs with
their aesthetics (Ibels 1898, p. 97). Indeed, if photographs were accepted as a
narrative support in travel diaries, realistic biographies and novels that "were
to provide an ideal description of human life and human being" (Ibels 1898,
p. 109), they were not acceptable to evoke all these subtle landscapes of soul
that the Symbolists intended to suggest to the reader.

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11 "la formule nouvelle du roman, c'est de ne pas faire du roman".

Rodenbach's strategy consisted therefore of a double generic trick: the public was reassured by obtaining a beautiful book accompanied by 35 photos of the city of Bruges (with legends telling a kind of little story) and perfectly corresponding to the bourgeois category of "illustrated novel". At the same time, Rodenbach replied to an inquiry launched by his Symbolist colleagues:

> The idea of illustrating a novel by photography is certainly ingenious, but a subtle reader will always prefer to imagine himself the characters, since a book is only a point of departure, a pretext and a canvas to dream. [...] As for me, nothing interests me but the text. (Ibels 1898, pp. 97–113)

Thus, if the Symbolists seemed to be ashamed of narrativity in general, they were less reluctant to use it (or, at least, to simulate it) when they needed to sell their productions to the public.

In general, to continue producing prosaic texts without resorting to traditional narrativity, character system and plot, the Symbolists and Decadents elaborated their "novels of extreme consciousness" (Michelet-Jacquod 2008), a philosophical-ontological genre that allowed the grasping of the inner life of a subject who self-analyses and builds himself progressively. At this stage, self-creativity seemed to oppose and exclude narrativity, since the authors mixed their novels with such genres as lyric poems, prose poems or diaries and such figures as ekphrases, enumerations, catalogues, etc.

However, despite the experimental richness of such a "creative laboratory" (Bertrand 1996) of new novelistic forms, anticipating to a large extent Surrealism (Tadié 1978), the Nouveau Roman (Steffes Blake 1974) or "the stream of consciousness" (Cohn 1981), the results were not always convincing on the artistic level, without taking into account the public, who became quickly tired of stories that "told nothing". In the long run, a certain return to narrativity seemed inevitable. So, let us look to some brief examples of these new non-Naturalistic narrativities, which are likely to engender modern self-reflection and self-creativity. We will mention several works by Remy de Gourmont (1858–1915), Édouard Dujardin (1861–1949) and André Gide (1869–1951) to illustrate our thesis.

Sixtine (1890) by Remy de Gourmont tells the unfortunate love of a fictional French writer (Hubert d'Entragues) for a young widow (Sixtine Magne). As a narrator, Hubert writes his own "cerebral novel", which is interrupted by numerous secondary stories, including *L'Adorant (The Worshipper)*, a novel in the novel. The six chapters of *The Worshipper* contain a story of Guido della Preda, Count of Santa Maria, and the woman of his dreams, Madonna Novella, both symbolic doubles of d'Entragues and Sixtine. The narrator confirms this *mise en abyme* by explaining his intention to make the inserted novel "a transposition

[...], on a mode of logical extravagance, of the drama he played naively with Sixtine" (Gourmont 1890, p. 287).[12] In fact, Hubert, who is supposed to write the two texts, immediately transposes the episodes of his love affair into the first novel (*Sixtine*), then into a second one (*The Worshipper*), which becomes a sort of platonic, idealised and refined translation of the two young people's love, through Guido's relationship to his Madonna.

The *Worshipper* gradually became a sort of manifesto of Symbolist idealism, based on three requirements: the independence of the work from any form of socio-cultural interpretation, the independence of the artist (not only in relation to society, but also vis-à-vis his own psychological determinisms) and the autonomy of language. At the same time, the failures of the two heroes – Hubert and Guido – illustrated the difficulties that Remy de Gourmont encountered in his desire to apply these Symbolist ideals to writing. The public did not seem ready to assume an empty book which "would stand by itself, by the inner strength of its style" (Flaubert 1980, p. 31)[13] and whose philosophical and moral message would concentrate entirely on aesthetics.

Despite the unhappy love of the two couples, narrativity – admittedly fragmentary and constantly accompanied by meta-literary parentheses – was rehabilitated and the writing of novels proposed as an alternative to ambient pessimism. Even though he was a supporter of Symbolist idealism, Remy de Gourmont finally rejected this type of literature, completely detached from the world and resulting in insurmountable internal contradictions. His self-knowledge would no longer be able to do without a fully assumed narrativity.

The Bays Are Sere (*Les Lauriers sont coupés*, 2001) by Édouard Dujardin takes place almost entirely in the head of the protagonist, Daniel Prince, a mediocre young man attracted by an actress whom he would like to seduce without deciding to act. The plot – almost non-existent, since nothing really happens in the book – is eclipsed by the movement of writing: it only matters in the stream of Daniel's thought, transcribed directly in the narrative and replacing the story.

However, the current reading of *The Bays*, namely its interpretation as a pure psychological novel prefiguring Joyce's "stream of consciousness", hides the irony or even comic aspects of the text. In fact, Daniel Prince is a kind of inverted Voltaire's Candide who looks naively for an amorous Eldorado, never understanding to what extent he is fooled, exploited and ridiculed by his beloved Lea. The narrator does not miss a single opportunity to highlight the gap existing

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12 "transposition [...] sur un mode d'extravagance logique, du drame qu'il jou[e] naïvement avec Sixtine".

13 "se tiendrait de lui-même par la force interne de son style".

between real life on the one hand and the ideals of the young dandy on the other. Six hours of simulations and dissimulations finally lead to no awareness and the hero, just as cheated as at the beginning of the story, makes the next appointment "on Wednesday, for three hours" restarting the cat-and-mouse game with a woman who despises and torments him.

Anticipating French minimalist writers, Édouard Dujardin practices in his novel a narration that seems at first glance banal, but that turns out to be subtly undermined from within by irony. His hero acts and observes himself acting, he thinks and analyses his thoughts, but such an intellectual duplication does not serve him at all, since a relatively simple woman manages to deceive him at every opportunity. Moreover, most of Daniel's intimate convictions – whether it is the superiority of Platonism over carnal love or that of art over life – are gradually being reversed by experience. The irony of the narration seems to prevail over self-knowledge and self-conscience.

Finally, it is in the work of André Gide that the novel definitely leaves the Symbolist aesthetics. In 1895, the writer published *Paludes* (*Morasses*), a typically Symbolist text, built on the protagonist's hesitations about literature. The narrator would like to write a novel called *Paludes* – "a story of a young single living in a tower surrounded by swamps", as we already know – but he is not able to do so, since his life is too scattered between literary salons and other different activities that prevent him from concentrating on writing. *Paludes* is a satire, sometimes cruel, sometimes very amusing, of literary Paris of the late nineteenth century. It describes the progressive exhaustion of Symbolist themes and humorously illustrates the limits of a literature completely devoid of characters and narrativity.

Four years later, Gide continues with *Prometheus Illbound* (1899), a little story often considered (Michelet-Jacquod 2008, p. 455) as the final episode of the Symbolist series, as the text that, together with *The Fruits of the Earth*, definitively closes the *fin-de-siècle* adventure. In *Prometheus Illbound* Gide re-evaluated his previous novels and drew a rather unflattering review of them. Indeed, the novel ended with a banquet scene in which the hero devours the eagle, a clear symbol of extreme consciousness. The novelist's self was finally reconciled with itself, it swept away Decadent anxieties with humour and finally opened itself to the outside world.

Gide definitively abandoned the utopia of a "novel of being", written by a pretentious artist-demiurge, in favour of the "sotie", a "derisory work" driven by folly or the subconscious, and at the same time very joyful, since it freed the self from its conditioning and recognised its right to express itself according to its particular inclinations.

As we can see, each of the three writers set up his own version of new narrativity linked to self-creation: Remy de Gourmont by inserting a reflective novel into another reflective novel, Édouard Dujardin by practising the stream of consciousness *avant la lettre* and André Gide by pushing the Symbolist tendencies to their extreme and undermining them with irony.

After having rejected Zolean aesthetics and experienced the impasses of a self-centred literature, they all returned to forms of narrativity that seemed to them more suitable for the expression of modern interiority and self-creation. In doing so, they were preparing the arrival of another literary giant, Marcel Proust, who in the years 1910–1920 would synthesise their efforts and deepen their reflections in order to build this amazing monument of new narrativity, that would be called *In Search of Lost Time*.

Interestingly, this development of Symbolist works confirms to some extent the general literary dialectic that Zola sketched towards the end of his life: if, after more than 20 years of "realistic" tendencies (Naturalism), the historical pendulum is to tilt in favour of "idealism" (Symbolism and Decadence), it should happen in some valuable way. Will the "new" writers be as consistent and as industrious in their enthusiasm as Zola himself? Will they write something truly admirable? The old man seemed to be excited, waiting for his own work to be "denied" and swept out of the bookstores by someone just as brilliant, but with views that were the opposite of Zola's. He hoped to be surprised, amazed, overcome. However, the Symbolists took their time.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Jules Huret called on several dozen contemporary writers to express their ideas about the direction of French literature after the end of Zolean Naturalism. Zola, who had just published *Money* (the eighteenth volume of the Rougon-Macquart saga), received Huret with humour ("Did you come to see if I had snuffed it?") and willingly shared his criticisms and hopes with him. The comprehensive text of the interview was published on 31 March 1891 in *Écho de Paris*. The writer confirmed that Naturalism was in his eyes an important, but not final, step towards greater "truthfulness" in depicting life in literature. This movement broadened the readers' interest in new topics and enriched the novel with new approaches and methods borrowed from the exact sciences. It did not deceive anyone, and never promised to be more than an honest effort to discover new things:

> But what is offered to replace us? To counterbalance the immense Positivist work of these last fifty years, we are shown a vague "Symbolist" label, covering some junk verses. [...] I have been following them for ten years with a lot of sympathy and interest; they are very nice, I like them a lot, especially since there is no one who can dislodge us! I receive their volumes, when they appear, I read their little magazines as long as they live, but I am still wondering where the ball and chain is that should crush us. [...] They have nothing under

them, but a gigantic and empty pretension! At a time when production should be so great, so lively, they only find to serve us literature growing in bocks; one cannot even call it literature, it is attempts, trials, stammerings, but nothing else! And notice that I am sorry [...] I would gladly see my old age brightened by masterpieces. But where is the beautiful book? (Mitterand 1999, pp. 140 – 141)[14]

Despite the obvious malice with which the author of dozens of successful novels commented on the first timid steps of his Symbolist challengers (whose magazines on average did not last as long as a year), Zola expressed a profound truth: Naturalism was historically successful as a perfect expression of Positivist philosophy and the French society of the second half of the nineteenth century. And the following literary movements will also be successful as long as they are able to find an adequate expression of the subject and the world of the twentieth century. After hundreds of unsuccessful attempts launched by the Symbolist "laboratory", Marcel Proust succeeded in this regard. I dare say that his novels – although very different from the Naturalistic ones – would undoubtedly be recognised as "beautiful" by Zola.

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14 "Mais que vient-on offrir pour nous remplacer ? Pour faire contrepoids à l'immense labeur positiviste de ces cinquante dernières années, on nous montre une vague étiquette "symboliste", recouvrant quelques vers de pacotille. [...] Je les suis depuis dix ans avec beaucoup de sympathie et d'intérêt ; ils sont très gentils, je les aime beaucoup, d'autant plus qu'il n'y en a pas un qui puisse nous déloger ! Je reçois leurs volumes, quand il en paraît, je lis leurs petites revues tant qu'elles vivent, mais j'en suis encore à me demander où se fond le boulet qui doit nous écrabouiller. [...] Ils n'ont rien sous eux, qu'une prétention gigantesque et vide ! À une époque où la production doit être si grande, si vivante, ils ne trouvent à nous servir que de la littérature poussant dans des bocks ; on ne peut même pas appeler cela de la littérature, ce sont des tentatives, des essais, des balbutiements, mais rien autre chose ! Et remarquez que j'en suis navré [...] je verrais volontiers ma vieillesse égayée par des chefs-d'œuvre. Mais où est-il, le beau livre ?"

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Chiara Mengozzi

On Recognition, Duplication, and Self-Creativity in Colonial Contexts: Hegel, Fanon, Tournier

Abstract: This article posits that no form of self-creation, personal or collective, occurs without engaging into an agonistic relation with the other, be it through negation, incorporation, inventive translation, or frontal struggle. Examining how intellectuals concerned with anticolonial fights have appropriated Hegel's master-slave dialectic provides an excellent entry point for understanding what specific facets these agonistic dynamics take on in colonial contexts. After identifying the main elements of novelty that Frantz Fanon and Michel Tournier – my two case studies – introduce into Hegel's account (involving the racial identity of the servant and the master, the narrative sequence, the point of view, and the reader), the chapter explores how these two authors conceive of the transition from the material violence of struggle to true emancipation and mutual recognition, opening up new ways of thinking about self-creativity (i.e., the capacity to reinvent oneself) as an intersubjective enterprise of shared sense-making.

No form of self-creation occurs without engaging into an agonistic relation with the other, be it through struggle, negation, incorporation, or *mimicry*.[1] This applies to the different dynamics that preside over the constitution and the transformation of identity (whether personal or collective), as well as to the transformative processes inherent to literature and to critical thinking. To put it abruptly, it is true that *world-making* is *self-making* (in that humans, as self-reflexive beings, inject into the meaningless reality the fiction of a transcendental meaning), but self-making always comes from the other. What we call *our* language, culture, or identity do not belong to us, even though we are responsible for and to them, but they are rather the place of a fundamental dispossession. "I have only one language, it is not mine" wrote Derrida in *The Monolinguism of the Other* (1996), meaning by this performative contradiction that our language is not

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[1] On *mimicry* as a subversive act, although often non-intentional, see Bhabha (1994).

only contingently heteronomous (it could be the language imposed by the oppressor), but it is so in a more fundamental way, since every language we consider as ours comes from "the other", precedes us and configures in advance the very possibility of saying "I" or "we", of defining ourselves. And yet, it is precisely within this codified system of norms, rules, and competences coming from the other that we struggle to find our own language, to create our unique voice. Similar dynamics are at work if we replace "language" with "identity", "culture", or "literary tradition". In the beginning, we might say, was the translation, both in metaphorical and literal senses, if it is true that many literary traditions locate at their very origin a translated text from a foreign language: for instance, the translation by Livio Andronico of Homer's *Odyssey* into Saturnian verses, which is largely acknowledged as the inception of Latin written literature. Yet, translation is ambivalent by definition, insofar as it implies, to a greater or lesser degree, both admiration and rivalry, reproduction and innovation. It is about incorporating the other's voice and instilling the sound of your own. Thus, if self-making is always a re-making, the opposite is also true: iteration always produces a remainder, generates deviations.

These agonistic processes of incorporation and transformation that can be subsumed under the concept of "translation", considered in a broad sense, assume specific nuances in colonial contexts: as Robert Young put it, "a Colony begins as a translation, a copy of the original located elsewhere on the map. New England. New Spain. New Amsterdam. New York. Colonial clone" (Young 2003, p. 139). Nevertheless, as we will see, this translation of the "motherland" might become a matter of dispute, an object of contention between colonisers and colonised, while the re-production of the self and the other (not only places, but also natives are to be transformed into a copy of the masters) ends up expressing the unfounded character of the dichotomies imposed by colonial systems. In other words, this "re-production" is revealed to be as much about violence, control, and discipline (on the side of the masters) as it is about mimicry, parody, and defiance (on the side of the colonised).

This chapter deals with a case of "traveling theory" (Said 1983; 2000), namely the remarkable fortune, among intellectuals and writers concerned with anti-colonial struggles, of Hegel's chapter about master-slave dialectic, where the philosopher posits that consciousness becomes self-consciousness through a competitive relation with the other. More precisely, this study focuses on two re-appropriations of Hegel's chapter that at first sight may appear to be diametrically opposed: Frantz Fanon's penultimate chapter of *Peaux noires, masques blancs* (1952), "Le Nègre et Hegel", which constitutes the link between his reflections on the alienation of the Black and those on struggle and violence in *Les Damnés de la terre* (1961), and Michel Tournier's philosophical novel, *Vendredi ou les*

limbes du Pacifique (1967), which inaugurated a new strain of postcolonial narratives inspired by the history of Robinson Crusoe and Friday, considered by Hegel, in the *Philosophical Propaedeutic*, as a synthetic illustration of the two figures of self-consciousness.

Fanon and Tournier do not intend, in any way, to accurately interpret Hegel's chapter within his system of thought, but they rather isolate it from the *Phenomenology of Spirit* considered as a whole and engage in a dialogue with it in order to comprehend whether and to which extent Hegel's struggle for recognition might provide the means for grasping and subverting power relations between masters and servants, colonisers and colonised people. Although they insist on quite opposite factors and strategies to neutralise colonial power, both Fanon and Tournier write back to Hegel with the common aim of decentring and decolonising European knowledge,[2] that is of exposing (and overcoming) its heuristic limits when it comes to understanding the colonial condition. We might object that Hegel never mentions the colonies nor the slave system in his chapter, and that criticising his argument for something that goes beyond the scopes of his analysis sounds partially illegitimate. Nevertheless, according to Susan Buck-Morss (2000; 2009), we should read the most famous chapter of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* while keeping in mind not only the French Revolution, but also and especially one of its most impressive outcomes outside Europe, the emancipation of slaves in Haiti led by Toussaint Louverture. This was an episode of world history that Hegel was certainly informed about, and that largely upset Europeans' consciences, in that it revealed a simple but scandalous and unmentionable truth, the fact that power relations are always reversible, that colonialism can be defeated, and that we can become at any time the other's other. If Buck-Morss' hypothesis is correct, then the effort made by numerous postcolonial intellectuals of decentring and decolonising European thinking turns out to be twofold: it deals with both tracing the vicissitudes and transformations of western modern concepts and theories when these are re-appropriated overseas, *and* with the reframing of their genealogy, that is bringing to light their obliterated colonial origin.[3]

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2 See Renault (2018), who identifies in Fanon five different strategies and methods of displacement and decolonisation of European knowledge. On this topic, see also Renault (2011) and Gordon (2008).

3 In my article, however, I will not address the genealogy of Hegelian thought but rather its dissemination. The contradiction that emerges from this paragraph (if Hegelian dialectics emerges in relation to the colonial context of Haiti, why should it not be possible to apply it to the colonial context?) is only apparent. First, because Buck-Morss's studies on the possible origins of the famous Hegelian chapter on the master-slave dialectic are subsequent to Fanon's and Tour-

Fanon's and Tournier's texts are creative, unfaithful translations, whose specific features depend not only on biographical or spatial-temporal aspects, but also on the discursive *genre* within which Hegelian philosophical argument is re-inscribed, a political essay and a novel, respectively. Fanon and Tournier contest the alleged universalism of European philosophy, by introducing four main elements of novelty in Hegel's account. First, they implicitly denounce Hegel's racial neutrality by attributing to the allegorical figures of the master and the servant a precise, racial identity. Secondly, they develop the narrative potential of Hegel's scene by imagining different sequels that would set again in motion the stuck situation in which the two figures of the consciousness are left by Hegel at the end of his chapter. Third, their texts address a particular target audience. Fanon's implied readers were the Blacks and Creoles from overseas territories of France, and the colonised from the countries that were still waiting for independence. In this respect, we better understand the need of a western mediator (Sartre) for a book (*The Wretched of the Earth*, 2004) that did not seem to address a European readership, just like the other writings by Fanon and by intellectuals of *Négritude*.[4] On the contrary, Tournier's novel, even though it is a homage to Friday, and more generally, to "this huge and silent mass of immigrant workers in France, [to] all those Fridays shipped to us from the third world" (Tournier 1977, p. 229),[5] is not addressed to them. It is rather directed to those "fool and blinkered Robinsons that we all are", to "our consumer society [which] is sitting on them [immigrant workers], [and which] parked its fat and white butt on this dark skinned people reduced to absolute silence" (Tournier 1977, p. 230).[6] Finally, Fanon and Tournier choose a precise point of view, from

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nier's reflections, and second, because origin and reception are two distinct problems that need to be analysed as such: even assuming that Hegel was inspired by the Haitian revolution (something Fanon and Tournier were probably unaware of), this does not mean that his model is necessarily adequate to describe that context. In retrospect, however, the link between the Haitian revolution and the Hegelian chapter brought to light by Buck-Morss perhaps helps to explain why so many postcolonial intellectuals, even in recent times, keep returning to the famous Hegelian chapter. See, among others, Thiong'o (2012).

4 André Breton wrote the preface to *Cahiers d'un retours au pays natal* by Aimé Césaire (1971); Robert Desnos to *Pigments* by Léon-Gontran Damas (1937), and Jean-Paul Sartre to *Portrait du colonisé: précédé du portrait du colonisateur* by Albert Memmi (1980) and to *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache*, edited by Sédar Senghor (1947).

5 It is worth mentioning that at the very end of Tournier's novel, Robinson decides to stay on the island, while Friday steps onboard the vessel headed to Europe.

6 To be more precise, Tournier's original intention was to dedicate the book to "those three million Algerians, Moroccans, Tunisians, Senegalese, and Portuguese upon which our society rests, and whom we never see, never hear", but he then rescinded this dedication, explaining that "the

which the reader is supposed to follow the adventures and misadventures of the struggle for recognition. Unlike in Hegel's chapter, where the philosopher's concern for reciprocity is reflected in what can be called – narratologically speaking – "zero focalisation", Fanon and Tournier insist on the impossibility of transcending our condition of "situated-beings". So, while Fanon mostly adopts the point of view of the slave and does not hesitate to make use of the first-person narrative, Tournier makes the radical choice to keep the focus on the master, Robinson, thus presenting to the reader the paradox of a novel whose protagonist is Friday (as announced by the title), but where his voice and point of view are never staged as such. Tournier's Friday is one among the numerous, inscrutable figures of natives that populate colonial European novels, and whose opacity and silence are both signs of the violence inflicted upon them, and means of resisting the colonial appropriation of their voice.[7] The choice of a precise focalisation allows Fanon and Tournier to foreground what it concretely means to occupy (and dwell in) the position of the master and the servant, respectively, namely what consequences this reversal can entail for the two consciousnesses from their distinct points of view.

Let us have a closer look at how Hegel's account is transformed by its uses in new times, places, and *genres*.[8] What interests Fanon first and foremost in the Hegelian narrative is the reciprocity of recognition: "at the foundation of Hegelian dialectic – he writes – there is an absolute reciprocity which must be emphasised" (Fanon 2008, p. 179). The reciprocity of the two consciousnesses in Hegel not only represents the synthesis, the desideratum announced in the opening lines of the chapter ("Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged"),[9] but it also concerns the thesis, the very premise of the open "struggle for prestige" – as Kojève defines it in *The Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* – (1980, p. 7) whose outcome will be the polarisation between the autonomous and non-autonomous consciousnesses of the lord and the servant (at the beginning – Hegel writes – "they recognise themselves as mutually recognising each other").[10] Yet, if Fanon affirms that there has not been any open

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recipient seemed to me too great, too respectable, too distant from me, and I did not have any chance to ask the permission to pay this foolish tribute" (Tournier 1977, pp. 229 – 230).

7 On this and other ambivalences of the European colonial novel, ranging from Joseph Conrad to J. M. Coetzee, see Brugnolo (2017).

8 On Fanon and Hegel, see also Sekyi-Otu (1996, pp. 24 – 31); the first chapter in Gibson (2003); Honenberger (2007).

9 Hegel (1977, p. 111).

10 Hegel (1977, p. 112).

conflict between white and black, colonisers and colonised, it is because, according to him, the starting point in the colonial context radically differs from the one imagined by Hegel. In the Hegelian narrative, the two consciousnesses start from a condition of equality: "Thus the movement is simply the double movement of the two self-consciousnesses. Each sees the other do the same as it does" (Hegel 1977, p. 112). This means that the roles of the lord and the servant are the result of a free choice, according to which the two subjects decide to risk their life or to serve the other. In the colonial situation, on the contrary, the roles of the lord and the servant are assigned from the beginning: if the two poles are already given, then the dialectical movement cannot even get started.

It is crucial to make explicit this fundamental premise of Fanonian argumentation because all the other divergences from the Hegelian model are grounded upon it.

a) The white man has never been interested in recognition from the slave, who is de-humanised from the beginning: being a "movable good", just like cattle – as formalised by the *Code noir*, in force almost without interruption from 1685 to 1848[11] – the black slave, strictly speaking, has never reached the status of white man's other, he is simply considered as subhuman. That is why Fanon writes that "the master laughs at the consciousness of the slave. What he wants from the slave is not recognition but work" (Fanon 2008, p. 172).

b) The slave, for his part, instead of acknowledging his dignity in the object of his work, has strived to become like the master: he has strongly interiorised the values of the colonial system and tried to whiten himself. This would explain both the internal split of the black and creole subject, and the cultural alienation of their elites.

c) Finally, the main difference from Hegel resides in the place and the role that Fanon attributes to the struggle, which arises at a different stage of the relation between the subjects. Fanon agrees with Hegel on the crucial importance of the struggle and quotes from *The Phenomenology of Spirit:* "It is solely by risking life that freedom is obtained; only thus is it tried and proved that the essential nature of self-consciousness is not bare existence, is not the merely immediate form in which it at first makes its appearance" (Fanon 2008, pp. 169–170). And yet, Fanon completely reverses Hegel's argument. "For Hegel, the struggle is what posits the asymmetrical relation between the self-consciousnesses in the first place" (Teixeira 2018, p. 109), the

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[11] Slavery in French colonies was first abolished by a Decree of the National Convention in 1794 during the French Revolution, but then it was re-established in 1802 by Napoleon, who also restored the *Code noir*.

master being unilaterally recognised by the slave. The dialectical reversal according to which the slave will turn out to be the master's master, and the master the slave's slave, does not lead to any further struggle. For Fanon, on the contrary, as we have seen, there was not "an open conflict between white and black" (Fanon 2008, p. 169), that is it was not the struggle that determined the polarisation between the two consciousnesses, since the asymmetry was the very starting point. But Fanon adds something else. He affirms, quite surprisingly, that:

> [o]ne day the White Master, without conflict, recognised the Negro slave. [...] Historically the Negro, steeped in the inessentiality of servitude, was set free by his master. He did not fight for his freedom. [...] The Negro is a slave who has been allowed to assume the attitude of a master. The white man is a master who has allowed his slaves to eat at his table. One day a good white master who had influence said to his friends, "let's be nice to the niggers..." [...] The upheaval reached the Negroes from without. The black man was acted upon. Values that had not been created by his actions, values that had not been born of the systolic tide of his blood, danced in a hued whirl round him. [...] The black man contented himself with thanking the white man [...]. (Fanon 2008, pp. 169–171)

Since Fanon was certainly aware of the numerous slave rebellions during French colonisation (the most prominent of which was the Haitian revolution), he intends to underline with these sarcastic remarks that the upheavals undertaken so far by the former slaves are insufficient, incomplete, and after all, irrelevant. They certainly fought from time to time, but it is as if they did not, first of all because the representation and the historical memory of the abolition of slavery have been entirely "re-colonised" by the motherland, as is demonstrated by the numerous paternalistic paintings and statues scattered over French soil that stage France's benevolence and former slaves' gratitude.[12] It is as if the unilateral decision of general and unconditional emancipation made by France in 1848 had wiped out not only the memory, but also the irrefutable value and impact of previous slave resistance and rebellions. Secondly, because black men's recognition has been merely legal and thus formal and did not change in any way the concrete relations of domination and subordination in French colonies. "Let the colonies perish rather than a principle", proudly claimed Victor Schoelcher in *Des colonies françaises: abolition immédiate de l'esclavage* (1842), in line with the abolitionists that had participated in the parliamentary debates during the

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12 See, among the most renowned examples, the painting by François Auguste Biard, *L'abolition de l'esclavage dans les colonies françaises* (1848), or the monument in honour of Victor Schoelcher (1896–1897), in Cayenne, with the inscription: "À Victor Schoelcher, la Guyane reconnaissante".

French Revolution. One must not forget, however, that both his book and their passionate speeches were mostly intended to persuade French planters and bourgeois that their economic interests were perfectly reconcilable with the revolutionary ideals of freedom, equality, and fraternity, since the ancient slaves would continue to work on plantations, assuring the prosperity of colonies and their motherland.[13] In short, give the slaves political rights and a salary, and they will work for you willingly and better. Even in Haiti, where the revolution of the ancient slaves successfully led to independence, the plantation system has never been questioned, neither during the revolution nor in the aftermath of emancipation; after all, the chiefs of the black revolution were themselves plantation owners. Consequently, as Fanon put it, the juridical equality between white and black, guaranteed by the abolition of slavery in 1848,

> did not make a difference for the Negro. He went from one way of life to another, but not from one life to another. […] the Negro knows nothing of the cost of freedom for he has not fought for it. From time to time, he has fought for Liberty and Justice, but these were always white liberty and white justice; that is, values secreted by the masters [valeurs sécrétées par les maîtres]. (Fanon 2008, p. 172)

In other words, the Negro, *volens nolens*, has not fought for his authentic freedom, but for a form of liberty and justice that was compatible with the values and the economic interests of the ancient masters.

What options are left to the former slaves in order to become the agents of their own liberation, once they had finally stopped putting the white mask on their face, grateful to sit at the master's table? They will certainly never get authentic freedom, neither by turning towards the product of their own work (since no *Bildung* can be provided by the alienated labour on the plantations), nor by recognising themselves in an alleged African identity prior to European colonisation, thanks to the rediscovery and revival of ancient negro civilisations, as celebrated by the poets of *Négritude*. This is first because this fact would not "change anything in the lives of the eight-year-old children who labour in the cane fields of Martinique or Guadeloupe" (Fanon 2008, p. 180), and secondly, because crystallising oneself into an essentialist negro identity provided by past history precludes the very possibility to re-invent oneself: "I am not a prisoner of history – writes Fanon – I should not seek there for the meaning of my destiny. I should constantly remind myself that the real *leap* [le véritable *saut*] consists in introducing invention into existence" (Fanon 2008, p. 179). Thus, it is solely through an open and violent struggle, in Fanon's view, that the Black

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13 See the parliamentary debates during the French Revolution, reported by Césaire (1960).

will achieve emancipation, and pave the path to a new human world, finally freed from oppression.

Here we touch upon one of the most controversial points of Fanonian reflection that deserves further explanations. If throughout *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008), Fanon views violence as mostly *metaphorical* and *internal* as a part of the development of black consciousness (black people have to negate the internalised white gaze, to kill the white man within), at the end of the book, he starts outlining the transition towards another kind of revolutionary violence, *material and external*, that he will extensively theorise in the *Wretched of the Earth* (2004). Faced with the structural violence of colonialism, oppressed people cannot but fight back violently, simply because they can no longer live in such a miserable state of hunger, suffering, and humiliation. This counter-violence – which arises as a spontaneous insurrection, as a physical, impulsive reaction to the unbearable conditions and injustices perpetrated by the colonial regime and needs to be channelled into an organised revolutionary struggle – takes tangible form in a series of violent, terroristic deeds, and has a precise, identifiable goal: the political independence of Algeria. Fanon – it is true – does not disqualify this kind of violence. However, even though he considers it necessary, he also considers it insufficient on its own. If revolutionary violence simply consists of replacing European elites with the local ones, if it is a mere "transfer into native hands of those unfair advantages which are a legacy of the colonial period" (Fanon 1963, p. 152); in short, "if it leaves the systemic structure of colonial relations intact" (Kawah 1999, p. 243), ending in the reproduction of the same traits of western hypocritical humanism that depends on the subordination of its "others", it turns out not to be revolutionary at all. As Samira Kawash convincingly puts it, the "instrumental violence" aiming at inverting power relations between colonisers and colonised in Fanon's pages seems to be supplemented by another kind of violence, an "absolute violence" that does not imply open combat with the enemy, terroristic attacks, or any other kind of violent empirical acts: "Decolonisation – writes Fanon – which sets out to change the order of the world, is, obviously, a programme of complete disorder" (Fanon 1963, p. 36).[14] If the reactive violence has a un-alienating effect for black people, in that it puts in their hands the power of auto-determination, the second kind of violence, by shaking the Manichean colonial order to its foundation, has a deeper and universal liberating outcome, in that it makes possible the emergence of a

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14 Kawash reads Fanon's reflections on violence through the lens of Walter Benjamin's distinction between mythical and divine violence. On Fanon and violence, see also Carofalo (2013a; 2013b); Mellino (2013).

new human world, which will not be predetermined by the colonial past, but whose features are still unknown, unforeseeable. However, if the subject of the first kind of violence is clearly identified, who or what would be the agent of the second, "world-shattering violence" (Kawash 1999, p. 239) that would interrupt the past, threatening the reality as a whole? What may this creative violence look like? And finally, how can the escalation of violence from the two parts be prevented, ceasing the infernal circle of destruction? In Fanon's reasoning, all these questions remain outside representation as blind spots of his argument, partly because Fanon refrains from attributing in advance a shape to the world emerging after decolonisation, and partly because he is well aware that no dialectical necessity binds together the two moments, the destruction of the old order, and the inception of a new one finally released from the burdens of the past.

In conclusion, by bringing the racial and colonial issues into the abstract Hegelian narrative, Fanon contests the alleged reciprocity that qualifies the starting point of Hegel's master-slave dialectic. In this way, he also makes the normative frame that precedes any intersubjective relation explicit. The encounter with the other never occurs in a discursive vacuum, but is on the contrary saturated with discourses, inextricably bound by prejudices, framed by a deforming lens, in the absence of which the other would probably not even be visible to us. By the same token, Tournier's *Vendredi ou les limbes du pacifique* (1972) stages the intersubjective relation between the master and the slave as pre-determined by the normative frame of meaning supplied by colonisation through the figures of Crusoe and Friday. This normative frame, however, is not immutable and fixed once and for all. On the contrary – as Fanon reminds us – it is possible and necessary to imagine some breaking points that may pave (or not) the way for a new beginning after the abolition of racial and colonial privileges. Those breaking points – in Fanon's narrative – are brought about by the violent struggle of colonised people against colonisers, while in Tournier's novel they are to be found in the limits and contradictions intrinsic to colonial domination: as we will see, Friday never engages into an open struggle against Robinson, he rather seems to confront the master with the absurdity and the arbitrariness of his power. But how precisely will those breaking points pave the way for a genuine decolonisation? Why are both the slave and the master metaphorically killed, suddenly finding themselves freed from the structure of domination? Similar to Fanon's reluctance and incapacity to give an account of the transition from material violence towards true emancipation, this question remains without a clear answer in Tournier, as if it were the blind spot of his novel. Friday will trigger (inadvertently or deliberately, it is hard to say, since his consciousness is left outside representation) a massive explosion that, starting from the cave where

Robinson hid 40 tons of gunpowder, destroys what Robinson achieved in all those years through the exploitation of Friday's labour: the residence burns, domesticated animals run away, plantations are devastated. But why, after everything has blown up, did Robinson not restore the ancient order as he stubbornly did before? An explosion after which no further restoration of the ancient model seems possible, but only a *re-start from somewhere else*,[15] does not explain anything, it is just a narrative and conceptual ellipsis. It would be probably too easy to answer to this objection that, being a novel, it is not meant to logically explain every step. As a matter of fact, Tournier's novel has no claim to be realistic. As Defoe before him, Tournier invites us to a series of extreme thought experiments: what if I found myself in an insular world without others? What if, all of a sudden, another consciousness emerged? And what if this consciousness were not another "me", but an indigenous whom I am not able to see as a subject? These *"what if" exercises* are, in some respects, similar to those already posed by Defoe's novel. The difference between the two lies both in the *content* and the *form* of their narrative answers. Tournier's novel – I argue – is challenging, in that it does not simply invite us to venture into alternative paths with regards to his predecessor, but it brings us face to face with our spontaneous resistance to even conceive of paths other than those taken by western civilisation in its historical development. In other words, instead of presenting the deviation from the original plot imagined by Defoe in realist terms, Tournier's novel openly plays with the codes of realism that inform the majoritarian strain of serious European literature after Defoe in order to provoke in the reader the feeling of a progressive departure both from the source-text and from so-called realism, as if any path differing from the mere reproduction of the western history and civilisation would exclusively belong to the realm of the improbable and of the fantastic. But is it truly realist and reasonable to transform a remote island[16] into a clone of England? "If you must live on an island in the Pacific – Tournier asks – hadn't you better learn from a native well versed in methods adapted to local conditions rather than attempt to impose an English way of life on an alien environment?" (Tournier 1977, p. 189).

Tournier enjoys concocting the new, (non)human world arisen from the ashes of the old one; Fanon, on the contrary, refrains on purpose from portraying the new world that awaits us. Yet the fact remains that neither can provide the

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15 See Thiele (2012).
16 In Defoe's novel, the island is located in the Atlantic Ocean, not in the Pacific as in Tournier, who probably wanted to get back to the event that actually inspired Defoe's novel, a shipwreck in the Pacific.

causal and narrative link that would lead from destructive to creative violence; neither knows what the second looks like, and who would be its agent.

After the shipwreck of the *Virginia*, Robinson first seeks to escape from the island by fabricating a small boat; once this project has failed, he plunges into despair and starts doubting the existence of everything, himself included;[17] in a third moment, he reacts to the temptation of animality ("With his nose on the soil he ate unnameable things. He pooped himself and rarely missed the chance to wallow in the soft warmth of his own dejections"),[18] and desperately tries to preserve his human nature. In the absence of other models, he reproduces step by step his ancient society: he builds a shelter, recovers his thoughts in writing, immerses himself in work, rapidly retracing all the stages that led from hunting and gathering to the Neolithic revolution. He methodically explores every corner of the island, rationalising and exploiting its resources: "From now on, I want, I demand all around me be measured, proved, certified, mathematical, rational... I would like each plant to be labelled, each bird provided with a ring, each mammal branded."[19] At the peak of his almightiness frenzy, he solemnly declares himself the absolute governor of the island and establishes an elaborated law system, including a civil, moral, and penal code: "The inhabitants of the island, provided that they think, are required to do it loudly and clearly... Whoever has polluted the island with excrements will be punished with one day of fast."[20] Some time later, he will also rediscover sexual life (unsurprisingly erased from Defoe's puritan novel) – an issue that, contrary to what all the interpreters of the novel believe, far from introducing a positive suspension and transgression of the capitalist order to which the "diurnal" Robinson voluntarily submits himself, is meant to strengthen the reproductive logic of the novel, insofar as it transposes on the desert island the genital Oedipal sexuality aimed at procreation: in a rose meadow, identified with the maternal womb, he copulates with the mother-island, *Speranza*, and mandrakes grow in the spot where he used to ejaculate.

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17 On the *other* as the structure of perception, see the Deleuzian interpretation of Tournier's novel (Deleuze 1969). For a critique of Deleuze's approach, see Mengozzi (2017).

18 All the quotations from Tournier's novel are taken from Tournier (1972). If not indicated otherwise, all the translations are mine. "Il mangeait, le nez au sol, des choses innommables. Il faisait sous lui et manquait rarement de se rouler dans la molle tiédeur de ses propres dejections" (Tournier 1972, p. 38).

19 "Je veux, j'exige que tout autour de moi soit dorénavant mesuré, prouvé, certifié, mathématique, rationnel. [...] Je voudrais que chaque plante fût étiquetée, chaque oiseau bagué, chaque mammifère marqué au feu" (Tournier 1972, p. 67).

20 "Les habitants de l'île sont tenus pour autant qu'ils pensent, de le faire à haute et intelligible voix [...] Quiconque a pollué l'île de ses excréments sera puni d'un jour de jeune" (Tournier 1972, p. 74).

So far, the novel has proceeded under the sign of duplication. Robinson restlessly strives to transform the island into a copy of the society he knew before the shipwreck, while Tournier follows in Defoe's footsteps by reproducing his predecessor's hypotext. The narrative voice of the novel also reproduces itself by means of a curious and apparently unjustified device, which has always been neglected in previous interpretations: the events that occur on the island and in Robinson's mind are systematically reported twice: first, through a homodiegetic narrator (Robinson), and then through an extradiegetic one, who nevertheless always maintains Robinson's focalisation. This second voice seems perfectly in line with Robinson's account, but gradually introduces some slight, almost undetectable incoherencies and discrepancies, such as ironic adverbs, and sarcastic commentaries or syntagms that express uncertainty, sowing doubt in the reader as to whether Robinson's voice and point of view are to be considered as totally reliable.[21] It is precisely this unusual narrative strategy that anticipates and evokes from the beginning the central dynamics of the novel, which poses the iterability as the condition for creativity: the possibility of a new, inaugural act – the novel shows – is opened by, and occurs in, the temporal gaps that separate the different steps within the sequence of the iteration of sameness. This endeavour to redirect the normative and authoritative weight of the past by introducing shifts in the chain of repetitions (of practices, concepts, and canonical works) lies at the very core of the postcolonial "writing back".

Just as even the most "faithful" literary re-writing to the source-text cannot but imply a dialectic between continuity and innovation,[22] in the same manner, regardless of Robinson's will, his attempt to reproduce his previous society on the island cannot but fail and take unforeseen turns. While Defoe's Robinson, in his egocentric delirium, goes as far as to affirm that his solitary conversations with himself and with God are more enjoyable than any other pleasure provided by human company,[23] Tournier shows that, in the absence of others, the system re-built with such an effort goes round in circles, revealing itself as simply ridiculous and essentially absurd. On the one hand, the order imposed by Robinson (an order based on the correlation between capitalism and genital sexuality sub-

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[21] See for example, among many occurrences, the ceremony whereby Robinson officiates Friday's submission.

[22] On the transformative power of adaptation and its capacity to shed new light on the source-text, see Hutcheon (2006).

[23] "This made my Life better than sociable, for when I began to regret the want of Conversation, I would ask myself whether thus conversing mutually with my own Thoughts, and, as I hope I may say, with even God himself by Ejaculations, was not better than the utmost Enjoyment of humane Society in the World" (Defoe 2007, p. 115).

ordinated to the reproductive function) shows itself to be a completely pointless enterprise (for whom are the tons of rice cultivated? To whom is the legislation addressed? "The vanity of the whole enterprise appeared to him all of a sudden, overwhelming, indisputable".)[24] On the other, this same order is derailed and goes uncontrollably wrong (he copulates with his mother!). Nevertheless, Robinson, during all these solitary endeavours, will never question his administration, which seems to him the only possible guarantee against the impending risk of animality, as if humanity as such could be reduced to the features of western societies.

After the arrival of Friday, Robinson is no longer only a capitalist father, but he also becomes a slave-owner. There is no open conflict at stake between the two, because the roles of the master and the slave are already assigned by the normative frame of colonisation: convinced of his own superiority ("God sent me a companion. But for a quite obscure tour of his Holy Will, he chose him down to the lowest degree of the human scale"),[25] Robinson subjugates Friday and commences to civilise him. He does not need the recognition of the savage, but only his work. At first, Tournier pretends to obsequiously follow Defoe's model. In reality, he introduces some ironic twists into the plot imagined by Defoe, for instance by presenting the ceremony of Friday's submission in a grotesque and exaggerated way, or by turning Friday into a salaried slave, which is obviously meaningless considering the absence of a community: "He pays Friday. Half a gold sovereign each month. At first he had taken care to put an interest rate of 5.5% on the whole amount. Then, considering that Friday had mentally reached the age of discretion, he allowed him the free disposal of his arrearage".[26] A closer look, however, reveals that Tournier's novel departs from Defoe's in more subtle ways, insofar as it shows that the polarisation of the roles between the master and the slave may be fragile from the outset, already when Friday's submission seemed absolute. Robinson must recognise that his mastery is not self-evident, that his alleged control over Friday comes up against more and more insurmountable obstacles. Let us enumerate some of them.

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24 "La vanité de toute son œuvre lui apparut d'un coup, accablante, indiscutable" (Tournier 1972, p. 124).

25 "Dieu m'a envoyé un compagnon. Mais, par un tour assez obscur de sa Sainte Volonté, il l'a choisi au plus bas degré de l'échelle humaine" (Tournier 1972, p. 146)

26 "Il paie Vendredi. Un demi souverain d'or par mois. Au début il avait pris soin de placer la totalité de ces sommes à un intérêt de 5,5%. Puis considérant que Vendredi avait atteint mentalement l'âge de la raison, il lui lassa la libre disposition de ses arrérages" (Tournier 1972, p. 148).

a) "I would not venture to tell him 'love me', because I am all too aware that for the first time I would not be obeyed",[27] writes Robinson in his logbook. This order "love me!" – which expresses the master's most secret desire to be not only obeyed, but also loved by the servant – is clearly a double bind: the servant cannot follow the order without simultaneously infringing it, since genuine love has to be spontaneous by definition.

b) Friday's behaviour demonstrates that the subversion of the order imposed by the master starts where least expected. Friday, for instance, executes all Robinson's orders to the letter, including the most senseless ones (waxing the stones of the road; filling a hole by digging another, and so forth), and he does so without any resistance, introducing, on the contrary, the pleasure and the amusement where the master sees nothing other than humiliation. Without ever rebelling, Friday, in an unexpected and unintentional way, lays bare Robinson's power, brings to light its absurdity, lack of foundation, and perversion.

c) Colonial ideology and power are fundamentally contradictory. On the one hand, they postulate an essential dichotomy between human masters and subhuman slaves in order to legitimise subjugation; on the other, they aspire to eradicate native cultures and replace them with western languages, religions, institutions, and know-how, that is to turn the savage into a master's copy. It is therefore not surprising that the savage might adopt and internalise behaviours that seemed to be an exclusive prerogative of the master. Friday, as a matter of fact, behaves like the master and, notwithstanding Robinson's prohibition, will end up smoking his pipe and copulating with Speranza, also giving birth to striped mandrakes. What has therefore happened to the colonialist axiom of the insurmountable divide between "us" and "them"? And where is the boundary between mimicry and mockery?

d) Although the coloniser would like to turn the savage into a copy of himself, the outcome of this transformative endeavour will never be a perfect match. Friday continues to maintain a relationship with the surrounding world which is beyond Robinson's control and comprehension: "Friday must regularly dwell in this part of the island, leading a life there at the margins of the order and devoting himself to mysterious plays whose meaning he was unable to grasp [...]. These were clues to a secret universe which Robinson did

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27 "Je ne me risquerais jamais à lui dire 'aime-moi', parce que je sais trop que pour la première fois je ne serais pas obéi" (Tournier 1972, p. 154).

not have the key to".[28] In particular, in his free time, Friday establishes a relationship with nature and animals which, in Robinson's eyes, is unsettling and mysterious. For instance, he plants some bushes the other way around, but surprisingly these continue to grow and prosper; he dresses up some cactuses with cloth and jewellery retrieved from the wreck, and enjoys the company of this uncanny cortege; he refuses to distinguish between useful and noxious animals, and between domestic and wild, establishing the same disturbing intimacy with the dog, Tenn, and with some baby vultures, whom he feeds with maggots from his own mouth;[29] finally, as Robinson notes with a certain amount of surprise, Friday does not adopt a relationship of domination with animals, but treats them as equals, refusing to consider any other way of killing an animal than that of single combat, giving the latter an equal chance to survive.

In short, Robinson initially strives to build an auto-referential system on the island which blindly reproduces eighteenth-century England in a totally different environment. However, it is precisely at the time when he attempts to incorporate the otherness represented by Friday as one of the system's components that it reaches its crisis point: "Not only did the savage not blend harmoniously with the system, but – as a foreign body – he threatens to destroy it".[30]

Admittedly, there is still a long way to go from these critical points to the authentic emancipation of the slave. Neither the intrinsic and structural weakness of colonial domination, nor the ironic and playful twist given by Friday to Robinson's order, nor the regrets of the master, necessarily lead to the end of the relationships of dominance and dependence. In Tournier's novel, as earlier in Fanon, it is the slave's action that might neutralise them, but the content of this action remains undetermined: as mentioned above, Friday secretly smoked Robinson's pipe in the cave, and the massive explosion that results from this deed involves the suspension of the ancient order.

What is certain, in contrast, is that this rupture with the past is both destructive and creative: "He realised that his influence on the Savage had been zero. Friday had imperturbably – and unconsciously – prepared and then provoked

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28 "Vendredi devait séjourner régulièrement dans cette partie de l'île, y mener une vie en marge de l'ordre et s'y adonner à des jeux mystérieux dont le sens lui échappait. [...] était les indices d'un univers secret dont *R*obinson n'avait pas la clé" (Tournier 1972, p. 163).

29 This dichotomy between domestic/useful and wild/noxious animals is an important feature of Defoe's novel. See Armstrong (2008, pp. 5–48).

30 "Non seulement l'Auracan ne se fondait pas harmonieusement dans le système, mais – corps étranger – il menaçait de le détruire" (Tournier 1972, p. 164).

the cataclysm that would foreshadow the onset of a new era."[31] In the aftermath of the explosion, the systematic exploitation of the island's resources is interrupted in favour of a subsistence economy; Robinson stops tyrannising his companion and adapts himself to Friday's ways of life; his copulations with Speranza come to an end when he discovers another sexuality, elemental, aerial, and solar – as Robinson says – that allows him to powerfully enjoy the contact of his body with the surrounding world; he embraces a symbiotic relationship with nature, and he gets involved in a series of plays with his companion, "that in the past he would have judged incompatible with his dignity".[32] This way, even the sad memories of their previous relationship of dominance and subordination can be sublimated thanks to the parodic performances of the master-slave dialectic: they exchange their roles (Friday wearing Robinson's clothes and vice-versa), and they re-experience each step of their relation as a sort of cathartic act, as if to suggest that "the roles of the servant and the master, of the primitive and the civilised, became merely masks, always reversible" (Brugnolo 2017, p. 210). In a word, the instrumental relations to the other (whether human or not) falls away, giving way to a ludic one.

One might object that this is a very naive and utopian conclusion: isn't such a new beginning but a rehabilitation of the myth of the noble savage? Isn't Tournier simply giving voice to the western inner hope to be finally freed from the oppressive order that we ourselves established by projecting onto "the primitive other" the salvific action that we are not able to undertake alone? After all, we know that Robinson secretly awaited and wished for the cataclysm that finally occurred. Imagining the relationship between Europe and the rest under the sign of a "fair play" is certainly suggestive, but can the act of playing transform the general framework that contextualises and conditions our relation with the other? Ultimately, the act of playing is just a suspension of the current order, a way to put it into brackets.

Instead of judging naive this kind of conclusion, it would be more appropriate to understand its historical reasons by mentioning two facts. First, Tournier – unlike Fanon who represents the natives' point of view and feels free to openly criticise idealised African primitivism embodied by Negritude – writes as a European white man. For this reason, not only does he choose to take Robinson's point of view so as not to fall into the trap of speaking for the subaltern, but he also considers it crucial to recognise the intrinsic value of native cultures

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31 "Il se rendait compte que son influence sur l'Auracan avait été nulle. Vendredi avait imperturbablement – et inconsciemment – prépare puis provoqué le cataclysme qui préluderait à l'avènement d'une ère nouvelle" (Tournier 1972, p. 154).

32 "Qu'il aurait jugés autrefois incompatibles avec sa dignité" (Tournier 1972, p. 192).

(here represented by Friday) as alternative (and not inferior) paths in human history (let us recall that Tournier wrote this novel after he followed Lévi-Strauss' classes at the *Musée de l'homme* in Paris). Secondly, after the independence of most colonies in the 1960s, and the arrival to France of massive flow of immigrants, the stress can be no longer put on the struggle, but rather on how to learn to encounter difference and thereby live with others. Tournier's novel takes up and develops what Fanon evokes only fleetingly in the very conclusion of *Black Skin, White Masks*, where, drawing away from the two false alternatives of domination and subordination, he resolutely affirms the primacy of the "you" in the intersubjective relations: "Superiority? Inferiority? Why not the quite simple attempt to touch the other, to feel the other, to explain the other to myself? Was my freedom not given to me then in order to build the world of the You?" (Fanon 2008, p. 181).

Whether realist or not, by focusing on the playful interactions, Tournier's novel urges us to think of an alternative to the instrumental relation with the other that used to characterise Robinson's order, and opens up a new way of conceiving self-creativity as an intersubjective enterprise that allows us to bypass the need of the struggle while preserving the opacity of the other, since in order to play with someone, you do not necessarily need to know the other's identity, nor assume the transparency of their inner reality. This way, unlike most postcolonial intellectuals, Tournier does not raise the question of otherness in terms of speech that would be, first, conquered, extorted, or denied, and then given or taken, but he apprehends it in more pragmatic terms: what can we do together? What if we thought of the other as not a limitation but as the very condition of my agency? How do we reciprocally implement, enlarge, and intensify each other's capacity to act? Moreover, through the practice of playing, Tournier's novel relocates the boundaries between the human and the nonhuman, challenging the exclusive identification of alterity to a human face. As Huizinga put it in *Homo ludens* (1949), the play exceeds the traditional categorical antithesis, such as truth/falsity, good/evil, wisdom/madness, nature/culture. In the play, biology (animals play like us, that is, freely, within a precise spatio-temporal frame, in order to have fun and learn) reaches and mingles with culture (the rule of playing, freely accepted but absolutely binding, is to be the model for societal life, similarly based on a delicate balance between freedoms and obligations). In a word, in the act of playing the porosity between nature and culture becomes apparent.

It must also be said that the novel does not end here, with Robinson and Friday cheerfully playing together.[33] Unlikely as it may have seemed, the relationship between Robinson and Friday is far from being represented as a timeless idyll. On the thresholds of the book, Friday affirms his freedom, vanishing from the island as well as from Tournier's fictive universe. In the same way we freely get out of a play, without giving any particular reasons, he simply leaves.

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33 At least not the first version of the novel, before Tournier adapted it for young adults.

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Josef Šebek

"Sketch for a Self-Analysis": Self-Reflexivity in Bourdieu's Approach to Literature

Abstract: This contribution explores how the pivotal role Pierre Bourdieu ascribes to self-reflexivity, in his theorisation of research in the social sciences and humanities, plays out in his theory of the literary field. According to Bourdieu, the concept of self-reflexivity is the most powerful methodological tool against the "scholastic point of view" typical of the academe, which imputes its own social logic to any object studied and is unable to account for the "practical logic" governing other social fields. A truly self-reflexive research should take into account the relation of the scholar to the social space, to the specific scholarly field in question and to the general conditions of the scholastic point of view. After an outline of Bourdieu's concept of self-reflexivity the chapter turns to the book *The Rules of Art* (1992) and asks how the general theoretical framework of self-reflexivity fits into the theory of the literary field.

Keywords: self-reflexivity; sociology of literature; sociology of science; literary theory; Pierre Bourdieu; author; habitus; literary field

1 Introduction

In the context of the social sciences and humanities, the idea of self-reflexivity is by no means new or surprising. In the second half of the twentieth century, in anthropology, sociology and many other disciplines, theorisation of the research process itself was understood to be one of the most urgent priorities. It also provoked the relatively new branch of the social theory of science which found its disciplinary voice with Robert K. Merton, David Bloor, and Bruno Latour. In the domain of literary criticism and literary theory the imperative to self-reflexivity has been perhaps even stronger and, since the 1960s, it has been embodied in quite varying approaches: from reader-response theory (especially in the variant advanced by Hans Robert Jauss, Wolfgang Iser and inspired by Gadamer's hermeneutic), through post-structuralism and deconstruction (Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, etc.), new historicism and cultural materialism, feminist, queer and postcolonial criticism, to the new sociology of literature that aims to bridge the gap between the social sciences and humanities.

Needless to say, these are profoundly different ways of looking at literature, leading to more than one concept of self-reflexivity. These concepts can be reduced, however, to one basic assumption: self-reflexivity always stems from an awareness of the involvement of the scholar in the object of study, of the fact that the subject inevitably participates in the construction of the object studied. When we approach a literary text – and the analysis and interpretation of texts is at the core of any literary-critical project, even the "purely" theoretical one – we inescapably approach it from the point of view of readers embedded in particular historical and cultural frameworks, as well as scholars endowed with certain information, concepts and specific *doxa* anchored in the discourse of our (sub)discipline. (The relation between these two contexts is a difficult matter in itself.) In order to avoid the universalisation of our perspective, which would compromise our attempt at critical analysis, we have to incorporate this awareness into our scholarly methods and strategies.

The point is that this basic challenge in literary research (and in any research, although the challenges of self-reflexivity in particular disciplines differ) cannot be overcome simply by "bracketing" the involvement of the researcher, methodologically and/or rhetorically, so as to exclude it from the object of research. Many approaches to literary analysis thus turn self-reflexivity into a methodological imperative: it takes up the form of the historical hermeneutic circle in reader-response theory, the two-way exchange between the culture studied and the culture of the scholar in new historicism, or the political commitment in cultural materialism and theories based on the "politics and poetics of social difference" (feminism, queer theory, etc.). It also has to be said that even the fact that an approach is overtly self-reflexive does not prevent it from facing extremely difficult questions and aporias, be it in the form of the paradoxes of historicism or in the form of universalisation of certain political affiliations.

In this contribution I will focus on a theory that deliberately centres itself around self-reflexivity, and not only in the domain of literary studies: Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of literature, put under the umbrella of the "literary field". In Bourdieu's theory of practice, habitus and social fields, the intention to "objectify [...] the subject of objectification" (Bourdieu 2000, p. 10) – to objectify, in other words, the scholar embedded in a particular scholarly field as well as in the larger social space – is virtually omnipresent. The strength of this emphasis on self-reflexivity is extraordinary and perhaps beyond comparison in contemporary social science. This holds for Bourdieu's theory of literature as well; but as I will try to show, a truly self-reflexive theory of the literary field is difficult to achieve.

In order to demonstrate this, I will proceed in the following steps. First, I will sketch the role self-reflexivity "plays" in Bourdieu's theory of action and I will

analyse its principal forms. Then I will focus on two of his works that emphasise self-reflexivity by way of using narrative strategies, that is, by letting the social agent (the agent studied and/or the researcher) "speak". Subsequently I will turn to his book *The Rules of Art* (first published in 1992) that incorporates most of his writings on literature and proposes a "new science of works" based on his theory of the literary field; specifically, I will ask how the general theoretical postulates of self-reflexivity are realised in the book. Finally, I will follow several directions that critique the notion of self-reflexivity in Bourdieu's theory of literature, with the help of current French "post-Bourdieusian" research. I should clarify here that my objective is not to demonstrate that self-reflexivity within the field theory simply doesn't "work" but rather to point out the difficulty of achieving a "practical" self-reflexivity, even within a theoretical framework that genuinely attempts to reconstruct the positions of social agents and the inner logic of their actions.

2 A Self-Reflexive Social Theory of Science and Knowledge Production

Bourdieu's theory of the literary field is part of his project on the analysis of social fields, including fields of cultural production. The whole project in turn is framed by his theory of practice structured around the concept of habitus. In the initial stages of the formation of his theory, Bourdieu had to come to terms with structuralism – at that time the most innovative approach – in anthropology, philosophy and linguistics. His concept of the social field owes much to such major figures of sociology as Max Weber and Émile Durkheim (which he preferred to most American sociologists of his time) as well as to the structuralist notion that elements are determined by their mutual relations, and that the human subject is at least pre-determined if not fully constituted by social structures. However, Bourdieu wanted to avoid the objectivism of structure implied by these notions, and so set out in his own notion of habitus to establish a set of socially "sedimented" dispositions of the subject, incorporating the social history of the social agent into the wider social space and/or in a particular field.[1] In the effort to grasp the relation of habitus and field as they apply to different social fields, the idea of self-reflexivity has gradually become central: the awareness of the involvement of the scholar in the object of his study and of the

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1 For the general outline of Bourdieu's theory of social action and habitus, see esp. Bourdieu (1977); Bourdieu (1990).

way his own position in a particular disciplinary field influences the way he approaches the object. In other words, it involves a degree of awareness on the part of the researcher that his position mirrors the agent that is the object of his study; he too, as a researcher, functions as an agent in a particular field and in the wider social space. The situation of the scholar is at the same time strange (he makes the object of his examination a human subject similar to himself, thus reclaiming certain sovereignty over this other subject) and necessary (it is not possible to improve the understanding of our society without objectifying other subjects in this way). Moreover, the analysis of human individuals and social groups inevitably poses questions concerning the behaviour of the scholar as a member of a certain social group, and as a vehicle of certain assumptions and social logic no less "hidden" than the logic of the subject studied. Ignoring this basic constellation only exacerbates an already precarious situation. Since self-reflexivity is so thoroughly embedded in Bourdieu's approach and explicitly theorised in many of his books and articles, I will seek only to outline the problematic rather than addressing it in an exhaustive manner. Nevertheless, after capturing its central aspects, I hope to be able to assess to what degree these assumptions concerning self-reflexivity are realised in *The Rules of Art*.

According to Yves Gingras (2004), reflexivity[2] was important in Bourdieu's sociology (not only) of science from the beginning but did not appear explicitly in his work before the 1990s (partially as a retroactive effect of the reception of his work in the Anglo-Saxon world, where the concept had already been established). Since then, it has become prominent in almost all of his books, including *Pascalian Meditations* (2000), the "eponymous" *Science of Science and Reflexivity* (2004), and *Sketch for a Self-Analysis* (2008). In his lucid analysis, Gingras identifies two possible meanings for "reflexivity" as it has been applied in social theory: it is either the "epistemic reflexivity" which consists in the examination of the general social conditions of research (especially questions of social class, power structures, and political issues), or "sociological reflexivity" which focuses on the position of the researcher in the particular scholarly field and the overall character of the field. If we follow Gingras' categorisation, we see that Bourdieu proceeds from the basic "epistemic reflexivity" to "sociological reflexivity", and from there to yet a third form that involves the peculiar characteristics of scientific and philosophical knowledge in the social world (especially in his works on the "scholastic reason", the academe, etc.; see Bourdieu 2000, p. 10).

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2 In sociology, the most common term is "reflexivity". This term also appears in Bourdieu's texts and their English translations; it designates turning the reflection towards the subject and the process of research. Since the framework of this chapter is literary-theoretical, I use the term "self-reflexivity", a term prevalent in literary criticism.

Bourdieu defines the motivations for his self-reflexive approach in sociological and anthropological research in the following way:

> First, the principle of the most serious errors or illusions of anthropological thought [...], and in particular the vision of the agent as a conscious, rational, unconditioned individual (or "subject"), lies in the social conditions of production of anthropological discourse, in other words in the structure and functioning of the fields in which discourse on "humanity" is produced. Secondly, there can be thought about the social conditions of thought which offers thought the possibility of a genuine *freedom* with respect to those conditions. (Bourdieu 2000, p. 118)

And he continues:

> To practise reflexivity means questioning the privilege of a knowing 'subject' arbitrarily excluded from the effort of objectification. It means endeavouring to account for the empirical 'subject' of scientific practice in the terms of the objectivity constructed by the scientific 'subject' – in particular by situating him at a determinate point in social space-time [...]. (Bourdieu 2000, p. 119)

The self-reflexive approach Bourdieu offers should therefore not only make visible these hidden presuppositions and automatisms but also give us a means to overcome them. According to him, historical sciences

> [b]y turning the instruments of knowledge that they produce against themselves, and especially against the social universes in which they produce them, [...] equip themselves with the means of at least partially escaping from the economic and social determinisms that they reveal and of dispelling the threat of historicist relativisation that they contain [...]. (Bourdieu 2000, p. 121)

This is precisely the programme of self-reflexive research Bourdieu subscribes to.

At the centre of *Pascalian Meditations* from which these quotations have been taken is the third "stage" of reflexivity, the "scholastic point of view" typical of the academe as it has developed historically. According to Bourdieu, the position of the academe in society as well as its relationship to the human subjects it studies is strangely privileged. At the same time, this "point of view" remains unaware of the historical conditions of its own genesis, specifically with regard to the *skholè* in which it is firmly rooted. Bourdieu uses the term *skholè* here to refer to the time available for accumulating cultural/symbolic capital in the form of knowledge, and to the material conditions necessary for acts of "pure" reflection. By virtue of its own detachment from the "practical point of view", the "scholastic point of view" is in fact incapable of grasping the logic of action in other, non-academic fields: the scholar unconsciously projects his ways of thinking and reasoning onto the object of his analysis, thus imputing de-

tached, rationalist, theoretical logic to social agents who have no need for such a logic since they are not partaking in the "scholastic point of view". This can be overcome – at least partially – by making oneself "the object of objectification". As we have seen, "objectifying" here involves not only thinking of oneself in an introspective manner or as an individual but putting oneself – in an "auto-analytical" way – into the disciplinary context of the respective field and of the "scholastic" world as such. Sociology and anthropology are potentially equipped for such a self-reflexive endeavour, but this requirement holds for philosophy as well, which in *Pascalian Meditations* and some of Bourdieu's other works is under close scrutiny.[3]

What is most crucial here is the imperative not to impute the "scholastic" categories of perception to the practical categories of action of the agents under consideration, since this inevitably leads to the assimilation of the logic of action in the given field into the logic of action typical of the scholar himself:

> Projecting his theoretical thinking into the heads of acting agents, the researcher presents the world as he thinks it (that is, as an object of contemplation, a representation, a spectacle) as if it were the world as it presents itself to those who do not have the leisure (or the desire) to withdraw from it in order to think it. (Bourdieu 2000, p. 51)

The only way to transcend this fatal encapsulation of the "scholastic point of view" is a self-reflexive enterprise whereby one makes of oneself the object of scientific objectification: it is necessary to grasp the scholar-agent in the context of the particular disciplinary field and by this to "objectify" his intentions and strategies. Thus, an analysis of certain agents and/or fields always has to be an auto-analysis as well:

> We [scholars] are no less separate, in this respect, from [our] own practical experience than we are from the practical experience of others. Indeed, simply because we pause in thought over our practice, because we turn back to it to consider it, describe it, analyse it, we become in a sense absent from it; we tend to substitute for the active agent the reflecting "subject", for practical knowledge the theoretical knowledge which selects significant features, pertinent indices (as in autobiographical narratives) and which, more profoundly, performs an essential alteration of experience [...]. (Bourdieu 2000, pp. 51–52).

Interestingly enough, the activity of the scholar ultimately has "practical" character as well. However, to a large degree, the awareness of this fact remains inaccessible to him, due to the "scholastic illusion" in operation, in the same man-

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3 Bourdieu himself studied philosophy and only later "converted" to anthropology and sociology.

ner as the scholar tends to be misled when he tries to analyse the behaviour of an agent in a "non-scholarly" field. Genuine self-reflexivity thus enables the scholar to restore, or at least make visible, the logic of action in his own field as well as in those he studies.

The study of fields of cultural production, among which belongs the literary field, has certain unique aspects. In my view, the most important difference here is that the social practices of cultural production results not only in decisions, relationships, practices, etc. but works that traditionally become primary objects of scholarly examination. Unlike other fields, these fields produce artistic objects as their ultimate objective and carrier of value. And, as Bourdieu maintains, it is here that the "reification" of these objects – that is, of the intentions, strategies and practices of social agents that result in these objects – is most perceptible:

> The work as it presents itself, that is, as an *opus operatum*, totalised and canonised in the form of a corpus of "complete works" torn from the time of its composition and capable of being run through in all directions, obscures the work in the process of construction and above all the *modus operandi* of which it is the product. And this leads them [scholars, J. Š] to proceed as if the logic that emerges from the retrospective, totalising, detemporalising reading of the *lector* had, from the beginning, been at the heart of the creative action of the *auctor*. (Bourdieu 2000, p. 53)

Bourdieu therefore suggests placing literary and artistic works back into the historical context of their genesis and treating them as the stakes or "position-takings" (*prises de position*) of the social agents who create them. It is only through such "dereification" and contextualisation that the genuine meaning of these works can become intelligible. What is necessary here is to reconstruct the "point of view" of the author so as to understand the behaviour of agents in the field of cultural production in relation to the object produced. Analysis of this relationship leads in turn to the reconstruction of the space of positions – the "space of possibles" – from the author's point of view: the literary field as such. In Bourdieu's theory an object can only be understood on the basis of its relationship to the human agent who produced it (typically its author), or to the successive agents who surround it with further discourse (critics, but also publishers, etc.). In fact, objects are only intelligible as "exteriorisations" of human intentions that are typically of a social and collective rather than individual nature. The interpretation of these objects then restores the "problematic" they relate to as the true signification of the objects themselves. (It also follows that these objects don't have any intrinsic value since their value is derived from the position of their authors in a particular field.) This is certainly a daring statement given the kind of objects in question (literary texts, works of art),

which are more commonly understood to be ambivalent and polysemic. I will return to this in the following sections.

It needs to be added that Bourdieu is aware of the fact that the "self-objectification" of the scholar is possible only to a certain degree:

> To explore and make explicit all the commitments and proclivities associated with the interests and habits of thought linked to occupation of a position (to be won or defended) in a field are, strictly speaking, infinite tasks. One would be falling into a form of the scholastic illusion of the omnipotence of thought if one were to believe it possible to take an absolute point of view on one's own point of view. (Bourdieu 2000, p. 119)

However, the social character of self-reflexivity thus construed guarantees a form of objectivity; and the principles of scientific fields themselves – with their competitiveness and mutual recognition (or rejection) of agents – can naturally contribute to self-reflexivity if it is accepted as an intrinsic component of the research.

In *Science of Science and Reflexivity* (2004), his last course at Collège de France, Bourdieu presents a concrete and detailed examination of different approaches in the theory of science and compares them with his own, that is, the field theory applied to the sociology of science itself. As we have seen, any sociology of a particular field must be to some extent the sociology of the scientific enterprise and of the scholar himself; this is the main methodological imperative of self-reflexivity. In *Science of Science and Reflexivity* Bourdieu sketches a more thorough picture of how self-reflexivity in research can be obtained. He advances three beliefs in particular that are crucial here: first, that true self-reflexivity is achievable and that it grounds the research in objectivity; second, that science can reasonably aim at such objectivity, and by objectifying itself it can come closer to this goal and avoid being determined by its own "historical apriori"; third, that the very structure of the scientific field contributes to the valuation of self-reflexivity because it imposes rigorous epistemological demands on the methods and results of research.

The underlying aim is to achieve some form of objectivity through the work of self-reflexivity. But how can such objectivity be achieved? First, a certain degree of self-reflexivity is embedded in the requirements of scientific fields themselves: for example, the strict regulation of competition among those seeking scientific validation. Unlike Bruno Latour and Stephen Woolgar, Bourdieu firmly believes in the "rules of the scientific game" (its autonomy being the crucial aspect of the scientific field, similar to the role of autonomy in literary and artistic fields) and maintains that "the truth recognised by scientific field is irreducible to its historical and social conditions of production" (Bourdieu 2004, p. 84). Reflexivity also plays a role in the culmination of this effect:

> it is a particularly effective means of increasing the chances of attaining truth by increasing the cross-controls and providing the principles of a technical critique, which makes it possible to keep closer watch over the factors capable of biasing research. It is not a matter of pursuing a new form of absolute knowledge, but of exercising a specific form of epistemological vigilance, the very form that this vigilance must take in an area where the epistemological obstacles are first and foremost social obstacles. (Bourdieu 2004, p. 89)

Bourdieu returns here to the notion of "epistemological vigilance" coined by Gaston Bachelard in his epistemology of science.

The idea of a self-reflexive "science of science" (that is, the sociology of science) is remarkable in itself, confronting us with a vertiginous *mise en abyme*. However, Bourdieu maintains that it implies instead a "spiral" character, one that may be regulated or halted at any reasonable point by the mutual control of social agents:

> Far from fearing this mirror – or boomerang – effect, in taking science as the object of my analysis I am deliberately aiming to expose myself, and all those who write about the social world, to a generalised reflexivity. One of my aims is to provide cognitive tools that can be turned back on the subject of the cognition, not in order to discredit scientific knowledge, but rather to check and strengthen it. [...] Casting an ironic gaze on the social world, a gaze which unveils, unmasks, brings to light what is hidden, it cannot avoid casting this gaze on itself – with the intention not of destroying sociology but rather of serving it, using the sociology of sociology in order to make a better sociology. (Bourdieu 2004, p. 4)

What Bourdieu seems to imply here is the unique epistemological position of sociology and anthropology. These disciplines are far better equipped to reflect upon themselves, as well as on other disciplines, than physics or musicology, for example. This is typical for Bourdieu: he regards sociology as a privileged channel to the social world, capable simultaneously of maintaining its scientific character and accounting for the logic of behaviour of social agents in the radically diverse fields and spheres that make up the social space. I would therefore argue that it is here – in the overestimation of the epistemological privilege of sociology – that we find a potential, deeply-rooted problem for self-reflexivity. One thinks immediately of Bourdieu's imperative not to replace the logic of action of agents in different social fields with that of the scholar.

However, in an interesting move, Bourdieu provides a concrete example of how to "objectify" oneself by analysing his own professional curriculum vitae in terms of his habitus and the "space of possibles" that was offered to him, as well as major agents in the fields he was aspiring to enter. (He later reworked this chapter from *Science of Science and Reflexivity* into a separate book, *Sketch for a Self-Analysis*.) I will therefore briefly turn to one prominent method by which Bourdieu attempts to overcome the over-imposition of the scholar vis-à-

vis the agent studied, one that consists in letting the agent "speak for himself" and produce a specific form of ego-narrative. Such narratives seem to be a natural way to trace the logic of one's action or give sense to a series of one's actions and may therefore be more suitable than theoretical descriptions. In Bourdieu's case they acquire peculiar shape and meaning.

3 Narratives as Vehicles of Self-Reflexivity

As we have seen, one of the crucial demands of self-reflexivity is that the scholar tries not to silence or "overlay" the voices of social agents he studies. In his efforts to understand the social regularities that determine the position and trajectory of an agent, including that agent's habitus, motivations and strategies, it is all too easy for the scholar to take over the point of view of the agent – under the impression that he sees "more clearly" from that point of view than the agent himself. It might be possible to avoid such generalisations by falling back on narratives produced by the social agent. Bourdieu employs this technique on several occasions. I will focus here on two rather different types of narrativisation.

The first of them is the short, posthumously published book *The Sketch for a Self-Analysis* (2008). Here Bourdieu speaks about himself in narrative fashion, making himself the object of his own analysis while reflecting upon his scientific trajectory and the positions he has occupied in various professional fields. The title is reminiscent of another rather paradoxical endeavour: Sigmund Freud analysing himself.[4] Bourdieu famously introduces his book with the pronouncement: "This is not an autobiography." The sequence of narratives he provides regarding his own positions and "points of view" within different fields – his university education, philosophy, anthropology, sociology but also the intellectual field as a whole – is supplemented by passages about his family, his primary and secondary education, and his experience in Algeria. However, in each story he is sure to emphasise aspects that express general regularities and surpass unique individual experience. This stems from his efforts of "self-objectification": "I have that much more chance of being objective the more completely I have objectivated my own (social, academic, etc.) position and interests, in particular the specifically academic ones, linked to that position." (Bourdieu 2004,

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4 Bourdieu's term "socioanalysis" is modelled on psychoanalysis. Although Bourdieu is critical of the psychoanalytic approach and of the position of this discipline as one of the most "scholastic", he describes, on the other hand, the intentions of his own research as "organising the return of the repressed" (Bourdieu 2008, p. 112).

p. 92) Bourdieu is at pains to distinguish this kind of self-objectification from autobiography: "what has to be objectivated is not the lived experience of the knowing subject, but the social conditions of possibility, and therefore the effects and limits, of this experience and, among other things, the act of the objectivation." (Bourdieu 2004, p. 93) The individual always should reveal itself *qua* social.

The statement "This is not an autobiography" should be read as an utterance by which the author distances himself from the "flaws" of the traditional autobiography, and points instead to the methodological framework of the ideal self-reflexive science. What we get is a description of the social trajectory and the series of points of view adopted by the narrator-agent. Bourdieu thus applies the "logic of practical action" on himself. After all, who has more privileged access to one's own point of view? And yet, any form of ego-narration inevitably raises questions concerning the author's self-transparency, the *post-factum* reconstruction, and the genre (which he claims to reject, but cannot ultimately avoid). This remarkable text thus becomes the narrative odyssey of the difficulties and aporias of self-objectification.[5]

Another example of narrativisation can be found in the book *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society* (1999) by Bourdieu and his collaborators. In his previous works he relied predominantly on statistical research, so that the various idiosyncrasies and points of view of social agents tended to "evaporate" during the processing of the data.[6] Bourdieu has always used examples and occasionally cited the agents; however, the overall results were rather impersonal. In *The Weight of the World* it is the other way round: the book is based on a series of structured interviews with French citizens, each one accompanied by the interviewer's introduction. The central conceit of the book is that interviews with social agents speaking in their own voices can "put flesh" on research, in this way exposing the regularities and inner logic of various social positions and points of view, at the same time preserving – at least partially – the raw material produced by the agents themselves. It is hard not to see here a kind of "socioanalysis" whereby the sociologist (modelling himself on the figure of the psychoanalyst) works with an agent to reveal the "social unconscious" through a collaboration on his narrative, its framing and interpretation.

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5 Interestingly, Bourdieu has become the object of this kind of contextualisation in scholarly fields by others as well: see, for example, Pinto (2002); Heinich (2007); and several contributions in the volume Pinto/Sapiro/Champagne (2004).

6 See esp. his "magnum opus" *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Bourdieu 1984).

The resulting book – which offers a striking contrast to *Sketch for a Self-Analysis* for both its length and collaborative aspect – is an interesting object of methodological and rhetorical reflection. The introductory texts that accompany the interviews feature titles in the form of concise summaries: "The Temp's Dream" or "A Compromising Success". Additionally, the interviews are grouped into sections by theme and supplemented by general essays on related and/or overarching topics. The manner of conducting and editing each interview is of utmost importance. It is evidently the task of the sociologist to work with the material in a methodologically transparent and honest way; no one may proceed under the illusion that an interview has succeeded in capturing "reality itself". This effort on the part researchers to avoid imposing the scholastic point of view on the social agent, to let the agent speak even when it runs up against the cognitive frameworks and expectations of the researchers, can be found in all aspects of the collection.

4 The "Author's Point of View"

Let's now turn finally to literature, and to Bourdieu's influential book *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, first published in 1992 and containing – in revised format – texts by the author going back to the late 1960s. I will limit myself to several key aspects of the book that are crucial for the question of self-reflexivity.

The notion of "sociological reflexivity" is presented here in a comprehensive discussion of the field of contemporary literary theory that spans from formalism to Marxism. Bourdieu's objective is to integrate two divergent ways of reading literary texts, immanent and social-contextual, into one overarching methodology. He claims that he can overcome the flaws of both extremes by reading literary texts as a particular position (or set of positions) adopted in the literary field. He is preoccupied with the French literary field of the second half of the nineteenth century, especially with Gustave Flaubert and his *Sentimental Education*, published in 1869. His reading of Flaubert's novel as both socioanalysis and social autoanalysis (see Bourdieu's own *Sketch*) is remarkable and convincing. Absent from the book, however, are readings and interpretations of other literary works, which are reduced instead to groupings of general "aspects" – by literary school, style, genre, and theme – that are meant to represent the actual position-taking of authors. If we carefully read the long section dealing with literary criticism, we find that Bourdieu does not critically focus on himself as a sociologist entering into the field of literary criticism, bringing into it a certain "point of view" and disciplinary *doxa* – in the spirit of his general demands for scientific

reflexivity. Rather, he insistently and eloquently argues for the privileged place of sociology vis-à-vis the substantial flaws and biases of other contemporary literary-theoretical and interpretive approaches.

Let's now turn to the crucial question of the relation of the scholar to the agent studied: How does the book fulfil the imperative not to "silence" the social agent in question, not to impute to him the logic of the scholastic field? It is evident that Bourdieu theorises literature *qua* social micro-world, and that an interpretation of a literary work as well as the reconstruction of the literary field in the particular moment of its development is unthinkable without the pivotal role of social agents. The key agent of the literary field is the author, determined by his habitus (consisting of the general social dispositions transmuted into specific dispositions in the field) which co-determines his position-taking and trajectory in the field. Unlike in many other social fields, the opposition of habitus and field (as subjective and objective structure) is complemented here by a third figure: the literary text. The author thus mediates between the text and the field – or, as Bourdieu puts it, "'the action of works upon works' [...] is only ever exercised by the intermediary of authors" (Bourdieu 1996, p. 199).

Bourdieu criticises the biographic approach that seeks to make sense of the author's personality (and of the work) by way of his social origin and personal idiosyncrasies. For Bourdieu, the cardinal example of this approach is Sartre's three-volume opus on Flaubert. Sartre attempts to find the logic of the literary personality where, according to Bourdieu, it could never be found; outside the literary field. Bourdieu's concept of the author is more restricted: the author becomes himself through the adoption of positions (by using certain generic or poetic forms, narrative modes, etc.) in the space of positions (that is, in the literary field as such) which is mediated – in the mind and body of the author – by his dispositions (habitus) and by the space of possibles which is the literary field (Bourdieu 1996, pp. 233–4, 256–7). All information about the author's life gains relevance exclusively through the prism of the field.

In his conception, Bourdieu takes into account the intentions of the author: when an author creates a work, he makes particular choices in order to achieve certain effects or to avoid certain generic, stylistic and other relations to the competing positions in the field. If we want to analyse the work, we have to take these choices into consideration. Bourdieu is convinced that it is possible to reconstruct the author's point of view in a given moment (Bourdieu 1996, pp. 106–30) and that "[b]iographical analysis thus understood can lead us to the principles of the evolution of the work of art in the course of time" (Bourdieu 1996, p. 260). In other words, the contextualisation of the literary work with reference to the author (via the author with the literary field) ensures the most adequate

understanding of the work itself, which means as an adoption of particular positions in the field.

The point of view of the author is the crucial term: it is the vanishing point where the social agent is present in the fullest. Bourdieu claims that it is possible – indeed critical – to reconstruct this point of view. The only aspects that matter, in this case, pertain to the literary field, and all that is meant by the "point of view of the author" is the description of his position at a given moment of the development of the field. Consequently, this also means that the author may be described from the point of view of the field. How can we take into account all the relevant intervening factors? Bourdieu's reconstruction of Flaubert's (and partially also Baudelaire's) point of view is based on their literary works, but even more on their essays and ego-documents: memoirs, correspondence, or notes. Yet even these textual traces are ultimately subject to interpretation. Indeed, to appeal to them in the course of an argument is also to select and interpret them, to call on them to serve the argument. Many documents are missing – though it is quite possibly meaningless to speak of missing evidence in a situation where, in the case of most authors, the process of creation is not well documented, certainly not in continuous fashion.

Moreover – and significantly – the question poses itself: Who "speaks" here? As Geoffroy de Lagasnerie, one of Bourdieu's recent commentators, aptly puts it, since the author doesn't have to be fully aware of the space of positions, nor his strategies fully conscious or intentional (the textual traces of which, in any case, are typically not at hand), it then falls on the researcher to capture the relevant circumstances and the whole range of his motivations, on the basis of the analysis of the author's position in the field. Thus, when Bourdieu analyses "Flaubert's point of view", it is as if he was able to "know" not just what Flaubert himself knew but also what Flaubert did not or even could not know. In other words, Bourdieu's field theory presupposes the epistemic sovereignty of the scholar over the agent of the field in consideration (see Lagasnerie 2011b, pp. 117–120). The sociologist speaks here in the name of the author. Indeed, can we get a valid description of the actual point of view of an agent when many of the relevant factors are only evident retrospectively, from the perspective of later research and models of literary development? Are we dealing here with the agent, or with the scholar's reconstruction of the field in the guise of the point of view of the social agent? Or is this based on a retrospective illusion of transparency which is not typical of the "practical" perception of the authors themselves (see the questions of the "practical" vs. "scholastic" point of view above).[7]

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7 Lagasnerie's book is one of the most succinct critical accounts of Bourdieu's theory of fields of

However, the problematic is even more layered in the book: Bourdieu assumes a certain *mise en abyme* effect between the hero of Flaubert's *Sentimental Education*, Frédéric Moreau, and Flaubert the author, as well as the reader and literary sociologist analysing the novel. Flaubert serves here as a model of self-objectification: the reader and the researcher can find inspiration in Flaubert's example to set off on their own socially self-objectifying journey. On the one hand, the author becomes paradigm for the reader as well as for the researcher and an interesting and somewhat hidden aspect of literature comes to the forefront.[8] On the other, the author is expected by the analyst to perform the task the analyst wants to perform himself: to (re)construct the space of positions in the field, as well as the individual but socially grounded point of view. Not many literary works are self-reflexive to such a degree as *Sentimental Education* (not even Flaubert's other novels and short stories). This unique aspect of the novel makes it an excellent hermeneutical tool for the purposes Bourdieu wants to pursue, but it also seems to diminish the possibility of finding such hermeneutically fertile grounds in the case of most other literary texts.[9] Lacking the same degree of self-reflexivity, they can be analysed in relation to the literary field, its positions and position-takings, mostly through the abovementioned labels of literary school, style, theme, or genre.[10]

It would be wise to take note here of a warning Bourdieu himself expresses in the context of his self-analysis, but which is also pertinent to the reconstruction of the point of view of the author:

> The fact that I am [...] both subject and object of the analysis compounds a very common difficulty of sociological analysis – the danger that the "objective intentions", which are brought out by analysis, will appear as express intentions, intentional strategies, explicit

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cultural production from a sympathetic viewpoint; the author focuses especially on the question of mutual separation of social fields and of the reception of literary works and meaning production outside the literary field. See also Lagasnerie's own theory of intellectual creation (Lagasnerie 2011a). For the problem of self-reflexivity, the author's point of view, and interpretation in *The Rules of Art*, see also Macherey (2010).

8 See the last paragraph of the *Sketch for a Self-Analysis:* "I have never thought that I was committing an act of sacrilegious arrogance when I posited, without taking myself for the artist, like so many inspired critics, that Flaubert or Manet was a person like me. And nothing would make me happier than having made it possible for some of my readers to recognise their own experiences, difficulties, questionings, sufferings, and so on, in mine, and to draw from that realistic identification, which is quite the opposite of an exalted projection, some means of doing what they do, and living what they live, a little bit better." (Bourdieu 2008, pp. 112–113)

9 However, there are other interesting contemporary attempts to read literary texts as "socioanalyses"; see for example Dubois (1997) for Proust, and Dubois (2007) for Stendhal.

10 On the "mirroring" effect between Flaubert and Bourdieu see also Dubois (2010).

projects, in the particular case the conscious or quasi-cynical intention of safeguarding a threatened symbolic capital. (Bourdieu 2008, p. 69)

We are faced here with the problem of imputing "objective intentions", which are properly based on the overall picture of the field (an account of which may or may not be possible), to the personal will of the social agent (the author).

At this point I would like to return briefly to the question of narratives as vehicles of self-reflexivity. Is the problem here that Bourdieu deals with dead authors and is therefore compelled to draw on existing textual sources – ego-documents and other materials as well as literary texts? One possible solution to this problem is offered by Bernard Lahire in his book *The Literary Condition: The Double Life of Writers* (2006). Lahire lets the living authors-social agents narrate themselves, in a manner perhaps even more eloquent than in Bourdieu's *The Weight of the World*. He is interested in what he aptly calls "the sociology of the practical conditions of practising literature" (Lahire 2006, p. 11; see also Lahire 2010). Although he doesn't renounce quantitative methods, it is equally important for him to listen to the life-stories of writers. In this book, he works with a group of 503 writers who filled in his extensive questionnaires. Out of this group, 40 of them were chosen to be interviewed extensively by Lahire and his collaborators. The resulting interviews, transcribed into a continuous text, form the largest part of the book. Generally, according to Lahire, the writer is always a multidimensional social being; although some regularities can be observed across the population of writers, individual conditions of writing and the relationship of each writer to his writing are unique. Lahire is interested in authors who invest their efforts and intellectual capacity in a specific activity while working a "civil" job on the side (hence the "double life"). Unlike in the case of Bourdieu, his objective is not to (re)construct the logic of their strategies but to make their lives intelligible, to the extent that sociology is adequate to the task. This way of interacting with living authors offers one possible remedy to the problem of "silencing" the social agent studied.

I will add just two brief comments. First, these comparisons between Bourdieu's and Lahire's projects are somewhat problematic, since Lahire deliberately departs from the framework of the literary field, applying his interest instead beyond the pure positions and position-taking in the field. It is disputable that most agents would be able and/or willing to comment in a detailed way on their strategies, choices, and perceptions of the literary field. This is due in part to the difficult leap from the embodied, practical logic of action to the scholastic logic of reflection that is unfamiliar to many of them. Second, it would be ungrounded to think that the material obtained from the agent is not processed and manipulated by the researcher, even though it is evident that in Lahire's *The*

Double Life of Writers the intention is similar to what Bourdieu achieves in *The Weight of the World*, in a more layered situation of the literary sphere where not only authors but also works have to be taken into account.

5 Are We Being Self-Reflexive Yet?

As I stated at the beginning, my objective is not to reject Bourdieu's theory completely, but to look closer at the problem of self-reflexivity at the centre of his sociological works, including his writings on literature. As I have also indicated, in the sphere of literary studies self-reflexivity presents itself often in a rather aporetic way. To sum up the problem of self-reflexivity in Bourdieu's work in the context of his theory of the literary field, I will stress three aspects.

– The "narcissistic trap". Bourdieu criticises what he calls "narcissistic" self-reflexivity (see Bourdieu 2004, p. 89): the "mirroring" of the scholar in the object of his research. Instead, he proposes "sociological reflexivity" and even reflexivity in terms of the overall scholastic point of view and its conditions. I will leave aside whether "narcissistic" self-reflexivity cannot sometimes be beneficial – either way, certain effects of mirroring are typical also of *The Rules of Art*.[11]

– The "noetic trap". When the researcher attempts to reconstruct the structure of the field at a given moment and the "stakes" produced by the *illusio* of the agents active in the field, it is easy to make the mistake of falling back on retrospective knowledge and a "panoramic" bird's-eye view that is not only unavailable to agents themselves at the time of genesis of their works, but also heavily dependent on literary-historical and interpretive work and preconceptions that came after the period under scrutiny. The same holds for the interpretation of literary works. In his literary-sociological fervour Bourdieu easily loses sight of the hermeneutic and hypothetical character of the interpretation of any literary text.[12]

– The "agent and/vs. scholar trap". Bourdieu risks projecting the scholar's perception onto the "mind" of the author. The author's point of view, in the end, becomes the scholar's point of view; the "scholastic illusion" is in operation.

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11 The "confessional" narrative is typical of some seminal texts of cultural analysis, for example, the famous essay "Culture Is Ordinary" by Raymond Williams (1958; 2001); it would be very illuminating to compare it for example with Bourdieu's *Sketch for a Self-Analysis*, with regard to the constellation of the individual, social and cultural aspects in these ego-narratives.

12 I would argue that this lack of a literary hermeneutic is one of the fundamental flaws of Bourdieu's theory; he substitutes it with the objectivist "analysis".

It would certainly be fascinating to reconstruct the "habitus in the action" of authors, to trace their "practical sense" (as opposed to the scholastic analysis of the author via the field/space of possibles). But can we really be wiser than the author himself? In psychoanalysis (to return to the analogy) the "patient" is also necessary – the process can't be carried out without his presence. Can there be a socioanalysis or "ethnography" of dead authors that can't narrate for themselves?

In his *Literary Condition*, Bernard Lahire writes about living authors, with the aim of giving them their own voice and narrative agency. These narratives are more like general ego-narratives than narratives that merely describe the particular point of view of an author as an agent of the literary field. He thus inevitably falls back on "biography", the genre Bourdieu so vehemently rejects in *The Rules of Art* (especially in the case of Sartre's book on Flaubert), and in his own "autobiography" *The Sketch for a Self-Analysis* – which, according to him, is not one. Dead authors can't narrate; but if they could, it is highly probable they wouldn't produce narratives congruous with Bourdieu's reconstruction of the author's point of view, limited to problematics inherent to the literary field.

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IV Creative Self – Text and Fine Art

Ladislav Kvasz

Changes of the Pictorial Form and the Development of the Self

Abstract: The aim of this paper is to connect Wittgenstein's *picture theory of meaning* with the Hegelian idea of the development of the self. Combining Wittgenstein with Hegel is perhaps not so original (see Mácha/Berg 2019); nevertheless, the context by means of which they will be connected, namely the history of painting, is perhaps new. I will argue that Wittgenstein's notion of *pictorial form* is an excellent tool for the analysis of the development of painting from Renaissance to modern art. The idea is to identify epochs, such as the Renaissance or Baroque, by means of the pictorial form they use. Pictorial form is closely related to the epistemic subject and thus the development of pictorial form can be used as a key to studying changes in the self. I shell discriminate eight pictorial forms in the history of western art and describe the form of selfhood characteristic of each of them.

Keywords: Wittgenstein; picture theory of meaning; Panofsky; Renaissance as a pictorial form; development of the self

1 Introduction

This paper seeks to use the notion of pictorial form introduced by Ludwig Wittgenstein to elucidate some aspects of the Hegelian idea of the development of the self. To connect Hegel with Wittgenstein is today perhaps not so original (see Kolman 2016; 2019). Nevertheless, Kolman tries to connect with Hegelian philosophy the views of Wittgenstein from his *Philosophical Investigations*. My aim is to stick to the early Wittgenstein and apply his thesis that language has, besides its grammatical structure, an independent structure which Wittgenstein called *pictorial form*. In the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (Wittgenstein 2001 [1921]) he characterised this form in TLP 2.2: "A picture has a logico-pictorial form in common with what it depicts." An important feature of this form is that it cannot be expressed in language. TLP 2.172: "A picture cannot, however, depict its pictorial form: it displays it." The distinction between what can be depicted and what can only be displayed is one of the central distinctions of the *Tractatus.*

 Wittgenstein explicitly mentioned two aspects of the pictorial form. One of them is the limits of language. TLP 5.6: "The limits of my language mean the lim-

its of my world." These limits are inexpressible in language and so they belong to the pictorial form. The second aspect of the pictorial form is the subject. According to TLP 5.632: "The subject does not belong to the world: rather, it is a limit of the world." Wittgenstein characterised this subject in TLP 5.641: "The philosophical self is not the human being, not the human body, or the human soul, with which psychology deals, but rather the metaphysical subject, the limit of the world – not a part of it." The main heuristic (developed in Kvasz 1998) is to apply Wittgenstein's picture theory of meaning to the pictures contained in mathematical texts on geometry. It turned out that Wittgenstein's notion of pictorial form, when applied to pictures, could be changed from a metaphor into a precise technical tool. This tool allowed me to reconstruct the development of geometry as a sequence of changes in the pictorial form of the language of geometry.

My present aim is to turn to the history of fine art and to apply the notion of the pictorial form to paintings. What Wittgenstein called in TLP 5.6 limits of language can be quite easily identified with the *horizon* visible in several paintings. Similarly, the idea of the *subject*, which according to Wittgenstein is not part of the world depicted by the painting, can be interpreted as the viewpoint from which the painting is constructed. However, it transpires that the horizon and the point of view are not the only aspects of the pictorial form displayed by paintings. Paintings have several other aspects, which are not depicted (that is, intentionally introduced by the painter) but are only *displayed* (that is, appear in the painting as if by the way). The distinction between what can be depicted and what can only be displayed gives Wittgenstein's notion of the pictorial form its heuristic power.

In the first part of the paper, I will introduce those aspects of paintings which cannot be depicted but can only be displayed. This will allow me to determine the notion of a pictorial form in sufficient detail and to turn it into an analytic tool. After clarifying the aspects of the pictorial form, in the second part of the paper I will argue that epochs such as the Renaissance, Mannerism, or Baroque can be characterised by their specific pictorial form. In this way the historical development of fine art can be connected with the changes of pictorial form. The mechanism of such changes of pictorial form will be described in the third part of the paper where I will also present an overview of the eight pictorial forms that were identified in the development of mathematics in Kvasz (2008). If we realise that the self is closely connected to the epistemic subject, which is one of the aspects of the pictorial form, we can read the development of art as the development of the self. Thus, in the fourth part of the paper I will characterise the development of selfhood.

2 Pictorial Form as a Tool for the Analysis of Pictorial Representations

If we wish to identify the aspects of the pictorial form, we can first take those explicitly mentioned by Wittgenstein, namely the limits of language (which in the case of a painting correspond to the horizon) and the subject (which corresponds to the point of view). Secondly, we can try to identify further aspects by focusing on the features of the painting, which are displayed (that is, features by the identification of which we are supposed to see something that deviates from what is depicted).

2.1 The Horizon

A superb display of the horizon can be found in *The Madonna of Chancellor Rolin* by Jan van Eyck (see Fig. 1).

If we were to enter the landscape depicted in a painting, headed for the place where the horizon is located, we would not find anything special. The horizon is an element of the painting to which nothing real corresponds. Strictly speaking, it cannot be created by any brush stroke; it only appears when the work is nearing completion. The horizon thus illustrates the distinction between depicting and displaying. Although the horizon is clearly visible in the painting, it is not an element of the world depicted by the painting. The horizon is only displayed – it is an aspect of the pictorial form.

2.2 The Point of View

Besides the horizon a further aspect of the pictorial form explicitly mentioned by Wittgenstein is the subject, which in painting takes the form of the point of view. It is well known that Renaissance paintings are painted from a particular viewpoint. Nevertheless, in order to justify the thesis that the point of view is one of the aspects of the pictorial form, we must show that it is not depicted but only displayed. That the point of view is not depicted on the painting is obvious – we cannot find it in the painting. In order to show that it is displayed, I have chosen Leonardo's famous fresco, *The Last Supper* (1497), which can be seen in Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan (see Fig. 2).

Fig. 1: Jan van Eyck (1390–1441), *The Madonna of Chancellor Rolin* (1437), Louvre, Paris
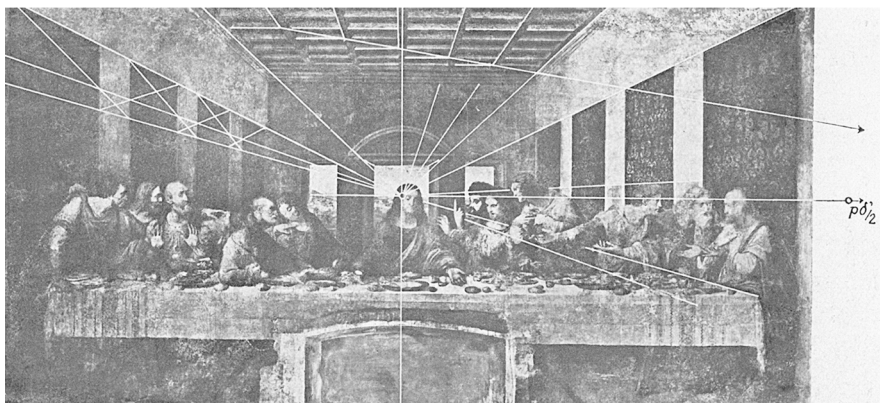
Fig. 2: The analysis of the perspective of the *Last Supper* by Kadeřávek (Kadeřávek 1922, Tab. XVII)

The Russian mathematician, philosopher and art historian Pavel Florensky discussed *The Last Supper* in his essay "Reverse Perspective".[1] He argued that

> [a]simple measurement is enough to show that the chamber is barely the height of two men and the width of three man-lengths, so that the space cannot possibly accommodate the number of people in it or the grandeur of the occasion. However, the ceiling does not seem oppressive and the cramped space of the room gives the painting a dramatic saturation and fullness. Imperceptibly yet accurately, the master resorts to the violation of perspective. Perspectival unity is violated, the dualism of the Renaissance soul revealed, and yet the painting acquires an aesthetic persuasiveness. (Florensky 2002 [1920], p. 229)

To understand what is going on in Leonardo's fresco, I will use its analysis by František Kadeřávek, who explained the effect highlighted by Florensky.[2] Kadeřávek constructed the so-called distance point $p\delta$ (or rather the half of this distance $p\delta/2$). The distance point is the point that is the same distance from the main point (the point to which the parallels going into the depth of the space converge, in this case the head of Christ) as the point of view, from which the perspective of the painting is constructed. Thus, if we take the distance between the main point and the distance point, we can find where Leonardo was standing.

The cone of human sight has a width of about 40 degrees. Therefore, what we see is a circle, the radius of which is about 1/3 of our distance from its centre. If we are looking into a room like the one depicted in Leonardo's fresco, we naturally take up a position in which the entire room is in our field of vision. This corresponds to drawing *a*) in Fig. 3 (the second from the left). If we stay where we are (the frames of the other drawings in Fig. 3 are the same size, so our position has not changed) but place the distance point further away (that is, "zoom out") we get drawing *f*). This corresponds to the situation in which we look at the painting from a point that is much further away than the point from which the painting was constructed. The room appears shallow, but high – this is caused by the fact that we perceive the room as being closer to the horizon. If, on the other hand, we stay where we are but put the distance point closer

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1 Pavel Florensky belonged to the famous Russian mathematical school formed around N. N. Luzin. Members of this school tried to unite the spiritual principles of the Russian Orthodox religion with mathematical research. Luzin survived while Florensky was executed in the GULAG. The fascinating history of this school is told by Loren Graham and Jean-Michel Kantor in their book *Naming Infinity* (Graham/Kantor 2009).

2 František Kadeřávek was professor of geometry at the Technical University in Prague. He wrote an excellent book about perspective (Kadeřávek 1922) in which he analysed the geometry of several famous paintings.

(that is, "zoom in") we get drawing *e*). The room would appear rather deep but low – and precisely this is what is going on in Leonardo's fresco. Leonardo chose a limited distance,[3] he "zoomed the room in", that is, he constructed it from a point that is much closer to the surface of the fresco than the point where the observer would stay (in order to see the entire fresco at once).
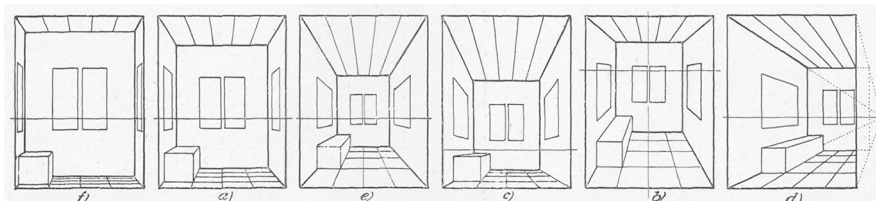
Fig. 3: The influence of the choice of the *distance* and of the elevation of the *horizon* on a picture (Kadeřávek 1922, Fig. 43)

We can substantiate the above analysis by the construction of the distance point $p\delta$ (or rather the half of this distance $p\delta/2$) in Fig. 2. Where the entire fresco covers our visual field, we are standing at a distance equal to *three times* half of its width. Nevertheless, the reconstruction in Fig. 2 indicates that the distance point is only *twice* half its width. That means that the space of the painting is constructed from a point the distance of which is only twice the half of the width of the fresco. The spectator, of course, naturally takes up the normal position and so the situation in Fig. 3.*e*) occurs. The space of the room appears lower.

I consider this analysis by Kadeřávek an important contribution to our understanding of the notion of pictorial form. Fig. 3 unequivocally shows that the point of view, without being depicted in the painting is, nevertheless, displayed by it. Thus, Florensky pointed to a key point, to the way the point of view is displayed by the painting.

2.3 Convergence of Parallel Lines

As the third aspect of the newly emerging pictorial form in Renaissance paintings we can take the convergence of parallel lines receding into depths of space. If we take two such lines and ask someone what they see, they are sup-

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3 In Leonardo's fresco the distance is about 9 metres. That means that Leonardo went to this point, looked at the painting, decided what to do next, walked 9 metres towards the wall and did what he decided to do.

posed to say "two parallel lines", even though in fact they are looking at two lines that obviously converge and intersect. Thus, although the painting is not depicting parallel lines – it is depicting lines that converge and intersect – nevertheless, it displays them. Everyone familiar with the pictorial form of Renaissance painting is able to recognise these lines as parallel, so the distinction between depicting and displaying has here a clear technical meaning and we see that the convergence of the parallel lines is a further aspect of the pictorial form.

Fig. 4: Giotto di Bondone (1266–1337), *Revelation to Fra. Augustin and the Bishop* (1325), fresco, Santa Croce, Florence

Among the first painters to discover that to create the illusion of (that is, to display) two parallel lines, one had to *depict* them as convergent, was Giotto di Bondone (see Fig. 4.) As we can see from the auxiliary lines, added by František Kadeřávek (Kadeřávek 1922, Tab. V), the point of convergence of lines belonging to the ceiling and the point of convergence of lines belonging to the canopy are different. Thus, in the fresco there are two points of convergence of parallel lines leading to the depth of space (called the main point). The use of two different main points and thus also of two horizons (because the main point lies on the

horizon) means that the perspective in Giotto's fresco is intuitive and fragmentary. Different parts of the architecture are painted in different perspectives.[4]

It was almost a century before painters discovered the rules of perspective, including the rule that all lines parallel to each other meet in a single point (a rule clearly violated by Giotto). The first surviving painting with a correctly constructed perspective is generally said to be the fresco by Guidi Tomasso Masaccio (1401–1428) entitled *Trinity* (1425) which is to be found in Santa Maria Novella in Florence.[5]

2.4 The Relation of Identity

A fourth aspect of the pictorial form can easily be discovered if we take Lorenzetti's *Enunciation* (Fig. 5) and fill in the diagonals of the tiling of the floor. We find what Kadeřávek shows in his analysis of the painting, namely that the diagonals of the tiles form a curve. This is, of course, wrong. The diagonals of the tiles form, in reality, a straight line and a projection of a straight line should be a straight line. Thus, we see that just like Giotto in the case of the parallels, Lorenzetti understands the general principle that the tiles should be depicted smaller and smaller as they recede into the depth of space, but he was not clear on the precise rule.

The correct rule for depicting a pavement was discovered by Leon Battista Alberti around 1435 (see Fig. 6). Although interesting, I will not enter into the details of his construction but simply draw attention to the fact that the rule by which the tiles of the *pavimento* (and in fact of any depicted object) diminish is also an aspect of the pictorial form. This can be seen from the fact that when I ask for the dimensions of the tiles, the correct answer is that they are identical. Even though we are looking at diminishing quadrangles, in order to understand the painting correctly we must be able to see them as identical (just as in the case of the intersecting straight lines, which we had to see as parallel). The painting does not depict the tiles as identical; it only displays them as such.

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4 A similar analysis of the *Last Supper* (1301–1308) by Duccio di Buoninsegna can be found in the famous paper by Erwin Panofsky, "Die Perspektive als 'symbolische' Form" (Panofsky 1927).
5 Adetailed discussion of its construction can be found in Field (1997, pp. 43–61).

Fig. 5: Ambrogio Lorenzetti (1285–1348), *Enunciation* (1344), Pinacoteca, Sienna

2.5 Summary – the Various Aspects of the Pictorial Form

It is not by chance that several important works discussing perspective were published around 1920. I have in mind the essay "Reverse Perspective" by Pavel Florensky (1882–1937) written in 1919; the book *Perspektiva* by František Kadeřávek (1885–1961), published in 1922; and the essay "Perspective as Symbolic Form" by Erwin Panofsky (1892–1968), published in 1927. In 1907, one year after Cézanne's death, his work was shown in a major exhibition in Paris, where it became obvious that it was possible to create a representation
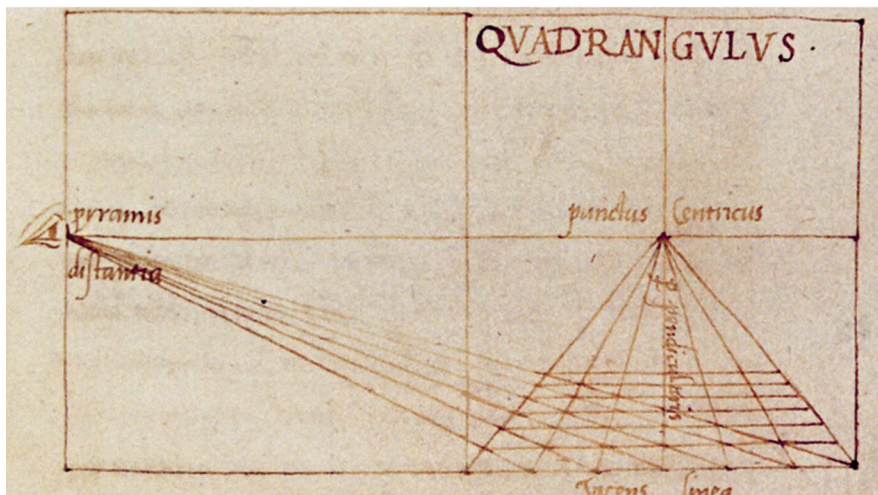
Fig. 6: Leon Battista Alberti (1404–1472), *De Pictura* (1435)

of space independent of the rules of perspective. Shortly afterwards came cubism and the general public started to realise that perspective was not *the* objective and correct way of representing space, but only one particular means for spatial representation.

My aim is to put Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951) and his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, published in 1921, alongside the works of Florensky, Kadeřávek, and Panofsky.[6] Wittgenstein's notion of pictorial form can be seen as a tool for understanding how representations are constructed.

Thus, the four aspects of the pictorial form described above are:
1. the horizon (or more generally the limits of the represented world),
2. the point of view (or more generally the epistemic subject),
3. the way of representing parallels (or more generally the way of depicting infinity),
4. the identity relation (or more generally, rules for depicting an object in different positions).

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6 I gave the years of birth of Florensky, Kadeřávek, Panofsky and Wittgenstein to indicate that despite rather different personal fortune they belonged to a generation that was able to draw theoretical and philosophical consequences from the revolution introduced into fine arts by Cézanne (1839–1906) and cubism.

These aspects are by no means restricted to painting or geometry. On the contrary, they are very general and can be identified in almost every representational system. For instance, take measuring temperature by means of a thermometer (that is, its instrumental representation). The point zero represents the point of view in the sense that all other temperatures are determined in relation to it (just like in a perspectivist painting all distances are determined in relation to the point of view). The scale, determined by the lowest and the highest temperature that the thermometer is able to measure, corresponds to the horizon (that is, to the most distant points the painting is able to depict). Finally, the unit on the thermometer corresponds to Alberti's rule for the construction of the pavimento. In the phenomenal realm it is very difficult to compare an increase in temperature, say from 15 to 16 degrees with another, say from 83 to 84 degrees. This is analogous to the difficulties Lorenzetti had in Fig. 5 with determining how to depict two tiles of the same size placed at different distances. A measuring device, just like Alberti's rule, brings a solution to this problem by introducing an identity relation by means of a scale. The example of the thermometer shows that a pictorial form can be found in almost every area of human experience, not just in the visual realm.

3 Pictorial Form as an Expression of the Unity of an Epoch

According to the *Tractatus* there is only one pictorial form (just as there is only one logic). Thus, for a system of symbols to count as a language it must have a pictorial form as described above. The later Wittgenstein criticised his previous position and for the sake of the plurality of linguistic manifestations (for which he introduced the term language games) he abandoned the Tractarian notion of pictorial form. My aim is to revoke this move and for the sake of linguistic plurality I suggest not abandoning the notion of the pictorial form (as Wittgenstein did), but rather to *introduce linguistic plurality into the notion of pictorial form itself*. In other words, this is not an exercise in Wittgenstein exegesis but an attempt to further develop his semantic intuitions from the *Tractatus*.

My aim is to introduce historicity into the notion of the pictorial form. The idea is simple. Every historical epoch, such as the Renaissance or the Baroque, has its own, unique and characteristic pictorial form. By passing from one epoch to the next the pictorial form undergoes change. The analysis of the pictorial form thus becomes a tool for the analysis of some aspects of the history of representational tools. In Kvasz (1998) I tried this approach in geometry. I believe

that it can also be applied to art history. This is not the proper place to give a full account of this approach. I will mention only two episodes – the Renaissance and Mannerism – to render the approach more plausible, and then give an overview of the rest. The interested reader can find a more detailed exposition in Kvasz (2008).

3.1 The Renaissance and the Perspectivistic Form

The paintings of Giotto, Lorenzetti, van Eyck and Leonardo, as well as those of many other Renaissance painters, can be characterised by means of the above four aspects of the pictorial form. Thus, they depict the world from one, fixed point chosen as the point of view. The landscape leads in a regular way to the horizon, to which the parallels smoothly converge, letting the objects in a systematic way diminish with distance. I believe the first section sufficiently explained why we should interpret perspective as a pictorial form in this sense, that is, as a system of conventions regarding how to 'see' what is displayed by a painting. It seems that the Renaissance can be characterised as that period in the history of art which was based upon *perspective as a pictorial form*.[7] Let us turn to the ensuing period, Mannerism.[8]

3.2 Mannerism and the Projective Form

In introducing the next period of artistic style, namely Mannerism, it is perhaps surprising that I make a detour into astronomy. It is well known that Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543) published *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium*, in which he proposed a heliocentric astronomy, in 1543. I would like to elucidate

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[7] In this sense the above analysis can be seen as a polemic with Panofsky and his paper *Perspektive als "symbolische" Form*. In contrast to Panofsky, whose concept of symbolic form is vague and lacks heuristic rules to identify the symbolic form of a particular piece of art, Wittgenstein's notion of pictorial form is clear (a pictorial form comprising all those aspects that a representation cannot depict but only display), and this gives sufficiently strong heuristics for identifying at least some aspects of the pictorial form in most cases.

[8] For a long time, Mannerism was regarded as a second-rate, decadent, declining period after the glorious Renaissance. It was the work of the Viennese art historian Max Dvořák in *Geschichte der italienischen Kunst* (Dvořák 1927) that changed our appreciation of Mannerism. His deep analyses of the works of mannerist artists showed that Mannerism was not a period of decadence between the Renaissance and Baroque but an epoch that, from an aesthetic point of view, was on a par with them.

how with this work he wrought a radical shift in pictorial form, that is in the way of organising pictorial representation. Copernicus does not depict the universe from the fixed point from which we observe it. Naturally, from our terrestrial point of view (that is from our terrestrial perspective) the Sun and the stars appear to move while the Earth stands still. Nevertheless, Copernicus insisted that the motions of the Sun and stars are only apparent. In order to be able to say this he must have been imagining himself, and any other observer of the skies, from an external point of view far apart from the Earth. In his mind's eye he abandoned his geocentric perspective and, from somewhere 'up there', observed some astronomer seated on a rotating, orbiting globe. From this external position the observer could see the motionless Sun and understand that the motion of the Sun, which the terrestrial astronomer observes, is in fact only an apparent motion.

My suggestion is to take the viewpoint of an external observer as the point of view (that is as an aspect of a new pictorial form). Of course, this leaves us needing to find the other three aspects of the new pictorial form in order to justify putting it on a par with normal perspective, which was the pictorial form of the Renaissance period. Before we turn to this task, let me just mention a link between this new pictorial form and Mannerist paintings. As an example, we can take the Jacopo Tintoretto's San Giorgio Maggiore version of *The Last Supper* (Fig. 7). Tintoretto is considered one of the main representatives of Mannerism (together with Parmigianino (1503–1540)).

Comparing the *Last Supper* by Leonardo (Fig. 2) and Tintoretto (Fig. 7), we immediately see a difference. Leonardo brings the observer into contact with the scene of the fresco by depicting the space of the room as a continuation of the space in which the observer is standing (as both spaces have the same axes of symmetry). On the other hand, Tintoretto is distancing the observer from the scene. By "rotating" the space of the scene with respect to the space of the observer he breaks their contact and creates a position similar to the position of the external observer of Copernican astronomy.

In order to derive a theoretical analysis of the pictorial form of Mannerism, we can turn to an etching by Albrecht Dürer. Just like Copernicus (who was born only two years after Dürer), Dürer also observes somebody at work. Copernicus was (in his imagination) observing an astronomer observing the skies, whereas Dürer is observing a painter constructing a perspectivist painting. In a sense the representation in Fig. 8 has two viewpoints. One is external: it is the point from which the space of the room is constructed. The other is internal, the eye of the painter, or more precisely, the point where the rope with the tube is fastened to the wall. This split (or duplicated) viewpoint is one aspect of the pictorial form of Mannerism. If we realise that Copernicus observed an astronomer (while he him-

Fig. 7: Jacopo Tintoretto (1518–1594), *Last Supper* (1592–1594), San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice

self was an astronomer), just like Dürer was observing a painter (while he himself was a painter), we see that Mannerism is, in a sense, incorporating into representation a reflection of the self. I suggest we term the pictorial form of Mannerism projective form, because what Dürer depicted in this etching is the projection; he is representing the process of representation.
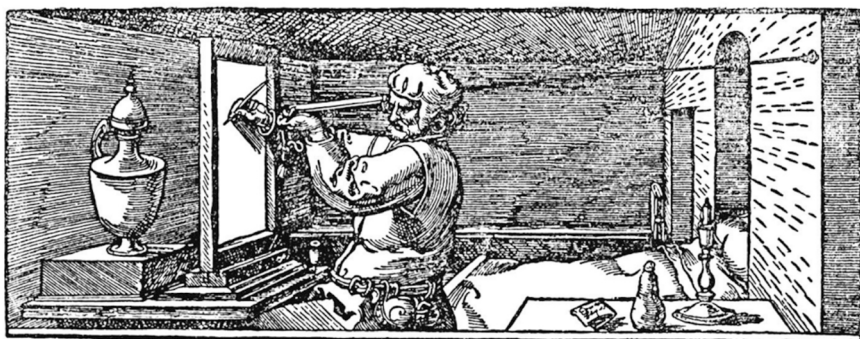
Fig. 8: Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528), *Underweysung der messung mit dem zirckel un richtscheyt* (1525)

4 Changes in Pictorial Form

It would be possible to continue the description of different pictorial forms of the preceding section further through the Baroque and Impressionism (see Kvasz 2003) and even onto cubism and abstract art. We could seek to characterise each epoch by its particular pictorial form. However, this is not my present aim. I would prefer to take a step forward and analyse the dynamics of change in pictorial form.

4.1 Breaking the Rules of Pictorial Form

The paintings by Giotto and Lorenzetti illustrate the process of the gradual emergence of the pictorial form of perspective. One could gain from them the impression that with the discovery of the rules of perspective, the Renaissance reached its completion. Nevertheless, the pictorial form continued to evolve after the rules of perspective had been discovered. To understand how, we may take Paolo Uccello's 1436 fresco, *Tombstone of Sir John Hawkwood* (Fig. 9).

A casual look at this fresco may disclose an irregularity which may even seem a mistake. The upper and lower parts of the fresco are painted in different perspectives, perhaps reminiscent of the Giotto fresco (Fig. 4). Nevertheless, there is a fundamental difference here, because Uccello was a master of perspective, so this irregularity is definitely intentional. If we pause a while by the fresco, we might realise that the split view is provided for good reasons. If the entire painting, and not just its lower part, were painted from below, we would gaze upon the huge abdomen of the horse. If on the contrary the entire painting was painted in profile, it would be an uninteresting, banal picture. By representing the pedestal from below, the painter creates the impression that the tombstone stands above us. Nevertheless, by depicting John Hawkwood from the side, Uccello prevents the tombstone dominating the space. We see that in breaking the rules of perspective, Uccello worked towards a clear goal driven by an aesthetic end. Another example of a similar, if much subtler split viewpoint can be found in the *Mona Lisa*. Leonardo, like Uccello, breaks the rules of perspective in pursuit of clear aesthetic goals.[9]

If the painter knows that particular aspects of pictorial form influence our perception, he can intensify this influence by overstepping the rules of pictorial form. This matters because the direction in which Uccello and Leonardo violated

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9 An interesting explanation of the *Mona Lisa* can be found in Gombrich (1949).

Fig. 9: Paolo Uccello (1397–1475), *Tombstone of Sir John Hawkwood* (1436), fresco, Santa Mariadel Fiore, Florence

those rules foreshadowed the pictorial form of the next stage, namely Mannerism, with its split or duplication of the point of view, so at least some of the prin-

ciples that came to constitute the new pictorial form were indicated by the way in which the rules of the previous pictorial form were violated.[10]

4.2 Incorporating the Pictorial Form into Language

Gérard Desargues, the founder of projective geometry, came up with an excellent idea. He *replaced the object with its picture.* So, while Dürer in Fig. 8 formulated the problem of perspective as a relation between the picture and reality, Desargues formulated it as a problem of the relation between two pictures. Suppose that we already have a perfect perspective picture of a jug; and let us imagine a painter who wants to paint the jug using the procedure represented in Fig. 8. At a moment when he is not paying attention, we can replace the jug with its picture. If the picture is a good perspectivist painting of the jug, the painter should not notice the difference, and instead of painting a picture of a jug he could start to paint a picture of the picture of the jug.

point of view
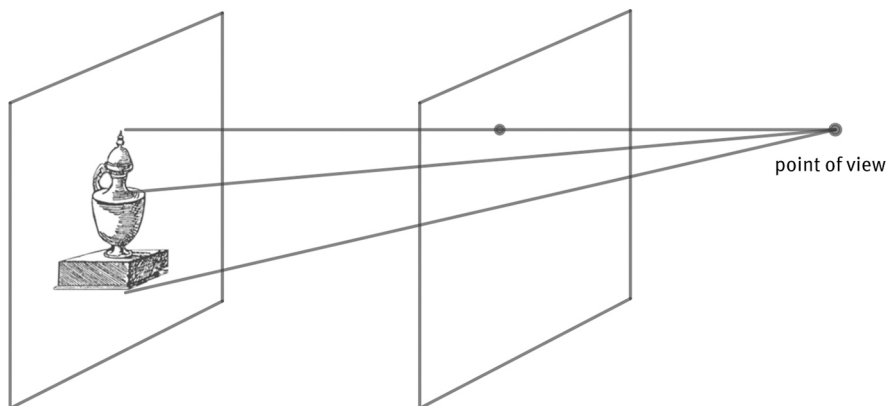
Fig. 10: Replacement of reality by its picture

The advantage brought by Desargues' idea is that instead of the relation between a three-dimensional object and its two-dimensional picture we have to deal with a relation between two, two-dimensional pictures. After this replacement of the object by its picture, it is easy to see that the dotting procedure depicted by Dürer

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10 Uccello and Leonardo are not the only painters to break the rules of the pictorial form of their times. In a similar vein one might interpret at least some paintings by El Greco, Turner and Cézanne.

becomes a central projection of one picture onto the other with its centre in our eye (see Fig. 10). Thus the centre of projection represents the point of view from which the two pictures make the same impression.

It is easy to see that with the exception of two parallel planes, the projection of a plane is not the whole plane. On the first plane (plane α – the plane from which we project) there is a line a of points for which there are no images. On the other hand, on the other plane (β – the plane onto which we project), there is a line b onto which nothing is projected. To make the central projection a mapping, Desargues had first of all to supplement both planes with infinitely remote points. After this, line a consists of those points of the plane α which are mapped onto the infinitely remote points of the second plane β. On the other hand, line b consists of images of the infinitely remote points of plane α. Thus, by supplementing each plane with infinitely remote points, the central projection becomes a one-to-one mapping. In this way Desargues created a technical tool for studying infinity.
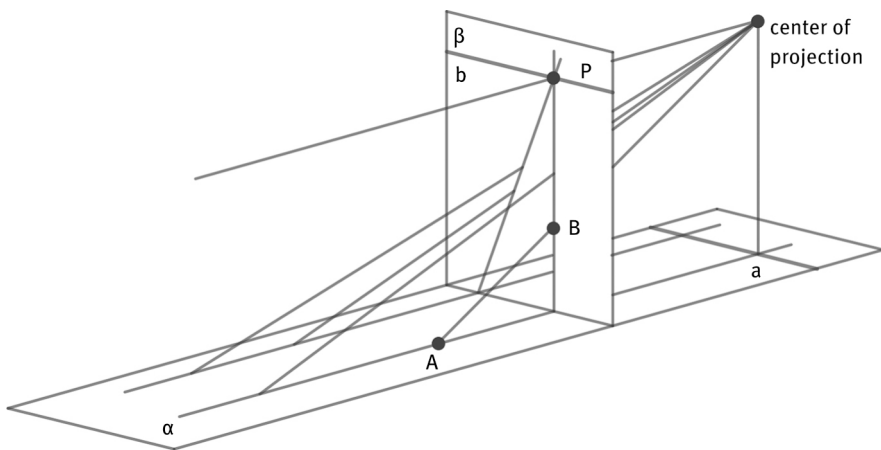
Fig. 11: Representation of two parallel straight lines in central projection

The idea is simple. The central projection projects the infinitely remote points of plane α onto the line b of plane β. So, if we wish to investigate what happens to some object at infinity, we have to draw it on plane α and project it onto b. If we draw two parallel lines on plane α, we see that their images on β intersect at one point on line b. From this we can conclude that parallel lines also intersect on plane α. They intersect at infinity, and the point of their intersection is mapped onto that point on line b where their images intersect (see Fig. 11). So Desargues

found a way to give to the term 'infinity' a clear, unambiguous and verifiable meaning.

   In pictures of projective geometry there is a remarkable point, different from all other points, called the centre of projection. As shown above, the centre of projection represents in an abstract form the eye of the painter from Dürer's drawing. Besides this point, pictures of projective geometry also contain a remarkable straight line – line b. The position of line b on plane β is determined by the centre of projection that represents the eye of the spectator. Clearly, line b represents the horizon. Yet it is important to realise one basic difference between the horizon in a perspectivist painting and in a picture of projective geometry. In projective geometry the horizon is a straight line, which means it belongs to the language. It is not something that shows itself only when the picture is completed, as in the case of paintings. Desargues drew the horizon, made from it an ordinary line, a sign of the language. There is nothing like the centre of projection or the horizon in Euclidean geometry. A Euclidean plane is homogeneous; all its lines are equivalent. Therefore, instead of the Euclidean looking from nowhere onto a homogeneous world, or the perspectivist watching from outside, for Desargues the point of view is explicitly incorporated into language. It is present in the form of the centre of projection and of the horizon which belongs to this centre.

4.3 Historical Development of the Pictorial Form

The incorporation of the pictorial form into the language, an example of which was the creation of projective geometry, makes the representation in a sense 'flat'. All of its rules are made explicit. There is no specific point of view – Desargues changed the point of view into the centre of projection. In this way it became an ordinary point, equivalent to all other points of space. Similarly, any two lines intersect: there are no parallel lines. By supplementing the plane with infinitely remote points, parallel lines are ordinary lines intersecting in these newly introduced points. Thus, we are no longer required to see in two lines running to the horizon any "non-intersecting parallel lines". We can speak in terms of what we see, because all the lines intersect. The infinitely remote points added to the plane replace the horizon. Thus, there is no longer any line presenting the limits of the world that would be displayed but not depicted. The straight line formed by all infinitely remote points is an ordinary line: it can be depicted, projected, intersected, just like any other line. Projective geometry being a non-metrical geometry, Alberti's problem of the pavimento is dissolved. Any two squares can be projected onto each other by a projective transformation,

that is, all squares are projectively equivalent, so in the language of projective geometry there is no difference between depicting and displaying. Projective geometry can depict everything that it displays.

Nevertheless, this rendering fully explicit all the rules of the pictorial form opens the door for the emergence of a new implicit pictorial form. The rules of this new pictorial form are foreshadowed by breaking the rules of the older form and after a while the new pictorial form emerges at full strength. This is not the time to describe the entire development of the pictorial form: I have restricted myself to sketching the first two developmental stages followed by a presentation of the overall scheme. A more detailed exposition of the eight hitherto identified pictorial forms can be found in Kvasz (2008). The development of the pictorial forms is presented in Fig. 12.
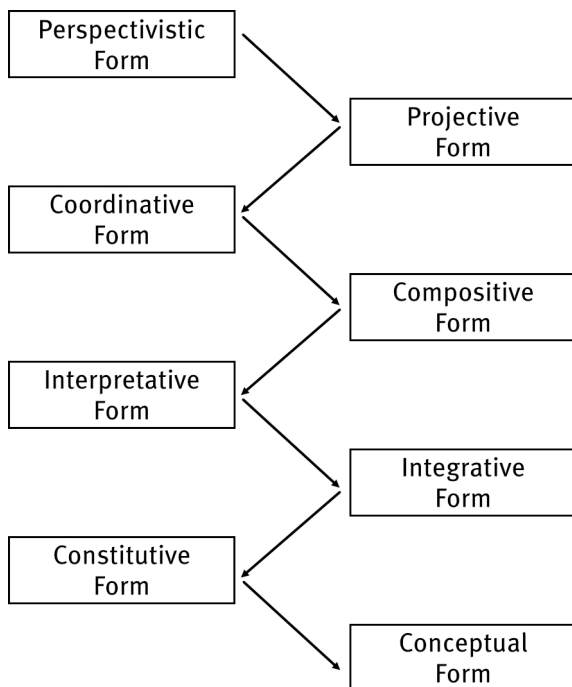
Fig. 12: The bipolar diagram representing the development of pictorial forms

4.4 Some Features of the Development of Pictorial Form

I suggest we call the diagram in Fig. 12 a bipolar diagram. It shows the historical development of the various pictorial forms as they have emerged in the history of geometry. This diagram has some peculiar features. It represents the development of the pictorial form as a process that oscillates between two poles. On the left we have forms that are singular (for example, the perspectivist form having a single point of view), absolute and internal. On the right we find forms that are plural (for example, the projective form based upon a split point of view, a point of view Copernicus and Dürer observed when observing the world), relative and external.

I call the development of the pictorial form, as well as the diagram representing it, *bipolar*. By the use of this word, I want to emphasise that its driving force is not some logical contradiction but rather an epistemic tension. Nobody can at the same time take a perspectivist and a projective viewpoint, that is, an internal perspective of observing the world and an external perspective of reflecting one's own observation. This does not mean that, for instance, the perspectivist and the projective pictorial forms would contradict each other or that the one would be the negation of the other (even if it is possible to describe them in this way). They are cognitively incompatible. Bipolarity is the tension between the singular and the plural, between internal and external, between absolute and relative. After two changes of pictorial form, one comes back to the original pole, not at the same point, but higher. Unfortunately, there is insufficient space to illustrate it here, but in Kvasz (2008) there are several illustrations of this dynamic. We see that the bipolar diagram has several rather Hegelian features.

5 Changes in Pictorial Form and Development of the Self

The diagram in Fig. 12 shows that the development of the pictorial form is not random. The emergence of the next pictorial form occurs after the previous form has been explicitly incorporated into the language, and so in the course of the development of pictorial form, richer and richer structures of subjectivity have been built into the language.

First, we had *perspectivist form*, which enabled the incorporation of the point of view which is the basis of the *subjectivity of the personal view*. Afterwards with the *projective form* it was the incorporation of the external point of view, which is the basis of the *subjective ability of self-reflection*.

Third was the *coordinative form* with the incorporation of the coordinating schemes that are the basis of the *subjectivity of order and of the principles of rule following*. Then followed the *compositive form* incorporating the mappings of the overlapping regions of adjacent maps of a manifold, which is the basis of the *subjective ability of identification of the same order at different scaling.*[11]

Fifth was the *interpretative form* with the incorporation of the translation between different languages, which is the basis of the *subjectivity of meaning*. The next was the *integrative form* incorporating the integration of incompatible interpretations, which is the basis of the *subjectivity of the possibilities of self-understanding*.

Seventh was the *constitutive form* with the incorporation of the constitutive acts, which is the basis of the *subjectivity of the possibilities of self-constitution*. As a last step comes the *conceptual form* with the incorporation of the *conceptual subject*, which is the most fundamental structure of subjectivity that I was able to identify in the development of geometry.

We cannot deny that all these levels are parts of our own subjectivity. Everyone has their personal point of view, everyone is able to reflect upon their actions, everyone has their own understanding of the rules of the game, everyone is able to shift between representations of the same order at different scales, everyone has their own interpretation of reality, their own self-understanding and unique potentiality of possibilities. Thus, we ourselves are the source from which the development of the pictorial form has taken the structures it uses. In the development of the pictorial form, deeper and deeper structures of our own subjectivity were first implicitly attached to the language and then explicitly incorporated into it.

The development represented in Fig. 12 oscillates between two poles. The epistemic subject can be either singular or plural. The left-hand column seems to represent new kinds of subjectivity, the birth of a new experience of ourselves. In contrast to this, the forms in the right-hand column introduce a plurality into this experience of ourselves, which opens us up to the new experience of the other. Thus, the perspectivist form is about how I see the world, while by means of the projective form I can understand how my world appears to somebody else. The coordinative form describes how I introduce order into my experience, while the compositive form allows me to bring the alternative orders in-

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11 It is not easy to characterise the particular pictorial forms without a detailed analysis of suitable examples (as in the paintings illustrating the perspectivist and the projective forms). Should this and the following two paragraphs appear to the reader rather incomprehensible, (Kvasz 2008) presents a much more detailed exposition of the particular pictorial forms. Alternatively, skip this and the next two paragraphs and return to them later.

troduced by others into relation with my own order. The interpretative form is about how I interpret my world, while the integrative form opens up the possibility of understanding and comparing my interpretation of the world with those of others. The constitutive form reflects how I constitute myself, while the conceptual form opens up the possibility of understanding alternative ways of self-constitution. This dynamic is one of encounters both with deeper layers of ourselves and with others.

In a sense, the diagram indicates that the road to a deeper layer of ourselves leads through the other. Thus, in order to be able to encounter myself on the co-ordinative level as the source of order in the world based on universal rules, and in this sense to discover my freedom as a subject (which is perhaps the core of the *Cartesian experience of the self*), it is necessary first to encounter otherness within the framework of the projective form. Only when I learn to see the world through the eyes of the other, and thus free myself from my egocentric perspective, does it become possible to create a distance from the world, which is a crucial component of the coordinative form. Similarly, in order to be able to encounter myself on the interpretative level as the source of values and interpretation of the world (which is perhaps the core of the *romantic experience of the self*), it is first necessary to encounter otherness within the framework of the compositive form. Only when I learn to tolerate the alternative orders of the world and alternative systems of rules guiding life in the world, and in this way free myself from the obviousness of the tribal order in which I was raised, is it possible to discover the role and power of interpretative "distancing" from the world. Further, in order to be able to encounter myself on the constitutive level as the centre of my existence (which is perhaps the core of the *existentialist experience of the self*), it is first necessary to encounter otherness within the framework of the integrative form. Only when I learn that all alternative interpretations of the world are basically equivalent (because they all confront the same existential questions of life and death), and so free myself from the framework of cultural narcissism in which my existence is veiled, am I prepared to encounter myself as a being that constitutes its existence.

Without the encounter with otherness, we may be stuck on the surface of the self, on the outer layers of our subjectivity. However, there is another danger. An encounter with the otherness of the other is made possible only by a deeper encounter with the self. Thus, in order to be able to encounter the other in the projective form as a bearer of an alternative view of the world, and so to discover the fundamental plurality of worldviews (which may be the core of the *Mannerist fascination with otherness*, *bizarreness* and *abnormality*), I must first encounter myself within the framework of the perspectivist form and learn to view the world from a fixed personal point of view. Similarly, in order to be able to en-

counter the other in the compositive form as the bearer of an alternative ordering of the world, and so discover the fundamental plurality of orders (which may be the core of the *Enlightenment's tolerance of otherness*), I must first encounter myself within the framework of the coordinative form and learn to subordinate my life to a fixed order. Finally, in order to be able to encounter the other in the integrative form as the bearer of an alternative value system, and so discover the fundamental plurality of evaluations (which may be the core of the *Positivist value neutrality in approaching otherness*), I must first encounter myself within the framework of the interpretative form and learn to see these values as bases of interpretation.

This dynamic inherent in encountering deeper and deeper layers of our subjectivity can be seen as the source of the changes in the history of geometry and painting. In this sense the history of geometry is no less an integral part of human culture than the history of art.

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Vojtěch Kolman

Why Doesn't Laocoön Scream?
Autopoiesis in Art

Abstract: Lessing famously poses the question "Why doesn't the marble Laocoön scream?" to draw the constitutive difference between painting and poetry as based on the specific nature of their media. I argue that while his reasoning is ill-founded *contentwise*, it is also *structurally* sound and, as such, might be extended to the whole of experience. Here, it establishes what might be called its *narrative model*. Focusing mainly on drama and music, I contrast this model with the *causal model* of experience employed particularly in the positive sciences and claim that they are not exclusive but embedded in a dialectical way. Against this background, I take the narrative model to manifest the *autopoietic nature* of experience and the joint role that both causality and narrativity play in it.

Keywords: Lessing; Hegel; autopoiesis; narrativity; emplotment; music

1 Introduction

In his *Laocoön; or the Limits of Poetry and Painting*,[1] Lessing takes the Vatican Laocoön group and asks why the depicted figure of Laocoön, in a situation of obvious agony, does not scream. In answering this, he arrives at what he interprets as the substantial difference between two types of art: painting and poetry. Unlike poetry, Lessing argues, paintings lack the temporal dimension, and thus, in dealing with actions, must create the required effect by spatial means. These consist in creating tension between the executed moment (the here and now) and the moment to be stipulated so that we can get the given piece of art right. And that is why the depicted Laocoön does not scream as he should, showing, instead, what seems to be an expression of rather mild discomfort.

I find the given explanation compelling if only because of its *structural* rather than purely *descriptive* nature, as represented by Lessing's main antagonist Johann Joachim Winckelmann and his *Reflections on the Imitation of Greek*

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[1] In the following, I am using the English translation Lessing (1836) and the *Studienausgabe* (Lessing 2012) of the 1766 original.

Works in Painting and Sculpture.[2] As such, it can be used for epistemological purposes and linked to what I would call a *narrative model of experience*. – At first, of course, "narrative model" is just a fancy term representing the rejection of the standard theories of truth based on the correspondence between the cognition and the cognised matter. I call it the *causal model of experience*, with an extended use of the word "causal". So, for example, Winckelmann's competing explanation that Laocoön's expression depicts the nature of the Greek spirit that is too noble to scream might be called causal in this sense.

I will arrive at the full-fledged narrative model later, in connection with identifying the main shortcoming in Lessing's argument in the underlying *homogeneity principle*. According to this, the temporal and spatial structure of the given media is directly transferred to the depicted objects as well. This is easily shown to be unsustainable, obscuring the essential point of Lessing's structural analysis. Based on examples from other temporal arts such as music and drama, I elaborate on this point, transposing it, first, to the art in general, and second, to the experience as such. Along this line, the narrative model turns out to manifest the experience's *autopoietic* nature and, most importantly, the specific role of art in it.[3]

2 Homogeneity Scrutinised

What I would like to call the *homogeneity principle* is fully expressed in section 16 of Lessing's *Essay* (1836, pp. 150 – 151):

> Now, as it is evident that the signs employed must bear a suitable relation to the things represented, it follows that those signs which are arranged in juxtaposition with each other, can only express co-existent objects, or an object whose parts are co-existent, while those signs which are consecutive, can only express things which, either of themselves, or in their component parts, are consecutive.

> Those objects which are co-existent, or whose parts are co-existent, are called bodies; consequently bodies, with their visible properties, are legitimate subjects of painting. Those things, on the contrary, which are consecutive, or whose parts are consecutive, are termed, generally speaking, actions. Actions are therefore the legitimate subjects of poetry.

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2 See Winckelmann (1986) for the new English translation of the 1755 original, and the modern German edition in Winckelmann (2013).

3 The basic structure of my argument and some of the examples used here draw on my Czech article Kolman (2017), which outlined a related distinction between causal and intentional explanations.

Thus, the *spatial* signs represent legitimately, via their own *juxtaposition*, the *co-existent* objects, or *bodies*, and, the *temporal* signs, via their own *consecutiveness*, the *consecutive* objects, or *events*. The given conclusion quickly follows. Because of the described "legitimacy", the painting cannot represent things directly, but by a detour, via the moment of action "which is at once expressive of the past, and pregnant with the future" (Lessing 1836, p. 152). This is why Laocoön does not scream or, inversely, why Homer depicts Agamemnon's robe via a description of the king dressing with it (Lessing 1836, p. 156).

The homogeneity principle stipulates the direct link between the arrangement of the representations and the nature of what is represented, inferring from this the object's legitimacy. What begs the question now is how the juxtaposition of signs on a page make them co-existent rather than consecutive. In a musical score, for example, they can be both, and we in fact owe the enterprise of polyphony and the whole modern development of the musical action to the possibilities of its spatial arrangement. By way of convention, the horizontal order stands for consecutive events and the vertical for co-existent ones. From this, of course, the inseparability of both forms of intuition in the aesthetical dimensions might be inferred, for which Adorno (1978) and Scruton (1997), to name a couple of examples, argue in some detail.[4]

But it is not necessary to get proto-Einsteinian here to identify the homogeneity principle's main weakness. In fact, one can easily make do with elementary Kant, arguing thusly: To see the Laocoön group as representing something, I have to understand it, which is already an action. As such, it consists not only in the basic apprehension of the sensuous matter, but in capturing its representational meaning. Otherwise, I cannot even phrase the difference between the sequence of representations and the representation of sequence. And this is what the apperception is for. Its role, as known from Kant's *Critiques*, is delicate, standing for both the reflectivity of the human mind as well as its productive and reproductive nature.

The central point is this: In order to see the Laocoön group *as* a statue, I not only register the given data, but also take into account the other side that I do

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4 Adorno's paper is rather straightforward in this, pointing out not only the interconnected nature of spatial thinking with the temporal medium of music (the symphonies of Bruckner being a rather obvious example), but also that "the act of notation is essential to art of music, not incidental. Without writing there can be no highly organized music; the historical distinction between improvisation and *musica composita* coincides qualitatively with that between laxness and musical articulation" (Adorno 1995, p. 70). As for Scruton, his concept of musical aesthetics is based on the idea that spatial metaphor is a point of difference between a mere acoustical experience and a musical one. See particularly Scruton (1997, pp. 73–77).

not actually see, using the power of my imagination. By analogy, one might say, in order to see the statue as a piece of art rather than a piece of marble, I must see Laocoön as screaming even if he is not. Thus, what Lessing has shown is not the spatial dependency of painting but the ability of art to bring cognition's productivity to a higher and more transparent level.

3 Counterexamples

Now, I do not claim there is not some real and vital difference between *Zeit-* and *Raumkunst*. The problem of the artistic *falsum*, for that matter, might serve as an example here simply because temporal art, unlike paintings and sculptures, seems to be rather indifferent to it. What the previous objections have shown, though, is that the homogeneity principle and the argument based on it does not work. The structural part of Lessing's explanation, on the other hand, is not affected and might be extended to the whole of art and, later, to the whole of experience. Allow me to focus on the former extension first.

The structural part of Lessing's argument might be phrased like this: The aesthetical quality of the piece of art, no matter whether of spatial or temporal kind, consists in creating tension between what might be called the *executed gesture*, in the here and now, and the gesture that I expect, in my intention. Let me call it the *intended gesture*. The executed gesture is introduced more or less causally, pertaining to the spatiotemporal dimension of the given piece of art; the intended gesture is defined by the overall context, such as the mythological narrative or the musical style in which Laocoön's figure or this or that musical piece is situated.

The purpose of this rephrasing is, primarily, to make the overall temporalisation of the spatial (as anticipated by Kant) understood in its intended generality. Thus, we can still think of the given difference as that of the executed moment that is pregnant enough to evoke something not present but intended. But we are also invited to take into account the underlying social nature of all knowledge so as to arrive at the full-fledged narrative model of experience. Now, to illustrate all these points, let me start with the musical drama as something both substantially different from painting and, for terminology's sake, almost excessively gestic. I will provide three counterexamples to Lessing's homogeneity principle by meeting the given structural condition of executed vs. intended gesture while being increasingly temporal and decreasingly spatial.

Counterexample 1 (Strauss' *Elektra*)

For a start, let me take Strauss' and Hofmannsthal's *Elektra*. In all the relevant scenes, including Elektra's invocation of Agamemnon, her digging out the axe or her final dance of victory and death, the gestures are suggested almost graphically by music. But, obviously, they would also easily turn into nothing or become just painful if treated too literally. Good artists usually know that aiming for the effect is not dissimilar to that of the Laocoön sculpture. So, in Kupfer's Vienna production under Abbado's baton (Wiener Staatsoper 1989, cond. Claudio Abbado, Arthaus 2009), there is, for example, the following memorable detail: After agonising expectations of Orest's coming, filling more than half of the opera, Elektra finally recognises her brother. The music culminates, loud and slow, with a protracted phrase suggesting the siblings' intention to embrace each other. But exactly when this is about to happen, Kupfer has them pass each other, thus amplifying the theatrical effect. The similar effect is achieved at the very end of the opera where, after the murder of her mother and her mother's lover, Elektra executes her dance of victory and, at the height of it, falls dead. Again, the attempts at dancing to Strauss' broken rhythmic figures would lead to a rather choreic and often painful experience. Kupfer's solution, on the other hand, is to let Elektra follow the rhythm only partially, based on the trajectory of the rope attached to the remnants of Agamemnon's statue. The result is both adequately expressive and expressively stimulating, leading quite naturally to the protracted moment of Elektra's death.

Counterexample 2 (Verdi's *Il trovatore*)

For the second example, by way of contrast, consider Stölzl's Berlin production of *Il Trovatore* (Staatsoper Berlin 2013, cond. Daniel Barenboim, Deutsche Grammophon 2014). Here, all the suggested gestures *are* executed to the last detail, which balances on the verge of ludicrousness. But this is obviously for a reason: The performance is conceived in the style of *commedia dell'arte*, including costumes and the combination of morbidity and grotesque. Hence, the same principle is taken advantage of, so to say, on the higher level, thus showing its general flexibility.

Counterexample 3 (Beethoven's *Ode to Joy*)

Finally, let us switch to the medium of music only, including its absolute variant. Nothing is more temporal and less pictorial than music, at least according to Lessing's original standards. But one can argue, as Leonard B. Meyer (1956, p. 14) did, that music's meaning arises only from the tension between the expectations evoked (such as the regular rhythm, the key, standard cadence etc.) and their intentional violations (syncopation, modulation, deceptive cadences etc.). As an easily recallable example, take the melodic line from the *Ode to Joy*, contrasting the basic melody (the intended gesture) with its subsequent syncopation (the executed one), as coming with "*Alle Menschen werden Brüder*". Since both gestures are, in fact, executed here consecutively, let me, for the sake of generality, consider also the beginning of Beethoven's *Fate* Symphony (Fig. 1):
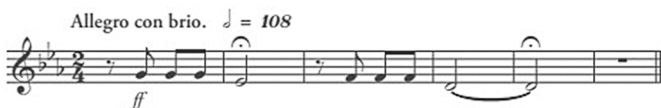
Fig. 1: Beethoven's *Fate* Symphony

As Ball (2010, p. 217) points out, it starts with a downbeat put on a rest. Gesturally, this is easily describable as the raising of Fate's hand in order to strike, but the point is that one is supposed to hear something which is not causally there but arises exactly from the interplay of the executed and the intended gesture.

I will not go further here, just stressing that Lessing's structural analysis can be easily transposed to other instances of *Zeitkunst*, showing it is not the underlying temporality but the superimposed contrastive structure that makes the difference. In this, the sensuous, causal part of music plays an important role (it is important to hear the music here and now, or to be right there, as in the theatrical performance). But it is not the decisive factor in making music aesthetically relevant. The internal contrast between two kinds of gestures is.

4 The Narrative Model and Positive Sciences

After the given series of counterexamples, the Laocoön example might be easily applied to the positive sciences, that is to experience in general: as a kind of manifestation that there is more to reality than what might be seen with the naked eye. So, contrary to Brecht's *Life of Galileo* and in accord with Feyera-

bend's *Against Method*,[5] you cannot just see how planets move in the sky, no matter how good your telescope is, if only because for many of them it takes hundreds of years to complete the orbit. In fact, you cannot see anything unless you come up with some additional hypothesis, as both Aristotle and Kepler did. Hegel's (in)famous "so much the worse for reality" that he allegedly said when told that his dissertation *De orbitis planetarum* (Hegel 1801) contradicts reality,[6] expresses just this, leading to the complex rejection of the causal model.

The overall idea of a viable alternative to the causal model of experience is based exactly on the internal contrast rather than external justification. In this, we still work with something which is just here and now, thus keeping the causal model within, but only as a side of the contrastive difference between two rep-

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5 This is just a short reference to two well-known and extreme positions. The position of Brecht corresponds to the "public opinion" identifying the essence of the modern scientific method in its heroic struggle with the dogmatic method of the Church and philosophers. See the dialogue below (Brecht 2013, p. 27):

> Galileo: Your Highness, why don't you come and look at these impossible and unnecessary stars through the telescope?
> The Mathematician: One is tempted to reply that your tube, in showing us what cannot be, must not – must it not? – be a very reliable tube?
> Galileo: What do you mean?
> The Mathematician: It would be so much more expeditious, Galileo, if you told us the reasons which move you to the supposition that in the furthest sphere of the immutable heavens there are other stars which support themselves and jiggle about.
> The Philosopher: Reasons, Galileo, reasons!
> Galileo: Reasons? When you can look at the stars themselves?

Feyerabend (2010, p. 125), explicitly, contradicts this shared opinion under the provocative statement that: "The Church at the time of Galileo not only kept closer to reason as defined then and, in part, even now; it also considered the ethical and social consequences of Galileo's views. Its indictment of Galileo was rational and only opportunism and a lack of perspective can demand a revision."

6 Interestingly, as regards the matter in which Hegel's dissertation allegedly contradicts reality, the validity of the Titius-Bode Law, Hegel is rather more right than wrong, not only nominally, in the sense that the law does not predict correctly the distances of the planets from the Sun, but also content-wise. Hegel did not attempt to refute the Law but simply ridiculed it by suggesting its replacement by another one based on Plato's *Timaeus*. The discovery of the asteroid Ceres, made ironically in the same year in which the dissertation was published, might have been the reason for taking Hegel's critique as obsolete since it filled the gap between Mars and Jupiter as predicted by the Titius-Bode Law. But, as we know today, while Ceres is the largest object in the asteroid belt, it is certainly not the only celestial body in the area. Furthermore, the Titius-Bode Law significantly failed in the cases of Neptune and Pluto. Hegel's claim thus easily reads along the lines of another famous maxim: "*Se non è vero, è ben trovato.*"

resentations rather than between the absolute difference of representation and what it represents. The reason, of course, is the standard one, amounting to the claim that "what the representation represents" is only another "representation".

In this, as Hegel maintains in the *Introduction* to his *Phenomenology*, one representation is used as a *measure* for the correctness of the other one, which only puts the whole picture into motion (see Hegel 2018, § 84). The planetary orbits were circular *for us* while being elliptical *in themselves*, at least until we found that they are not even that. Thus, rather than a report of how matters stand independently of us, our epistemic situation resembles that of two foreign languages, let us say English and Italian, the one which we know better and, as such, use as a measure for assessing the meaning of the other. This makes the whole of experience into a certain kind of cosmological story in which all parts are important for the understanding of what is happening here and now. Its protagonists are not always what they seem to be, and the plot consists basically in disentangling how the matters stand for them, or what is their true nature. This nature, however, is not separable from the plot, which, in fact, is why we might call the relevant model of experience a narrative one.

This delimitation of the narrative model is, of course, very simplistic and rough. But it allows for more flexibility than, for example, the popular and static concept of the fictional world (see Pavel 1986 and Doležel 1998). Take, for example, the case of mathematical knowledge. Obviously, it eludes the fictional paradigm because of its presupposed necessity: you cannot imagine a world in which it does not hold. But, as any kind of experience, it has an obvious narrative structure. Every school child, for example, knows the concept of the real number in its infinite expansion shape, say in 1.6180339887... What he or she usually does not know is that this shape recapitulates the whole story of incommensurability and thus provides the link to the original problems of practical measurement. If this link is neglected, as in the official axiomatic and model theoretic approach, one simply does not know what real numbers *really* are.[7]

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7 See my book (Kolman 2016) for an elaboration on this point. I am mentioning this rather occasionally here, but the example is important since mathematics seems, as the realm of allegedly eternal objects and forms, to be defying narrativity as such. Recently, Ladislav Kvasz argued otherwise, sketching an epistemic theory that not only takes the story of mathematical development into account (Kvasz 2008) but also considers explicitly the narrative form as a way of approaching mathematical knowledge (Kvasz 2020).

5 The Narrative Model and Art

The intelligibility of the narrative model consists primarily in its comparison with the causal one that basically stands for what Hegel calls the natural consciousness. It is characteristically adopted by both common sense and the positive sciences together with the dualism of the cognising subject and the cognised object (compare to Hegel 2018, §§ 26, 78). The goal of philosophy, as Hegel says in his *Differenzschrift* (Hegel 1977, p. 89), is to overcome such dualities.

The importance of art in this quest consists in its ability to make this need transparent, mainly by showing the unsustainability of the causal model without abandoning its salient features. This is how I read Hegel's dictum from his *Aesthetics* that beauty is the sensuous manifestation of truth (Hegel, 1975, p. 111). What is meant, of course, is not some particular truth, but the truth about the very nature of our experience, or: the truth about truth. I look at the narrative model as the complex sign for that. The fact that it leads to the self-contained concept of experience will give art the role of the organon of autopoiesis.

In introducing the narrative model properly, one can proceed in steps. The idea is to confront the causal model with the artistic experience and use this confrontation in a productive way, not as the rejection of the causal model, but its full-fledged transformation into the narrative one. This is a natural step since causality, as we have already mentioned, is a necessary part of the artistic experience, though not the exclusive one. What we want to arrive at is a certain kind of "*Aufhebung*", given in the above-mentioned accord of the executed and intended gestures. Accordingly, the undertaken steps will be presented also as particular models of experience, that is, not just as a preparation for establishing the particular one:

Model 1 (*Natasha Rostov*)

The basic inadequacy of the causal model is demonstrated in what might be called the model of Natasha Rostov due to Tolstoy's description of Rostovs' visit to the opera. What Natasha sees there is not the scene, but basically what is built from the here and now: the planks from which the set pieces were made, the ballerinas' fat legs etc. But this is obviously not what we are about to see or hear there. Interestingly, the description is rather autobiographical, as is indicated by Tolstoy's (1995, p. 104) account of his own visit to the performance of Wagner's *Siegfried* in *What is Art?:*

> On stage, amid scenery supposedly representing a cave in the rocks, in front of some object supposedly representing a blacksmith's apparatus, sat an actor dressed in tights and a cloak of skins, wearing a wig and a false beard, with weak, white, non-labouring hands (from his slack movements, and above all from his belly and lack of muscle, one could see that he was an actor), beating with a hammer such as never was upon a sword such as never could be, and beating in such a way as no one ever beats with a hammer, all the while opening his mouth strangely and singing something that could not be understood.

Model 2 (*Hamlet*)

In the second step, the more refined version of causality arises in an attempt to give the arts some extraneous function, be it within biological evolution, therapeutic sessions etc. Let me call it the model of Hamlet, considering his attempt to use the theatrical performance to confirm Claudius' crime. Here, *mutatis mutandis*, Wittgenstein's (1958, p. 178) critique of the idea that music is to express some extraneous emotions might be applied:

> What repels us in this account is that it seems to say that music is an instrument for producing in us sequences of feelings. And from this one might gather that any other means of producing such feelings would do for us instead of music. To such an account we are tempted to reply "Music conveys to us *itself!*"

This is *autopoiesis* in a nutshell.

Model 3 (*Laocoön*)

Along this path, finally, the Laocoön model arises in a dialectical way. It does not reject the previous models, and the causality and purposefulness present in them, but keeps them within, as responsible for arts' overall affectivity, social role, and their subsequent classification according to their epistemic adequacy. As for the model 2, the art is undoubtedly useful, but in the exact same self-reflective way in which it is true. By making the immanent nature of human experience transparent, model 3 captures this usefulness in an adequate way: there is no usefulness beyond the meaningful social life, beyond the sense that we give to the things around us by correcting them – as Axel Hutter (2007, p. 69) put it – through the stories we make.

This last model is also the coveted narrative model of experience acquired now in an adequate way, that is, according to the same principles that it makes explicit. As for the adequacy of individual arts *vis-a-vis* these principles, Hegel provides such a classification in his *Aesthetics*, starting with architecture

and sculpture and ending up with poetry and musical drama. Scruton's (1998, chaps. 9, 10) belittlement of photography and films as parasitic forms of art because of their substantial causal dependency is of the same origin. My differentiation between the causal and the narrative model, in fact, draws on his differentiation between causal and intentional explanation, reading the intentional structure of experience in a narrative way.

6 Conclusion

The concept of narrativity was used as a final expression of the explanatory strength of the structural part of Lessing's argument and as a suggestion to treat the analysis based on the executed and intended gestures as a universal one, covering not only the arts without discrimination but the whole of human experience. What makes Lessing's model narrative in the usual sense of the word is that it presents the experience not as a mere sequence of representations, but their organisation into a very simple plot that reads: *It was like this, but it is not anymore.* And this narrow sense of narrativity is also the way to its generalisation for which the art is here to help us. Let me illustrate how this might be done against the background of music as something rather counter narrative in the usual sense of the word. The generalisation of the narrative model of art to the narrative model of experience will then follow easily:

Example 1 (False tone)

To hear some tone as a false *A* is not just to hear some frequency, which is simply as it is, but something which differs from the standard of the Western scales that serve as a kind of *measure*. The measure, then, stands here for the intended gesture, what is not positively there, but which serves as a musical re-evaluation of the executed acoustical phenomena which, *per se*, is fine as it is.

Example 2 (Tune)

In the course of my listening, I might realise that what I am listening to is, in fact, some jazzy tune. Accordingly, I must reassess the false *A* as one of the *blue notes*. To use Hayden White's narrative terms, this might be read as that I am providing a completely different *emplotment* of the given acoustic data, that is, finding a story which fits them better or more adequately. The stories

and data are, of course, not independent, representing the complicated relations between the categories of being and meaning.

Example 3 (Composition)

This narrative structure of cognition becomes even more transparent on the level of musical composition. If I say that this looks like an authentic cadence but, in fact, it is a deceptive one, I do not just describe things as they are but make them into a meaningful whole. In this, the seeming quality of the authentic cadence that, in reality, turned out to be the deceptive one is not just a wrong guess but an essential part of the story, contributing to the aesthetical value in the same way the surprising quality of Laocoön's unconcerned face is. To put it concisely: In order to understand the meaning as intended by the composer, the listener must be deceived first. This is a case of what Hutter (2017, p. 84) calls "narrative irony", in which what there simply is (the causally defined being) is corrected by the overall meaning (the narrator's intention). You can imagine other, higher-order examples, such as the *Interlude* to *Tristan und Isolde*, in which you are deceived to the very end.

The most important point of this last example (3) is that the two representations contrasted there are only derivative, mirroring the contrast of two competing subjects, the composer and the listener. In this, the standard delimitation of narrativity by means of a narrator appears, but in the broadest epistemic sense which takes into account that every story is told by somebody to somebody else. The whole enterprise of overcoming the subject-object duality, described by Hegel as the "Calvary of the Spirit" (Hegel 2018, § 808), follows this proto-social pattern in which a dualistic model of experience is continuously transformed into a monistic one.

In this, the duality is somehow both cancelled and preserved, in a similar way as that in which we have cancelled the causal model within the narrative one. Along the lines that were suggested, this "*Aufhebung*" consists in replacing the object of my cognition by another subject that is both the same and different from me. The resulting structure of Spirit is obviously the most general and autopoietic one: there is no sense in placing the given cosmological story beyond the community of speakers and the intentionality of gestures they use. At the same time, it is the community of those that call themselves us that provides for the story's overall unity. In this, art, and the narrative model of experience based on it, are both one of the story's chapters and the means by which its autopoietic structure is made explicit. As such, to speak in Hegel's terms, they sensuously manifest the truth.

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