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## Critical Aspects of the Age

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## *Critical Aspects of the Age*

The volume presented here examines the critical points of the age, this being the highest task of the philosophical thinking in dialogue with other scientific disciplinary sectors. Examining how much the spiritual situation of the time has progressed in its theoretical presuppositions, not always concordant or coherent, but in fact operating and alive in the whole of our contemporary vision of the world, remains what the humanistic and social sphere has to ask in its reflection on a holistic context of the existential self-clarification in the immanent structures of reality.

The scientific works here come from an international, intercultural and multidisciplinary academic dialogue in which the most problematic points of today's academy and of the state of the art of humanistic, social and cultural research are expressed. Through the genealogy of the processes and dynamics that have formed a somewhat problematic and often contradictory, but undoubtedly contemporary, vision of the world within itself, that of the Western mole to which we belong and which determines us in our thoughts, personal projects and achievements, this volume proposes new paths.

These paths are the possibilities for improvement and conscientious and systemic development of our society, and are linked to an actuality that is not lost in the categories of the past and is not fixed as a mere future abstraction but remains a concrete project to be undertaken on both personal and social level. The humanistic, political, social and legal fields emerge as a solid background for academic reflection in this thematic volume. The theoretical presuppositions of the contemporary worldview communicate that research on the current state of society and of living existence requires reflections and paths of analysis.

Through the genealogy of the historical development of Western worldviews of speculation, Harbaš points to the inextricable link between the category of politics and phenomenologically oriented tradition, and thus observes the important developmental processes of existentially relevant factors for the current spiritual situation of the age. The author thus introduces significant names of the philosophical tradition that also serve as a starting point for the rehabilitation of those authors who are crucial for the plurality of theoretical discussion and branching of the philosophical science today.

In a similar framework, Colombani contextualizes her philosophical analytics by introducing the philosophical categories of worldview in the connection with the borderline situations of existence. The anthropological analysis that is profiled here is useful for deepening the approach through Jaspers' terminology and his philosophical assumptions, thus entering into the topicality of the continental-type philosophy at the international level of discussion on the topic.

Jerković and Zlatić compare two examples of higher education models and thus point out the differences in the implementation of the Bologna system within the members of the European Union. The paper is useful for introducing changes in various declensions of the European higher education system, which is indicated as one of the important factors of the

current state of the education sector, largely reflecting the current state of the Western worldview and its possible future development paths.

Uzunić, on the other hand, explains how the philosophical sphere today is part of a commercial vision of the cultural expropriation where the authentic hermeneutic message of self-understanding no longer takes place. Consistent with this, Visconti poses the philosophical question on the state of human dignity in the contemporary Western vision and proposes paths of recovery of the originally ontological speculation in an anthropological horizon through the categories of finiteness and morality. Romano's work fits into a similar perspective, re-proposing Weil's speculation and the categories of compassion which the contemporary worldview is notably lacking. Authentic communication between living beings in the age of oblivion of being requires a reintroduction of compassion through the spoken word and the concrete activity of inclusive action.

The indissoluble link between the ontology and ethics in an authentic philosophical speculation can also be found in the work of De Felice who notes in this interconnection of uniqueness of thinking and acting, the useful paths for today's philosophical development with the introduction of the work of Spinoza. The unifying and holistic monism of Spinoza's speculation serves as an antidote to the current philosophical positions of the Western worldview that determines and characterizes us.

This thematic volume therefore succeeds in its intent to demonstrate that internationality with strong declinations of the scientific sector to which each of the works presented here belongs, is the way to follow if we want to adequately analyze our condition of life. From purely philosophical themes to more strictly social, legal and cultural ones, this volume offers the reader a pluri-perspectives of research, with themes and arguments that form a complex critique of the current moment of personal consciousness and existential life.

## Editorial Board

## *Educación, ética y política. La respuesta a la coyuntura histórica*

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### *Abstract*

This project affirms and problematizes the teaching of philosophy in different curricular perspectives, and its didactic instrumentation in the current anthropological situation, from the processes of desubjectivization in the horizon of existence. The project also seeks to deepen the teacher training in the link that exists between anthropology and education, to the extent that the educational practice and the training of teachers in particular, assume the human being as a problematic unit. The relationship between education and politics is of fundamental importance here, since the educational fact is a political fact, a producer of convinced effects of the transformative and productive capacity of education. By way of didactic reflection, the proposal intends to intersect these problems with an introductory text to the teaching of philosophy: "The origins of philosophy" by the German thinker Karl Jaspers. In this way we want to think about how a text that commonly circulates in the classroom can serve as a platform for ethical, political and anthropological reflection and can help reflect on the link between the teacher training and philosophy.

### *Keywords*

Educación, ética, política, poder, resistencia.

### *Introducción*

«Rechazo la palabra enseñanza, mis libros son invitaciones, gestos hechos al público»<sup>1</sup>.

El proyecto de la presente comunicación consiste en pensar el valor de la enseñanza de la filosofía en la actual coyuntura antropológica, sobre todo a partir de los procesos desubjetivantes, propios de las actuales condiciones materiales de existencia.

La propuesta es intersectar nuestro foco de problematización con un texto precisamente introductorio de enseñanza de la filosofía. Nos referimos a la obra de Karl Jaspers *¿Qué es*

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<sup>1</sup> Farge, Arlet. “La Historia entre dos orillas” en *El infrecuentable Michel Foucault, Renovación del pensamiento crítico* bajo la dirección de Eribon, Didier, p. 227.

filosofía?<sup>2</sup>. De este modo queremos pensar cómo un texto de circulación corriente en las aulas de cualquier perspectiva de la formación docente puede servir como plataforma de reflexión ético-político-antropológica y contribuir a lo que llamaremos una instalación eto-poiética en el marco de una política de la existencia.

El trabajo recorre, pues, dos momentos. En primer lugar, desplegaremos algunos conceptos de matiz antropológico para fundamentar la absoluta solidaridad entre educación y antropología, como modo de sostener una instalación ético-política del hecho educativo.

En segundo lugar, abordaremos el texto mencionado, a fin de intentar un abordaje problematizador del mismo. Se trata, en última instancia, de una apropiación de los orígenes de la filosofía que Jaspers postula desde un horizonte antropológico.

### 1. *El topos antropológico*

El hombre puede tomar distancia de la naturaleza y esa distancia es el acto transformador por excelencia. Toda *poiesis* supone un acto de creación que hace del universo un mundo humano, al tiempo que supone un acto de instalación ética, ya que esa transformación es, al mismo tiempo, lo que despliega un *ethos*, una actitud, una manera de ser, un modo de vida. Creación e instalación son las claves que hacen del hombre una unidad problemática, cuya existencia gira en torno al puesto que ocupa en el cosmos.

Todo campo institucional representa un cierto *topos* de poder; incluso, los saberes se configuran en campos de poder, ya que se erigen como posibilidades operativas sobre lo real<sup>3</sup>. La escuela tiene el desafío histórico de delinejar los saberes que vehiculicen alguna transformación posible, puntualmente en los juegos vinculares que atraviesan a sus actores. Por supuesto que no desconocemos su desafío de recuperar otros saberes, más tradicionales en la narrativa escolar, pero, en el presente trabajo, orientamos la mirada hacia otra dimensión de lo humano, que, a nuestro criterio, representa el cimiento mismo de toda construcción ulterior. Se trata de reinstalar un cierto espacio de convivencia donde puedan insertarse luego otros objetos de conocimiento.

Asimismo, intentamos problematizar el actual imaginario de "lo político", y de la escuela como espacio "a-político", para ver en qué medida la institución escuela no puede permanecer ajena a una concepción de lo político.

El enfoque supone la complejidad e intersección de campos que no pueden verse como compartimientos estáticos, ya que la educación es esencialmente una experiencia en diálogo con la política, la ética, la antropología y todo aquello que conciba al hombre de manera integral.

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<sup>2</sup> Se trata de un capítulo de la obra Karl Jaspers, *¿Qué es filosofía?* En dicho capítulo, el autor alemán problematiza la diferencia entre origen y comienzo, para ubicar al primero en el lugar de la fuente desde donde mana el impulso a filosofar, mientras el segundo se refiere a una cuestión histórica, que se juega en un horizonte temporal, mientras el origen es a-histórico

<sup>3</sup> Las reflexiones aquí vertidas acompañan los lineamientos de Michel Foucault en torno a las modalidades del ejercicio del poder. Se trata del desplazamiento de una visión negativa del mismo a otra positiva de la tecnología de poder, estrechamente vinculada a los modos de subjetivación.

La propuesta es pensar la enseñanza de la filosofía desde ciertos horizontes, de marcado acento griegos: la noción de *krisis*, la noción de *kairos* y la noción de *epimeleia*, emparentada con el verbo *therapeuo*.

Se impone un recorrido por ellos para luego elaborarlos políticamente y ver su impacto en el campo de la formación docente.

Siguiendo la huella etimológica del término *krisis*, encontramos una serie de significados sugerentes, alejados de la usual visibilización del término: *separación, distinción, elección, disentimiento, disputa, decisión, sentencia, resolución*, entre otros.

La totalidad del campo semántico es solidario con la propuesta del presente trabajo, en la medida en que buscamos indagar un proceso de *separación, de distinción y elección* entre distintos modos de instalación subjetiva, en el marco de lo que constituye una *decisión, una resolución* por parte del sujeto, como forma de instalarse éticamente.

El mismo verbo *krino* alude a la noción de separar, distinguir, escoger, decidir, juzgar, condenar. En efecto, se trata de *distinguir* entre distintas categorías de sujetos, de *resolver para sí* una determinada constitución subjetiva, en el marco de lo que constituye una política de la existencia.

La huella semántica del término *epimeleia* parece situarnos en el corazón mismo de la experiencia. Cuidado, atención, solicitud, dirección, administración, estudio, práctica. La diversidad semántica abre las distintas aristas del fenómeno mismo. Una vez más, se trata de pensar la relación entre ética y antropología, como aquello que determinará un modelo de sujeto capaz de tener autoridad, potestad sobre sí.

¿En qué medida el verbo *therapeuo* nos ubica en el *topos* que estamos problematizando y en qué sentido resulta una noción nodular dentro de esta economía de cuidado de uno mismo? El verbo alude a la acción de estar al servicio de, cuidar, guardar, atender, tener cuidado de, honrar, curar. Conocerse a sí mismo implica reconocerse como persona y ese gesto supone honrarse. Honrar la propia vida, la cual toma, una vez más, un cierto valor estético.

El punto de partida es siempre el mismo que anima a un pensamiento filosófico: repensar la situación que nos atraviesa como primera instalación en lo que hemos construido.

En ese sentido, la tarea es propiciar el pensamiento, provocarlo como una caja de herramienta capaz de interpretar la realidad y transformarla. No sólo la realidad en la que el sujeto se halla inmerso, sino su propia realidad subjetiva, como hombre comprometido con su tiempo histórico, lo cual lo territorializa en un doble campo: su “ser en el mundo” y “su ser con”. Propiciar un pensamiento de estas características es propiciar un pensamiento político en tanto capaz de producir efectos, sobre sí y sobre los demás. Un pensamiento capaz de producir transformaciones en aras de una sociedad más justa y que, por otra parte, repiese el lugar de los jóvenes al interior de la misma, ya que ellos constituyen el *kairos* de toda transformación. El término alude a la idea de momento oportuno, coyuntura favorable, oportunidad, ocasión propicia. El concepto lo pensamos desde un doble andarivel: en primer lugar, la educación es ella misma *kairos*, siempre y cuando asuma su rol político, y en segundo lugar, los jóvenes representan el *kairos* de una nueva construcción moral.

Propiciar el pensamiento crítico en el sentido etimológico aludido es provocar la acción, a partir del maridaje entre la teoría y la acción. Se trata de la gesta fundacional de repensar

el propio lugar de instalación; de entender la acción como resistencia al modelo desubjetivante, individualista y narcotizante que parece atravesar la actual coyuntura antropológica, a partir de la vulnerabilidad del colectivo. El retiro de la palabra, como bien común y lazo comunicante, y del sentido como núcleo cohesionante ha determinado ese paisaje de vulnerabilidad

La *krisis* aparece entonces como alternativa-resistencia y como aquello que genera el *topos*, territorio, de nuevas construcciones de las identidades y nuevos mecanismos en los juegos vinculantes entre los sujetos. La tarea pasa por el modelo del reconocimiento. Poder ver al otro, escuchar su palabra, atender su reclamo, confiar en sus posibilidades poiéticas, que siempre son posibilidades resistentes. En un tiempo de aparente visibilidad y transparencia de los cuerpos, el otro como persona queda invisibilizado y silenciado desde su alteridad antropológica. El primer gesto es la propia mirada de quienes sostenemos el ejercicio docente. Sólo quien visibiliza desde su instalación de enseñanza, genera espacios de visibilidad.

Propiciar el pensamiento crítico es repensar el espacio ético como cuidado del otro, del par antropológico, en tanto co-gestor de un espacio de convivialidad. En tiempos de desamparo, el cuidado de sí es proporcional al cuidado de otro como forma de generar nuevos modelos de instalación en el mundo.

Propiciar el pensamiento crítico es apostar a un pensamiento nomádico. Entendemos por ello un tipo de pensamiento que resista toda fijación a-crítica, como forma de sedentarizar la mirada y el compromiso. El nomadismo implica un cierto modo de dirigir la mirada, de estar atento a pensar aquello que la realidad devuelve como *topos* de reflexión. El dispositivo narcotizante fija la mirada, secuestra la energía, conjurando sus posibilidades de movimiento y resistencia. Eso vuelve vulnerable a los sujetos; constituye la imposibilidad de instalarse críticamente en la realidad y escoger las herramientas para sortear un tiempo signado por nuevas formas de violencia.

El pensamiento nomádico es también aquel que sabe desterritorializarse del entorno subjetivo, clausurado y cerrado, para buscar en la intersubjetividad un espacio de acción común, a partir de la mutua afectación.

El pensamiento nómade se opone al pensamiento estático, el que no puede ni desea movilizarse para reflexionarse sobre nuevos objetos. Se trata de un pensamiento móvil que moviliza al tiempo que él mismo se mueve deseando problematizar lo real. Mueve y se mueve y en ese movimiento, modifica tanto al sujeto como a lo real mismo.

Se trata del nomadismo antropológico que sabe recorrer la coyuntura buscando los micro-espacios de construcción política de alternativas.

Propiciar el pensamiento crítico es reinstalar la expectativa del pro-yecto, con lo cual se abre la dimensión del futuro, como tiempo posible de acción. Vivirse como un proyecto es saberse “arrojado al porvenir”, en la línea del pensamiento sartreano<sup>4</sup>. La tarea es, entonces, la reconstrucción del lazo vinculante como forma de consolidar la posibilidad del proyecto compartido, como aquello que reinstala la noción de bien común. El proyecto opera entonces

<sup>4</sup> Sobre este punto, véase la obra de Jean Paul Sartre, *El existencialismo es un humanismo* y las consecuencias antropológicas de la primera verdad del existencialismo, esto es, la proposición general donde “la existencia precede la esencia”.

como el lugar del sentido, de aquello que vincula en la tarea compartida. Cuando el proyecto se instala, se reinstala la posibilidad del futuro, conjurando la única dimensión que el dispositivo narcotizante despliega: el presente.

## 2. La reapropiación textual: filosofía y ethos

A la luz del marco precedente donde hemos intentado desplegar el marco antropológico desde el cual pensamos la inserción de la formación docente y luego de haber definido el proyecto de instalación que la praxis educativa supone, proponemos algunas reflexiones reapropiándonos del texto escogido.

Recordemos cuáles son los cuatro orígenes que Jaspers postula para ver en qué medida guardan relación con el marco precedente, a partir de la apropiación antropológica que proponemos de los mismos<sup>5</sup>.

### 2.1 Asombro

En primer lugar pensemos en el asombro. Si en aquel marco el asombro representaba el *pathos* frente a la vastedad de lo real, ahora retorna en el desafío de recuperar la capacidad de asombro. *Θαυμάξω* significa admirar, mirar hacia, extrañarse, mirar con sorpresa, preguntarse con admiración o curiosidad. Esta es la clave de la propuesta: romper la familiaridad de lo cotidiano, neutralizar su estatuto de natural para indagar por qué las cosas son como son. Las cosas y las relaciones humanas se han naturalizado, transidas por el horror, la injusticia, la falta de solidaridad y compromiso, la banalidad, las lecturas a-criticas, el no reconocimiento de las diferencias, la invisibilización y silenciamiento de colectivos sociales, las formas de explotación, las formas de sometimiento, la pérdida de sentidos posibles, el empobrecimiento de los lazos vinculares. Sólo algunos hitos de un paisaje antropológico que pasa por habitual, natural, familiar y consensuado desde la mirada y la complicidad. Por supuesto que no anima al presente análisis la melancolía de un tiempo perdido, óptimo y fatalmente perecido. Nada de eso; pero sí la mirada de un tiempo histórico de una profunda devaluación antropológica, que no añora lo pasado, sino que mira lo por venir con medida expectativa. La escuela es la institución que debe liderar el protagonismo del asombro en el sentido aludido.

Asombrarse significa mirar de otro modo, direccionar la mirada para romper lo familiar y extrañarse. Creemos que este es el punto de partida de un nuevo *logos*, de una nueva palabra-instalación sobre aquello que abandona su habitual configuración de ser para pasar a ser parte del asombro.

Asombrarse implica dar cuenta de recibo de la relación hombre-mundo, para instalarse en él desde otro lugar. El asombro invita a pensar, a convertir en *logos* aquello que en principio suspende la palabra. A un primer momento de silenciamiento frente a la situación que extraña, se inicia un proceso de toma de la palabra, como intento de nombrar lo nuevo.

<sup>5</sup> Recordemos que el texto diferencia origen de comienzo. Mientras éste tiene un fondo histórico, vinculado a la idea de nacimiento epocal, el origen tiene que ver con el impulso que mueve a reflexionar.

En este línea, la genealogía de sesgo nietzscheano-foucaultiano<sup>6</sup> representa una herramienta de instalación útil. La pregunta que acompaña el asombro quizás sea ¿por qué somos lo que somos?, ¿cómo hemos llegado a ser lo que somos? ¿cuáles son las condiciones de posibilidad para que se produzcan determinadas realidades? Así el pensamiento deviene “caja de herramientas” capaz de interpretar la realidad pero, al mismo tiempo, comprensión política que entraña deseo de transformación. El pensamiento político radica precisamente en esa trilogía que aúna interpretación-instalación y transformación, como forma de un nuevo *ethos*.

Asombrarse es con-mocionarse, moverse en otra dirección. He allí el horizonte del pensamiento nómada al que aludiéramos; la vieja forma de ver-pensar se desterritorializa hacia otra forma nueva. El pensamiento se entrena a moverse frente a la visión de nuevos objetos y realidades.

El pensamiento se entrena para instalarse frente al *πρόβλημα*. El término es rico y significativo a la presente propuesta: problema, cuestión, propuesta, pero también, saliente, promontorio, baluarte, barrera. El problema opera como una barrera a sortear, como un nudo a desanudar y allí radica la dimensión política de todo pensamiento<sup>7</sup>.

La tarea filosófica y la instalación docente es generar el problema, proponer el nudo para desanudarlo reflexivamente.

## 2.2 Duda

En segundo lugar, pensemos en la duda. Si en aquel marco textual la duda representaba el espíritu crítico frente a la totalidad de lo conocido, ahora retorna en el desafío de recuperar la capacidad de duda. El intento está directamente relacionado con el apartado anterior, ya que dudar es poner en clave interrogativa las certezas que la habitud de las cosas y las situaciones otorga. La duda, al generar la pregunta, rompe el *topos* sosegante de la certeza y abre un nuevo espacio a transitar.

La duda desterritorializa el pensamiento clausurado e impermeable a lo nuevo; es un punto de fuga, una instalación en aquello que la certeza a-crítica invisibiliza. Es esta la función incomodante de la filosofía la que debe animar cualquier enseñanza de la disciplina.

La duda instala en el lugar de la angustia, ya que al quedar suspendidas las certezas, el sentimiento es de intemperie. Eso también marca la filosofía como *ethos* existencial, sobre todo porque el sentimiento de intemperie moviliza la capacidad de pensamiento.

De este modo, la duda se convierte ella misma en *kairos*, en oportunidad de una nueva construcción, que tenga el sello de la responsabilidad del sujeto y no de la recepción pasiva de construcciones ficcionadas por otros.

Dudar supone la tarea de de-construcción de lo dado y la *poiesis* de construcción de lo nuevo, convirtiéndose en una fuerza desterritorializante por excelencia que rompe la permanencia-identidad de la certeza como fuerza territorializada y congelada.

<sup>6</sup> Aludimos al carácter fundado, histórico de toda construcción. Lejos de las percepciones intemporales, por fuera del devenir histórico, vinculadas con la noción de *Ursprung* (origen), la genealogía sostiene el carácter ficcionante de todo *constructo*, en la línea del concepto de *Erfindung* (invento).

<sup>7</sup> Sobre este tema, véase Foucault, Michel, *La microfísica del poder*

### 2.3 Situaciones límites

En tercer lugar, pensemos en las situaciones límites. Si en aquel marco textual representaban aquellas situaciones de las cuales el hombre no podía evadirse porque constituían el corazón de su condición humana, ahora el tema retorna en el desafío de recuperar la capacidad de hacerse cargo de sí para devenir un sujeto responsable.

Quizás sean las situaciones límites las que impactan más directamente en el universo antropológico. Si el asombro y la duda parecen estar fuertemente ligadas al mundo exterior, más allá de que convoquen a una disponibilidad por parte del sujeto en una nueva forma de mirar, las situaciones límites impactan directamente sobre el mundo interno del sujeto. En este punto el sujeto se mira a sí mismo como nudo problemático.

Quizás sea en el marco del ejercicio docente una buena excusa para introducir a los griegos desde un horizonte de absoluta vigencia<sup>8</sup>. En ese marco dos conceptos se imponen: el de *epimeleia* y el de *epistrophe*. Ambos términos se complementan con la expresión *eis heautou*, la cual da cuenta del “hacia sí mismo”. *Epimeleia*, tal como anticipamos, se refiere al cuidado, y el verbo en su forma media, *epimeléomai*, significa cuidarse, preocuparse, cuidar de. *Epistrophe*, por otra parte, como noción complementaria, es la acción de volverse o tornarse, solicitud, atención. Suficiente marco para comprender una fuerte acción del sujeto sobre sí mismo como modo de volver la mirada sobre sí. Si con anterioridad habíamos pensado la dirección de la mirada sobre lo nuevo, lo que asombra y lo que genera duda, ahora el nuevo ejercicio de la mirada se dirige sobre cada uno como espacio ético-antropológico.

La idea es repensar la propia constitución subjetiva como tarea eto-poiética. Volverse uno mismo constituye también una situación límite, exactamente en el punto donde no podemos evadirnos de la gesta. Aparece así el problema de la subjetividad, de los llamados “modos de subjetivación”, en tanto constitución de uno mismo como acto estético-político.

Pensar la enseñanza de la filosofía como hecho político es pensar la posibilidad de que el pensamiento se convierta en un agente productor de efectos. El gran desafío y la mayor recompensa del ejercicio es un alumno capaz de asombrarse, dudar y atenderse, en el marco de las consideraciones antropológicas precedentes.

### Conclusiones

El presente trabajo ha intentado pensar el ejercicio docente desde un juego de intersecciones posibles.

En primer lugar, le dimos al ejercicio un marco antropológico para solidarizar dos nociones indisolubles: antropología y educación, maridaje por fuera del cual no concebimos el hecho educativo.

En segundo lugar, propusimos un juego de apropiación textual a modo de ejercicio de enseñanza filosófica y de plataforma de reflexión. El desplazamiento efectuado nos condujo

<sup>8</sup> Pensamos en el retorno que Michel Foucault plantea en su texto *Hermenéutica del sujeto* al mundo greco-romano, como forma de indagar políticas de constitución de la subjetividad.

del eje del asombro-duda al eje de la constitución subjetiva como núcleos de absoluta vigencia.

El recorrido estuvo siempre guiado por el convencimiento de que el pensamiento constituye una caja de herramientas capaz de operar sobre lo real, incluyendo la propia realidad del sujeto. El pensamiento se convierte entonces en resistencia<sup>9</sup>, en reacción responsable frente a una acción.

La resistencia es entonces el acto estético de reinventar el mundo y reinventarse como sujeto; es la apuesta de inventar un nuevo *topos* que amplíe las daciones de sentido. Salirse de sí, de lo aceptado a-críticamente, desposeerse de lo habitual y seguro para poseer la posibilidad de los múltiples sentidos, perderse para encontrarse desde otro espacio. Transgredir un espacio para asaltar otra geografía. El pensamiento como acto ético-estético interrumpe las certezas que los dispositivos aseguran en su lugar de primacía y el tiempo de la continuidad que el mismo representa. El acto filosófico interrumpe esa continuidad porque fractura el discurso que asegura certeza y continuidad para pensar la realidad desde otro lugar.

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<sup>9</sup> Pensamos en la relación poder-resistencia que Michel Foucault sostiene en el marco de la genealogía para pensar el poder como ejercicio, como funcionamiento, lo que supone la complementariedad de la acción que se ejerce y la reacción, que se despliega como resistencia.

## *Leibniz interprete di Spinoza. Un confronto a ritroso nel tempo tra logica, ontologia ed etica*

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### *Abstract*

In this article, the author aims to reconstruct the relationship between Leibniz and Spinoza in the light of the recent documents and unpublished texts and the historical and chronological revision of the dense correspondence of the philosopher of the monads. An ambivalent approach emerges from the fact that, on the one hand, Leibniz recognizes the Jewish philosopher's depth of spirit and philosophical acumen, and on the other he denounces the lack of methodological rigor of the ethical propositions and the Cartesian matrix that is at their origin. The negative evaluation that Leibniz gives of Spinoza's philosophy, considered as an erroneous theoretical system, theological heresy and moral decadence, will serve as a model for the subsequent interpretations / refutations of Spinozism in Germany, helping to give Spinoza the image of the accursed philosopher.

### *Keywords*

Leibniz, Spinoza, Confutazione, Sostanza, Etica

Sulla *Wirkungsgeschichte* dello spinozismo e, in particolare, sulla ricezione leibniziana del pensiero di Spinoza tanto è stato scritto e, tutt'oggi, l'argomento, grazie anche al ritrovamento di documenti e testi inediti e alla revisione storico-cronologica della corposa corrispondenza epistolare di Leibniz<sup>10</sup>, è motivo di rinnovato interesse e scrupolosa ricerca da parte degli studiosi<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> A tal proposito, si vedano: F. Akkerman, P. Steenbakkers (eds.), *Spinoza to the Letter. Studies in Words, Texts and Books*, Brill, Leiden, 2005. Il testo di O. Proietti e G. Licata, *Il carteggio Van Gent - Tschirnhaus (1679-1690). Storia, cronistoria, contesto dell'editio postuma spinoziana* (Macerata, EUM, 2013), offre un'approfondita analisi e una ricostruzione dei carteggi incrociati fra gli intellettuali dell'epoca, tra cui Leibniz, che si interrogano su questioni centrali della dottrina spinoziana. Una recente lettura è offerta da S. Di Bella, *Leibniz lettore di Spinoza*, in Carlo Altini (a cura di), *La fortuna di Spinoza in età moderna e contemporanea*, vol. I, Ed. Normale Pisa 2020, pp. 73-96.

<sup>11</sup> Nell'ultimo cinquantennio sono stati prodotti studi di grande spessore sulla ricezione dello spinozismo in Germania, tra questi: K. Gründer und W. Schmidt-Biggemann (eds.), *Spinoza in der Frühzeit seiner religiösen Wirkung*, Heidelberg, Lambert Schneider, 1984; D. Bell, *Spinoza in Germany From 1670 to the Age of Goethe*, London, Institute of Germanic Studies, 1984; W. Schröder, *Spinoza in der deutschen Frühauklärung*, Würzburg, Königshausen & Neumann, 1987; H. Han-Ding, *Spinoza und die deutsche Philosophie. Eine Untersuchung zur metaphysischen Wirkungsgeschichte des Spinozismus in Deutschland*, Aalen, Scientia, 1989, spec. pp. 26-35; F. Biasutti, *Prospettive su Spinoza*, Trento, Verifiche, 1990; *Spinoza au XVIIe siècle*, Klincksieck, Paris 1990; P.-F. Moreau, *Spinoza's Reception and Influence*, in: D. Garrett (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 408-434; V. Morfino (eds.) *La*

L'interpretazione più completa che Leibniz dà della filosofia spinoziana si trova negli *Essai de Théodicée* (1710) in cui Leibniz condensa gran parte delle argomentazioni formulate contro il pensiero di Spinoza in scritti editi, inediti e in lettere dal 1680 in poi<sup>12</sup>. In questo scritto Leibniz è spinto a trattare la filosofia di Spinoza da uno scopo ben preciso: visto l'orrore che lo spinozismo suscita a quel tempo, Leibniz intende prevenire un accostamento della propria filosofia a quella del dissidente ebreo e, nello stesso tempo, far valere, *contra Spinozam*, le proprie idee<sup>13</sup>.

Inoltre l'universalmente disprezzato Spinoza è per Leibniz un utile strumento per combattere i sostenitori del “nuovo sistema”, ossia i cartesiani: presentando il sistema di Spinoza come il logico sviluppo della filosofia di Descartes, o meglio come una forma di «cartesianesimo esasperato»<sup>14</sup>, oscuro e pieno di paralogismi e contraddizioni, il filosofo delle monadi non solo denuncia lo spinozismo come pericoloso, ma getta discredito sul cartesianesimo.

Analoga argomentazione si trova nel *Discours de Métaphysique* (1686)<sup>15</sup> e in diverse lettere e saggi pubblicati alla fine del XVII<sup>16</sup> in cui Leibniz polemizza contro i *derniers novateurs* accostando il nome di Spinoza a quello di Descartes e critica, attraverso la confutazione degli errori mostruosi del primo, quelli del secondo, che ne sono all'origine.

Vi è tuttavia un periodo dello sviluppo intellettuale di Leibniz, tra il 1676 e il 1678, in cui egli è spinto da un vivo interesse per il pensiero di Spinoza. La pubblicazione del *Tractatus*

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*Spinoza-Renaissance nella Germania di fine Settecento*, Milano, Unicopli, 1998; G. Lloyd (eds.), *Spinoza. Critical Assessments, IV, The Reception and Influence of Spinoza's Philosophy*, London-New York, Routledge, 2001; C. Jaquet, P.-F. Moreau (eds.), *Spinoza Transalpin. Les interprétations actuelles en Italie*, Éditions de la Sorbonne, Paris 2012, W. van Bunge, *Spinoza Past and Present. Essays on Spinoza, Spinozism and Spinoza Scholarship*, Leiden, Brill, 2012; V. Morfino, *Genealogia di un pregiudizio. L'immagine di Spinoza in Germania da Leibniz a Marx*, Hildesheim, Olms Verlag, 2016.

<sup>12</sup> *Essai de Théodicée sur la bonté de Dieu, la liberté de l'Homme et l'origine du mal*, in G.W. Leibniz, *Die philosophischen Schriften*, hrsg. von C. I. Gerhard (7 Bde), Olms, Hildesheim 1960 (Nachdr. 1 Aufl. 1875-1890), Bd. VI, pp. 1-375; la trad. it. si trova in G.W. Leibniz, *Scritti filosofici*, a cura di O. Bianca, (2 voll.), UTET, Torino 1967; vol. 1, pp. 373-731. Abbiamo qui preferito utilizzare i *Saggi di Teodicea*, trad. a cura di M. Marilli, BUR, Milano 1997.

<sup>13</sup> Con il suo articolo su *Spinoza* pubblicato nel *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1697, 1702) Bayle contribuisce a diffondere in tutta Europa l'immagine di Spinoza come *ateo sistematico*, immagine che sarà alla base di persecuzioni e censure, per sfuggire alle quali i simpatizzanti dello spinozismo saranno costretti ad assumere atteggiamenti di reticenza e dissimulazione per celare al meglio le proprie opinioni (cfr. P. Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique* in *Oeuvres diverses*, 2 vol., ed. par E. Labrousse, Olms, Hildesheim 1982); [Dizionario storico-critico] trad. it. a cura di G. Cantelli, Laterza, Roma-Bari 1976; G. Friedmann, *Leibniz et Spinoza*, Bibliothèque des Idées, Gallimard 1946, spec. cap. IV, pp. 95-111.

<sup>14</sup> G.W. Leibniz, *Essai de Théodicée*, in *Die philosophische Schriften*, VI, p. 350 (trad. cit., § 393, p. 503); cfr. G. Friedmann, *Leibniz et Spinoza*, cit., pp. 170-171; H.C.W. Sigwart, *Über den Zusammenhang des Spinozismus mit der cartesianischen Philosophie*, Tübingen 1816, Neudr. Scientia Aalen 1974, Einleitung, pp. VI-VIII.

<sup>15</sup> Cfr. G.W. Leibniz, *Discours de Métaphysique*, a cura di H. Lestienne, Paris 1929; trad. it. a cura di V. Mathieu, in Leibniz, *Saggi filosofici e lettere*, Bari 1963, pp. 104-144.

<sup>16</sup> «Si può dire che Spinoza abbia coltivato solo il proprio seme della filosofia di Cartesio, sì che io credo che sia importante per la religione che questa filosofia sia punita con la cancellazione degli errori che sono mischiati alla verità» (lettera a l'abbé Nicaise (1693-1699) in G.W. Leibniz, *Die philosophische Schriften*, II, pp. 562-565, cit. p. 563). Ancora, nelle *Considerations sur la doctrine d'un Esprit Universel Unique* (1702), Leibniz scrive: «Spinoza ha preteso di dimostrare che c'è solo un'unica sostanza nel mondo, ma queste dimostrazioni sono misere e incomprensibili e i nuovi cartesiani, che hanno creduto che Dio agisce, ne hanno dato appena una dimostrazione» (*Die philosophische Schriften*, cit., VI, p. 531).

spinoziano, nel 1670, suscita in Leibniz passioni ambivalenti: da una parte egli prova repulsione e spavento per esso, in sintonia con le reazioni dei suoi maestri<sup>17</sup>, dall'altro è attratto dalle teorie del filosofo ebreo al punto di esporsi al rischio di un contatto epistolare.<sup>18</sup> Così, se da un lato, come si legge in una lettera del 1° aprile 1669 a Jakob Thomasius, Spinoza viene classificato come un semplice seguace del filosofo francese di cui si limita a parafrasare il pensiero<sup>19</sup>, nell'ottobre 1671, Leibniz invia a Spinoza «celeberrimo medico e profondissimo filosofo», una nota dal titolo *Notitia Opticae promotae*, dicendosi convinto di non trovare in questo genere di studi «un più competente critico»<sup>20</sup>.

Spinoza risponde con alcune osservazioni, chiedendo ulteriori chiarimenti e promettendogli che gli invierà il *Tractatus theologico-politicus*<sup>21</sup>; ma Leibniz lo ha letto già nel maggio 1671, quindi alcuni mesi prima di scrivere a Spinoza, e ha ben in mente anche il violento attacco verbale pronunciato in un sermone dal suo maestro Thomasius, apparso nel 1693 in un testo dal titolo *Programma adversus anonimum de libertate philosophiae*<sup>22</sup>. Anche Leibniz condannerà poi lo scritto come pericoloso per la cristianità.

Nel 1672 Leibniz si trasferisce a Parigi dove svolge intensi studi di matematica e dove, alla fine del 1675, incontra Tschirnhaus al quale si lega in un rapporto di profonda amicizia. Nel 1676, prima di far ritorno in Germania per intraprendere il lavoro di bibliotecario ad Hannover propostogli da G. Federico, fa prima un breve viaggio a Londra dove incontra Oldenburg, segretario della *Royal Society*, e poi ad Amsterdam, dove incontra alcuni membri del circolo spinoziano, tra i quali Schuller, che gli comunica la lettera sull'infinito, inviata da Spinoza a Meyer nel 1663, alla quale Leibniz apporta alcune annotazioni che mostrano un'opposizione decisa, ma pacata alla filosofia di Spinoza, interpretata attraverso la propria teoria dell'armonia prestabilita.

<sup>17</sup> Cfr. E. Giancotti Boscherini, *Baruch Spinoza 1632-1677*, ed. Riuniti, Roma 1985, pp. 255-271. Un'ampia antologia dei giudizi su Spinoza circolanti all'epoca si trova in E. Altkirch, *Maledictus und Benedictus, Spinoza im Urteil des Volkes und der Geistes bis auf Costantin Brunnner*, Felix Meiner, Leipzig 1924, pp. 26-60.

<sup>18</sup> Cfr. M. Stewart, *Il cortigiano e l'eretico. Leibniz, Spinoza e il destino di Dio nel mondo moderno*, (trad. ita di F. Sircana) Feltrinelli, 2007.

<sup>19</sup> Cfr. G. W. Leibniz, *Die philosophische Schriften*, I, p. 16. Cfr. C. Mercer, *Leibniz and His Master: The Correspondence with Jakob Thomasius*, In P. Lodge (ed.), *Leibniz and his Correspondents*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 10 - 46.

<sup>20</sup> Spinoza, *Epistolario*, a cura di A. Droetto, Einaudi, Torino 1951 (1974<sup>2</sup>), lettera 45, p. 218.

<sup>21</sup> Cfr. la lettera 46, del 9 novembre 1671, ivi, pp. 219-22. A noi sono pervenute solo queste due lettere, ma lo scontro epistolare tra Spinoza e Leibniz fu, con ogni probabilità, più ampio, come testimoniano la lettera 70 del 1675 di Schuller a Spinoza «questo stesso Leibniz tiene molto in considerazione il *Trattato teologico-politico*, a proposito del quale – dice – egli ha anche scritto a V. S. una lettera» (ivi, p. 287) e la 72 in risposta a questa: «Quel Leibniz [...] credo di averlo conosciuto per lettera [...] A quanto ho potuto conoscere dalle sue lettere, mi è sembrato uomo di indole liberale e versato in tutte le scienze» (corsivo nostro). A tal proposito cfr. V. Morfino, *Spinoza contra Leibniz, Documenti di uno scontro intellettuale (1676-1678)*, Unicopli, Milano 1997.

<sup>22</sup> Cfr. la lettera di Leibniz a Thomasius, del settembre 1670, in G.W. Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, II, Bd. 1, p. 66; la lettera a Graevius, 5 Maggio 1671, ivi, p. 148; la lettera a Spietzl del 27 febbraio/8 marzo 1672, ivi, p. 193; la lettera a A. von Holten del 17/27 febbraio 1672, dove tuttavia Leibniz dice di voler fare del *Tractatus* una confutazione meglio bilanciata, che sia «più dotta e giusta che veemente e aspra» (ivi, p. 208). Cfr. anche la lettera del gennaio 1672 a J. Thomasius, nella quale dice all'amico: «L'autore del libro sulla libertà della filosofia, di cui tu hai fatto una refutazione breve, ma elegante, è Benedetto Spinoza, un ebreo cacciato dalla Sinagoga [ἀποστάγωγος] a causa delle sue mostruose opinioni [...]. Per altro è un uomo di vasta cultura, conosciuto soprattutto come ottico e artefice di lenti molto apprezzate» (in G.W. Leibniz, *Die philosophische Schriften*, I, pp. 38-39; cit. p. 39).

Dopo aver trascorso un mese ad Amsterdam, Leibniz parte per l'Aia dove frequenta alcuni dei personaggi più importanti del circolo spinoziano, fra cui Meyer, Jelles e Spinoza stesso, con cui si incontra «più volte e molto a lungo», come scrive in una lettera del settembre 1677 all'abate Gallois<sup>23</sup>. Durante uno di questi incontri Spinoza mostra a Leibniz il manoscritto dell'*Ethica*.

Nonostante l'incontro personale con Spinoza, la conoscenza leibniziana delle teorie spinoziane è ancora parziale<sup>24</sup>. Nel 1678, giunto ad Hannover, Leibniz riceve alcune lettere da Schuller che gli comunicano in primo luogo la malattia e la morte del filosofo, il travaglio per la pubblicazione degli *Opera Posthuma* e infine l'avvenuta pubblicazione nel 1677 unita alla promessa dell'invio di una copia dell'opera<sup>25</sup>. All'uscita degli *Opera posthuma* Leibniz scrive a Justel di trovare nell'*Ethica*:

«una quantità di bei pensieri conformi ai miei [...]; ci sono anche paradossi che io non trovo assolutamente plausibili, come, per esempio, che si dà solo una sostanza, ossia Dio; che le creature sono modi o accidenti di Dio; che la nostra mente non può cogliere la verità in questa vita; che Dio stesso sì pensa, ma non conosce ancora ciò che vuole; tutto ciò significa far perdurare la provvidenza e l'immortalità a parole, ma annullarle di fatto. Io ritengo questo libro pericoloso per la gente che si vuole dar pena di approfondirlo, mentre gli altri non lo capiranno comunque»<sup>26</sup>.

Ancora, in una lettera a Placcius del 14 febbraio 1678, Leibniz dice di apprezzare dell'*Ethica* soprattutto l'analisi delle passioni umane, mentre ritiene pericolosa l'affermazione della necessità delle cose e la negazione della provvidenza, perché vanificano gli «vitae officia» dell'uomo. Analogamente, in un frammento risalente forse al 1688, Spinoza compare inserito tra gli «auctores consulendi» in un lungo elenco che comprende tra gli altri Cardano, Galilei, Hobbes, Malebranche ecc<sup>27</sup>.

Con la pubblicazione degli *Opera posthuma* Leibniz ha modo di studiare attentamente l'*Ethica*, fa diversi commenti a margine, incentrati soprattutto sull'antifinalismo e sulla negazione spinoziana della provvidenza e di un Dio creatore, sommamente buono. All'incirca di questo periodo sono anche alcuni estratti e note sull'*Ethica*, che per lungo tempo sono stati trascurati, contenenti annotazioni di grande interesse per la comprensione del rapporto Leibniz-Spinoza<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> Cfr. G. W. Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, III, Bd. 2, pp. 225-229, cit. p. 227.

<sup>24</sup> U. Goldenbaum afferma che già in questo periodo Leibniz aveva preso le distanze da Spinoza, e con lui da Cartesio, in quanto questi non riuscivano a rispondere alle questioni che il fidato Tschirnhaus aveva posto sul rapporto tra la molteplicità dei modi e l'unicità della sostanza. La studiosa ipotizza che già in questa fase Leibniz dovesse avere «eine solche metaphysische Konzeption» del problema («qui ex conceptu Extensionis secundum tuas meditationes varietas rerum a priori possit ostendi?». *Noch einmal zu Leibniz, Spinoza und Tschirnhaus*, in *Leibniz und Europa*, Hannover 1994 (2 Bde), Bd.1, pp. 266-275, spec. pp. 266-267).

<sup>25</sup> Cfr. ivi, Bd. 1, p. 314. Cfr. anche G.W. Leibniz, *Die philosophischen Schriften*, III, 2, pp. 304; 313; 341-342; 358-360; P. Steenbakkers, *Spinoza's Ethica from manuscript to print*, Assen 1994.

<sup>26</sup> La lettera è del 4 febbraio 1678, in *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, cit., II, 1, p. 393.

<sup>27</sup> Cfr. G.W. Leibniz, *Textes inédits d'après les manuscrits de la Bibliothèque provinciale de Hanovre*, a cura di G. Grua, Paris, 1948, p. 548; Y. Belaval, *Leibniz lectures de Spinoza*, «Archives de philosophie», 46 (1983), pp. 531-552.

<sup>28</sup> Le note marginali alle parti II e III furono pubblicate parzialmente da Gerhard nel 1875 in G.W. Leibniz, *Die philosophischen Schriften*, cit., Bd. 1, pp. 150-152 (di cui si ha una trad. it. in Leibniz, *Scritti filosofici*, cit., vol. 2, pp. 113-116). Nel 1890 L. Stein pubblicò le note alla parte I insieme ad alcune note tralasciate dal Gerhard delle parti II e III (*Leibniz und Spinoza*, De Gruyter 1890, pp. 100-103). Grua, infine, ha pubblicato le tre parti

Leibniz riscrive il testo dell'*Ethica*, lo sintetizza in alcuni punti, ne modifica il contenuto e annota frasi in opposizione alla teoria spinoziana. In particolare, la lettera *Ad Ethicam B. d. Spinoza* costituisce una sorta di estratto critico della parte I dell'*Ethica* e mostra una profonda riflessione dell'autore sulle questioni centrali della filosofia spinoziana: in esso troviamo alcuni punti critici simili alla confutazione che farà Christian Wolff più di mezzo secolo dopo<sup>29</sup> e da cui si evince l'indiscutibile filiazione della critica wolffiana dall'analisi elaborata dal filosofo delle monadi, col quale Wolff non soltanto ha rapporti personali, ma condivide anche l'amicizia di Tschirnhaus, al quale Leibniz scrive le prime impressioni sugli *Opera Posthuma* nel maggio 1678, mostrando una conoscenza approfondita dei passaggi dell'*Ethica*.<sup>30</sup> La lettera a Tschirnhaus ci permette di comprendere la prospettiva da cui Leibniz critica Spinoza:

«Egli non espone sufficientemente nell'*Ethica* le sue asserzioni, del che mi rendo abbastanza conto. Talvolta fa paralogismi, e ciò capita perché si è allontanato dal rigore della dimostrazione; [...] ritengo che nel dimostrare le questioni metafisiche ed etiche vada seguito un estremo rigore, poiché in esse è facile errare»<sup>31</sup>.

Nei commenti alle prime definizioni sino alla prop. 20 dell'estratto dell'*Ethica* Leibniz si sforza di chiarire e correggere l'apparato dimostrativo spinoziano che egli definisce ripetutamente «oscuro» o «avventato». Dalla prop. 20 troviamo una critica feroce del valore logico del testo, rimproverando a Spinoza di non possedere la «vera arte di dimostrare»<sup>32</sup>, come si evince dai commenti ai concetti spinoziani di sostanza, attributo e modo.

Criticando la definizione di sostanza («ciò che è in sé e si concepisce per sé»), Leibniz si chiede se Spinoza intenda per sostanza ciò che è in sé e ciò che è concepito per sé, oppure

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tralasciate da Gerhard e da Stein, unitamente ad alcuni estratti della IV parte (*Textes inédits*, cit., pp. 277-284). Una raccolta completa delle note marginali agli *Opera Posthuma* si trova in V. Morfino, *Spinoza contra Leibniz*, cit., pp. 130-151. L'estratto critico della prima parte dell'*Ethica* è stato pubblicato per la prima volta in francese da A. Foucher de Careil nel 1862 (*Leibniz, Descartes, Spinoza, Langrange*, Paris 1862, pp. 223-248). L'originale latino è stato pubblicato da Gerhard (G.W. Leibniz, *Die philosophischen Schriften*, cit., Bd. 1, con il titolo *Ad Ethicam B. d. Sp.*, pp. 139-150) e su questa edizione si basa la trad. it. di D.O. Bianca, in *Scritti filosofici*, cit., pp. 99-113. V. Morfino (*Spinoza contra Leibniz*, cit., pp. 152-167), confrontando il testo edito da Gerhard con il manoscritto originale conservato nella Niedersächsische Bibliotek di Hannover (LH IV, VIII, 2, Bl. 8-14), ha riportato integralmente l'estratto, discostandosi in alcuni punti dalla trad. di D.O. Bianca. Alla traduzione di V. Morfino si riferiscono le citazioni qui riportate, utilizzando l'abbreviazione: G.W. Leibniz, *Ad Ethicam*.

<sup>29</sup> Cfr. C. Wolff, *Theologia naturalis, methodo scientifica pertractata. Pars posterior, qua existentia et attributa Dei ex notione entis perfectissimi et natura animae demonstrantur et Atheismi, Deismi, Fatalismi, Naturalismi, Spinosismi, aliarumque de Deo errorum fundamenta subvertuntur*, Francofurti et Lipsiae 1737; Nachdr. 2. Aufl. 1741 in G.W., II/8, 1981, §§ 671-716, pp. 672-730.

<sup>30</sup> Cfr. O. Proietti e G. Licata, *Il carteggio Van Gent - Tschirnhaus (1679-1690)*. Storia, cronistoria, contesto dell'editio postuma spinoziana (Macerata, EUM, 2013), pp. 52-55. Nell'articolo *Un'eredità spinoziana. Questioni "postume" di spinozismo a partire dalle lettere di Pieter Van Gent a Tschirnhaus* (Laboratorio dell'ISPF, XI, 2014) Roberto Evangelista, a partire dal libro di Proietti e Licata, mette in luce alcune questioni relative alla prima diffusione del pensiero di Spinoza, come la natura degli attributi, la relazione tra pensiero ed estensione e l'immortalità dell'anima, problemi affrontati già nell'epistolario spinoziano, in particolare nella corrispondenza con Schuller e Tschirnhaus.

<sup>31</sup> G.W. Leibniz, *Die philosophischen Schriften*, cit., III, 2, pp. 420-452, cit., pp. 425-426 (trad. cit., pp. 467-468).

<sup>32</sup> G.W. Leibniz, *Ad Ethicam*, cit., p. 166.

ciò in cui entrambe queste due caratteristiche concorrono; in questo secondo caso egli ritiene che Spinoza doveva dimostrare che alla sostanza appartengono sia l'essere in sé sia l'essere concepito per sé, il che è contrario alla nozione «comune» di sostanza, sostenuta da Leibniz, secondo cui la sostanza è sì ciò che è in sé, ma non è concepita per sé (bensì per mezzo di Dio). Proprio da questa concezione Leibniz critica la prop. 6 che afferma che «una sostanza non può essere prodotta da un'altra sostanza»: ciò vale per la sostanza esistente per sé, ma non ha senso riferito alla sostanza in sé<sup>33</sup>. La sostanza leibniziana, ossia l'individuo, che è in sé, è prodotto dalla sostanza per sé, ossia da Dio; per questo, ancora, nella prop. 13, nella quale Spinoza sostiene che la sostanza è indivisibile e che non si danno più sostanze, egli può affermare: «lo concedo per la cosa esistente per sé»<sup>34</sup>.

Leibniz dunque rifiuta la negazione spinoziana della sostanzialità dei singoli individui implicitamente nella definizione spinoziana di sostanza ed esplicitamente affermata nella seconda parte dell'*Ethica*<sup>35</sup>: al contrario, per il filosofo delle monadi gli individui sono sostanze *in sé*, create *ex nihilo* dalla sostanza *per sé*, cioè da Dio.

Scrive a tal proposito W. Bartuschat: «Ciò che Leibniz rifiuta è il collegamento dell'*in se esse* e del *per se percipi* alla struttura della sostanzialità, la quale, quindi non può essere predicata di qualcosa che dipende Dio e quindi di una molteplicità»<sup>36</sup>.

Dall'oscurità della definizione spinoziana della sostanza come *in sé* e *per sé* derivano altre proposizioni avventate<sup>37</sup> e, in particolare, le assurdità contenute nella prop. 28, concernente il rapporto infinito-finito o tutto-parti: se, come sostiene Spinoza, ogni modo finito è determinato a esistere e ad agire da un altro modo finito e così all'infinito<sup>38</sup>, «rimangono sempre in realtà cose indeterminate»<sup>39</sup>. Anche in questo caso Leibniz oppone a Spinoza la sua *Weltanschauung* che vede ogni sostanza finita determinata immediatamente da Dio, per cui il rapporto tra le parti è mediato dal tutto, laddove per Spinoza è l'infinita e necessaria relazionalità o *nexus* delle parti a costituire l'essenza stessa del tutto, ossia della sostanza intesa come tutto<sup>40</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> Ivi, p. 159; cfr. S. Di Bella, *Die Kritik des Begriffs 'causa sui' in den Leibnizschen Anmerkungen zu Spinoza 'Ethica'*, in *Internationaler Leibniz-Kongreß Vorträge*, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Gesellschaft, Hannover 1988, pp. 52-56.

<sup>34</sup> G.W. Leibniz, *Ad Ethicam*, cit., p. 164. Cfr. la critica di A. Hart in *Leibniz on Spinoza's Concept of Substance*, «*Studia leibniziana*», 14 (1982), n. 1, pp. 73-86.

<sup>35</sup> «All'essenza dell'uomo non appartiene l'essere della sostanza, ossia la sostanza non costituisce la forma dell'uomo» (E, II, 10, p. 123).

<sup>36</sup> *Spinoza in der Philosophie von Leibniz*, in K. Cramer/W.G. Jacobi/W. Schmidt-Bigermann (hrsg. von), *Spinoza Ethik und ihre frühe Wirkung*, Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, Bd. 16, 1981, pp. 51-67; cit. p. 55.

<sup>37</sup> Riguardo, per esempio, alla prop. 7, che afferma che «alla natura della sostanza appartiene l'esistere», Leibniz afferma che, una volta che si è dimostrato che la sostanza è possibile, si deve ancora dimostrare che essa esiste; infatti non tutto ciò che è possibile è prodotto da Dio, ma solo ciò che Dio, in virtù della sua perfezione, riconosce come buono, anzi il migliore rispetto a tutti gli altri compossibili. Anche Leibniz opera una distinzione tra logica e metafisica del tutto assente in Spinoza: per questi esiste solo un mondo reale di cui il possibile non è che un effetto immaginario; per tanto è del tutto privo di senso affermare che vi è una realtà possibile che non esiste (cfr. G.W. Leibniz, *Ad Ethicam*, cit., p. 160).

<sup>38</sup> Cfr. Spinoza, EI28.

<sup>39</sup> G.W. Leibniz, *Ad Ethicam*, cit., p. 170.

<sup>40</sup> Cfr. V. Morfino, *Genealogia di un pregiudizio: L'immagine di Spinoza in Germania da Leibniz a Marx*, Olms, Hildesheim, 2016, pp. 27-42.

La sostanza leibniziana è il soggetto d'inerenza, l'individuo particolare, mentre per Spinoza, essa è potenza infinita costituita da infiniti attributi, un infinito e necessario divenire processuale di modi. Leibniz e Spinoza si trovano su piani antitetici e hanno obiettivi radicalmente diversi: il primo vuole legittimare la realtà, conferirle il diritto all'esistenza, affermando che essa è la migliore di quelle possibili; il secondo vuole "semplicemente" conoscerla; per il primo vi deve essere una ragione sufficiente perché un possibile sia stato portato all'esistenza da Dio; per il secondo il possibile non è che un modo *inadeguato* di rappresentarsi le connessioni necessarie che costituiscono la struttura del reale.

Al faintendimento del concetto di sostanza consegue quello dei concetti di attributo e di modo che chiamano in causa il rapporto tra *in sé* e *per sé*<sup>41</sup>.

Leibniz definisce l'attributo spinoziano come «predicato essenziale, ossia necessario» e il modo come «predicato non essenziale, ossia mutabile»<sup>42</sup>. Poiché il modo è definito da Spinoza come «ciò che è in altro (*in alio*) ed è percepito per mezzo di altro (*per aliud*)»<sup>43</sup>, allora «l'attributo è sì nella sostanza e tuttavia è percepito per sé»<sup>44</sup>. Spinoza, conclude Leibniz, non dimostra che in natura si danno più attributi che sono concepiti *per se* e che questi «possono stare insieme»<sup>45</sup>. Perché, si chiede Leibniz, la medesima essenza semplice deve essere espressa da molteplici (infiniti) attributi differenti?: «Senza dubbio vi sono molteplici definizioni delle cose composite, ma della cosa semplice non ve n'è che una sola, e la sua essenza sembra poter essere espressa in un unico modo»<sup>46</sup>. Ancora, nel commento alla prop. 10, dove Spinoza afferma che «ciascun attributo di una sola sostanza deve essere concepito *per sé*», Leibniz obietta che da ciò «segue che non si dà se non un unico attributo di una sola sostanza, se veramente esprime tutta l'essenza»<sup>47</sup>.

Il punto fondamentale, qui come nella definizione della sostanza, sta nell'incomprensione che Leibniz mostra nell'intendere la *perseità* dell'attributo, il che emerge sia nel rapporto tra attributo e intelletto sia nel modo in cui gli infiniti attributi, realmente diversi perché non hanno nulla in comune l'uno con l'altro, ineriscono nella medesima sostanza (infinita)<sup>48</sup>. L'attributo, nella dottrina spinoziana, non è una proprietà della sostanza, in quanto esprime l'essenza constitutiva della sostanza, ossia ciò per cui la sostanza è tale: l'attributo precede, non segue l'essenza della sostanza. L'attributo è concepibile *per sé* nel senso che appartiene alla natura dell'attributo di essere concepito singolarmente, ma non di esistere separato dalla sostanza. Questo spiega perché l'intelletto umano percepisce la sostanza tramite i suoi

<sup>41</sup> Cfr. F. Piro, *La differenza tra "in se esse" e "per se concipi". Sulla critica leibniziana a Spinoza*, in: *Istituto di Filosofia Annali Due*, Urbino, 1987, p. 69-111.

<sup>42</sup> G.W. Leibniz, *Ad Ethicam*, cit., p. 153. La tradizione scolastica intese l'attributo come ciò che inerisce alla sostanza, distinguendo tra attributo essenziale e attributo accidentale; Cartesio, mantenendone inalterata la funzione semantica, chiamò "modi" gli attributi accidentali. Nel medesimo senso Leibniz intende gli attributi e i modi all'interno del discorso spinoziano.

<sup>43</sup> Spinoza, EI5.

<sup>44</sup> G.W. Leibniz, *Ad Ethicam*, p. 153.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ivi, cit., p. 154.

<sup>47</sup> Ivi, p. 162

<sup>48</sup> Sul dibattito intorno alla natura degli attributi spinoziani, si veda la recente e ampia trattazione di Y. Melamed, *La metafisica di Spinoza: sostanza e pensiero* (a cura di Emanuele Costa), Mimesis, Milano 2020.

(due) attributi, pensiero ed estensione: l'intelletto coglie immediatamente solo l'attributo e, mediante esso, la sostanza cui inerisce. Questo tuttavia non implica una riduzione degli attributi ai modi con cui l'intelletto percepisce la sostanza: gli attributi spinoziani hanno una natura ontologica, esprimono la realtà essenziale della sostanza, la quale risulta il simultaneo e identico soggetto degli infiniti e differenti attributi perché la sua esistenza è *indeterminata* o *indifferente* rispetto alle infinite essenze che la costituiscono. Ma ciò è proprio quanto Leibniz non è disposto a concedere a Spinoza, perché avrebbe come immediata conseguenza la negazione della trascendenza di Dio, della personalità, della volontà, dell'intelligenza e di tutti gli affetti frutto dell'umana immaginazione.

Il fraintendimento del concetto di attributo è evidenziato dal commento all'affermazione spinoziana che nulla si trova fuori dell'intelletto oltre alla sostanza e i modi (EI15): Leibniz si meraviglia che Spinoza abbia dimenticato gli attributi<sup>49</sup>, come se questi fossero da intendersi come elementi di mediazione tra due mondi e non come espressioni dell'essenza della sostanza: l'attributo e l'essenza della sostanza non sono due realtà differenti<sup>50</sup>, la distinzione "reale" è posta dall'intelletto, poiché l'attributo «è allo stesso tempo principio ontologico della sostanza, in quanto è costitutivo della sua realtà, e principio della sua intelligibilità, in quanto la fa conoscere come tale»<sup>51</sup>.

Operando una profonda rottura semantica ed epistemologica nei confronti della metafisica occidentale, termini come sostanza, attributo e modo, nel discorso spinoziano, non hanno alcuna efficacia conoscitiva se presi in sé, al di fuori delle connessioni interne della parte I dell'*Ethica* (e di questa con le altre): essi non sono altro che «strumenti verbali»<sup>52</sup> di cui il filosofo si serve per conoscere la realtà, nella quale non esistono cose, ma processi infiniti e necessari, che si compongono all'interno di quell'infinito processo senza soggetto che è il Dio-Natura, eterna unità ed eterna differenza, infinta affermazione di sé, assoluta *potenza* d'essere e d'agire<sup>53</sup>.

Sull'identità tra essenza e potenza, istituita da Spinoza nella proposizione 34 di *Ethica* I, Leibniz non annota nulla, tacendo su un concetto fondamentale, quello di potenza, che lo stesso Leibniz utilizzerà, con altri termini, proprio contro Spinoza. Infatti, la teoria delle monadi è presentata da Leibniz in antitesi alla teoria spinoziana dell'unicità della sostanza<sup>54</sup>,

<sup>49</sup> Ivi, p. 164.

<sup>50</sup> Cfr. la lettera 19 a S. De Vries (Spinoza, *Epistolario*, cit., pp. 69-72).

<sup>51</sup> M. Guérout, *Spinoza. Dieu*, Paris 1968, p. 47.

<sup>52</sup> M. Foucault, *L'ordine del discorso*, Einaudi, Torino 1970, p. 10.

<sup>53</sup> Ancora, in un commento alla prop. 33 [«Le cose non hanno potuto essere prodotte da Dio in nessun'altra maniera e in nessun altro ordine se non nella maniera e nell'ordine in cui sono state prodotte» (E., I, p. 75)], Leibniz cerca di trovare un accordo con la teoria spinoziana, mistificandola: egli ritiene che questa proposizione è vera se intesa secondo l'ipotesi della volontà divina che sceglie l'ottimo, ossia che agisce in modo massimamente perfetto, ma che è falsa se si osserva la natura delle cose, prese in se stesse (cfr. G.W.Leibniz, *Ad Ethicam*, pp. 172-173).

<sup>54</sup> Quando sarà accusato di una tendenza allo spinozismo, in una lettera del 1714 Leibniz replicherà a Bourguet: «Io non so, mio signore, come Lei possa dedurre un qualche spinozismo, il che significa passare frettolosamente alle conseguenze; al contrario lo spinozismo si distrugge proprio attraverso la monade. Dunque ci sono tante sostanze vere quante sono le monadi, invece che solo un'unica sostanza, come crede Spinoza. Egli avrebbe ragione se non si desse alcuna monade, giacché, senza di loro, tutto sarebbe transitorio e si volatilizzerebbe in mere modificazioni e accidenti, poiché le cose sarebbero prive di una propria causa dell'essenza e dell'esistenza, una base sostanziale che si fonda solo sull'esistenza delle monadi» (*Die philosophische Schriften*, cit., II, pp. 537-596, cit. p. 575).

e non soltanto perché Leibniz sostiene la pluralità delle monadi, ma anche perché il concetto di monade implica quello di “forza”, “attività”, “spontaneità”, che Leibniz misconosce nella dottrina monistica di Spinoza, o meglio li nega nella *Natura naturata*. Così, in una lettera ad Arnauld, Leibniz scrive:

«Ma da ciò consegue che nella natura si danno solo l'estensione e il movimento; che si toglierebbe ogni forza e potenza alle cose, il che significherebbe che da sostanze, quali esse sono, diventerebbero modi, come fa Spinoza, il quale vuole che soltanto Dio sia una sostanza e tutte le altre cose siano solo sue modificazioni. Questo Spinoza è pieno di fantasticerie confuse, e le sue prove di Dio non ne hanno che l'ombra»<sup>55</sup>.

Questo sarà uno dei punti cruciali su cui farà leva la linea interpretativa post-leibniziana:

«Leibniz fu il primo filosofo (e in ciò va rintracciata la sua originalità), il quale rivelò la rigidità del sistema spinoziano. Secondo Leibniz il punto debole della dottrina di Spinoza sta nel fatto che la sostanza non è forza, azione o attività: la sostanza non può essere senza attività [...] se si toglie l'attività alle sostanze, si cade nello spinozismo»<sup>56</sup>.

Leibniz affronta poi la questione morale, ossia il problema della libertà, e, in aperta opposizione alla prop. 29 di *Ethica I*<sup>57</sup>, propone la sua teoria del contingente che, nelle linee fondamentali, è la stessa che egli presenterà nel *Discours de Métaphysique* e negli *Essai de Théodicée*. Il sottile equilibrio che Leibniz costruisce tra il determinismo morale, la contingenza e la libertà dell'individuo è l'antidoto contro il determinismo spinoziano che, negando ogni responsabilità individuale, distrugge la moralità basata sul libero arbitrio.

Dopo il 1678 non troviamo nelle opere pubbliche di Leibniz che pochi accenni all'opera di Spinoza, spesso superficiali e polemici. Nella lettera a Langravio di Hessen del 1686 abbraccia il giudizio di Arnauld, secondo il quale «Spinoza è l'uomo più empio e pericoloso di questo secolo», e afferma che:

<sup>55</sup> Ivi, II, pp. 132-134, cit., p. 133. W. Bartuschat sostiene che, sebbene Leibniz formuli la sua teoria della sostanza in opposizione non tanto a Spinoza quanto ai cartesiani, «la teoria leibniziana della monade ha trovato uno sviluppo essenziale nella controversia implicita con Spinoza. Implicita perché nel continuo riferirsi a Spinoza, egli si è visto costretto a delimitare la sua nuova concezione di sostanza rispetto a quella di Spinoza». L'autore, inoltre, mostra come i concetti di spontaneità e forza siano affermati da Leibniz contro Spinoza non solo a livello etico, ma soprattutto a livello fisico (*Spinoza in der Philosophie von Leibniz*, in K. Cramer/W.G. Jacobs/ W. Schmidt-Biggemann (hrsg. von), *Spinoza Ethik und ihre frühe Wirkung*, Herzog August Bibliothek (Bd. 16), Wolfenbüttel 1981, pp. 58-64; cit. p. 52). E ancora: «Leibniz sviluppò la sua filosofia, specie la sua monadologia, in opposizione critica a Spinoza» (*Baruch de Spinoza*, C.H. Beck, München 1996, p. 178). Cfr. anche R. Woolhouse, *Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz. The concept of substance in seventeenth century metaphysics*, Routledge, London 1993.

<sup>56</sup> L. Feuerbach, *Geschichte der neuern Philosophie*, in FGW, Bd. 3, p. 34 ss. L'autore, dopo aver affermato che Leibniz sviluppa una concezione della sostanza completamente diversa da quella di Spinoza, sintetizza: «L'azione è il carattere della sostanza [...], l'attività appartiene all'essenza della sostanza» e definisce la sostanza leibniziana come «un'essenza capace di azione» (*ibid*). Sul tema, cfr. F. Piro, *Essenza, causa e ratio in Spinoza e Leibniz.*, In A. Sangiacomo, F. Toto (a cura di), *Essentia actuosa. Riletture dell'Etica di Spinoza*, Milano Mimesis, 2016, pp. 47-74.

<sup>57</sup> «In natura non si dà nulla di contingente, ma tutto è determinato dalla necessità della natura divina a esistere e a operare in un certo maniera» (p. 67).

«egli è veramente ateo, cioè non ammette l'esistenza di una Provvidenza dispensatrice di bene e di male secondo giustizia e credeva di averne dato la dimostrazione [...] Tuttavia, per quanto egli faccia gran rumore nelle sue argomentazioni, è molto lontano dal possedere l'arte della dimostrazione e non aveva che una conoscenza assai mediocre dell'analisi e della geometria»<sup>58</sup>.

Una volta dimostrata la convivenza tra i dogmi del cristianesimo e i principi razionali (rispetto alla bontà di Dio, alla libertà dell'uomo e all'origine del mondo), Leibniz può combattere Spinoza e, con lui, i deterministi, gli atei e i materialisti, confutandoli con la sola ragione (cristiana). La principale obiezione al sistema di Spinoza è che egli assoggetta tutta la natura a una:

«necessità cieca, avendo rifiutato all'Autore del creato l'intelletto e la volontà, e immaginando che il bene e la perfezione fossero in rapporto a noi, non in rapporto a Dio [...] Nondimeno, per quanto si può comprendere, egli non riconosce, a parlare propriamente, alcune bontà in Dio, e insegnà che tutte le cose esistono per la necessità della natura divina, senza che Dio possa fare alcuna scelta»<sup>59</sup>.

Contrariamente a Spinoza, Leibniz sostiene che la volontà e l'intelletto appartengono all'essenza di Dio, e che perciò Dio sceglie il meglio, senza essere costretto da una necessità *metafisica*. La scelta è determinata solo da una necessità *mora*le. La sottile distinzione tra la necessità *cieca* o *metafisica*, che implica il naturalismo e la presenza nell'universo di cause esclusivamente efficienti, e la necessità *mora*le, che preserva la contingenza nell'universo e le cause finali, diventa uno dei baluardi del sistema di Leibniz, proteggendolo dalle accuse di spinozismo<sup>60</sup>.

Nell'universo spinoziano ogni cosa accade per la stessa necessità geometrica con cui «il semicerchio è necessitato a includere solo angoli retti, senza averne né la conoscenza né la volontà»<sup>61</sup>, una necessità, quindi, che non è altro che la cieca concatenazione logica derivante dal principio di non contraddizione.

<sup>58</sup> La lett. è cit. in G. Friedmann, *Leibniz et Spinoza*, cit., p. 166. Cfr. anche la lettera del maggio 1678 a Tschirnhaus in G. W. Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, II, 1, pp. 505-506.

<sup>59</sup> G. W. Leibniz, *Die philosophischen Schriften*, cit., VI, p. 217; trad. cit., § 173, pp. 317-318, e anche pp. 67-68. Cfr. l'affermazione di Spinoza secondo cui la contingenza (o possibilità) non ha realtà oggettiva ed è dovuta a un difetto della nostra conoscenza in *Cogitata metaphysica*, trad. in B. Spinoza, *Emendazione dell'intelletto. Principi della filosofia cartesiana. Pensieri metafisici*, a cura di E. De Angelis, Boringhieri, Torino 1962, 3, pp. 246-248; EI33sc.1.

<sup>60</sup> In una lettera a C. Philipp Leibniz rinviene la stessa debolezza della filosofia di Cartesio, ossia la negazione delle *causae finales*. Nel 1680 Leibniz scrive: «Ritengo che sia impossibile che si possano escludere le cause finali dallo studio della natura, come Cartesio afferma nella Parte 1, art. 28 [...] Una simile idea è senza dubbio una chimera. Di conseguenza, stando a Spinoza, si dovrebbe rappresentare Dio come un uomo che non ha né volontà né ragione, che crea tutto, sia il bene sia il male, visto che egli è indifferente riguardo alle cose e di conseguenza non c'è assolutamente alcuna causa che lo sottomette a una più che a un'altra» (G. W. Leibniz, *Die philosophischen Schriften*, IV, p. 284 ss.). Da ciò, secondo Leibniz, conseguirebbe l'ateismo.

<sup>61</sup> Cfr. G. W. Leibniz, *Essai de théodicée*, cit., p. 218 (trad. cit., p. 327).

La valutazione negativa che Leibniz fa della filosofia di Spinoza resterà tale durante il resto della sua vita e farà da modello per tutte le altre interpretazioni dello spinozismo in Germania<sup>62</sup>.

Il tono veemente adottato da Leibniz, che si conforma ai *clichés* della letteratura anti-spinoziana d'inizio secolo, non è, comunque, il prodotto di un'ostilità cieca e oltraggiosa, ma la posizione di un pensatore che ha un chiaro fine: la costruzione di una filosofia antitetica a quella spinoziana e che serva da base razionale alle dottrine teologiche ortodosse. E tuttavia, nonostante gli attacchi e le accuse di fatalismo mossi contro la filosofia di Spinoza, restano molti punti di contatto tra i due e la speculazione sulla presunta somiglianza dei due sistemi inizierà già durante la vita di Leibniz. Basti qui ricordare, riguardo al tema della libertà nel sistema leibniziano, il noto scambio epistolare tra Leibniz e Arnauld, occasionato dal *Discours de métaphysique* del 1686, il cui § 13 (sulla nozione individuale di persona) scioccherà il giansenista, il quale vi vedrà l'espressione di una «necessità più che fatale»<sup>63</sup>.

Il medesimo atteggiamento sul determinismo leibniziano sarà espresso nel 1721 (quindi poco prima dell'inizio della controversia tra Lange e Wolff) da Langhansen, professore a Königsberg di matematica e più tardi di teologia, con una dissertazione *Dubia contra monades leibnitianas*<sup>64</sup>.

L'interpretazione leibniziana di Spinoza costituisce l'*humus* storico-filosofico di una lotta che attraverserà tutta la storia della filosofia e contribuirà a rinforzare l'immagine di Spinoza come filosofo maledetto, dominando, in maniera più o meno latente, l'orizzonte filosofico della modernità<sup>65</sup>.

<sup>62</sup> «Il tentativo di definire in maniera nuova la sostanza di Spinoza, questa indifferente, statica e rigida sostanzialità, fu avviato da tutti i grandi idealisti tedeschi da Fichte a Hegel, i quali si diedero il compito di riempire il concetto di sostanza spinoziano con un nuovo contenuto con cui si cercava di portare la sostanza di Spinoza da Oggetto assoluto a Soggetto assoluto. Possiamo dire con certezza che questa tendenza di soggettivazione della sostanza spinoziana è affermata dall'idealismo tedesco e ha inizio con Leibniz. La soggettivazione della sostanza è la caratteristica fondamentale dello sviluppo dello spinozismo in Germania». (H.D. Hong, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-35; cit. p. 34).

<sup>63</sup> Lettera del 13.3.1686 a Langravio von Hessen-Rheinfeld, in G. W. Leibniz, *Die philosophische Schriften*, cit., Bd. 2, p. 15. Cfr. L. Stein, *Leibniz e Spinoza*, cit., pp. 1-7. Sulla questione del presunto spinozismo in Leibniz ripresa da Mendelsshon e da Lessing, cfr. V. Morfino, *Lo spinozismo di Leibniz. Linee per una ricostruzione della storia della questione*, «Acme», IL (1996), 3, pp. 55-81; M. Walther, *Spinoza in Deutschland als Faktor der Wirkungsgeschichte der Leibnizschen Philosophie. Eine Erinnung*, in *Leibniz, Werk und Wirkung*, Hannover 1983, pp. 814-821; D. von Uslar, *Leibniz' Kritik an Spinoza*, «*Studia Leibniziana*», Supplementa Bd. 5 (1971), pp. 72-80; W. Bartuschat, *Spinoza in der Philosophie von Leibniz*, cit., pp. 51-66. Sul concetto leibniziano di armonia prestabilita in relazione al determinismo spinoziano, cfr. S. Zac, *Spinoza, précurseur de Leibniz?*, in S Zac (hrsg. von), *Spinoza en Allemagne. Mendelssohn, Lessing, Jacobi*, Meridiens Klincksieck, Paris 1989, pp. 49-68.

<sup>64</sup> Langhansen rincarerà la dose nel 1724, quando accuserà di determinismo assoluto sia la metafisica wolffiana sia la teodicea leibniziana, diventando così un aperto alleato di Lange (*Dissertatio de necessitate omnium quae existunt, absoluta, in Theodicea G. G. Leibnitii, cui Wolffianum Metaphysicae Sistema superstructum est, asserta*, Königsberg 1724; cfr. anche C.G. Ludovici, *Ausführlicher Entwurf einer Vollständigen Historie der Wolffianischen Philosophie*, Nachdr. Aufl. Leipzig 1738 (in G.W., III/1.1 – III/1.3, 1977), Bd. 1, §§ 243, 292, pp. 298, 231; G.V. Hartmann, *Anleitung zur Historie der leibnitzisch-wolffianischen Philosophie*, Nachdr. Aufl. Frankfurt-Leipzig 1737 (in G.W., III/4, 1973), pp. 846, 893, 905).

<sup>65</sup> Cfr. D. Bell, *Spinoza in Germany* cit., pp. 5-8; C. Wilson, *The Reception of Leibniz in the Eighteenth Century*, in N. Jolley (ed. by), *Cambridge Companion to Spinoza*, Cambridge, 1995, pp. 442-474, spec. pp. 450-451.

## *Simone Weil: desdicha y compasión sobrenatural* *Simone Weil: affliction and supernatural compassion*

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### *Abstract*

It is extremely difficult to pay attention to those who suffer extreme affliction. And although one may have a natural inclination to feel compassion for the afflicted, the very instinct of self-preservation pushes one to flee from affliction, so as not to be affected by it. Hence, according to the French philosopher Simone Weil, compassion for the afflicted cannot be natural, but supernatural. Those who experience this kind of compassion – whether or not they are aware of the presence of God's love in their soul – participate in divine love and accept to renounce the egotistical assertion of the self, in order to be able to contemplate not only human misery, but also their own misery; as well as to pay attention to the afflicted, with the aim of identifying their true needs and recognizing their existence. Compassion for the afflicted becomes, in this way, a testimony of divine mercy in this world.

### *Keywords*

Attention, Natural compassion, Supernatural compassion, Affliction, Mediation

### *1. Introducción*

Para Simone Weil<sup>66</sup> (1909-1943) la compasión no es simplemente experimentar un sentimiento de piedad que mueve a socorrer a los otros, manteniendo una cierta distancia, para evitar ser tocados por la desdicha. La compasión es para ella «un equivalente voluntario, consentido de la desdicha»<sup>67</sup>, es decir, una participación de la desdicha humana, una solidaridad y fraternidad hacia la humanidad. Esto no significa, sin embargo, sentir una enfermiza inclinación hacia el dolor y el sufrimiento<sup>68</sup>. La compasión no es una propensión al dolor ni es algo a desechar, porque el hacerlo «es antinatural; es una perversión»<sup>69</sup>.

<sup>66</sup> En adelante se escribirá a lo largo del texto “Weil”, salvo en los títulos de libros y artículos, así como en las citas textuales que hagan referencia al nombre completo de la autora.

<sup>67</sup> S. Weil, “Cahier XV”, [1942], en *Oeuvres complètes*, t. VI: *Cahiers*, vol. 4: (*juillet 1942 – juillet 1943*), Gallimard, Paris, 2006, p. 230. En adelante se usará la abreviatura *OC*, tomo, volumen y página. Para este artículo se han utilizado algunas ediciones antiguas de la obra weiliiana en francés, así como los tomos y volúmenes de la edición crítica francesa publicados bajo el nombre de *Oeuvres complètes*. Las obras en francés han sido traducidas al castellano por cuenta de la autora de este artículo.

<sup>68</sup> A este respecto, es injustificada la opinión de pensadores como Paul Giniewski que ven en Weil un pesimismo y desprecio hacia sí misma. Cfr. P. Giniewski, *Simone Weil ou la haine de soi*, Berg International, Paris, 1978.

<sup>69</sup> S. Weil, “L'amour de Dieu et le malheur”, [1942], *OC*, IV 1, p. 361.

La verdadera compasión consiste en mirar, socorrer, amar y reconocer la existencia de los otros, particularmente, la de aquellos que sufren la extrema desdicha<sup>70</sup>. Al momento de dirigir una mirada compasiva hacia el prójimo, implícitamente se participa del amor de Cristo, incluso si no se es consciente de esta participación<sup>71</sup>. La compasión tiene el papel de mediadora entre los desdichados y el amor de Dios. De ahí que, para la autora, la compasión pura es un *μεταξύ*<sup>72</sup>. Desde esta perspectiva, como indica Weil:

«La compasión consiste en prestar atención al desdichado y en ir hacia él a través del pensamiento. De este modo, si tiene hambre, se le alimenta automáticamente, como uno mismo se alimenta cuando tiene hambre. Este pan que se le da es simplemente el efecto y el signo de la compasión. Es entonces cuando se tiene el agradecimiento de Cristo»<sup>73</sup>.

En su propia experiencia de la compasión, Weil no es indiferente al sufrimiento de los otros, por lo que no pretende estar en una situación privilegiada, sino que su vocación es la de mezclarse con los más desfavorecidos y participar de su miseria, para conocerlos y amarlos tal y como son. Como ella misma declara: «tengo la necesidad esencial y, creo poder decir, la vocación de pasar entre los hombres y los distintos medios humanos, confundiéndome con ellos [...], para que se muestren tal como son y sin disfrazarse para mí. Es lo que deseo, conocerlos para amarlos tal como son»<sup>74</sup>.

Se ha dividido el presente artículo en tres partes. Primero, se expondrá el tema de la compasión, por la que puede contemplarse la miseria humana y reconocerse la propia miseria. Luego, se verá lo difícil que resulta prestar atención a los desdichados y compadecerse de ellos. El instinto de conservación provoca que el individuo huya de la desdicha y le impide experimentar una compasión natural por los desdichados. Por ello, se requiere de una compasión sobrenatural, pues, mediante ella, quien es compasivo renuncia a toda autoafirmación egoísta del “yo”, para poder mirar la desdicha en toda su verdad y ofrecerse en rescate por aquellos que están sometidos a ella. Y, finalmente, se mostrará que, quien es compasivo, es un intermediario entre el amor de Dios y el desdichado, en el sentido en el que transmite a los desdichados la compasión y el amor divinos.

## 2. *La compasión como contemplación de la miseria humana*

La desdicha –al igual que la verdad– es muda<sup>75</sup>. Asimismo, es un misterio, es «el gran enigma de la vida humana»<sup>76</sup>. La desdicha es una realidad difícil de explicar y de comprender. Por una parte, para quienes la sufren, es algo inexpresable. Como afirma Weil, «aquellos que han sufrido uno de esos golpes tras los cuales un ser se debate en el suelo

<sup>70</sup> Cfr. María del Sol Romano, “Simone Weil: la atención y la acción como reconocimiento de la existencia”, en *Cuadernos salmantinos de filosofía*, vol. 48, 2021, pp. 471-489.

<sup>71</sup> La compasión se vuelve una gracia explícita cuando se tiene conciencia de que es animada por la caridad de Cristo.

<sup>72</sup> Cfr. S. Weil, “Cahier VI”, [1942], *OC*, VI 2, p. 393.

<sup>73</sup> Ead., “Cahier XV”, cit., *OC*, VI 4, p. 230.

<sup>74</sup> Ead., “Hésitations devant le baptême”, [1942], en *Attente de Dieu*, Fayard, Paris, 1966, p. 19.

<sup>75</sup> Cfr. Ead., “Carnet de Londres”, [1943], *OC*, VI 4, p. 364.

<sup>76</sup> Ead., “L’amour de Dieu et le malheur”, cit., *OC*, IV 1, p. 348.

como un gusano medio aplastado, no tienen palabras para expresar lo que les sucede»<sup>77</sup>. Por otra parte, quienes no han padecido la desdicha extrema, no pueden comprenderla. De modo que, «aunque hayan sufrido mucho, nunca han tenido contacto con la desdicha propiamente dicha, no pueden hacerse una idea de lo que es. Es algo específico, irreductible a cualquier otra cosa como los sonidos, de los que nadie puede dar una idea a un sordomudo»<sup>78</sup>.

Además de lo anterior, la desdicha provoca que se aparte la mirada de quien la padece, impide pensar en el desdichado. Como indica Weil, «al pensamiento le repugna pensar en la desdicha, tanto como a la carne viviente le repugna la muerte»<sup>79</sup>. Esto se debe a que nadie quiere ser alcanzado por la desdicha y muestra que «la tendencia de la naturaleza humana es la de no prestar atención a los desdichados»<sup>80</sup>. En este sentido, como lo advierte Rolf Kühn, «cada mirada dirigida sobre otro es predeterminada a partir del prestigio social y [...] cada desdicha es afectada de anatema social en toda la acepción del término»<sup>81</sup>.

Por consiguiente, el desdichado es invisible para la sociedad, está sometido al silencio y carece de todo reconocimiento social, como si se tratara de un ser inexistente. No es tan sencillo tener compasión de él porque –como lo expresa Weil–, «no se tiene compasión por las cosas totalmente destruidas»<sup>82</sup>. Y, si para quienes no están sumergidos en la desdicha es muy difícil prestar atención y compadecerse de quienes sí la sufren, para los desdichados es casi imposible dirigir su mirada hacia la desdicha de los otros<sup>83</sup>. «Aquellos que han sido mutilados por la desdicha –sostiene Weil–, no están en condiciones de prestar ayuda a nadie y son prácticamente incapaces de desearlo. Así, la compasión por los desdichados es una imposibilidad»<sup>84</sup>.

Particularmente, quien experimenta una extrema degradación social no tiene la facultad de compadecerse y prestar atención a los otros. Esto es, «si su estado le impide prestar atención a cualquier otra cosa, no presta atención en absoluto. Una completa incapacidad de concentración y continuidad es característica de los estados de extrema degradación social (prostitutas, convictos). Esta incapacidad es a la vez causa y efecto de la degradación»<sup>85</sup>. Por tanto, es imposible que los desdichados sientan compasión por los otros y todo acto de compasión que puedan manifestar es prácticamente «un milagro más sorprendente que el caminar sobre las aguas, la curación de los enfermos e incluso la resurrección de un muerto»<sup>86</sup>.

<sup>77</sup> Ivi, *OC*, IV 1, p. 349.

<sup>78</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>79</sup> Ead., «Collectivité – Personne – Impersonnel – Droit – Justice», [1943], *OC*, V 1, p. 225.

<sup>80</sup> Ead., «L'Enracinement», [1943], *OC*, V 2, p. 162.

<sup>81</sup> R. Kühn, «L'attention comme méthode dé-créative», en *Cahiers Simone Weil*, XXX/1, mars 2007, p. 66.

<sup>82</sup> S. Weil, «L'Enracinement», cit., *OC*, V 2, p. 289.

<sup>83</sup> De manera análoga a la dificultad que representa prestar atención y ser compasivo con un desdichado, este último experimenta el mismo impedimento respecto a la gratitud que debería manifestar a quien intenta socorrerlo. Como indica Weil: «la même incapacité de faire attention au malheur qui empêche la compassion chez celui qui voit un malheureux empêche la gratitude chez le malheureux secouru. La gratitude suppose la capacité de sortir de soi et de contempler son propre malheur du dehors dans toute sa laideur. C'est trop affreux». Ead., «Cahier XV», cit., *OC*, VI 4, p. 231.

<sup>84</sup> Ead., «L'amour de Dieu et le malheur», cit., *OC*, IV 1, p. 349.

<sup>85</sup> Ead., «Cahier XV», cit., *OC*, VI 4, p. 231.

<sup>86</sup> Ead., «L'amour de Dieu et le malheur», cit., *OC*, IV 1, p. 349.

Sin embargo, a pesar de la gran dificultad que implica dirigir una mirada atenta y compasiva hacia los desdichados, la desdicha es una realidad que no puede negarse. El mirarla entraña el reconocimiento de la miseria humana y de la propia miseria. Desde la perspectiva de la autora, la miseria humana solo puede contemplarse a través del amor al prójimo como a uno mismo, puesto que «amar al prójimo como a uno mismo no es otra cosa más que contemplar la miseria humana en sí mismo y en los demás»<sup>87</sup>. Mediante el amor al prójimo, que es un amor de compasión, el ser humano contempla la desdicha del otro<sup>88</sup> y reconoce en esta desdicha su propia miseria<sup>89</sup>.

Para ello, como afirma Weil, debe tenerse «el alma vulnerable a las heridas de toda carne, sin excepción», para poder «transformar todo dolor, toda desdicha [...] en sentimiento de la miseria humana»<sup>90</sup>. El negarse a aceptar el propio sufrimiento o «el rechazo de reconocerse en la miseria de otro»<sup>91</sup> obstaculiza la capacidad de compasión. Por consiguiente, para experimentar una verdadera compasión hacia los otros es preciso, primero, aceptar y mirar la propia miseria y, luego, tener la capacidad de ponerse exactamente en el lugar del otro, de modo que se haga «descender voluntariamente su propio ser en un desdichado»<sup>92</sup>. En palabras de Weil:

«Cuando se tiene frío y hambre por necesidad, se tiene siempre un poco de piedad por uno mismo, por muy alto que se esté situado espiritualmente. La compasión por aquellos que tienen frío y hambre implica la capacidad de concebirse e imaginarse a uno mismo situado en cualquier circunstancia social y material y, en consecuencia, el desapego de las circunstancias en las que uno se encuentra»<sup>93</sup>.

Quienes padecen la extrema desdicha, principalmente, la que es causada por el factor social, necesitan «de hombres capaces de prestarles atención»<sup>94</sup>, que reconozcan su existencia. Necesitan de una mirada atenta y compasiva, que pueda liberarlos del anonimato y de la exclusión. La verdadera compasión consiste en prestar atención al desdichado, mirarlo tal cual es, como un semejante, con la finalidad de identificar sus verdaderas necesidades<sup>95</sup>. Siguiendo a Weil, «es saber que el desdichado existe, no como una unidad en una colección, no como un ejemplar de la categoría social denominada “desdichado”, sino como un hombre, exactamente semejante a nosotros, que fue un día golpeado y marcado, con una marca inimitable, por la desdicha»<sup>96</sup>.

<sup>87</sup> Ead., “Cahier VI”, cit., *OC*, VI 2, p. 392.

<sup>88</sup> Cfr. Ead., “Cahier XV”, cit., *OC*, VI 4, p. 222.

<sup>89</sup> Cfr. Ead., “Cahier XIII”, [1942], *OC*, VI 4, p. 117.

<sup>90</sup> Ead., “Cahier VI”, cit., *OC*, VI 2, p. 390.

<sup>91</sup> Ivi, *OC*, VI 2, p. 395.

<sup>92</sup> Ivi, *OC*, VI 2, p. 396. Esto puede entenderse a la imagen de la compasión de Dios por la miseria humana: «Dieu a eu compassion de notre misère, bien qu'il accepte qu'elle soit». Ibidem.

<sup>93</sup> Ivi, *OC*, VI 2, p. 392.

<sup>94</sup> Ead., “Réflexions sur le bon usage des études scolaires en vue de l'amour de Dieu”, [1942], *OC*, IV 1, p. 262.

<sup>95</sup> Cfr. María del Sol Romano, “Simone Weil: la atención y la acción como reconocimiento de la existencia”, cit., pp. 474-479.

<sup>96</sup> S. Weil, “Réflexions sur le bon usage des études scolaires en vue de l'amour de Dieu”, cit., *OC*, IV 1, p. 262.

### 3. Compasión natural y compasión sobrenatural

En el ser humano hay una inclinación natural a mostrar compasión por la desdicha de los otros, específicamente, cuando se trata de la idea o de la imagen de esta. Hasta los más duros de corazón son capaces de experimentar tal compasión, al menos en la ficción, como en el caso del teatro. Como señala Weil, «no hay hombre, por muy duro de corazón que sea, que no sienta compasión por las desgracias que ve representadas en el teatro. Porque no [...] teniendo ningún peligro o contaminación que temer, se introduce en los personajes. Da rienda suelta a su compasión porque sabe que esa no es la realidad. Si fuera la realidad, se volvería frío como el hielo»<sup>97</sup>.

De este modo, una vez que se está frente a la desdicha real, el instinto de conservación mueve a quien no está afectado por ella a huir, a desviar la mirada, para no ser alcanzado por ella. Incluso, si se llega a experimentar una piedad natural hacia los más desfavorecidos, se les auxilia a distancia para evitar contaminarse por la desdicha<sup>98</sup>. De ahí que, no es un acto excepcional si alguien da pan a quien lo necesita, sino que, siguiendo a Weil, «lo sorprendente es que sea capaz de hacerlo con un gesto distinto a aquel con el que se compra un objeto. La limosna, cuando no es sobrenatural, es similar a una operación de compra. Compra al desdichado»<sup>99</sup>.

Cuando el individuo tiene como único propósito satisfacer las necesidades y deseos del “yo”, no hace más que buscar su propia autoafirmación, lo que ocasiona que se vuelva incapaz de mirar y reconocer la realidad de los otros. De esta manera, no hay lugar para la compasión, dado que –en sentido nietzscheano– hace perder la cabeza, es un signo de debilidad, se opone a la voluntad de poder, a la afirmación del “yo”. Por ello, como indica el filósofo alemán, «debemos sujetar nuestro corazón, pues si lo dejamos ir, ipronto perderemos la cabeza! ¡Ay!, ¿dónde han ocurrido en el mundo mayores necesidades que entre los compasivos? ¿Y qué ha provocado en el mundo más sufrimiento que las necesidades de los compasivos?»<sup>100</sup>

Desde la perspectiva weiliana, en cambio, es necesario renunciar a toda autoafirmación egoísta e individualista del “yo”, para poder mirar la realidad exterior a uno mismo. Esto es, «solo la verdadera renuncia al poder de pensar todo en primera persona [...], permite a un hombre saber que los otros hombres son sus semejantes»<sup>101</sup>. Esta renuncia, que Kühn denomina «una invitación sobrenatural al abandono de sí en tanto que yo egoísta»<sup>102</sup>, es para la autora «el amor a Dios, ya sea que el nombre de Dios esté o no presente en el pensamiento»<sup>103</sup>. Solo el alma que es animada por lo que Weil denomina “el amor sobrenatural”, es susceptible de mirar lo invisible y sentir una auténtica compasión por los

<sup>97</sup> Ead., “Cahier XV”, cit., OC, VI 4, p. 222.

<sup>98</sup> «La pitié naturelle consiste à secourir un malheureux ou afin de mieux réussir à ne plus penser à lui, ou afin de mieux jouir de la distance entre soi et lui. C'est une forme de cruauté qui n'est contraire à la cruauté proprement dite que par les effets extérieurs». Ivi, OC, VI 4, p. 230.

<sup>99</sup> Ead., “Formes de l'amour implicite de Dieu”, [1942], OC, IV 1, p. 292.

<sup>100</sup> F. Nietzsche, *Así habló Zarathustra. Un libro para todos y para nadie*, Gredos, Madrid, 2014, p. 112.

<sup>101</sup> S. Weil, “Intuitions pré-chrétiennes”, [1942], OC, IV 2, p. 270.

<sup>102</sup> R. Kühn, “L'attention comme méthode dé-creative”, cit., p. 71.

<sup>103</sup> S. Weil, “Intuitions pré-chrétiennes”, cit., OC, IV 2, p. 270.

otros, particularmente por quienes sufren una desdicha extrema. Por consiguiente, como afirma la autora:

«Solo la compasión permite contemplar la desdicha. Porque, con la propia desdicha, uno es aplastado por ella, no se le contempla. La desdicha de los otros no es desdicha si no hay compasión. Nuestra sensibilidad es naturalmente universal, pero se vuelve egoísta por nuestro deseo, que está apegado a ella. El deseo enteramente dirigido hacia el Bien infinito que está fuera de nosotros excluye todo retorno sobre uno mismo y, en consecuencia, todo egoísmo. Es porque se cree que la desdicha es un mal que se mata dentro de sí la compasión natural. La compasión es natural, pero está ahogada por el instinto de conservación. Solo la posesión de toda el alma por el amor sobrenatural devuelve a la compasión natural su libre funcionamiento»<sup>104</sup>.

En este contexto, la auténtica compasión es la que posibilita contemplar la desdicha en toda su verdad. Y esto se logra únicamente cuando se es capaz de renunciar al propio egoísmo para orientar la mirada a un Bien absoluto, que inspira a contemplar la realidad, lo exterior al “yo”, de un modo genuino. La reflexión weiliana sugiere, por tanto, que la compasión hacia los desdichados no puede ser natural, sino sobrenatural. Como sostiene Miklos Vetö, «no hay una compasión natural por el desdichado porque esta implicaría la negación del yo. La verdadera intersubjetividad que se perfecciona en la compasión por el desdichado es sobrenatural. Es necesario haber pasado a la perspectiva de Dios para poder ofrecerse en rescate por otro y eso es precisamente lo que exige la compasión»<sup>105</sup>.

#### 4. La compasión como mediación

De acuerdo con Weil, «la misericordia es un atributo propiamente divino»<sup>106</sup> y la compasión que el ser humano experimenta por su prójimo es una extensión de la misericordia divina. La compasión es «la presencia visible de Dios en este mundo»<sup>107</sup> y, quien es compasivo, no solamente da testimonio de la misericordia divina en la tierra<sup>108</sup>, sino que se vuelve un intermediario entre el amor de Dios y el desdichado, en el sentido en el que solo él es capaz de socorrer directamente al desdichado, es el único en el mundo que puede dar de comer al hambriento. Como afirma Weil:

«Ese desdichado yace en el camino, medio muerto de hambre. Dios tiene misericordia de él, pero no puede enviarle pan. Pero yo, que estoy aquí, afortunadamente no soy Dios; puedo darle un trozo de pan. Esta es mi única superioridad sobre Dios. Tuve hambre y vosotros me disteis de comer. Dios puede pedir pan para los desdichados, pero no dárselo»<sup>109</sup>.

Desde el enfoque weiliano, quien es compasivo debe «servir a los otros en sus necesidades corporales [...]. Servirlos gratuitamente en sus necesidades de criaturas [como Cristo que]

<sup>104</sup> Cfr. Ead., “Cahier XV”, cit., *OC*, VI 4, p. 222.

<sup>105</sup> M. Vetö, *La métaphysique religieuse*, L’Harmattan, Paris, 1997, p. 82.

<sup>106</sup> S. Weil, “Cahier XIII”, cit., *OC*, VI 4, p. 120.

<sup>107</sup> Ivi, *OC*, VI 4, p. 131.

<sup>108</sup> «Quatre témoignages de la miséricorde divine ici-bas. Les faveurs de Dieu aux êtres capables de contemplation. Le rayonnement de ces êtres, et leur compassion, qui est la compassion divine en eux. La beauté du monde. Le quatrième témoignage est l’absence complète de miséricorde». Ead., “Cahier VIII”, [1942], *OC*, VI 3, p. 137.

<sup>109</sup> Ead., “Cahier XV”, cit., *OC*, VI 4, p. 215.

curó y alimentó»<sup>110</sup>. No obstante, la compasión para la autora no solamente consiste en socorrer al prójimo desde el punto de vista material, también comprende una dimensión espiritual. Quien es compasivo –sea o no consciente de la presencia del amor de Dios en su alma– transmite a los desdichados el amor y compasión de Dios. Participa de este amor y acepta ser «movido por Dios hacia el prójimo» y «ser un instrumento de contacto entre el prójimo y Dios»<sup>111</sup>. Por ello, siguiendo a Weil, «solo la presencia de Cristo en un alma puede hacer que haya verdadera compasión. Pero el Evangelio nos revela, además, que el que da con verdadera compasión da a Cristo mismo»<sup>112</sup>.

A través de la compasión puede unirse la parte «creada, temporal» de la criatura desdichada, es decir, su parte material, con Dios<sup>113</sup>. La compasión es un acto de donación de sí mismo, del propio ser, es volverse «comestible a todos los desdichados»<sup>114</sup>. Es un acto de amor, en el que se desea que el otro tenga «una existencia independiente de la desdicha»<sup>115</sup>, que salga del estado en el que está inmerso. A la par, implica compartir y asumir voluntariamente la desdicha. Como indica Weil, el «transportar el ser en un desdichado, es asumir su desdicha por un momento, tomar voluntariamente lo que en esencia consiste en estar impuesto por la fuerza y contra la voluntad»<sup>116</sup>.

Quien muestra compasión, más concretamente, una compasión sobrenatural por los desdichados, manifiesta que ha experimentado una transformación de sí que lo mueve a renunciar a sí mismo, a su “yo” egoísta para descender «de lo que no sufre a lo que sufre»<sup>117</sup> y «para difundir en este mundo, en esta vida terrestre, el reflejo de la luz sobrenatural»<sup>118</sup>. Para ello, se necesita estar totalmente habitado por el amor divino, puesto que, quien está completamente habitado por este amor, puede amar verdaderamente al otro con un «amor que ha pasado por Dios como por el fuego. [Un] amor que se desprende completamente de las criaturas para subir a Dios y que baja asociado al amor creador de Dios»<sup>119</sup>.

Este amor implica no solo ser compasivo, sino también, prestar atención al otro y, aunque «solo Dios puede prestar atención a un desdichado»<sup>120</sup>, quienes participan de su amor son igualmente capaces de atención. La atención permite reconocer al otro como prójimo y a dirigirle «una mirada atenta, en la que el alma se vacía de todo contenido propio para recibir en ella misma el ser que mira tal cual es, en toda su verdad»<sup>121</sup>. Se trata, en términos de Weil, de una “atención creadora” y que «consiste en prestar realmente atención a lo que no

<sup>110</sup> Ivi, *OC*, VI 4, p. 247.

<sup>111</sup> Ead., “Cahier VII”, [1942], *OC*, VI 2, p. 485.

<sup>112</sup> Ead., “L’amour de Dieu et le malheur”, cit., *OC*, IV 1, p. 367.

<sup>113</sup> Cfr. Ead., “Cahier XIII”, cit., *OC*, VI 4, p. 131.

<sup>114</sup> «Demander que Dieu fasse de notre chair la chair du Christ pour que nous soyons comestibles à tous les malheureux». Ead., “Cahier XVI”, [1942], *OC*, VI 4, p. 302.

<sup>115</sup> Ead., “L’amour de Dieu et le malheur”, cit., *OC*, IV 1, p. 367.

<sup>116</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>117</sup> Ead., “Cahier XIII”, cit., *OC*, VI 4, p. 120.

<sup>118</sup> Ead., “Dieu dans Platon”, [1942], *OC*, IV 2, p. 101.

<sup>119</sup> Ead., “Cahier XI”, [1942], *OC*, VI 3, p. 344.

<sup>120</sup> Ead., “Cahier XV”, cit., *OC*, VI 4, p. 230.

<sup>121</sup> Ead., “Réflexions sur le bon usage des études scolaires en vue de l’amour de Dieu”, cit., *OC*, VI 2, p. 262.

existe»<sup>122</sup>. Es una atención por la que se ve lo invisible y se dirige una mirada compasiva a quienes padecen la degradación social y carecen de todo reconocimiento social<sup>123</sup>.

Lo anterior comporta un acto “redentor”, fundamentalmente, cuando el individuo renuncia al “yo” egoísta para afirmar la existencia del otro<sup>124</sup>. Esto es, «negándose a sí mismo, uno se hace capaz, con Dios, de afirmar al otro por una afirmación creadora. Uno se da a sí mismo en rescate por el otro»<sup>125</sup>. Y esto se logra con la operación sobrenatural de la gracia que «hace que un alma pase por su propio anonadamiento hasta el lugar donde se produce la especie de atención que es la única que permite estar atento a la verdad y a la desdicha»<sup>126</sup>.

### 5. Conclusión

De acuerdo con lo expuesto a lo largo de este artículo, puede decirse que, para Weil, incluso si la desdicha provoca que se desvíe la mirada de quienes la sufren, aquellos que están llenos del amor de Dios y están dispuestos a renunciar a toda autoafirmación egoísta e individualista del “yo”, son capaces de contemplar la desdicha mediante un amor de compasión, por el que se presta atención al desdichado y se reconoce su existencia. Pero, no se trata de una compasión natural, sino de una compasión sobrenatural, por la que se transmite a los desdichados el amor y compasión divinos. Ya que, únicamente Dios –y quienes participan de su amor– puede prestar atención a los desdichados.

Aquellos que han sido afectados por la desdicha reciben, por la mediación de quien actúa sin intentar dejar la marca del “yo”, el amor de Dios. Es entonces, cuando se recrea al otro a través de la compasión y de la atención, una atención que es creadora en tanto que busca «amar el ser amado tal como es, y querer recrearlo»<sup>127</sup>. En este sentido, como indica Emmanuel Gabellieri, «la compasión presupone un amor que está por encima de la voluntad, un acto no de voluntad sino de atención, por el que uno no produce nada, sino que se deja penetrar por la presencia del otro»<sup>128</sup>.

En última instancia, para Weil, la «compasión perfecta y pura» es creer de manera implícita en la encarnación<sup>129</sup>, en la presencia real de Cristo en el desdichado. Como subraya André Devaux, «puede haber un uso sobrenatural de todo el sufrimiento y un valor igualmente sobrenatural de la compasión, siempre que no se tenga compasión de uno

<sup>122</sup> Ead., “Formes de l’amour implicite de Dieu”, cit., *OC*, IV 1, p. 293.

<sup>123</sup> Cfr. María del Sol Romano, “Simone Weil: la atención y la acción como reconocimiento de la existencia”, cit., pp. 479-483.

<sup>124</sup> Esta renuncia al “yo” egoísta remite al concepto weiliiano de “descreación”, que es una imitación de la kénosis divina, por la que se permite la existencia del otro: «Dieu a abdiqué en nous donnant l’existence. Nous abdiquons et devenons ainsi semblables à Dieu en la refusant. C’est dans et par l’abdication que nous sommes transportés en Dieu». S. Weil, “Cahier XVII”, [1942], *OC*, VI 4, p. 347.

<sup>125</sup> Ead., “Formes de l’amour implicite de Dieu”, cit., *OC*, IV 1, p. 292.

<sup>126</sup> Ead., “Collectivité – Personne – Impersonnel – Droit – Justice”, cit., *OC*, V 1, p. 231.

<sup>127</sup> Ead., “Cahier XI”, cit., *OC*, VI 3, p. 344.

<sup>128</sup> E. Gabellieri, *Être et don. Simone Weil et la philosophie*, Peeters, Louvain-Paris, 2003, p. 196.

<sup>129</sup> Cfr. S. Weil, “Cahier VI”, cit., *OC*, VI 2, p. 392. «C’est par suite [...] la capacité de concevoir et d’imaginer un homme parfait – un Dieu incarné placé dans n’importe quel état de malheur». Ibidem.

mismo, sino de Cristo presente en todo desdichado»<sup>130</sup>. Es más, siguiendo a Weil, «la compasión sobrenatural por los hombres no puede ser más que una participación a la compasión de Dios, que es la Pasión»<sup>131</sup>. Como Cristo que «en la cruz tuvo compasión de su propio sufrimiento como si se tratara del sufrimiento de la humanidad en él. Su grito: “Dios mío, ¿por qué me has abandonado?” fue proclamado en él por todos los hombres»<sup>132</sup>.

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<sup>130</sup> A. Devaux, “Passion de la vérité et expérience mystique chez Simone Weil”, en *Cahiers Simone Weil*, VIII/1, mars 1985, p. 79.

<sup>131</sup> S. Weil, “Les trois fils de Noé et l’histoire de la civilisation méditerranéenne”, [1942], *OC*, IV 1, p. 379.

<sup>132</sup> Ead., “Carnet de Londres”, cit., *OC*, VI 4, p. 365.

## *There is no politics without a body*

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### *Abstract*

The body represents one of the fundamental modes of human existence, but also a significant political category. Throughout history, the body was an object of political control, but also a place of resistance to political intentions to establish a total government over society. While, on one hand, governments strived to control the body through population politics, categorizing it by gender characteristics, and consuming it through exhausting work, many philosophers, on the other hand, thought that the body, because of its plurality, fluidity, and fragmentarity, was the central entity that resisted any ideological and totalitarian unity. In Michel Foucault, resistance to a political authority is seen in an individual's aspiration to be freed from sexual control through the "care of the self". For Gilles Deleuze, the body is a sensible plurality and therefore cannot be subordinated to a fixed identity and authoritarian control. He introduces the term "body without organs", which, as a primal, unorganized, and fragmented entity eludes any form of unificatory politics. In Jean-Luc Nancy's philosophy, body is also fragmented into a plurality of senses. As in Deleuze, Nancy's philosophy is about the body, because of its singular plural characteristics that eludes authority and political unity. Judith Butler indicates double characteristics of the body: public, because we are present and exposed to the public through the body, and private, because we are fighting for property over "our" body. All these theories agree that the body is a fluid plurality of senses and a fragmented entity and therefore does not belong to the area of representativity. As such, it cannot be subordinated to common politics and therefore represents the most significant place of resistance to totalitarianism.

### *Keywords*

technologies of the self; body without organs; singular plural; docile body; cloning; totalitarianism; conformist body

### *1. Obedient and disobedient body*

The notion of the body is an integral part of all classical political categories such as parliament, sovereignty, political power, and authority. Through various aspects, the body can relate to all the above mentioned traditional political notions. In the well-known classical philosophical theory about the king's two bodies, the sovereign's body can be observed from two angles: eternity and transience. In the first aspect, it is about the king's eternal essence which pertains to his characteristic to produce and enforce laws but without being subordinated to them. On the other hand, the sovereign's body is at the same time also

a subject made of flesh and blood, who decides and acts depending on political circumstances. Thus, traditional understanding of the sovereign as king's two bodies tells us that his essence is the ambivalence between rejecting to be subjected to law (eternity and universality of the state) and making concrete political decisions (perishability and transience). Tradition shows us that sovereign's body is this, concrete, body which acts in a certain situation, but which at the same time rejects to, as the body, be subjected and subordinated to the law, that is, to be identified with other bodies. His body is special and sacred because it arises (Nancy) above the ordinary world. With modern politics comes another significant determination of the body. Contrary to the Ancients, modern politics introduces the notion of representative body whose aim is to represent citizens' interests. The representative body did not only introduce a new form of political acting, nor did it show that the world is being modernized through certain political innovations, but introduced into the politics the concept of metonymy, i.e., replacement of the bigger (referent) with the smaller (signifier). This form of politics got to be called representative because the body was observed as a sort of sign, image or phenomenon which was hiding the essence or content, so it could be concluded that the representation (performance) and body are synonymous notions.

Striving of each authority's power was to overlook and control both bodies and bodily activities of its residents. In that sense, the body is the inseparable part of each politics. In philosophical traditions, the state was represented as a systematized and organized body, and thus was always strongly dependant on organization. Thus, political economy, as a form of political management of economic life, was directed to control, discipline, surveillance, and exhaustion of our bodies. It strived to achieve greater production, consumption and, eventually, obedient body and socially anticipated behaviour.

If we follow Nietzsche, we will realize that the body and materiality are spaces of freedom and not captivity. Contrary to the body as the space of freedom, according to Nietzsche (*On the Genealogy of Morality*), politics has the aesthetic function similar to what the artist does – imposes shapes, egoistically and without responsibility. Whereas spirit, idea and principles rule us, the body is observed as a way of realizing individual creativity. Many contemporary theoreticians agree that the body is what makes us free, through sexuality, creative work, and artistic creativity. However, beside creativity and artistic activity, the body is a way of political acting. Although history has shown us that the body was a subject of political control and a way of showing the affiliation to a certain identity, it was also a means and bearer of protests against authority. Each body is the object of violence, categorization, subjugation, counting, torturing, earmarking. But also, it is a subject of freedom, creativity, and rejection of obedience. We write, paint, touch, by the body, it is a sexual subject and object, a place of the outmost pleasure or hedonism, and, in this regard, means of pure subjectification. Politics is oriented towards the bodies, it wants to subjugate, group, and align them so it achieves its ultimate goal, i.e., to master them entirely. Opposite to it, the body runs away, slides the control and governing through its hedonism, plurality, and subjectivity.

## 2. Foucault and emergence of the body politics

In the theories of Edmund Husserl and his successor Merleau-Ponty, a contemporary philosophy of the body was established. In the theoretical insights of the two authors, the concept of the body was not observed in social or political context, but as a place of cognition, that is as a place where the sense of objective world is being constructed. A big turn towards political understanding of the body starts with Foucault who observes this concept as the object of disciplinary practices and politics of power. Whereas in phenomenology body was a receptive entity which precedes the linguistic expression, in Foucault it represents political and social product. In his work, Foucault indicates that body represents the object of political control, but also a means of resistance to domination and authority. In his *Discipline and Punish*, he elaborates how the body was treated throughout history through the changes in Western European penal politics. Until the nineteenth century, penal politics was executed publicly in France, all the death penalties were executed on squares, i.e., in public spaces. During that period (19<sup>th</sup> century), there was a slight turn when it comes to ceremonial practicing of punishing. As put by Foucault, spectacularity gained a negative omen because the act of public execution of death penalty (Foucault here thinks first and foremost on torture) started to be observed as criminal i.e., as a practice that encourages violence<sup>133</sup>. That does not mean that the body ceased being treated through penal politics, only the public practice of punishing was discontinued. In that respect, body was no longer object of torturing and inflicting pain because penal politics was changing into direction of disappearance of public executions. Punishment began to be executed in such a way that: «the body, according to this penalty, is caught up in system of constraints and privations, obligations and prohibitions»<sup>134</sup>. The convict was deprived of his rights and freedoms which represents only a different type of politics of disciplining individuals through the control of the body. The body was no longer an object of public punishing and torturing but was punished through forced work for the purpose of general good. With the new penal system, bodily punishment ceases to be bloodthirsty and rigorous and became longer and redirected to gradual exhaustion of the body and soul through hard work. With the new penal politics, body became «the property of society»<sup>135</sup>. This practice deepened the practice of disciplining a human being. Main purpose of disciplining was creation of individuals and production of useful and docile subjects<sup>136</sup>. Body politics are for Foucault bidirectional because they don't only represent striving of a certain politics to master the population (i.e., bodies), but also a possibility for resistance to governing and control. The resistance is visible through what is called "technologies of the self". For him, this notion represents a way of resisting the practices of disciplining bodies through the practice of what he calls "care of the self". State, power, government, and authority control social sexuality through the supervision of

<sup>133</sup> M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of Prison*. Vintage Books, New York 1995, p. 9.

<sup>134</sup> Ivi, p. 11.

<sup>135</sup> Ivi, p. 109.

<sup>136</sup> S. Best – D. Kellner, *Postmodern Theory. Critical Interrogations*. The Guilford Press, New York 1991, p. 47.

reproduction (interest in demography, fertility, and mortality). The state's interest in sexual and reproductive practices produces also a micro-resistance based on free bodily activities. On one side there is state sexuality and, on the other, reaction of the population through free sexual activity. This sort of acting implies creation of new bodies, bodies that will resist the concept of disciplined and obedient body<sup>137</sup>. For Foucault, the new body is a means by which one can struggle against totalitarian powers of the authority and state. As opposed to state, there is the individual with his body which he does not allow to be sexually disciplined. By taking care of himself, more precisely of his body, the individual opposes the technology of state domination. For Foucault, technologies of the self are operations on body and soul, thoughts, for the purpose of transformation and attaining happiness, wisdom, and perfection<sup>138</sup>. Practice of taking care of the self is not characteristic of contemporariness, nor is it a discovery of the postmodern era. According to Foucault, maintenance of the body takes place through taking care of oneself, which «always refers to an active political and erotic state»<sup>139</sup>. Technologies of the self are reorientation of attention to oneself, to one's own soul and body. They are the way of bringing out the truth about oneself, accepting one self's own sins and deficiencies. Technologies are those «that permit individuals to effect, by their own means, a certain number of operations on their own bodies, their own souls, their own thoughts, their own conduct, and this in a manner so as to transform themselves, modify themselves, and to attain a certain state of perfection, happiness, purity, supernatural power»<sup>140</sup>. According to Foucault, this refers to Christian culture and its relation towards the body and sexuality. Sexuality and motoric in general were under the control of soul and will, which means that body was only the executor of soul's orders. However, Foucault discovers that, at the same time, in Christian culture there was a rebellion against will and soul. This rebellion is a resistance of the body to the control and management, and as the example he takes Adam's "fall" when his body and body parts stopped obeying his orders<sup>141</sup>. In the case of Adam, we can see that body with its sexual practices becomes self-contained and independent being which acts freely. This free action of the body is not only achieving independence, but also a sort of resistance to the higher principles. As the best example, Foucault takes here Adam's erection, because of which Adam covered his genitalia with fig leaf and which represents a revolt against God<sup>142</sup>.

### 3. Counting the bodies and violence against the body

Foucault's theory of control was continued by the American anthropologist Arjun Appadurai who, in his books *Modernity at Large* and *Fear of Small Numbers*, recognized a strong relation between body and politics, which he analysed through the practices of counting and statistics conducted by colonial powers on the concurred/colonialized

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<sup>137</sup> Ivi, p. 58.

<sup>138</sup> Michel Foucault, *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth*, The New Press, New York 1997, p. 225.

<sup>139</sup> Ivi, 230.

<sup>140</sup> Ivi, 177.

<sup>141</sup> Ivi, 181.

<sup>142</sup> Ibidem

territories. By analysing the political situation in Indian society during the mid-19th century, Appadurai perceived that, for colonial power, the process of counting both castes and ethnic groups (Hindu and Muslim) was relevant. Counting represented the principle of finding racial similarities (from the inside) and differences (from the outside). That way, counting established the category of the exotic Indian body. The goal of counting was to create the body as obedient and loyal to the ruling colonial regime. Counting individuals represented entering basic racial characteristics into the official statistics and thus legitimization, or officialization, of biological characteristics of the population. Through statistical processes, population was imposed as a sense of belonging, but also of differing from other ethnic groups. Through these practices, in one group a sense of loyalty and obedience was created whereas, at the same time, the other group was represented as the enemy. «In this process, the body of the colonial subject is made simultaneously strange and docile»<sup>143</sup>. Through counting as the application of official scientific method (brought) from the West, colonial power determined the amount of population available to it on Indian soil. Through the methods of counting, colonial power expressed its intentions to strengthen its authority over the colonialized territory. Why is counting the bodies so important for the establishment and strengthening of political authority? Because official politics used the statistics not only to classify the population, but also to establish the enemy. In other words, each classification of the body meant constitution of the enemy in the form of a different body. This practice continued in India even after the withdrawal of British authority from there and turned into a new (inner) counting of Muslim and Hindu population and creation of sharp divisions within the Indian society. However, counting, managing, and control also provoke the resistance of the body which rejects being fragmented into various, through statistics officialised, bodies. Let us remember, with Gandhi we saw the intention to end with divisions and to make the Indian body a central identity which will unite Muslim and Hindu identities. «With Gandhi, we have a revolt of the Indian body, a reawakening of Indian selves, and a reconstitution of loyal body into the unruly and sign-ridden body of mass nationalist protest»<sup>144</sup>. Each act of ethnic violence is conducted on the body through torturing, humiliation, and killing. Because of the affiliation to a certain ethnos, the body is the object of degradation. According to Appadurai, it is important to stress that the affiliation to a certain ethnos or identity is not what we possess, but what is created. And it is created through counting, classification, raising the boundaries, which all indicate the existence of the enemy.

As we could see, statistics and counting are techniques through which we form, ‘discover’, and strengthen the identity. Through the same practice, minorities are being created: «In some cases it seems obvious, in other less so. And that is because minorities are not born but made, historically speaking»<sup>145</sup>. Counting is, in other words, the creation of minorities. They

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<sup>143</sup> A. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, London 1996, p. 133.

<sup>144</sup> Ivi, p. 134.

<sup>145</sup> A. Appadurai, *Fear of Small Numbers. An Essay of the Geography of Anger*, Duke University Press, Durham and London 2006, p. 45.

are problematic because of their direct relation to the sense of incompleteness. As long as there are minorities nearby, or one shares with them the same political space, in majority the sense of incompleteness or living in the impure space is created. In this respect, counting and classification were to clearly mark the boundaries between ethnic groups. The purpose of classification is creation of pure ethnic space in which the same bodies live and, as its (classification's) consequence, in the majority ethnic group appears the fear of incompleteness, i.e., the fear that the minority may become majority.

«As abstractions produced by census techniques and liberal proceduralism, majorities can always be mobilized to think that they are in danger of becoming *minor* (culturally or numerically) and to fear that minorities, conversely, can easily become *major* (through brute accelerated reproduction or subtler legal or political means)»<sup>146</sup>.

Ethnic violence begins to be conducted through bodily violence whose aim is to clear the space and make a clear difference between purity and dirt. Neither political control of the body, nor its identification, must be conducted only through violence, or creation of boundaries. The body can also depict peace and stability of a society. According to Appadurai, the culture of nurturing the body can symbolize strength, supremacy, and stability of a state. Flashing, built up bodies can indicate power and strength of a society. Therefore, bodies we see in media symbolize the strength and stability of a society.

#### 4. *Gendered body*

In Judith Butler, like in Foucault, corporeality is understood as political and social category. The body is what we possess, what is ours, and what is inseparable from our being. In liberal sense, it is, beside personality and dignity, our property. The violation of our bodies is the attack on the greatest value of liberal culture, private property. If a person is being violated, power must react with the purpose of its (person's) protection. Butler is of the opinion that the body, beside economic-legal (ownership), has more functions. The body acts as political category because it exposes us to the world. «In a sense, to be a body is to be given over to others even as a body is, emphatically, “one’s own,” that over which we must claim rights of autonomy»<sup>147</sup>. In some sense, Butler follows Foucault when it comes to the social position of the body. However, while Foucault remains at the level of questioning the relation between the control of the body and corporeal resistance to governing and authority, Butler opens the question of the body politic as new forms of identity. Transgender, lesbian, and sexual identities in general are what collides with socially appropriate model of behaviour and the body is thus transformed into a political category. As socially inappropriate, sexuality (homosexuality or sadomasochism) is not only private and personal, but also public and thus political. Butler considers sexuality to be what makes being political of our corporeal existence. «It is a mode of being disposed toward others,

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<sup>146</sup> Ivi, p. 83.

<sup>147</sup> J. Butler, *Undoing gender*, Routledge, New York and London 2004, p. 20.

including in the mode of fantasy, and sometimes only in the mode of fantasy»<sup>148</sup>. Society and authority impose the appropriate form and shape which thus make the body a political category. To struggle for the rights of transgender, gay, and lesbian persons means a political struggle fought by the body.

### 5. *Body as plurality*

Throughout the history of philosophy, the body was observed as a sensual, plural, and changeable entity, contrary to spirit which was characterized by eternity and unchangeability. It is why the image of the body as the executor of orders of the spirit was created. This perspective claimed that the body cannot take care of itself, because it is changeable and non-independent, and therefore needs the spirit to govern it. This idea is retained by the contemporary philosophers Deleuze, Guattari, and Nancy, who think that positions in the relations between the spirit and the body should not be reversed, but the body should still be observed as a plural and changeable entity. Deleuze and Guattari introduce a new concept of the body which represents a way of resistance to totalizing political practices. For them, that is a body without organs (BwO) which is not systematized, organized, disciplined, and thus politically controlled. In other words, the body which rejects the politics of control can be defined as pre-differentialized and pre-systematized body. For Deleuze, plurality and desire are the most important notions, and they represent the expression of free uncontrolled individuals. Desire and plurality are the most distinct characteristics of the body as instinctive, sensual, sensitive, and ultimately, plural entity. «The BwO is desire, it is that which one desires and by which one desires»<sup>149</sup>. For Deleuze and Guattari, the body is unrepresentable because it represents itself and thus conducts the politics of general will. It is thus the most obvious example of democratic politics because, through its plurality and constant otherness, it cannot be subsumed under the common idea. Through the principle of desire which rules it, the body resists the concept of rational, organized, and bureaucratized being. Desire is what subverts predictability and control and establishes individuality and creativity. Suppression of desire means to introduce the system of bodily control, a body deprived of individuality and plurality. According to Deleuze and Guattari, we should return to the original body which is not systematized, organized, and controlled. «Thus the body without organs is opposed less to organs as such than to the organisation of the organs insofar as it composes an organism»<sup>150</sup>.

For Jean-Luc Nancy the body is understood in the style of his philosophy of singular plural. Nancy fully accepts the standpoint of traditional philosophy of the body being transient, plural, and changeable. The body is a plurality of different senses which are constantly being interchanged. We live, work, and create by the body and because of that we are first and foremost corporeally present in the world. Each body is the plurality of different

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<sup>148</sup> Ivi, p. 33.

<sup>149</sup> G. Deleuze – F. Guattari, *A thousand plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis and London 2005, p. 165.

<sup>150</sup> Ivi, p. 30.

senses, hearings, views, tastes, smells, touches. In addition to all that, body is not only a passive recipient of information, but also an active and creative actor. According to Nancy, community is best expressed through the body as what is characterized by a constant changeability. The main activity of the body is touching, which implies every form of corporeal activity. Other term relevant for Nancy's philosophy of the body is writing which, for him, represents the touch of the sense. For Nancy, sense is finite, changeable and plural. That means that each moment and event of our existence is marked by the sense. The best indicator of sense is therefore the body because it is the place marked by changeability (perception, touch, and its other characteristics). Because of that, the body is the best example of what Nancy implies by community. Since community is a constant change of senses, or to put it simply, a plurality of individuals which are constantly moving, touching, influencing each other, communicating, eating, drinking, creating, living and existing each time in this or that way, the body is therefore the most important and most obvious example of changeability and living-in-common.

What is in fact more common than the body itself<sup>151</sup>? The body is what we all share and what is common, but at the same time, also different in our existence. To designate his understanding of the body, Nancy uses the term *corpus* which has several meanings: body, catalogue, plurality of features. Contrary to the classic understanding of the body as a perceptive subject, here it is understood as a constant and eternal plurality of characteristics which are not reduced to the same denominator. For him, the body is *partes extra partes*, or the aggregate of parts which can, but don't have to be connected to or dependent on others. It is the combination of random characteristics which are not articulated<sup>152</sup>. Such characteristics implies that the body is an incommensurable entity which acts randomly, freely, arbitrarily, and without external control. If our existence is plural, it means that it resists each form of unification and, ultimately, control. For Nancy, the body is a political category because it represents community, because it is a part of it and due to the changeability of sense that is its most exemplary sign. Community should have body as its sense, and body should have community as its sense<sup>153</sup>.

## 6. Technologies of the body

Anthropologist Arnold Gehlen wrote a long time ago that technology is the indicator of human deficiency. In that sense, a certain number of authors will later indicate in their works that body and technologies are inseparable. According to Jean Baudrillard, in the symbolical order and postmodernity, «the whole body becomes a sign to offer itself to exchange of bodily signs»<sup>154</sup>. In contact between bodies, they communicate through signs without desire as part of simulacrum, virtual space in which rules the symbolic order. For Baudrillard, there is a narrow connection between body and technology. The traditional

<sup>151</sup> J.L. Nancy, *Corpus*, Fordham University Press, New York 2008, p. 49.

<sup>152</sup> Ivi, p. 53.

<sup>153</sup> Ivi, p. 71.

<sup>154</sup> J. Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, The University of Michigan Press, An Arbor 2010, p. 112.

perspective was that, through technology, the body approximated or identified itself with the nature. In that sense «technology is an extension of the body»<sup>155</sup>. Contrary to the traditional perspective of the relation between body and technology, the contemporary postmodern understanding represents a reciprocal violent relation in which technology is no longer the extension or mediator of the body. Contrary to traditional philosophy where body and technologies were in the subject-object relation, in postmodernity technology is the deconstruction of the body<sup>156</sup>. For Baudrillard, technology is no longer the extension of the body, but becomes intertwined with it and there is no clear boundary between them. Bodies are no longer bodies of desire or lust, but elements or objects which inhabit the space of simulacrum, which represent signs for other bodies-signs. Baudrillard also writes about the problem of cloning, and he does that by following Benjamin's article "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility". In the article, Benjamin states that contemporary forms of artistic creativity created new form of observing the art. With the emergence of photography and film the *here and now* of art and the *aura* of its originality are being lost. Art becomes reproducible and its source or original is no longer important. Similarly, Baudrillard describes the process of cloning indicating that the clone is annihilation of subject, parent, and ultimately, the creator. Cloning conducted from genetical material of a cell is not a creation of images but similar beings, who do not stand in the place of other beings, nor do they represent some model, they are simply the same as the model itself. According to Baudrillard, cloning shows that there is no longer the original body, nor does technology have the role of extension or prothesis of the body. The body is now the object which is produced according to the model which already exists. «Cloning is thus last stage of the history and modelling of the body, the one at which, reduced to its abstract and genetic formula, the individual is destined to serial propagation»<sup>157</sup>. Baudrillard indicates here that there is the end of the body, of the body which creates, which produces. In that sense, the body is no longer tired, exhausted, lustful, because these characteristics are no longer relevant for the individual. In the age of simulacrum, it (the body) has simply become a sign for the other body-sign. With the emergence of cloning, sex, which was the essence of the body, stops being that. Baudrillard's understanding of the body refers to his perspective of the new world conditioned by the simulacrum, which is not the imitation of the real world, but a virtual production of a new world, or a copy of the original. In such a world there is no space for reality and materiality. In that sense, processes of cloning and simulacrum can be called the most obvious examples of uniformed society in which each form of plurality and singularity is discarded. The disappearance of the tired and lustful body means both the end of the politics of resistance to totalitarianism and the transformation of all bodies into one model whose force and lust are being governed.

## 7. *Boundaries*

Contemporary political anthropology dealt with the concept of the body through the processes of the rituals of purification. Mary Douglas gave a special contribution in her book

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<sup>155</sup> Ivi, p. 111.

<sup>156</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>157</sup> Ivi, p. 99.

*Purity and danger* in which she indicated the opposition between sacred and pure and the position of the body in these relations. Those two categories are a binary opposition between belonging and non-belonging to a certain community. Sacred and pure is privileged, whereas dirty is outside normal and privileged community because it simply didn't undergo the ritual of purification. In that sense, pure and purified body is privileged and represents a discourse of normality as opposed to the dirty body, which is being excluded and which shows the boundary between belonging and non-belonging. "Purity and danger" mean the boundary which indicates the belonging to a certain social group. Just like pure, dirty is the part of the system, because dirty should exist to show the pure how to act outside the norms of expected behaviour. System exists because something that resists it exists, and the existence of what is resisting, what is outside the system, strengthens the relations between those inside it. Dirt is never isolated. It is always connected to purity and where the dirt exists, there is the system as well<sup>158</sup>. Here, one can see the importance of the boundary which separates the socially appropriate and non-belonging bodily identities. «The work performed by each caste carries a symbolic load: it says something about the relatively pure status of the caste in question»<sup>159</sup>. For the belonging to a group, it is necessary to draw a boundary towards the grouping which does not belong to the normal order. Douglas writes about the body and corporeal appearance which form the boundary which essentially defines social life. That boundary is the central place of all oppositions which make one society: belonging–non-belonging, inside-outside, purity-dirt.

Giorgio Agamben writes about the body through the prism of biopolitical theory, by observing it as the object of the sovereign's arbitrary control. According to him, sovereign's governing and suspension of laws has become a rule in contemporary world and the subject is not observed as a human being, but as a naked body. The sovereign does whatever he pleases with the subject as the body, because he is separated from the community (of the legal order) and thus deprived all human characteristics. Because of that, the naked body or naked life becomes the basic characteristic of the modern subject's life. Governing the individual is reduced to governing and controlling his body. Since the characteristic of the contemporary world is the state of exception, the citizen is transformed into the subject.

The subject becomes the body with identity which is recognizable only through biological characteristics. That is why Agamben claims that our existence in the contemporary world is only biological and corporal one. However, corporality isn't here a plurality of our movements and actions, but an object of control and governing the individuals by the state. By his biological characteristics, the individual becomes a singular citizen of a political community. According to Agamben, fear of recidivism in criminal acting introduces biological method in identification. «From this point identity no longer has, essentially, anything to do with recognition and the person's social prestige. Instead, it responds to the necessity of ensuring another type of recognition: that of the recidivist criminal by the police

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<sup>158</sup> M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger. An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, Routledge, London and New York 2001, p. 36

<sup>159</sup> Ivi, p. 128

officer»<sup>160</sup>. Identity is no longer a social construction, nor does it emerge through social recognition, it is defined by biological characteristics: size of the head, fingerprints, and anatomic characteristics in general.

«No longer do the “others”, my fellow men, my friends or enemies, guarantee my recognition. Not even my ethical capacity to not coincide with the social mask that I have nevertheless taken on can guarantee such recognition. What now defines my identity and recognizability are the senseless arabesques that my inked-up thumb leaves on a card in some police station. This is something with which I have absolutely nothing to do, something with which and by which I cannot in any way identify myself or take distance from: naked life, a purely biological datum»<sup>161</sup>.

### *8. Conformist body vs body of resistance*

We are witnessing the growing popularity of fitness activities which is the result of the socially desired body. Muscularity and suitable body shape in general indicate a sort of responsibility for oneself and one's health. Such endeavour of the contemporary man is caused by the growing attention to one's own health. In that sense, perfecting one's own body represents the excuse for taking care of the health of one's own body. That is why physical appearance becomes the image of the health condition. Ideal appearance is imposition of the general image of the bodily appearance and thus breaking with the body's role in a political action against authoritarian power of the government. The body becomes opportune and it accommodates itself to society's needs and expectations. The training of the body and achieving the perfect image of the body have theological implications. When we train in order to achieve a perfect body, we deny ourselves worldly pleasures. The ascetic character of training implies subordination to the ideology and, eventually, to what the society expects from us as true members. In that sense, this can be called a conformist body, i.e., a body which does not resist but is obedient to the ideology. Such bodies are those which are suitable for totalitarian regimes and in which the singular plural characteristic is abolished. Such a body is not only an object of social expectations, but it also shows the strength and stability of a society. The beautiful and tidy body we see in media indicate that in such society there are no political or social problems. Such a society is healthy and politically stable and there are no reasons for political resistance in it. However, not all bodies accept the ideology of healthy and ascetic living, but live hedonistically not caring much for socially desired behaviour and appearance. On the other, healthy living and nurturing means high standards of living which not all members of the society can afford and therefore, even without their own willing, cannot achieve what the society expects from them. Those bodies, either by their own will, or by the imposed impossibility to achieve the ideal, represent rebellious bodies dangerous for the order and stability of the society they live in.

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<sup>160</sup> G. Agamben, *Nudities*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 2011, p. 48

<sup>161</sup> Ivi, p. 50.

### *9. Rebellious body*

As we could see from the presented theories, the body is the inevitable part of politics. Politics strives to tame the body and put it under its control through processes of census and classification, which it identify and create rigidly bounded ethnic groups. Identification with the appropriate body represents conformism towards the governing regime and strengthening of the image of a stable and safe political order. On the other hand, many theoreticians believe that, as a plural entity, the body simultaneously rejects identification with a desired concept and can thus function as the subject of resistance to totalitarian political regimes. The body is a complex and ambivalent concept because it represents both uniformity and plurality, it subjects itself to a desired political concept, but can also reject subjugation to the governing politics through, for example, struggles for non-conventional, non-traditional sexual orientations. Slavery, precarious manual labour, torture, and various forms of control show us that human being is bodily subjected and humiliated. On the other hand, sexual freedoms and forms of gender identifications show us that it is a significant political entity in the struggle against ideology and authority. The body creates boundaries between ethnic groups and is crucial in forming identity, but at the same time it functions as a subject of struggle against homogenization and identification.

# *Financial framework of the scientific-teaching training and carrier advancement in Italian and Croatian higher education system. Comparative research*

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## *Abstract*

This paper analyzes the current state of the Italian higher education system through the financial reforms that have been introduced to combat the much broader and more engaging economic crisis of the last decade. The consequences of the legislative acts such as the intervention on the structure and organization of the academy with the sole purpose of reducing expenses, have proved to have a negative influence on the university itself and the scientific research in general. In comparison with the Croatian system, as a different example of a European country that has faced the crisis by not choosing to undermine the model of the university, scientific research and the accademy to such an extent, the Italian system reveals its problems in an even more evident way.

This work proves that the economic intervention of the Italian model did not have motivations coming from the very structure of the academy and higher education, but was imposed from the outside, as a political decision of an economic nature. This has had such an impact as to implement the most profound reorganization of the university, still enforced and with disappointing qualitative and quantitative results. The Croatian model stands as a counter-example of these economic and legislative trends, and guarantees more economic and existential stability for teaching staff, with the most favorable data for the approval of the entire system involved in university and academic training today.

## *Keywords*

Financial law, Reform, University evaluation, Higher education, Career advancement

## *Introduction*

The career development and scientific and teaching advancement is one of the key elements of the entire higher education system excellence and quality. The financial and economic aspect of such a system is its determinant, which most significantly affects its overall functioning.

An example of compromising the financial structure of such a system, which resulted in a deep redefinition of all of its components, including criteria of excellence and quality, is today's model of scientific and educational advancement in Italy. The problems of its today's functioning, than the educational progress and employment in Italy are the result of the

radical and exclusively financially motivated reforms of the legislator who in the midst of the economic crisis (2008-2013) redefined the entire structure of education at the national level. This also affected the structure of universities and higher education for the purpose of economic strategies to combat the impact of the crisis and reduce the budget deficit as efficiently as possible.

This paper analyzes the part of the reform related to universities and higher education in Italy, with a focus on the changes introduced by this reform in the segment of scientific and teaching advances in careers and job placement. A comparison with the Croatian higher education system and its financial framework is useful in the form of a better understanding of the specifics of such a process.

### *1. Scientific and scientific-teaching titles and job placement in the Republic of Croatia*

The system of scientific job placement and higher education is regulated in the Republic of Croatia by the Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education (ZZDVO)<sup>162</sup>. Scientific and teaching titles are defined in Art. 91 para. 1 of ZZDVO according to the classification "assistant professor", "associate professor", "full professor" and "full professor in a permanent position", which in the scientific component, according to paragraph 2 of this article, corresponds to the scientific title of scientific associate (for assistant professor), senior research associate (for associate professor), scientific advisor (for full professor) and scientific advisor in permanent position (for full professor in permanent position).

The law separates the election to a scientific title from the election to a scientific-teaching title and to a scientific-work position. The labor market in this segment was reformed in 2013 with the amendments to the ZZDVO and it is regulated that employment must be accompanied by the publication of a public tender in the Official Gazette, then the website of the scientific body it employs on the EURAXESS internet portal, which undoubtedly contributed to labor market openness. The law regulates that special conditions for election to a scientific position are prescribed by the holder of the scientific activity in the Republic of Croatia, such as scientific institutes, universities and colleges and other legal entities that have registered their scientific activity.

The decision on election to the scientific-teaching titles and positions is made on the basis of Art. 93 of ZZDVO, then the Statute of the University and its constituent faculties, then the Ordinance on the implementation of the procedure of election/re-election to titles and appropriate positions, and based on the positive report of the Committee for verification of eligibility for election in the procedure for the scientific-teaching title and the scientific-teaching position in the field prescribed by the competition. According to the Art. 42 of the ZZDVO, the employment contract is concluded for an indefinite period of time with the obligation of re-election or promotion, but the law also provides for the initiation of regular personal termination of employment if the re-election does not occur due to the failure to meet the prescribed conditions.

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<sup>162</sup> *Zakon o znanstvenoj djelatnosti i visokom obrazovanju* NN 123/03, 198/03, 105/04, 174/04, 02/07, 46/07, 45/09, 63/11, 94/13, 139/13, 101/14, 60/15, 131/17.

An important component of the Croatian scientific system is the existence of the preconditions in the form of election to the scientific titles for the later election to a scientific or scientific-research position. The intention of the legislator was to encourage the mobility of the scientific community in the national space on the principle of voluntary dislocation of scientists if someone in possession of a higher title would accept a job in another city or scientific body. In interaction with the system of compulsory promotion, such an initiative has resulted in pressure on scientific institutions themselves to enable promotions to higher positions within their own system in order to retain employees and guarantee the system functionality, but undoubtedly even positively contributed to the national standardization of the scientific criteria for teaching advancement and for employment in a scientific and scientific-teaching position.

Currently, the system of employment in the scientific and teaching positions in the Republic of Croatia is based on the principle of coefficients, which leads to the significant obstacles to progress if there is no coefficient that would financially legitimize the employment. The consequence is an obstruction of the linear development of "emerging" careers where the quality does not result in a key criterion, but this role is taken over by the external financial elements of the system itself.

The research conducted within the EU project "Strengthening social dialogue in the science and higher education sector"<sup>163</sup> showed that the reasons for waiting for promotion are precisely the lack of vacancies as a result of the lack of coefficients for this same promotion. The uncertainty related to getting a job placement, despite meeting all the conditions and the specific need for staff at the home institution, was felt by more than half of the respondents as assistant professors and research associates.

## *2. The system of titles and promotions in Italian higher education*

The definition of scientific and scientific-teaching title and position in Italian higher education differs significantly from the Croatian system, as well as the employment procedure and the conditions for re-election or election to a higher position. The specificity of today's Italian system is that it is the result of urgent legal and exclusively economically motivated interventions on the system that rely on a series of already unclear legal definitions of categories and classes of the academic staff.

### *2.1. The (un)existing figure of "assistant professor"*

#### *2.1.1. University researchers. The Moratti reform*

In the Italian system of higher education, there is no scientific-teaching title or scientific-teaching position of assistant professor. This function is performed in practice by the "university researchers" (*ricercatore universitario*), whose legal status is determined by the

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<sup>163</sup> Igor Radeka - Dragan Bagić - Lucija Barjašić Špiler - Krunoslav Pisk- Višnja Besendorfer, *Kakvu budućnost sustava znanosti i visokog obrazovanja želimo?*, Nezavisni sindikat znanosti i visokog obrazovanja, Zagreb 2016.

Decree no. 382/80<sup>164</sup> and equated with that of a permanent university assistant. The university researchers are not part of the teaching staff consisting exclusively of associate and full professors (Art. 1). In the Art. 32. it is also defined that "the university researchers contribute to the development of the university scientific research and carry out additional teaching activities".

The order from the Art. 1. according to which researchers may not be holders of teaching activities, has been partially amended by the Act 341/90, which allows participation in classes in the form of substitutions (*supplenze*) and with the consent of the holder of the course chair. Such a redefinition has left room for the participation in teaching as well as employment for an indefinite period, although the academic position of a university researcher has still not been entirely clear. By the first 2000s, the total teaching load for university research teaching staff had reached 40% of the total teaching load at the national level.

The position of the university researchers was further aggravated by the Moratti reform, ie Law 230 of 2005 "New provisions on university professors and researchers and a power of attorney to the Government to reorganize the employment of university professors"<sup>165</sup>. The article 14 of this Law terminates contracts for an indefinite period of time and limits the position of scientific researcher to a contract for a definite period of time, for three years, which can be extended only once. The position of a scientific researcher can thus be covered by a job position for a maximum period of six years. The conditions for promotion or re-election are not prescribed, and the share of researchers in teaching is limited to no more than 20% of the total workload of the university teaching staff.

Thus, two categories of the scientific researchers were created. The existing researchers with a contract of indefinite duration, denominated as "structured researchers" (*ricercatore strutturato*), coexisted with the new researchers for a definite period of time, and who later formed a whole financially unstable category of teaching staff. That is why it unofficially began to be called – *precariato*. This term refers to the general working state of uncertainty that lasts for a long time. The term is characterized by a lack of continuity of employment and security in the future and a lack of the adequate income and working conditions for life planning.

The reform envisages, but does not legally define a deadline for the complete termination of the permanent contracts for the category of the university researcher. Such a legal disposition was introduced five years after the Moratti reform, the largest reform of the Italian education system in the midst of the economic crisis, known as the - *Gelmini reform*.

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<sup>164</sup> Decreto Presidente Repubblica 11 luglio 1980, n. 32, "Riordinamento della docenza universitaria, relativa fascia di formazione nonché sperimentazione organizzativa e didattica".

<sup>165</sup> Legge 4 novembre 2005, n. 230, "Nuove disposizioni concernenti i professori e i ricercatori universitari e delega al Governo per il riordino del reclutamento dei professori universitari".

### 2.1.2. *The Gelmini reform. Financially motivated intervention in the education system*

The Gelmini reform is one of the best examples of introducing the legal changes in the system according to the principle of economic and financial criteria, without the nature of the reform activities arising from the needs and shortcomings of the system itself. A series of legal acts that in the period from 2008 to 2010 radically changed the entire structure of the Italian education system, on the principle of the most rational use of resources, aimed at the realization of ten billion euros in cuts to the school and university budget between 2008 and 2012. Eight billion and five hundred million cuts in schools (10.4% of the total budget) and 1.3 billion euros for universities (out of a total of 7.4 billion in 2007), which is 9.2%.

The legal acts of the Gelmini reform are as follows:

- Law 133/2008: "Transposition, as amended, of the Draft Law of 25 June 2008, no. 112, which contains urgent provisions for economic development, simplification, competitiveness, stabilization of public finances and equalization of taxes"<sup>166</sup>, in the Art. 15, 16, 17, 64 and 66 applies to education and universities. Particularly restrictive is the provision from the paragraph 3 of the Art. 66. where the cost of new staff recruitment in excess of 10% of the amount of the outgoing staff costs from the previous year is prohibited;

- Law 01/2009: "Transformation, as amended, of the Draft Law of November 10, 2008, No. 180, which contains urgent provisions on the right to study, improving the merits and quality of the university system and research"<sup>167</sup>. In the Art. 4. it is explicitly stated that the linear and progressive financial cuts of EUR 24 million for 2009, EUR 71 million for 2010 and EUR 141 million starting in 2011 are introduced;

- Law 240/2010: "Rules on the organization of universities, academic staff and employment, as well as the delegation of the Government to promote the quality and efficiency of the university system"<sup>168</sup> entered into force on 29 January 2011. This law structurally changes the ways of governing universities, redefines university bodies and prescribes a number of new provisions for the employment of teaching and technical staff. In order to rationalize the costs, this law abolished the institution of the faculty as a component of the university, and established departments as larger structural units that reduce the number of employees in the administration and management structure.

In the "Biennial Report on the State of the University and Research System"<sup>169</sup> of the Italian "Agency for Science and Higher Education", in the chapter "Time course of expenditures of Italian state universities", it was stated that in 2008 the total cost of the university was 13.5 billion euros. This progressively drops to 11.8 billion in 2015 (-12.9%),

<sup>166</sup> Legge 6 agosto 2008, n. 133, "Conversione in legge, con modificazioni, del decreto-legge 25 giugno 2008, n. 112, recante disposizioni urgenti per lo sviluppo economico, la semplificazione, la competitività, la stabilizzazione della finanza pubblica e la perequazione tributaria".

<sup>167</sup> Legge 9 gennaio 2009, n. 1, "Conversione in legge, con modificazioni, del decreto-legge 10 novembre 2008, n. 180, recante disposizioni urgenti per il diritto allo studio, la valorizzazione del merito e la qualità del sistema universitario e della ricerca".

<sup>168</sup> Legge 30 dicembre 2010, n. 240, "Norme in materia di organizzazione delle università, di personale accademico e reclutamento, nonche' delega al Governo per incentivare la qualità e l'efficienza del sistema universitario".

<sup>169</sup> Rapporto biennale sullo stato del sistema universitario e della ricerca, Agenzia Nazionale di Valutazione del Sistema Universitario e della Ricerca, Rome 2018.

which would mean that compared to 2000, the level of costs in 2008 was higher by 30%, while in 2015 it was at 3%.<sup>170</sup> The same research also shows a decline in the overall university expenditure relative to staff costs, with the parallel decline in both components, visible after the implementation of economically motivated reforms in 2008.

Based on data available from the "Education at a Glance 2017" report of the Organization for the Economic Cooperation and Development, and from the "She Figures 2015" report of the European Commission, the Italian Agency for Science and Higher Education determined that the main results of the analysis are as follows: "Since the peak reached in 2008, the total number of the university teachers has decreased steadily, and in 2017 the level reached was 14.9% lower than all levels in the history of measurement. This decline increased the number of students per teacher (in 2017 an average of 31 student), which is today among the highest in Europe"<sup>171</sup>.

Within six months of the entry into force of the law, the universities were required to amend their own statutes in the segment of organization and governing bodies. This coercive measure of the ministry is additionally defined in the Art. 6: "In case of non-compliance with the deadline, the Ministry assigns the university a period of three months to adopt statutory changes; after this period, the Minister establishes, without new or major burdens on public finances, a committee composed of three members to prepare the necessary statutory changes". In the Art. 7. it is additionally stated: "The Statute, adopted in accordance with paragraphs 5 and 6 of this Article, shall be sent to the Ministry which carries out the control provided for in the Article 6 of Law No. 168, within one hundred and twenty days of receipt". In the Art. 12. it is stated that the criterion for allocating funds will be conditioned by the level of implementation of reforms in the system: "Compliance with the principles of simplification, rational restructuring, efficiency and effectiveness are among the criteria for evaluating universities valid for the purpose of allocating funds"

The Art. 3 Par. 1 of the law also provides for the possibility of uniting and merging two universities: "In order to improve the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of teaching, research and management activities, streamline the distribution of universities and optimize the use of facilities and resources, from the art. 1. of this Law, two or more universities may merge, even limited to certain sectors of activity or structure".

The government had an obligation, according to the Art. 5. of this Law, and after the expiration of twelve months from the enactment of the law, to adopt "one or more legal regulations aimed at reforming the university system in order to achieve the following goals:

a) improving the quality and efficiency of the universities and consequently introducing reward mechanisms in the allocation of the public funds based on *ex ante* defined criteria, through the provision of a periodic accreditation system for universities

b) revision of accounting regulations to ensure the compliance with the university's three-year program, greater transparency and homogeneity, and to identify the exact capital

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<sup>170</sup> Agenzia Nazionale di Valutazione del Sistema Universitario e della Ricerca is a public body under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (MIUR), founded in 2006 with its headquarters in Rome and evaluates the activities of universities in Italy.

<sup>171</sup> Rapporto biennale sullo stato del sistema universitario e della ricerca, cit., pg. 262.

situation of the university and the overall management trend; providing start-up mechanisms in case of financial difficulties of the university

c) introduction of a system of *ex-post* evaluation of the university employment policies, based on criteria defined *ex ante*".

The Paragraph 2 of this article states that the implementation of the paragraph 1 must not lead to new or greater burdens on public finances.

### *2.1.3. University researchers on a part-time basis as the only form of assistant professorship*

In the Art. 24 of this Act, the figure of a university researcher is recognized and defined exclusively for a certain period of time: "As part of the resources available for conducting the research and teaching services, universities may determine temporary employment contracts, and student services as well as research activities ". To abolish the position of the scientific researcher was not the only legal restriction on this issue. Particularly problematic, but still valid today, is the paragraph 3 of this article, which further specifies the position of the university researcher: "Contracts can be of the following types: a) three-year contracts that can be extended to only two years, only once, after a positive evaluation of the conducted didactic and research activities, based on methods, criteria and parameters defined by the Minister's decree, b) three-year non-renewable contracts reserved for candidates who have benefited from the contracts mentioned in a) or, at least three years, even if not consecutive, of research grants [...] or postdoctoral fellowships. "

The university researchers for a fixed period of time (RTD - *ricercatore a tempo determinato*), as the only legally recognized figure, are divided into two categories: typology A (RTDa - *junior*) where a fixed-term contract is concluded for three years, which can be extended for another two years, and only once, and typology B (RTDb - *senior*) where the contract is also concluded for three years and must be full-time. This category includes candidates who have already been in the first category or who have been in the higher education system for three years with various sources of funding.

The only possibility of signing a contract for an indefinite period of time is that, if the candidate has a national academic qualification for the position of associate professor, the university commission approves, in the third year of the contract, the transition to a higher scientific-teaching position. This means that in the position of the university researcher, which in the Croatian national academic system corresponds to the position of the assistant professor, it is possible to be in Italy within a maximum of five years, with a fixed-term contract divided into two valuation periods of three plus two years<sup>172</sup>.

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<sup>172</sup> In the quantitative evaluation of teaching staff, at the conference entitled "University system four years since the reform", held in Rome in 2015, it was shown that the number of scientific researchers has significantly decreased since the Gelmini reform. Since the implementation of the first Gelmini Reform Act in 2008, the number of university researchers has begun to decline, a trend that has continued to decline moderately in the two-year period of enactment. From almost 25,000 university researchers in 2008, the number dropped to 18,752. Full professors went from 20,000 (2006) to 13,276, and associate professors from 19,000 to 16,000 (2012). Since 2012, the slight trend of increasing employment in the scientific-teaching position of associate

## *2.2. Associate and full professors. The only categories employed for an indefinite period of time*

In comparison with the Croatian system of promotion, where the election to a scientific title is distinguished from the election to a scientific and scientific-teaching position, and where there is a distinction between the scientific-teaching title and position, it can be stated that despite the fact that in the Italian academic system there is no election to the scientific title of research associate, neither the scientific-teaching title nor the position of assistant professor, a certain parallelism with the Croatian system exists in the categories of associate and full professor.

The Moratti reform introduced a form of election to the scientific-teaching title of associate and full professor. Still, unlike the Croatian system, there are no forms or obligations of prior election to a scientific title, but the law defines the obligation of the "national scientific qualification" (*idoneità scientifica nazionale*). The Art. 1 para. 5 of Law 230/2005 reads: "In order to continue the reorganization of the discipline related to the employment of university professors, guaranteeing the selection appropriate to the quality of the functions to be performed, the Government is delegated to adopt, within six months from the date of entry into force of this law, with regard to the autonomy of the university institutions, one or more legislative decrees. [...] The Minister of Education, Universities and Research shall publish by its own regulation separately for the categories of full professors and associate professors".

Before being elected to the scientific-teaching position of associate and full professor, it is necessary that the candidates go through the procedure of election to the scientific-teaching title of one or another category (*fascia I and II*). The Art. 1 Paragraph 1 states: "Achieving a scientific qualification is a necessary condition for the participation in public tenders for access to public administration according to the criteria and procedures established by the decree of the Minister of Civil Service, after consultation with the Minister of Education, University and Research". The introduction of this legal condition for the election to a scientific-teaching position is analogous to the motivation that led to the introduction of a similar criterion in the Croatian system - greater mobility of staff at the national level.

The Art. 1 para. 12 of the Act 230/2005 also envisages a form of full professor (*professore straordinario*), which would nevertheless be for a definite period of time, with a contract for three years. This can be extended to the next three years if it is funded by external research activities, reserved for those who have acquired the conditions for a full professor. Holders of positions are granted legal and economic treatment of full professors for the duration of their duties.

The Gelmini reform further tightened the legal obligation of a national scientific qualification by establishing a "national scientific habilitation" (*abilitazione scientifica*

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professor is linked to the legally defined category B of university researchers, which in practice means that the growth in the number of associate professors is largely proportional to the decline in university researchers.

*nazionale*) for categories I and II, and for the scientific-teaching title of associate and full professor. The National Scientific Qualification is an evaluation process directly managed by the Ministry through the national commissions of each of the competition sectors. The Art. 16 para. 1 of Law 240/2010 states: "The national scientific habilitation is determined. The habilitation lasts four years and requires separate requirements for the functions of first and second level professors. The habilitation confirms the scientific qualification which is a necessary condition for access to the first and second groups of professors".

In practice, it has been shown that the percentage of employment on a specific scientific job position after meeting the conditions of habilitation is very low. The research conducted at the national level in the scientific sector of economics<sup>173</sup>, showed that in the period from 2012 to 2017 the highest employment rate was in the field of political economy, at 27.43%. Other percentages are extremely low and mostly do not exceed 20%. The national scientific habilitation has proven to be an additional obstacle in the scientific and teaching carrier progress that does not guarantee the employment in an equivalent job position.

### *3. Problems of conditions for the career academic advancement*

The conditions for promotion to a scientific research position, which would include a contract of the indefinite duration in the Italian academic system, are closely linked to the previous stages of the scientific and teaching career. The legal provision establishing a category B of the university researcher, which would lead to the position of associate professor, presupposes, among other things, a condition of at least three years of experience in post-doctoral research projects or in the position of category A researcher. It is in practice almost impossible if such a condition is not met outside the borders of the national system, ie at foreign universities, for several reasons.

#### *3.1. The decline of doctoral studies in Italy as an example of the negative consequences of economic intervention on the system*

With financial cuts in higher education, the number of competitions for doctoral studies in Italy decreased, in the period from 2007 to 2019, by the rate of 43.4%<sup>174</sup>. There is a constant decline in the number of doctoral positions from 2007 to 2016, after which the trend substantially continues with a negative sign with less oscillations. There are two particularly sensitive moments of impact on the system. The first factor is the period of implementation of the Gelmini reform, where from the very first legal act in the form of urgent measures for economic development, the effect of falling concrete vacancies for doctoral positions at the national level began to be felt. The year 2008 is the critical point of the first significant decline in the supply of such a place, which coincides with the year of the

<sup>173</sup> Enrico Bellino – Saverio M. Fratini, *Abilitazione e reclutamento dei professori universitari nei settori economici dal 2012 ad oggi*, online source: <https://www.eticaeconomia.it/abilitazione-e-reclutamento-dei-professori-universitari-nei-settori-economici-dal-2012-ad-oggi-i-parte/#>

<sup>174</sup> VIII. *Indagine dell'Associazione Dottoranti e dotti di ricerca in Italia*. Online izvor: <https://dottorato.it/sites/default/files/survey/indagine-adi-2019.pdf>

first legal act of the Gelmini reform, while the second moment is recorded in 2014, as a consequence of the "Decree on Accreditation Procedures and Doctoral courses and criteria for the establishment of the doctoral courses by authorized bodies"<sup>175</sup>, where the conditions for enrollment in doctoral studies are significantly tightened.

The Art. 8. which talks about the ways of enrolling in doctoral studies, prescribes that admission to doctoral studies takes place on the basis of public selection, ie competition, in qualitative and quantitative evaluation of the commission through written and/or oral exam and evaluation of previous academic experience. The para. 2., article 8. reads: "The competition, drawn up in Italian and English and advertised electronically [...], must contain the criteria for access to and assessment of qualifications, as well as instructions for written and oral entrance examinations". The situation was further aggravated by a seemingly positive intervention on the system. Decree 436/2014 stipulates that 75% of the tenders offered for doctoral studies must be covered by a scholarship from the Ministry, within the existing financial situation<sup>176</sup>. In practice, this meant that the number of competitions was drastically reduced, due to the lack of financial coverage of such a high percentage of scholarships. Despite the fact that this regulation guarantees the faculty that it independently decides on the compatibility of doctoral positions with paid work activities, research shows that in many cases such a doctoral student's right is not recognized. In other words, employment is incompatible with attending doctoral studies<sup>177</sup>. This situation is especially problematic for doctoral students who are not scholarship holders and who, in 14.4% of cases, cannot engage in any other work activity, while they are still obliged to pay fees for attending their doctoral studies. Such a structured doctoral study, as well as admission to it, has significantly hampered access to this academic qualification, which further complicates the stay of excellent students in the higher education system, and consequently obstructs the possibility of scientific and research careers.

### *3.2. Assistant and postdoctoral titles and positions. Significant system differences*

The Italian system significantly differs from the Croatian one in terms of associate professions, which are a necessary precondition for the carrier advancement. While in the Croatian system, the Article 43, paragraph 1 of the ZZDVO states: "The associate titles and positions are assistant and postdoctoral student. Selection for the position of assistant or postdoctoral student is carried out on the basis of a public competition", in the Italian system the figure of assistant does not exist from the 1980s reform. That title was then equated with the researcher for an indefinite period, which was later abolished.

<sup>175</sup> Decreto Ministeriale 8 febbraio 2013 n. 45, "Regolamento recante modalità di accreditamento delle sedi e dei corsi di dottorato e criteri per la istituzione dei corsi di dottorato da parte degli enti accreditati".

<sup>176</sup> On 24 March 2014, the protocol n.436, "Linee guida per l'accreditamento dei corsi di dottorato". The Paragraph 6 states: "The number of doctoral scholarships (or equivalent forms of funding) must be aligned with the number of announced places in order to avoid a high and unjustified number of doctoral students without a scholarship (indicator of poor course sustainability). A certain number of scholarships equal to at least 75% of the available places is considered appropriate".

<sup>177</sup> VIII. Indagine dell'Associazione Dottoranti e dotti di ricerca in Italia' su Dottorato e Post-Dottorato, cit., pg. 16.

The postdoctoral student figure in the Italian academic system exists only in the form of fixed-term contracts, for a period of one to three years, in the form of research aid (*assegno di ricerca*). The Italian name of such a job position (*assegnista di ricerca*) derives from the form of financing such a figure. The maximum cumulative limit set by law is 6 years, excluding from the calculation of income received during the research doctorate. The cuts in higher education have led to a drastic reduction in post-doctoral positions, and are primarily reduced to the private investment initiatives, mostly in market-attractive areas of production and technology, leading to further suffering in the humanities and social sciences.

Associate titles and positions that would enable the fulfillment of the conditions for promotion to the title and position of associate professor as the first contract for an indefinite period of time are thus almost impossible in the Italian academic system. The Italian Agency for Science noted and therefore warned of the problem of a drastic reduction in teaching staff and an increase in fixed-term contracts. Since the implementation of the Gelmini reform in the system, the number of full professors has fallen by a third, associate professors have increased slightly (from 18,256 to 20,119) but it must be taken into account that this is directly related to category B university researchers who have almost halved in the period from 2008 to 2017 (from 25,582 to 14,610)<sup>178</sup>. There is a large imbalance between the moderately positive growth of associate professors with the drastic decline of university researchers. Among these categories, the one that has grown the most is the Temporary Researcher, a markedly unfavorable category of teaching staff given its legally defined characteristics. In this period, the number increased from 456 to 6,216. In the overall calculation of the number of scientific and teaching jobs, there was a decrease from 63,228 to 53,801.

### *Conclusion*

A comparison of the Croatian and Italian higher education systems, and in terms of the financial framework for scientific and research advances and jobs, shows that the Croatian system provides far greater opportunities to achieve a certain level of existential and financial security of teaching and research staff. Unlike the Italian one, the Croatian legislative framework offers the possibility of relatively continuous advancement or re-election, with the existence of associate positions of assistant and postdoctoral student. The Italian legislative framework is specific in that it is the result of urgent austerity measures in the midst of the economic crisis, but which has not yet undergone substantial changes. Consequently, urgent measures are still in force in the form of legal acts defining the conditions for election and/or re-election, but which are difficult to meet in practice due to the specific absence of those forms of academic career that would precede the first contract for an associate professor. Elections to a higher title and position in the Italian system are discontinuous, with complete uncertainty of the outcome of the process.

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<sup>178</sup> Rapporto biennale sullo stato del sistema universitario e della ricerca, cit., pg. 263.

It is evident that the Italian system, after graduation, provides young scientists with extremely difficult and restrictive conditions for remaining in the system of career advancement. Rapid and primarily financially motivated decline in doctoral studies at the national level, lack of associate position of assistant, redefinition of postdoctoral students only as beneficiaries of research support and temporary, partial abolition of the position of assistant professor which exists only in the form of fixed-term contracts years of university career, are measures that generate a very high degree of scientific, but also existential and financial insecurity, primarily of young scientists.

Measures introduced and justified by the desire to achieve a greater degree of competitiveness and excellence as a consequence of preventing job security from leading to substantial scientific unproductivity have had the opposite effect. Career and financial insecurity did not lead to higher productivity and excellence in the hope of remaining in the system, but resulted in additional legal protection for the already protected categories of associate and full professor. Emerging careers suffered precisely because of the search for basic existential security outside the national academic system or remaining in it with additional employment, often unrelated to the profession, which ultimately led to a decline in research quality and teaching performance.

The Croatian system of higher education has not undergone such radical changes as the Italian one, given that the economic response to the economic crisis in the Croatian version did not have as much focus on savings in the education sector. The Italian reform package to combat the impact of the economic crisis, which has focused largely on the deep restructuring of the entire education system, has proved professionally, existentially and financially disastrous for the younger generations.

The example of the impact of financially motivated reforms on the system, which did not arise from the needs and nature of the academic system itself and which were imposed on the system in order to achieve the highest possible level of savings, shows that the existential situation of young researchers has become even more difficult. Creditworthiness and financial security would be provided only by a job for an indefinite period, or a job for a definite period of time, but which provides at least a rough possibility of advancement without major waiting time intervals.

In the comparative analysis of the two systems, the Croatian model is established as a framework that provides greater opportunities for career realization and advancement, while the Italian framework generates high percentages of teacher deficits at the national level, especially with regard to emerging careers that require economic stability and planning for future advancement and improvement.

# *Human dignity and existential anthropology in Gabriel Marcel*

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## *Abstract*

Every time the value of human life and of the human individual are questioned, it is always again urgent to go back to interrogate ourselves about human dignity. The suggestion proposed by Gabriel Marcel about this perennial commitment of philosophical thinking looks in the direction of an existential anthropology, which could be able to frame and express the sense itself of human existence. It is not about specifying a definition of humanity that presumes to deplete its substantial definition or voluntaristic aspiration. Rather, Marcel exhorts to rediscover the sacred sense of human being as a mortal being. Against the prevailing technocracy of contemporaneity and its resulting nihilism, the French philosopher suggests to problematize the doubt on the human, by virtue of the inexhaustible question of meaning each one of us is. Not having to reduce human being at any cost to a function of something other than itself, the human being reveals itself in his dignity precisely in the face of its free and vocational tension towards the eternal and infinite. In this desiring aspiration, human being is on a journey towards the realization of itself, always existing as a ganglion of relationships between itself, other human beings, the entire world and the personal dialogue with the God-human being.

## *Keywords*

Existential Anthropology, Human Dignity, Vocation, Mortality, Technocracy

### *1. Redefining human subject and its relationship to objectivity*

Whatever the personal beliefs of a thinker, his duty is to investigate the existential situation of human being, having before him the objective of reflecting on the inalienable dignity that distinguishes the human being<sup>179</sup>. It is with this observation that Gabriel Marcel proposes the initial terms, the purpose and the intent of a research that he wishes to return to question who we are, men and women factually existing. Such a commitment cannot be uncritically solved in the assumption of dogmatic or doctrinal positions, which reveal themselves incapable of grasping the problematic dimension that the human being intrinsically is. Moreover, such a determination in the philosophical effort proves to be necessary, the French thinker suggests, when it comes to uttering a reflection acceptable

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<sup>179</sup> Cfr. G. Marcel, *La dignité humaine et ses assises existentielles*, Éditions Aubier-Montaigne, Paris 1964, pp. 11-12.

even by those whose gaze is not illuminated by a transcendent affirmation<sup>180</sup>. The guided path proposed by Marcel starts from what he himself suggests to define an “existential anthropology” (*anthropologie existentielle*)<sup>181</sup>. It is an approach which, on the one hand, is rigorously aimed at the problematization of the human being in his existential situation and which, on the other hand, speaks of human being with a certain reserve, in terms that, while regarding the human community in the anthropic sense, it does not innervate itself on an essentialistic discourse<sup>182</sup>. Therefore Marcel wants to treat of human being in terms of his existence, unique and circumstantial for each personal human individual, but also with reference to the category proper to the ἄνθρωπος, the human being understood in its general clarification common to every single existent.

This of Marcel is a non-systematic project, which the philosopher envisages according to the term “existential anthropology” only in the concluding part of the reflective parable of his life experience<sup>183</sup>. To grasp the heritage of this proposal and allow a fruitful reupdating, it is essential to recompose the draft of the project outlined by the author in his conceptual texts and not so much through his artistic production. Indeed, if it is indisputable to recognize how Marcel’s dramaturgical works integrate and complete his philosophical production<sup>184</sup>, it is also distinctive how the author’s artistic experience represents a phenomenological function of what is theoretically included in his essays and meditative works. In other words, Marcel’s theatrical creations can be considered phenomenological concretions of his speculative spirit, such that his edification of thought is arranged asystematically through the vitality of the work of art, understood as the embodiment of the contemplative spirit, sublimating in the most exquisitely philosophical writings. With this methodological warning of comprehension and of reading, we then proceed to examine the conceptual reflection openly articulated and professed by the personalistic doctrine of Marcel.

That of this philosopher is not an anthropology of the human essence. This research is not about any conceptual fixism or any biological, scientific or sociological categorical definition of what is claimed to be or must be factually existenting human being. Marcel affirms the human in order to its existential status, that is to say, its enduring and becoming

<sup>180</sup> «Une cadence orthodoxe ce serait là à mes yeux une simple tricherie. Le fait d’appartenir à l’Eglise ou à une Eglise, ne nous dispense pas, bien au contraire, de comprendre avec une lucidité qui ne doit jamais exclure la compassion, comment la vie apparaît à ceux que n’éclaire aucune affirmation transcendante. C’est d’ailleurs pour cette raison que je n’ai jamais accepté qu’on me désigne sous l’étiquette philosophe ou écrivain catholique, car admettre d’être étiqueté de la sorte, c’est, je le crains, du même coup s’engager au nom d’un apostolat mal compris à procéder à ce que j’ai appelé une tricherie incompatible avec cette honnêteté intellectuelle qui n’a jamais cessé de m’apparaître comme le premier devoir, non seulement du philosophe, ce qui va de soi, mais même de l’écrivain et je vise par là en particulier le romancier ou l’auteur dramatique» (*ivi*, p. 150).

<sup>181</sup> Cfr. M. De Corte, *L’ontologie existentielle de Gabriel Marcel*, in «Revue néoscolastique de philosophie», Vol. 38 (1935), pp. 470-483.

<sup>182</sup> Cfr. G. Marcel, *La dignité humaine et ses assises existentielles*, cit., pp. 32-33.

<sup>183</sup> Cfr. I. Mancini, *Sistema e ontologia in G. Marcel*, in «Rivista di Filosofia Neo-Scolastica», Vol. 47, No. 6 (novembre-dicembre 1955), pp. 642-661.

<sup>184</sup> «Mon œuvre dramatique, bien loin de constituer une sorte de compartiment étanche de ma vie, complète indissolublement mes écrits philosophiques, si j’ose dire techniques, qu’ils aient pris la forme du journal ou de l’essai. En réalité, cette œuvre dramatique participe vitalement de la recherche dont je puis dire que, depuis l’époque lointaine où j’ai commencé à prendre conscience de moi-même, elle a été ma vocation unique» (G. Marcel, *La dignité humaine et ses assises existentielles*, cit., p. 18).

staying out of indeterminacy (*ex-sistere*) within the extremes of life and death. Not life and death generally understood, but the individual and unrepeatable unique experiences that are my life and my death, your life and your death. Therefore, it is not even a science, an objective and defining knowledge that tethers the qualifications of the human to what is considered worthy of esteem and respect, abandoning all the rest to the sub-categories of subhumanity, inhumanity and animality. What Marcel thinks of is an “existential realism” (*réalisme existentiel*), which is based not on the objectual dimension of things, but on the apprehension of the existence of every reality starting from the embodied being of the individual and personal self<sup>185</sup>. To avoid becoming slaves of a formula that binds the human being to a certain self-belief about itself, Marcel suggests a return to the existentialistically problematizing dimension of existing human being.

«Le danger est de se rendre prisonnier d'une formule. Mon effort persistant aura consisté peut-être avant tout à lutter contre cette tentation de la formule quelle qu'elle soit, cela au nom d'une expérience des hommes qui me semble devoir être affrontée dans toute sa complexité, avec les jeux incessants d'ombre et de lumière qui s'y déploient tout au long notre existence»<sup>186</sup>.

Among the main intersections that can be isolated within the nebula of Marcel's existential anthropology, it is necessary to highlight two initial fixed stars: the semantic and terminological redefinition of the human “subject” and the methodological and theoretical error of peremptorily separating subjectivity and objectivity from one another. Let's briefly see these two points.

The first point involves a relocation of the human being based on a different sense of its self-understanding of being in the world. Speaking of itself in terms of subjectivity, human being thinks of itself as foundation (*sub-iectum*): protagonist of the cognitive act of knowledge, as it happens in the modernist parable that leads directly from Descartes to Kant, or principle of reality itself as knowable, as we read in Fichte's idealistic offshoots<sup>187</sup>. A similar knowledge of oneself ultimately makes the human being a consciousness unable to conceive both its own interdependence from the other different from itself, and the ontological status that more properly pertains to its personalistic status of existence. Human being never constitutes an absolutizable point of reality, on which a totalizing and all-encompassing grasp of the truth can leverage. Each one of us is always made up of a weave of inextricable relationships that constitute our own subjectivistic identity. The latter can mistakenly be considered something absolute, that is to say free from any type of bond or conditioning of others (*ab-solutus*), only when - equally misunderstanding - it is thought of as something solipsistic and unrelated. Contrary to this overall idealistic conception of the human self, the existent that each of us individually is demands - with our own life - to occupy the authenticating dimension that belongs to each single living self.

In order for everyone to occupy the space-time that properly belongs to him, one cannot continue to speak in an impersonal way of human subjectivity, rather it is necessary to

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<sup>185</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, p. 70.

<sup>186</sup> *Ivi*, p. 126.

<sup>187</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, pp. 27 sgg.

rediscover the existential richness that each personal individual is in his own irreplaceable and unrepeatable specificity. Against the homologation of egoic singularities in the abstractness of modern and postmodern subjectivity, Marcel proposes the affirmation of the vital concreteness and of the immeasurable relationality of every human existing. This dimension of personal being shows us as each individual self, while it can be identified as a subjectivity, nevertheless it does not exhaust in any way in this metaphysical categorization. The nefarious possibility towards which - in a Nietzschean way of speaking - we risk rolling to is the absolutization of self-awareness, as if this could ever be an absolute term of reference and of tracing reality to some definitive unity<sup>188</sup>. In this misrepresentation of itself, the ego becomes obscure to itself, unable to peer into itself as well as to contemplate the world around it with the awareness of the interdependence and with the wonder of the encounter. The self that dresses in subjectivity becomes not only an ambiguous concept for itself, but even a dangerous possibility for the inauthentic conduction of the individual existence<sup>189</sup>. In the name of all this, Marcel goes so far as to say that, in his understanding, the ego appears to him as an obstacle to the existence and to the (self)knowledge of human being, rather than as a principle of creation capable of realizing the human<sup>190</sup>. In fact, the ego is ultimately only a part of both the experience that the individual has of itself, and a perspective portion of the entire problem relating to the I-me, me-world, me-others relationships<sup>191</sup>.

With regard to the second point of the question, that is the subject-object binomial, Marcel underlines how these two terms are in a foundational relationship with respect to each other. A subject is in fact such only insofar as it possesses an active capacity for grasping, understanding and possessing, directed towards a term called "object". On the other hand, a real entity can be defined as an object only because it is placed before (*objectum, Gegenstand*) a subject, who grasps it with its senses, catalogues it with its intellect and uses it according to the purposes useful for its life. In the approach that understands the entity as an object, it is found that the reality of the subsistent thus considered participates in the existence of the subject, since it is from the subject. Precisely from the latter - that is to say from the experiential and cognitive act of the subject - the metamorphosis of the entity from a mere "thing that is" (*öv, ens*) to an object depends<sup>192</sup>. When we conceive reality in "objective" terms, Marcel criticizes, we are basically hypostatizing the product of that human cognitive act, which transforms the entity into an object and which, forgetting this gnoseological change, isolates the creation of this abstractive operation, considering it subsisting in and of itself<sup>193</sup>. Such a process of human cogitating is so connatural to our way of thinking, so much so that we are led to speak even of our subjectivistic identity in terms of something that exists in and of itself. In doing so, however, we arrive to prescind from

<sup>188</sup> «La conscience de soi, bien loin comme l'a cru la philosophie traditionnelle d'être un principe éclairant, peut au contraire refermer l'être humain sur lui-même et devenir ainsi un facteur d'opacité» (*ivi*, p. 54).

<sup>189</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, p. 135.

<sup>190</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, pp. 135-136.

<sup>191</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, pp. 136-137.

<sup>192</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>193</sup> «L'erreur me semblait consister à hypostasier ce qui n'est en définitive qu'une exigence de la pensée et à croire possible d'isoler et de considérer en soi le produit de cet acte» (*ivi*, p. 40).

both the subsistence of the entities of the world, which have now become usable objectivities, and the existences of myself and of the other human beings<sup>194</sup>.

If the subject and the object are both isolated each one in itself, from its foundational and relational counterpart, then the world becomes a foregone data and our capability to reason simple biological inborn to our *Sapiens Sapiens* species. If, on the other hand, we maintain the distinction and the correlation between subject and object, while converting the ontological determination of human subjectivity into personal existence and our understanding of empirical objectivity into a gift of being<sup>195</sup>; if we do so, following Marcel's proposal, we can hope to restore our relationship to ourselves, to the world and to other human beings in the common conscience of participating in being.

«C'est bien du côté du sujet, mais à condition de le restaurer dans sa réalité de sujet par-delà toute fallacieuse objectivation; qu'il convenait de chercher à comprendre comment nous participons à l'être»<sup>196</sup>.

In the awareness of this existential participation of human beings to the mysterious donation of being, Marcel glimpses the path which passes from the impersonal character of subjectivity to the realization of human existence in an authentic relationship with the things of the world and to other persons. Such a dimension of ontological realization is pointed out by the thinker in the specific supra-personal dimension to which the human being must aspire and in which, at last, it is possible that the entire process of theoretical transfiguration that has been discussed until now may have its own final outcome<sup>197</sup>.

Through the enunciation of the two thematic nuclei just above summarized, Marcel confesses the concern that guided him through the development of his philosophical work. The thoughtfulness, which every authentic thinker must have and which the French philosopher has no qualms in admitting, consists in the need to restore its ontological weight to human experience<sup>198</sup>. It is a need for thinking and being that risks dispersing together with the consciousness of the dignity that ontologically belongs to every existing human being. After all, possessing this awareness and envisioning that endeavour of reflection are the two parts of Marcel's only purpose. In order to do this, it is necessary to realize the limitation of our human language which, as Bergson has already shown, is intrinsically modeled on things and on the gratuitousness of what can be made object of thought or action<sup>199</sup>.

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<sup>194</sup> «C'est que nous avons une tendance invincible, lorsque nous parlons du sujet, à l'objectiver et par là même à le convertir en pure abstraction» (*ivi*, p. 41).

<sup>195</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, p. 70.

<sup>196</sup> *Ivi*, p. 41.

<sup>197</sup> Marcel wonders: «faut-il alors parler ici d'impersonnalité? Je crois plutôt qu'une distinction subtile doit être instituée entre l'impersonnel et le supra-personnel. Une loi est impersonnelle, elle est un contenu, un *what*. [...] Le propre de l'être humain semble être de pouvoir s'ouvrir à cette lumière suprapersonnelle, et il paraît clair que cette possibilité est liée en quelque manière à ce que nous appelons la dignité humaine» (*ivi*, pp. 128-129).

<sup>198</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, p. 103.

<sup>199</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, p. 107.

Then, it appears indispensable to prepare ourselves for a must-be, which calls back into question the foundational dynamic of the ego towards one's own and other people's existence. In such a tension between being and non-being, the human individual must surrender to the temptation of absolutizing the subjectivistic dimension of its own self-understanding, rather having to push itself towards an existential and dialectical understanding of its own living in the human community into the donative horizon of being<sup>200</sup>. In human knowledge, receiving Maritain's lesson, Marcel observes that there is in fact much more than just the gnoseological positivity that comes from the fact that I know something. Much more than this mere fact of the notional knowledge, in the event of understanding it is revealed the omnipresent and everywhere mysterious bond that makes, on the one hand, the human being a personal entity capable of knowledge and, on the other hand, the empirical reality something suitable for knowability by human being<sup>201</sup>. Forgetting this original state of fact or simply getting over its extremely wonderful and unfathomable nature, means losing sight of the ontological authenticity pertaining to the human existence<sup>202</sup>.

## 2. Not essential determination, rather existential vocation

In the context of Marcel's existential anthropology, it has been said, it is not in question the essence of the human, but rather its vocation<sup>203</sup>. In fact, when we talk about the human being in relation to its essence, we risk calling into question the positivity of peculiar sciences, which presumes to be able to frame once and for all what human being is. In doing so, however, this epistemological approach ignores the fact that the question about the *quid* of the human cannot disregard the focus on its *quis*: each living man and woman does not consist in a psycho-physical matter to be essentially categorized, but rather in people to be understood and welcomed in their existential uniqueness. On the other hand, Marcel observes, if we wanted to determine the human starting from its singular elements, which were preferred to others that were instead discarded, then we would be faced with the risk of a regression on to infinity<sup>204</sup>.

The more the human is sought in the determination of singular particular elements of its humanity, the more it is scattered in an infinitesimal fragmentation that can actually proceed endlessly. Discernment on the human cannot consist in the analysis of individual elements, in which the essence of human being is presumed to be enclosed. It is in fact in the totality of the existential experience of every single person and of all humanity together, that the overall essence of the human resides<sup>205</sup>. Such a categorical clarification, however, is not prerogative of any positive anthropic science, since it pertains to a state of consciousness

<sup>200</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, pp. 107-108.

<sup>201</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, p. 111.

<sup>202</sup> Cfr. F. Riva, *L'analogia occultata. A proposito del discorso ontologico di Gabriel Marcel*, in «Rivista di Filosofia Neo-Scolastica», Vol. 75, No. 3 (luglio-settembre 1983), pp. 457- 485.

<sup>203</sup> Cfr. G. Marcel, *La dignité humaine et ses assises existentielles*, cit., p. 35.

<sup>204</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, pp. 35-36.

<sup>205</sup> Cfr. B.L. Paschetto, *L'esistenzialismo di Gabriel Marcel e il realismo classico II*, in «Rivista di Filosofia Neo-Scolastica», Vol. 36, No. 3/4 (luglio-ottobre 1944), pp. 159-181.

that may be able to look at the totality of the human in order to its unity. A substantial unitarity, this one, which is found both in the single existing person and in the totality of the human race. The anthropology inspired by Marcel precisely looks and motivates to this unitarity of existential and personalistic order<sup>206</sup>.

In the development of such a sapiential commitment, philosophy fills a prominent role. Its task consists of a specific vocation: to withstand the violence of disillusionment, towards which it goes the initial wonder, with which the human being both experiences being and perceives itself in the world<sup>207</sup>. After the primal amazement that can be found in a child, who sees the world for the first time, or in an explorer, who approaches the discovery of new realities with trepidation, it always takes over the need to schematize our knowledge, making our initial enthusiasm a simple propulsive engine aimed at examination and analysis<sup>208</sup>. Of that native experience of beauty that made every human being a philosopher, nothing remains but the frustration of not keeping our eyes open to the original sense of reality. Due to the contingent needs to keep us alive, the logic of survival takes precedence over the authenticating purposes, which make human life fully itself. Well, philosophy has as its intrinsic election the fact of being love for that original wisdom, towards which the human being must turn not with a systematic spirit, but with a loving intention, in order to realize itself in the sapiential instance of its own personal existence<sup>209</sup>. This is how Marcel says:

«J'exprimerai une conviction qui est demeurée en moi inébranlable depuis plus d'un demi-siècle, en disant que le philosophe ne reste philosophe qu'autant qu'il garde vivant en lui cet étonnement en présence de certaines situations fondamentales, malgré tout ce qui autour de nous et même en nous tend à le dissiper»<sup>210</sup>.

Philosophy must allow the human being to face the original state of wonder, which is experienced every time, when the concrete and existential experience of our being is lived with sapiential strength. The intent is to prevent this initial situation from degenerating into bewilderment and disorientation, so as to justify the need for a positivistic categorization, which may be able to immunize the human being from fear but which, at the same time, makes it insensitive to that same principal astonishment<sup>211</sup>. According to Marcel, it is precisely in metaphysical speculation that this philosophical vocation can be consecrated: it ultimately turns to the definition of the human in terms of its personal existence and, therefore, to the fundamental determination of humanity in and of itself<sup>212</sup>.

The way in which philosophy engages in the existential clarification of the human does not consist only in the problematizing differentiation between the *quid* and the *quis* pertaining to human being, as mentioned above. As an explanatory complement to this, the objective of philosophizing is to try to correct a state of relative indeterminacy, which must

<sup>206</sup> Cfr. R. Célis, *La philosophie contre l'esprit d'abstraction*, in «Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie», Troisième série, Vol. 125, No. 4 (1993), pp. 383-391.

<sup>207</sup> Cfr. G. Marcel, *La dignité humaine et ses assises existentielles*, cit., pp. 23-24.

<sup>208</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>209</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, p. 24.

<sup>210</sup> *Ivi*, p. 26.

<sup>211</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>212</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, pp. 27-28.

be addressed through the act of interrogating<sup>213</sup>. The questioning about the “what” and the “who” of the human being, in fact, provides for an essential constant, which cannot be reduced to the rank of a circumstantial variable. Marcel observes that the ontological weight of any statement of thought is irreducible to its mere content of expression, but also pertains to other *costituenda*: the context in which that claim is uttered, the purposes according to which a given proposition is formulated in one way and not in another, the inner motives of the one who expresses itself and the variations according to which the message is received<sup>214</sup>. At the center of all these elements, which an existentialistic examination of the ἄνθρωπος cannot ignore or elide, it arises the perennial demand for meaning on the specific existence that each of us finds him/herself living. This is the personal existence, immeasurable in the comparison of human subjects with each other, yet identical to itself in each individual with its problematic metaphysical substance.

Now, just as in the relationship between several elements their fundamental status does not consist so much in the categorical determination of each one in themselves and alone, but rather in the mutual dialectic that exists between one and the other of those said elements; thus in the context of Marcel's existential anthropology the fundamental point is not the already excluded essential clarification of what the human being is, but the intersubjectivity or, still better, the interpersonality that each human individual is intrinsically existing<sup>215</sup>. In this terminology, the speculative emphasis must not be placed on the root of the terms in question, but rather on their common prefix “inter-”. This latter does not indicate that among human beings there is an order of causality that indicates our personalistic trait, since here it is not about a question of implying the explanatory factual links that exist between human subjects<sup>216</sup>. Although here the existence is in question, proper of each personal individual and common to all persons belonging to the human race, one should not even think of a peremptory categorization of ontological order. Such a hypothesis would expire the open research of Marcel's existential anthropology in a closed system with an existentialistic matrix, such as Sartre's can be<sup>217</sup>.

The research envisaged by Marcel does not want to yoke the categories of the human to some univocal guidelines, to which all living men and women must then uncritically conform, in order to be said in general, abstractly, according to a purely conceptual meaning, “human”. The philosophical intention promoted by Marcel's reflection does not want to derive the human from a premeditated and already formulated thought, in which the various

<sup>213</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, pp. 57-58.

<sup>214</sup> Underlining the fact that traditional philosophy has accustomed us to considering as principle of truth of an affirmation its mere conceptual content, which almost completely neglects the complex of elements that constitutes both the enunciation of thought and the ontological situation in which it fits, Marcel enunciates this critique of his «c'est ainsi par exemple que je devais reprocher à Sartre d'avoir, lorsqu'il se rendit à Genève en 1946, je crois, accueilli les journalistes qui venaient le saluer en leur disant: "Messieurs, Dieu est mort". Je disais: "Si l'on s'en tient au contenu, à l'énoncé, c'est la parole même de Nietzsche, mais en réalité, ce n'est pas la même parole, parce que le contexte existentiel est tout autre". Chez Nietzsche, cette affirmation terrible est un secret murmuré dans l'effroi, dans le tremblement, par un penseur qui se sent comme condamné au sacrilège; proférée par Sartre à l'aérodrome, elle devient une manchette pour quotidien à gros tirage et est par là même vidée de sa substance» (*ivi*, pp. 90-91).

<sup>215</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, p. 61.

<sup>216</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>217</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, pp. 9-10.

living human beings can be classified as more or less consonant with their state of belonging to humanity. Rather, Marcel suggests letting any existential meditation on the human derive from the modality of a thought that develops *in fieri*, *in itinere*, that is, during the ever new path of existence of every single life, which comes into the world and which brings its own unique experience to the modality of the human being in the world and among men<sup>218</sup>.

If what has been said hitherto allows us to reconstruct the coordinates along which Marcel outlines his reflective trajectory, what ultimately the interest of this philosopher is aiming at is human dignity, understood in its most original root. Above all, Marcel's worry consists in returning to place the attention of all humanity on its intrinsic dignity, at a time in which the most intimately existential nature of the human being is threatened by technocracy<sup>219</sup>. With this term the philosopher means the attitude that the civil society and the economic system - both those of the former communist apparatus, and those still contemporary of the capitalist everywhere prevailing - demonstrate in their making the human individual a simple factor of production, consumption and annuity<sup>220</sup>. What primarily matters to Marcel, however,

«ce n'est pas la technocratie prise en elle-même, d'autant que ce n'est encore là après tout qu'une abstraction, c'est beaucoup plutôt ce qu'elle tend à faire des êtres individuels qui sont appelés à vivre sous son égide. Il faut encore ajouter ceci qui est extrêmement important, c'est que le monde dans lequel nous vivons et qui est aussi celui où se déroulent mes drames, est un monde où la technocratie n'est pas souveraine, où elle existe beaucoup plutôt à l'état de menace à l'horizon, mais en même temps comme un certain esprit qui tend de plus en plus à informer la vie»<sup>221</sup>.

It is neither out of place, nor alarming to certify how today it is precisely this omnipervasiveness of the technical function which, with ever greater peremptory nature, shapes the human being in its public and working life, as well as in its private and emotional experiences<sup>222</sup>. The major index of this leveling of being and of knowledge is revealed in the increasingly shaded and ultimately indistinct differentiation between creation and production<sup>223</sup>. In this primary distinction between the *ex novo* generation of something original and the manipulation of what already exists to provide a surrogate variant, Marcel identifies an essential reading key to determine the human. In fact, it is precisely starting from a reflection on the active receptivity of which the human being is capable, that it is possible to orient our conception on who we are and on the dignity that belongs to every man and woman of the world<sup>224</sup>. The very nature of the human creative act, however, recalls something that surpasses, completes and founds the humanity internally at the dynamics of creation.

<sup>218</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, p. 10.

<sup>219</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, pp. 161-162.

<sup>220</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, pp. 162-163.

<sup>221</sup> *Ivi*, p. 163.

<sup>222</sup> Cfr. B. Gendreau, *Gabriel Marcel's Personalist Ontological Approach to Technology*, in «The Personalist Forum», Fall 1999, Vol. 15, No. 2, Proceedings of the International Conference on Persons, Santa Fe, NM, pp. 237-246.

<sup>223</sup> Cfr. G. Marcel, *La dignité humaine et ses assises existentielles*, cit., pp. 165-166.

<sup>224</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, p. 167.

«Je crois profondément, en ce qui me concerne, que nous ne pouvons arriver à préserver le principe mystérieux qui est au cœur de la dignité humaine, qu'à condition de parvenir à expliciter la qualité proprement sacrale qui lui est propre, et cette qualité apparaîtra d'autant plus clairement que nous nous attacherons davantage à l'être humain considéré dans sa nudité et dans sa faiblesse, à l'être humain désarmé tel que nous le trouvons chez l'enfant, chez le vieillard, ou chez le pauvre»<sup>225</sup>.

Through the rediscovery of the original sacral dimension of creation, even the human act of creating can reacquire its own connotation, that is, to point towards human dignity in its becoming through the thinking and the being of individual existing people. The greatest difficulty encountered in this direction of re-appropriating human authenticity to itself is that “progressive secularization of reason” (*sécularisation progressive de la raison*), of which Marcel makes himself accuser<sup>226</sup>. According to the understanding of this philosopher, from the time of Kant until today, reason has been increasingly gradually reduced to a set of technical operations typical of a descriptive, positive and particular science. The human capacity to reason has been confused with the logarithmic calculation function of computers, so as to think of machines as something intelligent and of human beings as calculators, which should be perfected in terms of performance and functionalistic task. The difficulty of rediscovering the sacral instance, proper both to Being as such and to all existing beings in particular, and to the human being as existent endowed with an intrinsic and inalienable dignity, has its origin exactly in our distance from a fundamental meaning of reason, which instead is typical of ancient and medieval philosophy<sup>227</sup>. Even, in our contemporary language, talking about what is most essential in order to determine human dignity would mean referring to something residual, accessory and superfluous compared to what is considered more important for humanity: the reduction of our life to the animal survival stage and to the utilitarian level of employment and work function<sup>228</sup>.

### 3. Mortality and human dignity

Already in the mid-sixties of the past century, when Marcel wrote down his thoughts with the words reread so far, the philosopher realized that the problem of human dignity, then as now, consists in understanding what will become of the sacral dimension of human and of whole reality within an entirely technicized world. A context of desacralization, secularization, leveling of human beings among themselves and lowering of the human to the stage of mere animality; a current destiny to which we are already all individually consigned<sup>229</sup>. The language that designates and that would like to treat the highest things is all the more frequently degraded and reviled, the more we witness the presumptuous and pretentious affirmation that the sacred either disappeared from the Earth, or never belonged

<sup>225</sup> *Ivi*, p. 168.

<sup>226</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, p. 169.

<sup>227</sup> Cfr. B.L. Pasquetto, *L'esistenzialismo di Gabriel Marcel e il realismo classico I*, in «Rivista di Filosofia Neo-Scolastica», Vol. 36, No. 2 (aprile 1944), pp. 115-124.

<sup>228</sup> Cfr. G. Marcel, *La dignità humaine et ses assises existentielles*, cit., p. 170.

<sup>229</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, pp. 204-205.

to it in general<sup>230</sup>. Almost as if the sacral dimension was not proper of Being as such and of living human being as existing, but rather of individuals only, who be aware of living in Being as sacred! Even if man were to remove from itself the memory of its own origin and sense lodged in God and in the sacred act of His creation, God Himself will never forget His generative act, which it has brought into being and which it keeps alive<sup>231</sup>. In the name of this metaphysical and, at the same time, theological bonding, Marcel can speak with criterion of human dignity in terms that are not politically formal or merely conventional, but theoretically founded and philosophically more than legitimate.

The factors resulting from this initial determination on human dignity allow us to identify the existentialist qualifications of the anthropology studied by Marcel. In the first place, the relationship between human beings must be clarified not so much as a function of the otherness of each other, that is, in general, of each being a generic "other" for the others, but starting from the determination of mutual proximity. To complete and - in a certain way - in contrast to what Lévinas argued, Marcel emphasizes that for every human being the other is a neighbour, since each determines itself in its own humanity starting from the proximal contact with the others<sup>232</sup>. That is to say: the communion in which we recognize ourselves different from others in mutual existence, but equal to each other as we are all connected by belonging to the one Being that allows us to differentiate, each in its own "I", and communion, in our own unanimous "we"<sup>233</sup>.

Secondly, another essential term that Marcel insists on is the concept of universal fraternity. This revolutionary ideal, which emblematically entered in the history with the slogans that led to the construction of the barricades in Paris in 1789, is associated with the terms of freedom and equality. However, fraternity has a much more marginal role within the cultural view established by these keys of interpretation, that are unavoidable for our closest contemporaneity. In fact, if one talks a lot about equality between human beings, in relation to the logic of the natural and inalienable rights of the person, and if likewise we are dealing everywhere and in detail with the concept of freedom, understood on several levels and according to its various nuances, the same cannot be said of the concept of fraternity. This latter, as Marcel rightly observes, implies the categorical equivalent of sonship, since we can all call ourselves brothers only insofar as we descend from a single paternity-maternity, from which we derive and in which we recognize ourselves as brothers one another<sup>234</sup>. Well, this last concept of evident religious derivation did not go towards an efficient mechanism of secularization, which instead involved much more massively the ideals of freedom and equality, such that nowadays it is preferred to omit the meaning of fraternity, when it come to human dignity. Instead, Marcel insists, only starting from the re-determination of human fraternity within the sacral instance that concerns our common

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<sup>230</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, p. 102.

<sup>231</sup> Is 49, 8-15.

<sup>232</sup> Cfr. G. Marcel, *La dignité humaine et ses assises existentielles*, cit., p. 170.

<sup>233</sup> Cfr. K.R. Hanley, *Réflexions sur la présence comme signe d'immortalité, d'après la pensée de Gabriel Marcel*, in «*Revue philosophique de Louvain*», Quatrième série, Vol. 74, No. 22 (MAY 1976), pp. 211-234.

<sup>234</sup> Cfr. G. Marcel, *La dignité humaine et ses assises existentielles*, cit., p. 171.

sonship in God, it is possible to treat human dignity in a manner that is neither merely formal, nor just egalitarian<sup>235</sup>. The philosopher writes:

«Si la dignité humaine peut être aujourd’hui pleinement reconnue, sans que par là on s’engage à nouveau dans les ornières d’un rationalisme abstrait, c’est à condition de se placer dans la perspective de la fraternité et non dans celle de l’égalitarisme. [...] Ce serait, je crois, une erreur et en tout cas une imprudence de prétendre que la dignité humaine ne peut être affirmée que par ceux qui sous quelque modalité confessionnelle que ce soit, reconnaissent explicitement Dieu comme père de tous les hommes»<sup>236</sup>.

A similar discourse on fraternity among men may even not be accepted in its doctrinal origin, but it can in any case be actively considered and lived (therefore even unconsciously professed) even by a non-believer, who is disposed to the understanding and to the respect required by human dignity. This latter, Marcel suggests, must not be sought in the demand of the law or in the arrogance of the law, but rather in the weakness and in the finitude proper of the human being<sup>237</sup>. Death is the key horizon of sense for the determination of human dignity in Marcel, and therefore for understanding the existential anthropology meant by this thinker: the inalienable dignity of human being is shown exactly in its condition of being mortal<sup>238</sup>. The principle of the essential dignity that belongs to humanity, both in the individuality of the people who compose it, and in the totality of past, present and future human beings, is exactly identified in this paradoxical conclusion affirmed by Marcel as the typicality of his existentialistic personalism<sup>239</sup>. In the light of this thought, the French thinker invites us to travel with him three distinct and concurrent paths: to agree on the exclusion of any form of scientism, which would promote a dogmatism that denies the importance of the superhuman dimension, in order to determine the human dignity; to take notice that the atheist positions actively expressed in the 20th century have not provided a greater realization of human dignity, but rather have led to an increasingly substantial erosion of it; to guard against the uncritical assumption of religious positions which, in the name of certain readings of sacred texts, pretend a priori to reject a certain determination of the human, understood both in its existential contingency and in its otherworldly destination<sup>240</sup>.

Once again, it is philosophy that has the duty of encouraging the work of conscience that leads to this determination of human dignity in the light of the individual mortality of personal existence. In fact, death must not be understood in terms of an intrinsic fatality, to which the freedom of the individual must inevitably submit, once become aware of having in death an insurmountable limit for the exercise of its arbitrariness<sup>241</sup>. Openly objecting to Sartre, Marcel observes that just as the human being is not condemned to freedom, it is either condemned to mortality, since freedom and death represent the roots that anchor

<sup>235</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, pp. 172-173.

<sup>236</sup> *Ivi*, p. 174.

<sup>237</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, p. 175.

<sup>238</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, p. 176.

<sup>239</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, p. 177.

<sup>240</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, pp. 180-181.

<sup>241</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, p. 188.

man to its own existential status<sup>242</sup>. Only when someone wants a human being uprooted from itself and bereft of any fundamental ontological reference to its communion with other human beings, it also becomes possible to speak about freedom and mortality as condemnations, against which the capricious decisiveness of contemporary human being collides.

Just as, Marcel insists, freedom cannot in any way be considered an attribute of the human, equally it is not possible to think of mortality as the state connatural to the living being called human being<sup>243</sup>. For Marcel, in fact, it is not correct to speak in these terms, since the ontological determination of who the human being is does not pertain to the essential attributions that could be traced back to a single human being, in order to be able to frame it in itself and alone<sup>244</sup>. While the key words of intersubjectivity and interpersonality remain essential in the light of universal fraternity, it is reaffirmed how the state of finitude of the single individual refers to that broader and more authenticating, meta-individual unitarity, that the single ego finds in the contact and in the communion with the brother in the unity of Being, that is, in God<sup>245</sup>. Only by disposing to the completeness of this meditative dimension, from which the individual being derives its existence and possesses its own ontological destination and place, the human being can authentically return to calling itself free precisely in virtue, in grace and not in spite, of its mortal nature<sup>246</sup>.

In the light of this consciousness about its own mortality, what the human being of our time must fight against, for the reaffirmation of itself, is the slavery of recklessness and of dependence to which exactly technocracy leads it<sup>247</sup>. The critical objective consists in replacing what is highest and noblest in the human with the ideal of a certain type of technological functioning, which annihilates human being in what is most proper to it<sup>248</sup>. This exclusionary overlapping represents the form of alienation of the human from itself: this overlay ultimately leads to the forgetfulness of human dignity. This latter goes towards annihilation precisely because the integral dimension of humanity is lost sight of: one becomes less and less capable of considering, on the one hand, all human beings in their common personalistic and existential foundation and, on the other hand, each individual of the human race as something invaluable to be safeguarded and ennobled<sup>249</sup>.

In an attempt to pursue a similar commitment capable of authenticating the human, Marcel argues that we must firmly reject an anthropology based on functionality, which leaves no room for human dignity and tends to insinuate itself into every dimension of the human acting and operating<sup>250</sup>. The philosopher even goes so far as to affirm that the extension of such utilitarian thinking on a global level must be openly considered as the «rêve démesuré, [...] la folie criminelle d'un individu ou d'un petit groupe d'hommes

<sup>242</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, p. 189.

<sup>243</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, pp. 190-191.

<sup>244</sup> Cfr. M. De Corte, *L'ontologie existentielle de Gabriel Marcel*, in «Revue néoscolastique de philosophie», Vol. 38 (1935), pp. 483-500.

<sup>245</sup> Cfr. G. Marcel, *La dignité humaine et ses assises existentielles*, cit., pp. 191-192.

<sup>246</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, pp. 194-195.

<sup>247</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, p. 206.

<sup>248</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, p. 207.

<sup>249</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, p. 209.

<sup>250</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, pp. 211-212.

provisoirement unis par une même ambition»<sup>251</sup>. In fact, one should ask what image of itself man can still figure in a world entirely illuminated by the shadow of unconsciousness and of interpersonal insensitivity provided by technology.

Technique constitutes a tool of mediation and communication that is certainly by now indispensable, that in any case and in any way cannot divest humanity of its integral aspiration<sup>252</sup>. The hyperbolic development of techniques and technocracy, Marcel argues, has rendered virtually null the substantial Socratic appeal to the “know yourself”, so that nowadays it becomes increasingly difficult to determine the path that leads the human being to itself<sup>253</sup>. In fact, it is exactly through that original *γνῶθι σαυτόν*, that the trail of the ego passes in search of itself in the open dialogue with the other and with one's own interiority. Where the function of technology ultimately become all-encompassing, Marcel foresees in his examination, it would arrive at the point that the human subject itself would cease to be considered *subiectum*, that is, something fundamental<sup>254</sup>. Thus, the human being would be transformed in a function and an instrument of that same apparatus, devised for its own aims<sup>255</sup>. In a word, the technocratic mean, not directed at a purpose proper to the human and at the authentication of this one, makes human being a medium of the function and enhancement of technology, now elected end in itself. Thus Marcel:

«Nous assistons vraiment à un processus gigantesque de dévaluation portant sur le *permanent dans l'homme et au-dessus de l'homme*, et le terme de désacralisation auquel j'ai si souvent eu recours dans mes écrits me semble s'appliquer d'une façon très exacte à ce processus. Il suit de là que c'est selon toute vraisemblance exclusivement dans le sens d'une restauration du sacré qu'il convient de chercher, je n'ose dire le remède, à la situation que j'ai tenté de décrire. Si je préfère ici ne pas parler de remède, c'est que en s'exprimant de la sorte, on risquerait de verser dans une sorte de pragmatisme du sacré qui constituerait une offense à cela même qu'on semblait se proposer de ré-instaurer. [...] Il fallait sans doute se garder de croire qu'un tel problème pût comporter une solution»<sup>256</sup>.

The human struggle for the conquest of itself is a perennial conflict, an interior and interpersonal combat that concerns humanity from when and for as long as it is. The contemporary contingencies of technocracy only make the determination of the human in its entirety and in the dignity that belongs to every man or woman more urgent<sup>257</sup>. There is no need to speak of a remedy for the critical situation of current technical society, because what we are dealing with is the issue that the human is in itself, in its anthropological-existential clarification. Precisely because this definition does not constitute nothing essentialistic, the ongoing duty of investigating the human - even through technology - represents the ultimate goal of any passionate and loving research on meaning and purpose

<sup>251</sup> *Ivi*, p. 212.

<sup>252</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, p. 213.

<sup>253</sup> Cfr. *ibidem*.

<sup>254</sup> Cfr. B. Gendreau, *Gabriel Marcel's Personalist Ontological Approach to Technology*, in «The Personalist Forum», Fall 1999, Vol. 15, No. 2, Proceedings of the International Conference on Persons, Santa Fe, NM, pp. 229-236.

<sup>255</sup> Cfr. G. Marcel, *La dignité humaine et ses assises existentielles*, cit., pp. 213-214.

<sup>256</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 214-215.

<sup>257</sup> Cfr. *ivi*, p. 216.

of the human. An investigation *for* human being, conducted in the light of its origin and in perspective according to the dialogue of human beings with each other and with God<sup>258</sup>. Indeed, it is lately this dialogue that Marcel aims at, when he deals with a “restoration of the sacred” (*restauration du sacré*), in terms that be respectful not of an abstract concept of speculation, but of the living substance of an interpersonal relationship that needs to be restored.

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<sup>258</sup> «Comme toujours - Marcel concludes - c'est à l'expérience et à l'expérience seule qu'appartient ici le dernier mot. Le philosophe [...] vient faire part à ceux qui veulent bien l'écouter, d'une certaine expérience qu'il lui a été donné de faire et dont il constate qu'il ne peut rendre compte sans faire intervenir cette réalité mystérieuse et essentiellement discrète qu'il appelle la grâce et qui se définit avant tout, non pas seulement par le fait qu'elle est irréductible à la liberté, mais plutôt par la stimulation secrète qui émane d'elle et sans laquelle il est très probable que la liberté se vide de son sens. [...] La fonction essentielle du philosophe me semble être une fonction d'ensemencement qui ne peut sans doute guère s'exercer que dans l'intimité du dialogue, *inter paucos*. Et il est évident qu'ici c'est à Socrate, à la leçon de Socrate, qu'il est impossible de ne pas penser» (*ivi*, p. 217).

## *“The debate of the century” as a spectacle: an indicator of the spiritual situation of our age*

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### *Abstract*

In 2019, Slavoj Žižek and Jordan Peterson participated in what was dubbed “the debate of the century”, a philosophical spectacle. The anticipation of the intellectual conversation as a spectacle was catalyzed by (post)modern marketing and communication means and strategies, mainly the Internet. Both Žižek and Peterson are recognized public intellectuals with fundamentally different worldviews, making the sensationalist claims somewhat valid. However, the “philosophical boxing match” did not happen, which left many spectators dissatisfied. Such reactions – to perceive an intellectual conversation as an aggressive mastering over the opponent – indicate at a dangerously problematic spiritual situation of our age and warrant a philosophical elaboration. The philosophical and problem focus thus shifts from the contents of the debate itself and its intellectual significance to the formal relation between a) the speakers (Žižek and Peterson), between b) the speakers and the audience, and c) this event and its wider social context. All three relations can be considered as being based on the idea of an intellectual debate as a spectacle.

### *Keywords*

The debate of the century, Žižek, Peterson, The spectacle, The anticipation

### *Introduction – conversation as a spectacle*

“The debate of the century” was a name given to a debate held in 2019 between Slavoj Žižek, a prominent Marxist philosopher, and Jordan Peterson, a prominent psychiatrist. The official title of the debate was “Happiness: Capitalism vs. Marxism”. The debate was held in the biggest theatrical hall in Canada and all three thousand tickets for it sold out. The demand was so high, that the organizers<sup>259</sup> enabled a paid livestream via the Internet. In total, the debate was spectated by around ten thousand people and it was subsequently viewed by millions more who expected an answer to the question “what is happiness?”, as the marketing of the debate promised. The audience paid money to get that information. The audience expected a 'philosophical boxing match' between two diametrically opposed thinkers. However, the reactions to the outcome of the debate were not favorable and many spectators felt 'cheated' – they came for a *tour de force*, a show, a debate of the century, but instead witnessed to a dialogue of tolerant difference of opinion; exactly what is expected of

<sup>259</sup> Despite the attempts, the information on who organised the event could not be obtained.

an academic conversation. Like with many shows designed to entertain, one commodity is exchanged for the other: money for the information and presentation. As this transaction did not occur as the audience expected or was led to believe by the organizers (and partially the participants) of this spectacle, the ‘customers’ felt unhappy.

This event is extremely indicative to the spiritual situation of our age in several aspects; not because of its content, which was intellectually subpar,<sup>260</sup> but because of its structure and form as a *spectacle*. The debate had a marketing strategy, it was being sold – literally and figuratively – under an impressive name, it promised a recipe for happiness, it was digitally communicated to every corner of the world, and it promised a clash between a leftist and a conservative. It was promised as a modern, intellectual spectacle. What is probably the most problematic, besides presenting a philosophical dialogue as an aggressive conflict between ‘foes’, is the fact that this spectacle presented philosophy and human sciences as a *quid pro quo* relationship in which the recipe for happiness is exchanged for money – knowledge and conversation become a commodity, philosophy and humanities become a tool for a specific purpose. It was supposed to be a philosophical spectacle between two opponents, however there is nothing philosophical in a “spiritual dominance, yet alone raw sophistry” which characterizes a “non-communication” (Pešić, 2021, p. 189) and is devoid of any meaningful substance beneath the surface of the spectacle. The characterization of this debate as an 'event' thus refers to its three parts making it a spectacle: pre-debate preparations, the in-debate actions, and post-debate reactions.

In this regard, this debate and its philosophical implications are indicative not only for the spiritual situation of contemporary philosophy, but also of the Western culture and its instrumentalist perception of philosophical conversation. The structure of the debate and its form as a spectacle indicates at multiple relationships to be philosophically explored. The philosophical and problem focus thus shifts from the contents of the debate itself and its intellectual significance to the formal relation between a) the speakers (Žižek and Peterson), between b) the speakers and the audience, and c) this event and its wider social context. All three relations can be considered as being based on the idea of an intellectual debate as a spectacle. In addition, this spectacle is based in the idea of an intellectual conversation basing on belligerence and rivalry, instead of cooperation. All three formal relations of this event can be characterized as a spectacle. All three relations, because of their formal and social aspect, can be taken as a corroboration of Guy Debord's idea of “the society of the spectacle” in the sense of it being “a social relation between people that is mediated by images”, images here denoting not merely the visual, but “a world-view” sustained by “mass-media technologies” (2014, p. 7). This paper thus borrows Debord's influential notion of the “spectacle” in order to explore it in a particular aspect, but distances itself from his decisively Marxist solutions which he utilized in developing it. This is especially noteworthy considering that the debate features Žižek's Marxist position and focuses on the problems of capitalism. The aim of this paper is to explore not the content of the debate and the ideas

<sup>260</sup> An extensive philosophical portrayal of Žižek's and Peterson's theories can be found in Last (2019). The work mostly focuses on similarities and differences of these two intellectuals pre-public debate. The debate itself is discussed concisely and with the conclusion that the event, if nothing else, demonstrated the “importance of high order dialogue”, which is in line with the aim and conclusion of this paper.

advocated within, but the dimensions of its formal structure. Thus, this paper explores the role of the *philosophical* in the society of the spectacle. It aims to do so by analyzing this intellectual dialogue as a theatrical performance characterized as a spectacle. Although Žižek's theatrical appearances are well known and have undoubtedly contributed to his popularity, as well as the popularity of philosophy, 'the debate of the century' stands out by its extreme form, function and aim as a spectacle.

*The overview of the debate and the philosophical problems emerging*

The debate itself and its content is philosophically unremarkable. It contained no strong arguments, no new information, it did not even have a definitive structure in the sense that Žižek and Peterson did not exchange any strong counterarguments. They did not even have a starting problem to argue about, although the topic of the debate was clear. The conversation lasted for approximately two and a half hours. Each participant had thirty minutes of introduction, so the exchange of arguments was to start after one hour. Peterson, unsurprisingly, started with an attack on Marxism by arguing that the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* contained fallacies and self-contradictions, most of which became even more pronounced with the development of the Economics as a scientific discipline. Peterson tried to win over a quick victory by attacking the fundamental pillar of Marxist theory. What came as a surprise, not to anyone who is even moderately philosophically adept, but to the spectators, was that Žižek agreed with this argument and dismissed it as irrelevant for the question of happiness. After all, Marx is not Marxism, and the problems of capitalist model of production and society cannot be refuted by dismissing the Marxist solutions. Thus, Žižek did not attempt to defend solutions offered by Marx or various Marxisms, but instead turned to emphasizing the problems of capitalism, which became even more acute since Marxist theories emerged almost two centuries ago. The fundamental flaw of capitalism as a mode of production is its need to expand and exploit, to constantly grow in order to maintain its structure. To this argument both Žižek and Peterson agreed and this point in the debate marked the expansion of the common ground they found.

After two hours of agreement, merely thirty minutes before the end, the moderator of the debate asked the participants to go back to the problem announced in the title of the debate – "happiness: capitalism vs Marxism". The conversation about how to achieve happiness lasted about fifteen minutes and both Žižek and Peterson agreed that happiness is not, or should not, be a goal in itself. Instead, they both concluded, happiness should be a by-product of proper action. However, and this is probably the main reason the debate felt like a disappointment – the participants did not define what acts would be considered proper in order to deliver the expected product of the debate and what specific steps are to be taken. Of course, such a recipe for happiness would be long and exhaustive, as the impacts of capitalism are not only of economic nature. And perhaps one of the reasons why Žižek and Peterson avoided the topic of happiness was their agreement with Lyotard's evaluation that the postmodern condition is characterized by the loss of credibility of "grand narratives" which seek to explain in absolutes. Although Peterson is a staunch opponent of Marxism and Žižek is its proponent, the debate took an unexpected turn early on. Instead on widening the

differences by assaulting different world views, these two intellectuals found a common ground and developed their dialogue in a similar direction, offering a critical take on the spiritual situation of our age. This situation, they agreed, is marked by global problems that are a direct consequence of capitalist mode of production. However, they did not delve into offering any serious solutions or deconstructing the problems to their fundamentals, making this more of a spectacularly dressed conversation than a philosophical or intellectual debate.

Even though the debate is philosophically unremarkable in its content, it is extremely philosophically relevant in its form and structure. Its form is indicative of the spiritual situation of our age in several aspects and relations. The first relation considers the Žižek and Peterson, the speakers themselves and their role in the spectacle. They were both chosen simply because they were popular figures and of diametrically opposite worldviews. The second relation is between the speakers and the audience. This relation developed prior to the debate itself by the sole fact that both Žižek and Peterson had had established supporters and popular image. This relation became naturally embodied in the formal structure of the theatrical performance. The audience here refers to the people present in the building at the time, but the relation can be extended to *spectators* in general, considering the fact that the debate was available via the Internet both live during the debate and after. The formal structure of the debate thus extends, because its content is available indefinitely to an indefinite number of people, to the third relation between the debate as a theatrical event and its general social context.

### *The speaker-speaker relation*

It has to be noted that both Peterson and Žižek were not chosen for this event because of their shared research areas, academic achievements or interest in ethics, but because they are provocative public figures with different worldviews. On the one hand, both of them are experienced public speakers, they have followers and websites, Žižek has a journal dedicated to him, and both authors capitalize on their intellectual work. In fact, Peterson's popularity is by far the result of his two 'bestseller' books on the topic of self-help and self-improvement, while Žižek wrote almost fifty books on philosophy and cultural theory. They share a common interest in psychology and psychiatry, which is the reason why the title of the debate focused on the notion of happiness. On the other hand, Žižek is openly left on the political spectrum, while Peterson is considered to be more conservative. The recipe for a spectacle acquired its first ingredient, it seemed, of two people willing to arduously argue against one another because of their differences.

It can be easily concluded that Žižek and Peterson are modern intellectual celebrities with a strong fanbase. This became manifest in the debate by the reactions from the audience. When Žižek or Peterson spoke, the members of the audience cheered and clapped, just like at a stand-up comedy show or a sports match. Ironically, the loudest reactions were at witty quips and Žižek's jokes. The audience, i.e. the fans wanted to show their support for their preferred team, they wanted to show that they approve the message and the people on stage. Peterson was mostly unfazed during the cheering, but Žižek was very irritated by the audience and insisted several times that they remain silent and respectful. They laughed and

clapped at this proposal and continued with the noise. The reason for such a disregard for an intellectual conversation can be attributed to the hierarchy in a paid spectacle. It is a hierarchy of those who pay and those who provide a service, of a customer and a provider and, as the saying goes, 'the customer is always right'. Some members of the audience, and it was a no small number, did not want to be silent because they paid money for the spectacle, the 'intellectual boxing match' and they felt that they had the privilege to protest or to show approval of the side they were rooting for.

Although the speakers did not aggravate one another or the atmosphere during the debate, which would partially explain why the audience felt belligerent, the reason for such sentiments can be traced before the debate, to factors which defined it as a spectacle. The debate was extensively marketed on the Internet on various and notable news outlets and on YouTube channels. Initially, the plan was to only sell tickets for the live show. However, due to very high demand, the organizers decided to enable a paid livestream. They hype and excitement about the event were so high that the tickets were being sold from \$300 to \$1500. However, such reactions and announcements may not come as a surprise, considering that they originated from popular media. What does come as a surprise is the fact that Peterson publicly marketed the debate and livestream tickets on a video, explaining that they were being sold for \$14.95 and that the earnings from the video stream of the debate will be used "to produce it professionally and to ensure, we hope, that the broadcast is of high quality and reliable, as well as to produce whatever profit might ensue" while Žižek "has announced his intention to donate his share to charity"<sup>261</sup>. Whatever the motivation for the profit off of the debate was, the fact remains that the pre-debate marketing campaign paid the way for it developing into something more than just an intellectual conversation with innovative and useful conclusions on happiness – which, to reiterate, were absent. It cannot be denied that such actions, catalyzed by (post)modern communication and marketing technologies and strategies, had developed the idea of the debate as a grand spectacle worth paying for. The hierarchy between the customer and the service, it seems, had developed even before the debate took place. Once again, to echo M. McLuhan's warnings, the medium became the message and the media promised a spectacle.

### *The speakers-audience relation*

The theatrical hall in which the debate took place only exacerbated this anticipated hierarchy between the speakers and the audience, the service providers and the payers. In the theatre as a location, the speakers and the audience are physically separated. The speakers are on an elevated position: on the stage and under the light, and they are performing the roles assigned to them. It is evident that the public image these two intellectuals developed are those of knowledge and authority, albeit from two different perspectives and worldviews. Such image then, naturally, presupposes a certain hierarchy

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<sup>261</sup> Description of a video posted by J. Peterson on his official YouTube channel. Video URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qLfkAALbnWc>. Accessed: 22nd April 2022. The debate had an official website at <https://www.jordanvsslavojdebate.com>, however the contents of the site were subsequently removed.

between those seeking answers and those giving them. In other words, both Žižek and Peterson are notable for their ability to offer – or at least discuss – answers and solutions to the problems of everyday man. This hierarchy based on knowledge, in addition to it being based in economic transaction, then extended into the live debate and shaped its form as a spectacle. The preestablished hierarchy of the spectacle thus naturally branched out not only by the way of formal relationship between the speakers who speak and the audience who listens (and sometimes loudly interrupts), but also by the spatial organization of the hall itself – it physically separating the actors and the audience. The live performance of this spectacle enabled the audience to immediately express their approval or disapproval. This was no more a podcast, a radio show, an Internet video, a blog or even a book where the content is laid out without any immediate consequence or reaction from the consumer. The recipe for a spectacle acquired its second ingredient, it seemed, of people willing to pay in order to observe two people arduously arguing against one another because their differences.

The live debate gave access to the creators of the content and to the process of creation itself. It opened an immediate connection on two levels: a) between the speakers and the audience generally and b) between the two opposing camps within the audience itself. Although the development of this debate as a spectacle was mainly based on creating situation b) even before the debate via Internet marketing campaigns, the belligerence between the members of the audience, between the sympathizers of Žižek and Peterson, turned into situation a). The audience's dissatisfaction with the outcome of the debate thus shifted the tensions stemming from within to the outside – to the failure of the speakers to deliver the product the audience, now as a single entity, paid for in advance. To borrow from Canetti's theory, it can be concluded that situation b) transformed into situation a) on the basis that the audience and spectators acted as a *crowd* from the beginning of the event, i.e. when the marketing campaign started.

Canetti's theory of the crowd (1973, p. 29-30) finds its strong corroboration in the nature of this event. The features of the crowd are: 1) its tendency to grow, 2) equality among members, 3) density, and 4) a necessary goal. The first feature that "the crowd wants to grow" was established and developed even before the debate, during the marketing campaign which aimed at including as many members as possible. Even when traditional limitations, such as the dimensions of the building and number of seats and tickets restricted the size of crowd, those were neutralized by (post)modern technologies. The transmission of the debate via the Internet virtually made the crowd limitless. However, the boundary was established, and it was defined by the price. More precisely, the limit and the boundary of the crowd were determined by the willpower of its members to pay a certain amount they considered acceptable. It has to be recalled that the physical tickets were auctioned due to high demand, with the price reaching as much as \$1500. The actual source of the 1) growth, 2) equality, 3) density and 4) goal of the crowd thus originates from the *internal* desire and motivation which are shared with the whole group. Whatever those internal motions were – e.g. curiosity, genuine interest in the topic of happiness, boredom, etc. – they were directed at the same focal point: the debate. The crowd is not only directed towards a goal, it *needs* a goal in order to sustain itself, Canetti theorizes, and it exists as long as the goal is unattained.

After the goal is attained, the crowd “dissolves” and disperses. The debate, anticipated as a spectacle, was supposed to satisfy the crowd in its goal and desire: to deliver either a spectacular intellectual battle or to provide a recipe for happiness. The preferred outcome would be both, but neither occurred. The crowd thus did not dissolve and disperse, instead, it shifted its tensions and frustrations towards the speakers, as is evident by negative reactions after the debate.

The hierarchy between those who speak from authority and those who listen out of internal motivation was based on the common goal of the crowd – to witness a spectacle. When the goal turned into a disappointment, this shared sentiment reinforced the “equality” among the members of the crowd, as well as its “density” or unity. At the beginning and during situation b), that shared goal was the conflict between two different worldviews. The crowd mentality of the audience was thus directed towards the conflict which was projected and anticipated *before* the debate. However, this conflict did not materialize in the real debate between the speakers, which led to it being superimposed by the audience both *during* the debate and *after*. The crowd thus did not dissolve even after the debate was over, making the dissatisfaction and frustration persistent until it is resolved. The equality between the members of the crowd affirmed itself even more when the speakers did not deliver what was anticipated and paid for. It was no longer relevant who supported which side, who was in the building and who watched the stream, who paid more and who paid less, the country of origin or personal characteristics; the members of the crowd were equal in their shared disappointment of the spectacle.

#### *The event in a wider social context*

After an extensive analysis of the nature of this particular spectacle, it may be asked: does it reflect the spiritual situation of our age and who is responsible for it? Is the audience, the ‘common people’ and their spectacular expectations of the debate, is it the media who instrumented such a promise, is it the organizers who monetized on the event, or is the responsibility of professional intellectuals who allowed such a situation to develop? The answer of this conclusion is affirmative and includes all the constituents mentioned. One of the characteristics of the contemporary spiritual situation of ‘Western culture’, Krivak argues, is its existence as an “instant spectacle” which enforces the idea that “genuine happiness is not in communication”, that it can only be obtained by “particular groups and privileged individuals” (2019, p. 34). The debate between Žižek and Jaspers satisfies these criteria in its formal structure as a spectacle. However, it is not an isolated anomaly, it is a strong indicator of the general spiritual situation of the Western culture by the sole fact that it is the product of its many constituents. Those constituents functioned competitively, instead of universally. The criterion of their cooperation is usefulness for a particular goal. As soon as the goal is achieved, the information received and the product obtained, the conversation and cooperation end. Krivak concludes, quite right, that happiness and its worth cannot be calculated – it can be billed for a sum of money and promised as a spectacle, but the spectacle is the concealment of the truth. The search for happiness is thus inevitably manifested as a “desire for philosophy”, not as ethics in its normative function, but as

philosophy of existence actualized. The path towards happiness is thus the path towards the truth as *aletheia* – as Heidegger defined it – the unconcealedness which is the precondition for truth and any proper and meaningful action.

It may be speculated that only some future conversation (between Žižek and Peterson, and in general) based on sincere attempts at understanding the other and the different may lead to a true intellectual coexistence, the *universitas* actualized in what Jaspers called “*Weltpolitik*” in his later writings. Jaspers' world philosophy is not a particular doctrine absolutized, it is “a task of the human being, which conducts his self-understanding”, a “movement... towards an unattainable goal for existence which is the transcendent unity of its origin” (Žitko 2021, p. 72). The aim of a philosophical conversation is not to neutralize the different and to master over the opponent, but to identify and preserve the common and the universal in humanity. By internalizing the philosophical conversation as a goal in itself, the conflict and discord become one's own and thus they become controllable. The future can now be claimed as one's own. The spectacle functions as the anticipation of meaning which *a priori* defines something as a spectacle. The fundamental problem is not in the anticipation itself, as Gadamer's (2004, pp. 305-335; 383) hermeneutic theory clearly demonstrates, because it is the prerequisite for understanding via language and conversation. Instead, the real danger of misunderstanding lays in anticipations which arrive from the 'outside', whose source and content are unknown and cannot be controlled. The aim is thus not to eliminate the anticipatory nature of understanding, but to become “conscious” of their existence in order to “check them and thus acquire right understanding from the things themselves” (ibid., p. 307). This is the “tyranny of hidden prejudices” (ibid.) which, it can be added, originates from the anticipative nature of the spectacle. Although this debate is an indicator of the spiritual situation of our age and of 'Western culture', there lies an optimism that the condition is not definite as it is *ours*.

True, the process of anticipating a philosophical conversation a spectacle was carried out by postmodern media, mainly the Internet, in a capitalist or profit oriented climate, it was also carried out by Peterson who, knowingly or unknowingly, facilitated such events. However, it would be culturally dangerous and philosophically irresponsible to designate the audience as mere passive recipients of an outside influence. Such perception delegates the human being as a helpless victim and denies the possibility of its self-determination and *epistemic freedom* – the ability to freely think, speculate and form judgements<sup>262</sup>. True, contemporary man is preyed upon by various ideologies and market analyses which seek to exploit, and the freedom of action and thought is subjected, to use Nietzsche's notion, to the struggle for “the will to power”. However, it cannot be admitted that contemporary man is helpless, only *unwilling*. The Enlightenment, which embodied the idea of freedom and self-determination via education and citizenship, was pioneered by the idea of accessible information – the project of making the first encyclopedias. The culmination of this project and its goals can be identified in the Internet and various Wikipediaes (community edited databases), which offer free and extensive knowledge and even education. Kant's appeal during the heyday of the Enlightenment that intellectual maturity requires “resolution and

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<sup>262</sup> For an overview of the notion of epistemic freedom see Uzunić (2021).

courage to use it [understanding] without the guidance of another [man]"<sup>263</sup> echoes even stronger two and a half centuries later. Kant finds the solution not in the quality or quantity of knowledge, but in the will for independent thinking. The amount of information, knowledge and discoveries has exponentially multiplied since the Enlightenment, this cannot be denied, but can the same with equal certainty be claimed for the independence of thought? It seems not, especially in the light of Žižek-Peterson debate, and even more so if the task of thinking is delegated and restricted to human sciences and sciences in general.

### *Conclusion – to anticipate anticipations*

The debate between Žižek and Peterson was a spectacular event with a marketing strategy, the Internet as a channel of communication, ticket selling, promising a product. These elements are typical of an advertisement for a product. The organizers of the debate spoke to the audience, mostly Western audience, with the language and terminology they understand – that one of capitalism. It seems this is the way to make such intellectual events appear relevant and useful to the general public. The human sciences and sciences in general should not function as a part of civilizational machinery which is engaged to produce solutions when needed, let alone in order to produce a spectacle devoid of any substance or significance other than its own existence. Nonetheless, this became manifest in the 'debate of the century'. Such instrumentalism reduces the scientific and the humanistic aspects of pertinent activities to a final product which can be articulated, measured, and evaluated. It fails to appreciate the activities and intellectual labor required to produce such results. This seems to be the conclusion that Peterson and Žižek drew out when they agreed that happiness cannot result from mere knowledge, but requires proper action. This is not in dispute, such conclusions are known even to undergraduate students in philosophy, and it sets aside the content of this intellectual exchange which was not, indeed, spectacular. It is more philosophically interesting and problematic to analyze the form and the relationship, not only between the speakers and the audience, but also between the two main speakers in order to reveal the structure of this spectacle.

An intellectual conversation thus becomes an alien body that enters everyday activities, but only if it is relevant, interesting, or useful as a tool for an ulterior purpose. Philosophical and intellectual activities are pushed out between walls of universities, and genuine conversation can only emerge as an entertainment show. Is this the future of philosophy? Is this the future of humanities? Is this "debate of the century" merely an anomaly, or a precedent which anticipates what the future of the philosophical conversation will look like? These are the real lessons of this debate. The speakers in this debate found a way to bridge their differences by finding a common ground not only in the topic of capitalism, but in the willingness to do so with *bona fide* of intellectual behavior. The irony is that those who paid for the debate and felt disappointed missed on the fundamental message of it – that self-improvement cannot be given from the outside, especially by discord, it can be only be

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<sup>263</sup> Kant's *An answer to the question: "What is Enlightenment?"*, first published in 1784 as *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?*

existentially actualized. To quote a chapter from Peterson's book (2018): "Set your house in perfect order before you criticize the world".