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## Theoretical and Applied Inquiries in Philosophy and Social Sciences

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# RESEARCH ARTICLES

# Philosophical Reflections

# Le self dans l'ouvrage de Ricœur *Soi-même comme un autre*. L'attestation de soi : certitude et fragilité du self

Annie Barthélémy

**Abstract:** The paper aims to explain how Paul Ricœur's phenomenological and hermeneutic approach offers an original theory of the self as self-attestation. Considering useful an approach that combines the psychological uses of the notion of self with a reflection on one's capacity to design himself/herself as a person, the paper offers a thorough analysis of Ricœur's work *Soi-même comme un autre / Oneself as Another*. The main purpose of this analysis is to highlight that, drawing a clear distinction between two forms of identity (la mêmeté/sameness and l'ipséité/selfhood) and proposing a dialectic between the self and the other, Ricœur grounds his theory on a notion of self which includes one's acceptance of the other.

**Keywords:** Paul Ricœur, self, identity, attestation, sameness, selfhood

La notion de self en psychologie réhabilite l'étude de la vie psychique intime, discréditée par le courant behavioriste du XIXème siècle qui avait rejeté le recours à l'introspection. En psychologie clinique, la notion de self renvoie à un rapport à soi permettant de saisir sa propre personne et aussi de déterminer l'orientation de sa conduite. Cf. à titre d'exemples approche génétique dans la pratique psychanalytique de Winnicott qui oppose « false self » et « true self »[1]; approche humaniste de Carl Rogers pour qui la « self actualisation »[2] est essentielle pour comprendre le développement de la personne ; approche expérimentale en psychologie cognitive où le terme de self se combine en une profusion de termes dont : auto-perception, estime de soi, autorégulation, auto-efficacité, présentation de soi... Associée à des pratiques thérapeutiques ou pédagogiques, la valeur d'usage du self varie en fonction de la manière dont sont intégrées les dimensions cognitives, affectives, conatives et sociales de cette notion. Cette multiplicité de sens peut entraîner la confusion, le risque est d'en faire un terme polysémique dont la signification se dilue : la notion s'use alors à force d'en trop user sans vigilance critique. On peut se prémunir contre ce risque en considérant la dispersion des définitions du self sans chercher une synthèse

[1] Soi = noyau de l'individu exige l'association du corps et de la psyche.

[2] Cf. source de la créativité: « tendance de l'homme à s'actualiser, et à devenir ce qui est potentiel en lui », force curative sur laquelle s'appuie le thérapeute découverte à partir de l'expérience de la relation d'aide : « mon expérience m'a montré que, fondamentalement, tous les hommes ont une orientation positive » (Rogers 1968, 248).

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problématique et s'inscrire dans le champ d'une théorie clinique précise, on y gagne en efficacité mais pas nécessairement en compréhension.

Dans ces conditions, il me semble utile que les usages psychologiques de la notion de self s'accompagnent d'une réflexion sur cette capacité de chaque homme à se désigner lui-même comme une personne. L'anthropologie de Paul Ricœur dans son ouvrage majeur *Soi-même comme un autre* paru en 1990 offre des bases solides à cette réflexion. Son anthropologie philosophique propose une herméneutique du soi qui enrichit l'approche phénoménologique dont il est parti. La pensée de Ricœur se révèle particulièrement utile parce qu'elle dégage clairement les problématiques dans lesquelles est inscrite cette notion de self.

Quelques mots sur le parcours philosophique de Paul Ricœur (1913-2004) jusqu'à la publication de *Soi-même comme un autre.*

Après avoir traduit en captivité (1942) les *Ideen*[3] d'Husserl et fait paraître en 1947 et 1948 des ouvrages dédiés à ses maîtres en philosophie: Gabriel Marcel et Karl Jaspers, deux philosophes s'inscrivant dans le courant existentialiste, il publie sa thèse, ainsi commence son œuvre philosophique.

Dans la lecture rétrospective qu'il fait de son œuvre, lors d'une conférence donnée à Barcelone en 2001,[4] Ricœur souligne que sa philosophie est une philosophie de l'action ;[5] il explique :

> [...] j'ai glissé progressivement d'une philosophie de l'action à une philosophie du langage avant que le mouvement du balancier me ramène dans le champ pratique (Ricoeur 2001, 78).

## I. Point de départ: une philosophie de l'action

Il publie en 1950 le premier tome et en 1960 le second tome de *La philosophie de la volonté*. Le premier tome intitulé *Le volontaire et l'involontaire* étudie la volonté selon la démarche phénoménologique cf. Husserl. Voici comment Ricœur récapitule les différents moments de son analyse: « Dire « je veux » signifie 1° je décide, 2° je meus mon corps, 3° je consens » (Ricoeur 1950, 23). Dans chacun de ces moments, se révèle la réciprocité du volontaire et de l'involontaire[6] et au terme de l'analyse, la volonté se révèle comme le pouvoir d'une liberté humaine qui compose avec le réel :

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[3] *Idées directrices pour une phénoménologie,* réédité en poche chez Gallimard col. Tel (1985). Le texte de cette conférence est intégré en appendice à l'ouvrage de Domenico Jervolino (2002). Voir Michel 2006.

[4] Le texte de cette conférence est intégré en appendice à l'ouvrage de Domenico Jervolino (2002).

[5] Voir Michel 2006.

[6] Début de la troisième partie intitulée consentir : le consentement et la nécessité: «décider était l'acte de la volonté qui s'appuie sur des motifs ; mouvoir l'acte de la volonté qui ébranle des pouvoirs ; consentir est l'acte de la volonté qui acquiesce à la nécessité. Étant entendu que c'est la même volonté qui est considérée successivement à des points de vue différents celui de la légitimité, celui de l'efficacité et celui de la patience » (Ricoeur 1950, 43).

> [...] consentir à la situation présente, prendre le réel à plein corps pour y chercher son expression et sa réalisation… C'est un engagement dans l'être (Ricoeur 1950, 432).

## II. La Philosophie du langage passe au premier plan

Le virage est amorcé dans le deuxième tome de la *Philosophie de la volonté*, intitulé *Finitude et culpabilité*, paru dix ans après le premier tome ; Ricœur y traite de l'expérience du mal et de la volonté mauvaise. L'analyse abstraite du premier tome est abandonnée pour « penser à partir des symboles »,[7] c'est-à-dire en appui sur les images à travers lesquelles les hommes ont exprimé la culpabilité (par exemple la souillure) ou les mythes par lesquels ils ont tenté d'expliquer l'origine du mal (par exemple dans la tragédie grecque le héros en proie au « dieu méchant » ou les figures d'Adam et Eve dans la Bible). Désormais dans l'œuvre de Ricœur, la philosophie du langage s'articule à l'analyse réflexive, témoignant d'un infléchissement de la méthode. Jean Greisch parle de la percée herméneutique de 1960 dans l'œuvre de Ricœur (Greisch 2001, 89 et suiv.). Cette démarche herméneutique s'affirme lorsqu'en 1965, il publie *De l'interprétation Essai sur Freud,* ouvrage dans lequel il montre le « conflit des interprétations »[8] entre les explications que donnent les sciences humaines des déterminismes psychiques ou sociaux qui constituent le moi (cf. Freud : pulsions, mécanismes inconscients) et la philosophie réflexive pour qui l'intentionnalité de la conscience oriente la vie psychique du sujet. Ce conflit Ricœur le conçoit comme une tension non comme une concurrence et il invite à faire dialoguer les deux approches, l'interprétation causale (explication) et l'interprétation du sens (compréhension), selon sa formule souvent citée : « expliquer plus pour comprendre mieux ».

Ce sont les deux ouvrages *La métaphore vive* (1975) consacré au langage poétique et les trois tomes de *Temps et récit* (1983-1985) consacrés au récit (historique ou de fiction) qui témoignent le mieux de cette importance prise par le langage dans l'œuvre de Ricœur. Il y montre les ressources du langage poétique et littéraire pour comprendre l'expérience humaine et pour la vivre. Citons à titre d'exemple l'hypothèse majeure de *Temps et récit*, Ricœur :

> [...] le temps devient humain dans la mesure où il est articulé de manière narrative ; en retour le récit est significatif dans la mesure où il dessine les traits de l'expérience temporelle (Ricœur 1983, 17).

Hypothèse puissante selon laquelle le récit, c'est à dire la composition d'une histoire qui déroule une intrigue dans le temps, rend compte de l'expérience

[7] Démarche définie en méditant la formule de Kant : « le symbole donne à penser ». A partir renvoie à deux idées: 1) La pensée philosophique autonome part toujours d'un langage qui lui préexiste. 2) L'univers symbolique donne une impulsion et oriente cet exercice de la pensée, à condition de se fier aux significations suggérées par les symboles.

[8] C'est le titre d'un recueil d'articles paru en 1969.

humaine du temps, du temps humain qui est d'une autre nature que le temps cosmologique dans lequel pourtant il s'inscrit. Dans l'ouvrage, en particulier lorsqu'il traite du récit de fiction, Ricœur démontre que le récit dont la caractéristique est de parler des événements, des actions et des personnes, en construisant une trame qui donne un sens (une direction et une signification) à ce qui est raconté, peut enrichir la manière de vivre notre existence temporelle.

## III. Retour au premier plan de la philosophie de l'action

Il se concrétise dans l'ouvrage majeur *Soi-même comme un autre* (1990). Voici les propos que tient Ricœur en 2001 à Barcelone sur les circonstances qui ont conduit à la publication de cet ouvrage qui reprend dix des conférences qu'il avait données à l'université d'Edimbourg en 1986.[9] L'université l'avait invité en lui demandant de faire une synthèse de ses travaux, Ricœur a dû pour présenter cette synthèse se faire violence:

> D'une certaine façon je crois à un certain éparpillement du champ de la réflexion philosophique en fonction d'une pluralité de questions déterminées appelant chaque fois un traitement distinct en vue de conclusions limitées mais précises… C'était donc à contre-courant de mes préférences avérées que je devais proposer une clef de lecture à mon auditoire. C'est de cette mise à l'épreuve qu'est né *Soi-même comme un autre* (1990) (Ricoeur 2001, 80-81).

Il lui est apparu alors que les questions multiples qui l'avaient occupé dans le passé pouvaient être regroupées autour d'une question centrale, celle des significations du verbe « je peux ». *Soi-même comme un autre*, développe une anthropologie de l'homme capable, c'est-à-dire une anthropologie des pouvoirs qui caractérisent l'homme et en particulier ce pouvoir fondamental de se désigner lui-même comme l'auteur de ses paroles et de ses actes et de se tenir responsable de sa vie. Pour Ricœur, le sens du mot self renvoie aux emplois du pronom réfléchi (ex. : je m'engage) et désigne donc la capacité des personnes humaines à associer le soi à un je. Nous allons montrer que, partant de ces emplois du pronom réfléchi, le philosophe apporte une conception du self qui n'a rien d'un retour contemplatif sur soi, encore moins d'une mise en scène de soi comme cela se généralise avec la mode du « selfie » pris d'un téléphone portable au bout d'une perche. Le self n'est ni narcissique, ni autosatisfaction, ni repli sur ce qui serait le noyau intime de la personne, le self est attestation de soi, une attestation fragile mais confiante.

Je termine cette section en présentant le plan de notre article qui va suivre les trois intentions qui ont guidé Ricœur pour l'élaboration de son ouvrage et qu'il précise dans la Préface de *Soi-même comme un autre.*[10]

[9] Gifford Lectures: *On Selfhood, the Question of Personal Identity.*

[10] « Par le titre *Soi-même comme un autre,* j'ai voulu désigner le point de convergence entre les trois intentions philosophiques majeures qui ont présidé à l'élaboration des études qui composent cet ouvrage » (Ricœur 1990, 11).

> La première intention est de marquer le primat de la médiation réflexive sur la position immédiate du sujet telle qu'elle s'exprime à la première personne du singulier : « je pense », « je suis »… (Ricœur 1990, 11).

Autrement dit se désigner soi-même n'est pas une affirmation de soi spontanée, où le je qui parle ou qui pense se saisit directement. Le soi, contrairement à cette position directe du je, exige le recours à des médiations autrement dit la notion de self n'a rien d'évident, elle suppose des étapes pour désigner qui est cette personne qui dit « je ». Cette intention sera développée dans les première et deuxième parties qui expliqueront ce qui différencie la position immédiate du sujet de la capacité à se désigner soi-même comme personne.

> La seconde intention philosophique, implicitement inscrite dans le titre du présent ouvrage par le biais du terme « même », est de dissocier deux significations majeures de l'identité… selon que l'on entend par identique l'équivalent de l'*idem* ou de l'*ipse* latin… (Ricœur 1990, 12).

Ici Ricœur attire l'attention sur le sens du terme même quand il vient renforcer l'emploi du mot soi comme dans le titre *Soi-<u>même</u> comme un autre*. La notion de self implique une référence à l'identité personnelle, mais pour Ricœur cette identité ne renvoie pas à un noyau non changeant de la personnalité qui resterait identique dans le temps. Pour éviter l'assimilation de même à identique,[11] Ricœur, pour un lecteur français, est obligé d'avoir recours au latin pour différencier deux formes d'identité : l'identité-idem (mêmeté) et l'identité-ipse (l'ipséité). Cette analyse fera l'objet de la troisième partie, c'est dans cette troisième partie que le titre de l'ouvrage sera commenté, le self se définira comme une attestation confiante et fragile de soi.

> La troisième intention philosophique, explicitement incluse, celle-ci, dans notre titre, s'enchaîne avec la précédente, en ce sens que l'identité-*ipse* met en jeu une dialectique complémentaire de celle de l'ipséité et de la mêmeté, à savoir la dialectique du *soi* et de *l'autre que soi* (Ricœur 1990, 13).

Ricœur explique qu'en rester à une définition de l'identité-mêmeté, c'est exclure l'autre différent (cf. les dérives identitaires pour exclure ceux qui ne sont pas comme nous) alors que penser l'identité sous la forme l'ipséité, c'est mettre l'altérité au cœur de l'identité et la relation à autrui au cœur de la relation à soi-même : « l'ipséité du soi-même implique l'altérité à un degré si intime que l'une ne se laisse pas penser sans l'autre » (Ricœur 1990, 14). Ricœur attire l'attention sur le fait que la conjonction comme dans le titre n'est pas un terme de comparaison (soi-même semblable à un autre) mais qu'il faut l'entendre au sens

[11] En français, le mot même signifie self dans soi-même et identique quand il est adjectif (c'est la même chose), l'anglais dispose de deux mots différents: self et same.

fort, synonyme de (soi-même en tant qu'autre). La quatrième partie développera cette thèse qui lie intimement l'altérité à l'attestation de soi qui constitue le self.

## IV. Le self n'est pas position immédiate de soi

Self n'est pas ego « Dire soi n'est pas dire moi » (Ricœur 1990, 212). Le self :

- ✓ vaut pour tous les pronoms personnels qu'il s'agisse de moi, de toi, d'elle, de lui et désigne un mouvement réflexif par laquelle une personne se rapporte à elle-même.

Le self est rapport à soi, Ricœur évoque le beau titre d'un ouvrage de Michel Foucault *Le souci de soi* qui lui-même l'emprunte aux grecs Cf. précepte de Socrate reçu du Dieu de Delphes « prends soin de soi-même ». D'emblée cette mention du souci de soi invite non à connaître un soi qui serait donné mais à cultiver un soi, cette culture de soi devenant la tâche prioritaire des hommes (comment conduire d'autres personnes si on ne sait pas se conduire soi-même ?). Comme on exerce son corps pour être en bonne santé, le précepte de prendre soin de soi-même rappelle que l'âme aussi a besoin d'exercice.

- ✓ n'est pas l'ego donné immédiatement à lui-même en toute transparence comme le sujet cartésien.

Ricœur conteste la surestimation du soi du cogito cartésien. *Cogito ergo sum* pose la certitude du sujet pensant comme intuition et vérité première pour sortir de l'océan du doute : Descartes peut douter de tout, mais dans cette expérience de doute radical, il découvre une certitude celle de l'existence du sujet qui doute au moment où il doute (j'existe pensant). Ricœur énonce trois critiques à l'égard de ce sujet cartésien qui émerge de l'océan du doute : pour Ricœur c'est un sujet désincarné (une chose qui pense), c'est un sujet exalté placé au rang de première vérité, enfin c'est un sujet qui prétend pouvoir se saisir directement par une intuition intellectuelle.

- ✓ n'est pas non plus l'ego brisé, dont les paroles et les actes disséminés ruinent toute prétention de l'ego à se désigner comme locuteur de sa parole et auteur de ses actes.

Contre Descartes, Nietzsche affirme que le sujet pensant est une illusion, une fiction. Le monde intérieur est un tissu de faits, d'impressions subjectives, nous interprétons cette expérience intime comme liée à un sujet, mais cela est une interprétation où nous inventons un enchaînement et un acteur qui dirige cette vie intérieure. Le soi dans ces conditions est une pure fiction, pour Nietzsche le soi est énigmatique, cet acteur qui dirigerait notre vie intérieure n'est que le jouet de forces vitales : instincts, intérêts, passions.

Ricœur sensible à la critique de Nietzsche n'en reste cependant pas à cette vision d'un soi brisé, éclaté qui sous-estime selon lui les pouvoirs du soi.

- ✓ n'est pas l'ego isolé dans sa tour d'ivoire.

Une remarque avant de présenter l'herméneutique du soi par laquelle Ricœur va dépasser l'opposition entre un sujet exalté et un sujet brisé. A la question qui suis-je ? De quelle nature est le soi ? Les deux philosophes, Descartes et Nietzsche, répondent en ignorant la personne concrète dans ses rapports avec autrui et dans les actes par lesquels elle intervient dans le cours du monde ; en cela, ils ignorent l'identité de la personne historique, la relation je-tu, « le soi de la responsabilité » (Ricœur 1990, 22).

## V. Le self implique une herméneutique du soi. Les médiations qui précisent question qui ? (qui suis-je ?)

La saisie de soi n'est pas directe, elle passe nécessairement par un travail d'interprétation, que désigne l'expression herméneutique du soi. L'herméneutique met au point de départ de la réflexion non le sujet (le sujet des philosophies réflexives: Descartes, Husserl entre autres), mais la personne concrète, insérée dans le monde et en relation avec les autres. Ricœur utilise une jolie métaphore :

> [...] nous survenons, en quelque sorte, au beau milieu d'une conversation qui est déjà commencée et dans laquelle nous essayons de nous orienter afin de pouvoir à notre tour y apporter notre contribution (Ricœur 1986, 48).

La démarche phénoménologique qui se fie à la seule intuition intellectuelle ne suffit plus pour saisir l'expérience du soi enraciné dans le monde. Pour se comprendre, il faut que le sujet se décentre et interprète les signes concrets de son existence, c'est-à-dire ses paroles, ses actes, ses engagements. L'herméneutique du soi a pour tâche de rassembler les signes dispersés de la présence du soi dans le monde, de ses paroles, ses actes, les récits qu'il fait de sa vie et ses engagements éthiques; la patiente démarche herméneutique de Ricœur se présente ainsi comme une alternative au sujet cartésien exalté qui trouve en lui-même immédiatement sa vérité mais aussi une alternative au sujet humilié que la critique de Nietzsche réduit à une pure illusion. Elle dépasse l'opposition entre self et non-self par une triple démarche :

> [...] le détour de la réflexion par l'analyse, la dialectique de l'ipséité et de la mêmeté, celle enfin de l'ipséité et de l'altérité (Ricœur 1990, 28).

La suite de l'exposé développe successivement chacun de ces trois aspects ; commençons par le premier et précisons en quoi consiste le détour par l'analyse indispensable à la philosophie réflexive.

- ✓ dépassement de la phénoménologie dans l'anthropologie de l'homme capable : les quatre dimensions de l'herméneutique : qui parle ? qui agit ? qui se raconte ? qui est le sujet moral d'imputation ?

La démarche herméneutique rend moins massive la question qui ? À laquelle le soi donne une réponse (cf. effet de perplexité produit par l'injonction « sois toi-même »), l'herméneutique du soi divise la question qui ? En quatre questions : qui parle ? qui agit ? qui se raconte ? qui est le sujet moral responsable de ses actes ? Cette analyse permet balayer toute l'amplitude de la question qui ? et d'y répondre en renvoyant à la réalité concrète des paroles, des actes, des récits, des engagements. Progressivement le *Soi* va émerger de l'analyse des réponses aux quatre questions qui détaillent la question qui ? Refusant de faire du self une donnée immédiate, l'herméneutique du soi approche le self par une interprétation des différentes facettes par lesquelles le soi se manifeste dans le monde. Elle propose donc un retour sur soi au terme d'un long détour: d'abord Ricœur, se référant à la philosophie analytique anglo-saxonne, étudie la manière dont on parle des personnes c'est-à-dire des entités susceptibles d'être un soi, puis il s'intéresse aux actions qui sont des événements d'un genre particulier, attribuables à une personne qui en est l'agent.

La démarche part de la définition la plus extérieure du soi : au quotidien, quand nous parlons de quelqu'un, quelle différence faisons-nous avec la désignation d'une chose particulière (Cf. usage du nom propre et d'attributs psychiques) ? Quand nous décrivons un acte posé par quelqu'un, comment différencions-nous cet acte d'un simple fait physique (je lève la main pour vous saluer/le vent se lève) ? Nous voyons que l'analyse, à ce stade, n'envisage pas encore un soi comme personne qui se désigne elle-même, mais quiconque dont on parle.

- ✓ attestation de soi comme sujet agissant et souffrant

Des quatre premières études, je retiens un thème central dans l'ouvrage, celui d'attestation de soi qui précise le statut que Ricœur donne au self. Partons de la capacité d'initiative que suppose la distinction entre événement et action : un événement est ce qui arrive (la tempête a causé des dégâts à la voilure du bateau), une action fait arriver un événement (le capitaine en virant de bord a provoqué le naufrage de son équipage). Cela paraît clair : l'événement est ce qui arrive (cause naturelle), l'action est ce qui fait arriver quelque chose (le quoi de l'acte se relie non à des causes mais à des motifs). Quand on attribue l'acte à son auteur, l'analyse révèle beaucoup de complexité : Qu'en est-il des conséquences non voulues de l'action ? Pour faire arriver quelque-chose ne faut-il pas composer le but poursuivi avec l'enchaînement des causes et des effets ? Il suffit d'assister à une séance d'un tribunal pour constater que le lien entre le qui ? a fait quoi ?

pourquoi? n'a rien d'évident ni pour les enquêteurs, ni pour les témoins, ni pour les juges, ni même le présumé coupable.

Sans entrer dans le détail des analyses, on voit que ce qui est en cause c'est la capacité d'initiative d'une personne, le self apparaît ici liée à la puissance d'agir de la personne: « L'initiative », affirme Ricœur,

> est une *intervention* de l'agent de l'action dans le cours du monde, intervention qui *cause* effectivement les changements dans le monde (Ricœur 1990, 133).

Que le soi puisse avoir prise sur le cours des événements, pouvoir certes limité mais efficacité partielle réelle, est, pour le philosophe, une croyance nécessaire afin que l'idée de self ait un sens. Cette assurance n'est pas une simple opinion, je crois que cela peut arriver, elle relève d'une croyance en soi[12] qui n'est pas de l'ordre de la vérité scientifique ; elle est une certitude pratique fragile, qui contraste avec les alibis paresseux : « qu'est ce que je peux y faire? », mais qui se révèle indispensable pour que le self ne se désagrège en soi chosifié,[13] au destin déjà tout tracé (Cf. le ton désabusé du : ça ne m'étonne pas de lui!).

> L'attestation peut se définir comme *l'assurance d'être soi-même agissant et souffrant*. Cette assurance demeure l'ultime recours contre tout soupçon ; même si elle est toujours en quelque façon reçue d'un autre, elle demeure attestation *de soi*. C'est l'attestation de soi qui préservera la question qui de se laisser remplacer par la question quoi ? Ou la question pourquoi? (Ricœur 1990, 35).

Cet extrait de la préface de *Soi-même comme un autre* indique bien le statut du self pour Ricœur ni vérité primitive, ni simple éventualité mais affirmation de la puissance d'agir en dépit de ce qu'il subit comme être vivant, de ce dont il souffre comme personne incarnée, à la perspective limitée, soumise au vieillissement et à la mort.

✓ herméneutique de soi toujours inachevée

L'herméneutique du soi prend acte du fait que la personne ne coïncide pas spontanément avec elle-même et qu'une appropriation lente est nécessaire pour qu'elle se reconnaisse elle-même. Tant que la vie continue, cette reconnaissance est incomplète. Ricœur aborde ce thème dans la cinquième étude qui traite de l'identité narrative, nous en donnons ici un bref aperçu. Cette cinquième étude s'appuie sur les acquis de *Temps et récit*, ouvrage dans lequel Ricœur, à la suite d'Aristote, médite sur l'importance du récit qui en construisant une histoire relie des événements dispersés. Une suite

[12] Ricœur distingue nettement deux usages du verbe croire en français : croire que (opinion) et croire en (vérité pratique)

[13] « L'attestation « de soi » permet à la question « qui » de ne pas se métamorphoser dans un « quoi » la personne « choséifiée » ou un pourquoi « la vérité prédonnée » (Mongin 1994, 174).

d'événements ne fait pas une histoire car une histoire repose sur une intrigue qui enchaîne les événements et donne sens et cohérence à la succession des faits. Sans le récit qui enchaîne les épisodes, nous ne voyons qu'une succession d'événements qui arrivent l'un après l'autre (la distinction fondamentale est entre une succession et un enchaînement de faits). L'intrigue donne une unité à l'histoire, le fil de l'histoire qui se déroule du début à la fin rend intelligible la succession des épisodes; cette unité de l'histoire se répercute sur les personnages de l'histoire qui acquièrent ainsi une identité, que le lecteur reconnaît (celui-ci est l'ami fidèle, celui-là le traître…): telle est l'origine de l'expression « identité narrative », celle des personnages de fiction dans un récit.

Passons de la fiction à la vie, le tissu de la vie reste décousu pour celui qui la vit comme une simple succession d'événements. Faire le récit de sa vie peut devenir une médiation utile pour se reconnaître soi-même dans son histoire personnelle. Mais à la différence de l'auteur qui construit une histoire dont il maîtrise le commencement, le déroulement et la fin. La personne n'est ni maître de sa naissance, ni de sa mort et ne l'est que partiellement du déroulement de sa vie. En ce sens, tant que la mort n'a pas mis un point final, l'interprétation de soi agissant et souffrant dans le cours des événements reste ouverte, inachevée, non seulement parce que la fin de l'histoire n'est pas arrivée, mais parce que la personne peut toujours réécrire l'histoire de sa vie, en donner une autre interprétation, en donner un autre cours (Cf. les exemples de reconversion professionnelle, de conversion etc.).

## VI. Le self ricœurien: une conception de l'identité personnelle

Dans les cinquième et sixième études de l'ouvrage, Ricœur aborde la question de l'identité personnelle, une problématique incontournable à la notion de self. En effet cette notion implique la référence à une continuité du soi dans le temps et donc suppose une permanence du soi dans le changement. Quel est le fondement de cette permanence ? Comme je l'ai annoncé plus haut, Ricœur apporte un éclairage qui renouvelle le traitement de la question, en distinguant deux formes de permanence, qui constituent deux manières d'appréhender l'identité: *mêmeté* et *ipséité*. Cette terminologie emprunte aux mots latins *idem* et *ipse*. Le critère de la mêmeté est la similitude, l'identité conçue selon ce critère (identité-mêmeté), c'est celle de l'état-civil qui décline le nom de la personne, la date et son lieu de naissance ou celle de la reconnaissance d'une personne à sa démarche, à sa voix, aux traits de son visage (Cf. lorsqu'on dit à un ami qu'on revoit après quelques années: « *tu n'as pas changé!* »). Mais ce second exemple montre les limites de l'identité-mêmeté pour définir l'identité d'une personne, outre le fait qu'elle est attribuée de l'extérieur, ignorant l'expérience du corps propre (vécu d'un corps

qui est le mien) à laquelle Ricœur accorde beaucoup d'attention,[14] elle méconnaît le fait que nous changeons (sous le poids des ans, dans l'épreuve de la maladie, avec les entraînements et régimes auxquels nous nous soumettons). On ne peut donc assimiler identité personnelle au fait de rester identiquement le même (identité-mêmeté). C'est à ces difficultés que répond la notion d'ipséité introduite par Ricœur.

- ✓ différence entre idem et ipse

L'ipséité désigne le maintien de soi à travers le temps. Ainsi lorsqu'une personne offre un cadeau en déclarant fièrement: « c'est moi qui l'ai fait », la personne se désigne elle-même dans l'acte de fabrication et l'acte de donner, signifiant son désir d'être reconnue dans le mouvement qui l'a conduite à faire quelque chose pour l'autre. On perçoit combien cette reconnaissance-là surpasse la simple reconnaissance d'une personne dans la rue. Ricœur donne en exemple emblématique de l'ipséité: la promesse tenue. En effet quand je tiens parole, je maintiens ma promesse dans la durée et malgré les difficultés qui peuvent surgir. Le self selon Ricœur ne se réduit pas à la mêmeté, il échappe à toutes les définitions qui l'enferment dans des traits identitaires, le self est une identité ouverte; cette conception me paraît très utile de diffuser aujourd'hui où nous constatons la tentation d'un repli identitaire de beaucoup de groupes sociaux.

- ✓ ipséité : une identité ouverte

La distinction opérée entre mêmeté et ipséité renouvelle l'analyse de l'emprise du caractère sur la personne (Ricœur 1990,143-150) que Ricœur avait amorcée dans *Le Volontaire et l'Involontaire* et lui permet de penser les chevauchements entre mêmeté et ipséité dans l'identité personnelle. Il est ainsi conduit à relativiser la fixité du caractère qu'il présentait alors comme un pôle immuable et involontaire de la personnalité. Dans *Soi-même comme un autre*, après avoir précisé que le caractère n'est pas donné à la naissance mais qu'il a une histoire susceptible d'en assouplir ou d'en rigidifier les traits, il souligne que l'identité de la personne n'est pas fixée seulement dans le caractère, mais qu'elle relève aussi d'un « *maintien de soi* ». Ricœur argumente en opposant la stabilité du caractère à la fidélité à une promesse ou la constance dans l'amitié:

> Une chose est la continuation du caractère : une autre est la persévérance dans la fidélité à la parole donnée. Une chose est la continuation du caractère; une autre, la constance dans l'amitié (Ricœur 1990, 148).

[14] C'est cette expérience d'un vécu du corps propre (« de la double appartenance du corps propre au règne des choses et au règne du soi »), irréductible à la relation du corps avec d'autres corps dans l'espace, qui ouvre l'identité-mêmeté sur l'ipséité et à l'altérité au cœur du self (Cf. 10ème étude, 369-380).

La persévérance ou la constance impliquent une action de la personne. C'est ainsi que la distinction entre mêmeté et ipséité invite non à être soi-même mais à demeurer fiable quoi qu'il en soit des péripéties des événements. Dans une note, Ricœur apporte une nuance en définissant le caractère comme « *la mêmeté dans la mienneté* » (Ricœur 1990, 145, note), ce dernier est alors susceptible d'être vécu comme le style qui marque mes initiatives, mais cette forme d'adhésion à notre caractère, proche du consentement décrit dans la troisième partie du tome 1 de la *Philosophie de la volonté*, n'est pas acceptation passive du caractère qui donne un alibi à la paresse (Cf. « que voulez-vous que j'y fasse, c'est mon caractère! »), mais une reprise de soi dans l'action sans assurance présomptueuse mais avec la confiance fragile et tenace de l'attestation. Le self est suspendu à cette attestation qui, sous le signe de l'ipséité, défie la sclérose des habitudes rigides et laisse un horizon temporel ouvert.

✓ ipséité : une identité qui est une tâche et non une donnée

La conception ricœurienne du self est liée à une philosophie de l'action. Le self n'est pas donné, il se construit par un rassemblement patient des signes qui manifestent l'intervention du soi dans le cours des événements, il n'est pas un substrat qui serait le socle de l'identité mais une tâche morale, plus précisément éthique,[15] par laquelle la personne devient progressivement elle-même. La conception ricœurienne du self exige de ne pas assimiler la question qui-suis-je ? à la question que suis-je? Le self est une réponse pratique confiante et résolue à la question qui-suis-je? Cette initiative, cet engagement personnel, voilà l'alternative que Ricœur oppose à la fierté du sujet cartésien et à l'humiliation du sujet nietzschéen:

> [...] il n'est pas douteux que le « Me voici » par quoi la personne se reconnait sujet d'imputation marque un coup d'arrêt à l'égard de l'errance à laquelle peut conduire la confrontation de soi-même avec une multitude de modèles d'action et de vie dont certains vont jusqu'à paralyser la capacité d'engagement ferme.
>
> Entre l'imagination qui dit : « Je peux tout essayer » et la voix qui dit : « Tout est possible mais tout n'est pas bénéfique (entendons à autrui et à toi-même) une source de discorde s'installe ». C'est cette discorde que l'acte de la promesse transforme en concorde fragile: Je peux tout essayer, certes mais: « Ici je me tiens! » (Ricœur 1990, 197-198).

La dimension éthique de la réponse pratique qui vise la réconciliation du self avec lui-même est signalée par le rappel: « Tout n'est pas bénéfique ».

[15] La morale renvoyant au devoir n'est qu'un moment pour Ricœur de l'éthique par laquelle se concrétise dans un contexte donné l'aspiration à la vie bonne.

## VII. Le self en tant qu'autre: l'altérité, un « comme » qui renvoie à une implication et non à une comparaison

Tout au long de *Soi-même comme un autre*, l'intersubjectivité est placée au cœur du self, autrui n'est pas un autre moi, il fait partie intimement du soi (cf. « dire soi n'est pas dire moi » cité plus haut) car la relation à autrui est constitutive de ma subjectivité. Bien entendu, cette conception est largement développée dans les études 7, 8 et 9 de *Soi-même comme un autre*, court traité de philosophie morale qui donne à l'action humaine ce large horizon: « une vie bonne, avec et pour autrui, dans des institutions justes » (Ricœur 1990, 202).

✓ « altérité intérieure »

L'attestation suppose autrui au cœur de la subjectivité, Ricœur le souligne dès la Préface :

> [...] l'attestation peut se définir comme *l'assurance d'être soi-même agissant et souffrant*. Cette assurance demeure l'ultime recours contre tout soupçon; même si elle est toujours en quelque façon reçue d'un autre, elle demeure attestation de soi (Ricœur 1990, 35).

Si la promesse est l'acte qui traduit le mieux l'ipséité, c'est parce qu'elle rend visible dans la fidélité à la parole donnée ce qui lie intimement le soi et l'autre: la promesse suppose un autre à qui s'adresse la promesse et un autre qui se fie à la parole donnée. Ricœur pointe aussi l'intersubjectivité est au fondement de l'estime de soi:

> [...] je ne puis m'estimer moi-même sans estimer autrui *comme* moi-même… Deviennent ainsi fondamentalement équivalentes l'estime de l'*autre comme un soi-même* et l'estime de *soi-même comme un autre* (Ricœur 1990, 226).

C'est dans cette réciprocité que se trouve le secret de la force de l'attestation: elle n'est pas une assurance qui ne tient qu'à soi, elle s'enracine dans la confiance que l'autre me fait. L'attestation tient de l'affirmation de soi et de l'accueil de l'autre en soi.

✓ caractère dialogal du soi

Le self n'est pas un héros solitaire, croire en soi suppose qu'un autre, que d'autres nous font confiance. Cette dimension intersubjective du self est intégrée par beaucoup de thérapies qui montrent l'influence décisive de l'environnement humain pour l'émergence et le développement du self. La pensée de Ricœur va dans ce sens: la médiation d'autrui est indispensable à l'accomplissement du self; ce point de vue, il le développe en commentant longuement, dans la septième étude (Ricœur 1990, 217 et suiv.), l'affirmation d'Aristote dans l'*Ethique à Nicomaque* selon laquelle « l'homme heureux a besoin d'amis ». Dans *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli* (2000), Ricœur insiste sur le rôle des proches: « ceux qui comptent sur nous et pour qui nous

comptons », situés dans un cercle à géométrie variable, selon le degré de proximité qui n'est pas seulement spatial mais qui dépend de la manière dont on se sent et on se rend proche. Je cite ce très bel extrait concernant ceux qu'on appelle nos proches:

> Quelques-uns pourront déplorer ma mort. Mais auparavant quelques-uns ont pu se réjouir de ma naissance et célébrer à cette occasion le miracle de la natalité, et la donation du nom sous lequel ma vie durant je me désignerai moi-même. Entre temps mes proches sont ceux qui m'approuvent d'exister et dont j'approuve l'existence dans la réciprocité et l'égalité d'estime… Ce que j'attends de mes proches, c'est qu'ils approuvent ce que j'atteste: que je puis parler, agir, raconter, m'imputer à moi-même la responsabilité de mes actions (Ricœur 2000, 162).

Comme vous le constatez Ricœur fait là explicitement référence à l'anthropologie de l'homme capable de *Soi-même comme un autre*, pour lui la médiation de l'autre est indispensable à la concrétisation de nos pouvoirs humain : la parole, l'action, le récit, l'exercice de la responsabilité. Dans cet extrait, on voit aussi comment le nom ne se réduit pas pour Ricœur à une dénomination inscrite à l'état-civil mais signe une arrivée dans le monde qui donne au soi son incarnation: corporelle, spatiale, temporelle. Quant à la question d'une journaliste sur ce qu'est pour elle l'identité, une écolière répond: « je suis Malika et j'ai onze ans », on peut l'entendre comme une forme d'appropriation de son identité.

- ✓ une éthique de soi : vivre bien avec et pour autrui dans des institutions justes

Impossible de développer ici toute la « petite éthique » incluse dans *Soi-même comme un autre*, je veux seulement souligner que pour Ricœur le self repose en définitive sur la responsabilité personnelle à l'égard de soi, de l'autre et de chacun. Considérer le « je », le « tu », le « il » comme un soi digne d'estime, de respect et à qui il faut rendre justice, tel est l'horizon large de l'anthropologie de l'homme capable de Paul Ricœur.

## Conclusion

Au terme de ce développement, on voit que les analyses de Paul Ricœur rendent plus problématiques les désignations du self dans le champ de la psychologie. Les rendre problématiques c'est en cerner les limites de validité théorique et de pertinence pratique, en considérant que sous ce terme apparemment simple se cachent un ensemble de questions essentielles. Ces questions Ricœur les a examinées méthodiquement, au terme de sa recherche, il montre que le self n'est pas une identité définissable a priori mais qu'elle est une finalité que la personne poursuit par un effort de rassemblement, rassemblement des éclats dispersés du moi, rassemblement de ses forces pour attester de ses capacités. Le self a besoin

que je parie sur lui pour advenir, il n'a pas de base fixe assurée ; les seules garanties que cet effort ne soit pas vain, sont l'expérience intime d'un corps vécu comme mien[16] et la confiance que me fait autrui (l'intersubjectivité est en ce sens plus fondamentale que le self). Le self n'est pas centration sur soi mais réalisation des capacités de soi dans une visée humanisante pour soi, pour autrui et pour tout un chacun. Le self exige une culture de soi, culture de soi dont Michel Foucault, dans ces derniers écrits, montre l'importance, même si sa perspective diffère de celle de Ricœur, ce qui n'exclut pas des points de rencontre entre les deux herméneutiques du sujet.[17]

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[16] Michel 2006, 80: « le maintien de la référence phénoménologique relative au corps propre et à la mienneté permet de préserver l'exigence morale et juridique de la responsabilité individuelle ».

[17] Ce texte est la retranscription d'une conférence donnée à Iasi en juin 2015.

# The Phenomenology of Religious Life: From Primary Christianity to Eastern Christianity*

Alexandru Bejinariu

**Abstract:** In this paper I attempt a reading of Heidegger's interpretations of St. Paul's Epistles in light of the distinction between Eastern and Western thought. To this end, I suggest that Heidegger's recourse to the Paulinic texts represents his endeavor to gain access to the original structures of life by circumventing the metaphysical framework of Greek (Plato's and Aristotle's) thought. Thus, I argue that by doing this, Heidegger actually approaches the Eastern way of thinking, i.e. a non-metaphysical alternative. In order to better understand what defines Eastern thought, I discuss in some detail Zizioulas's interpretations of temporality in Eastern Christianity. Along the lines of this different understanding of temporality, the proximity of Heideggerian thought can be seen. Finally, I show that the importance of my argument lies in that it can open a possible research path for what Heidegger in his latter works calls "the other beginning."

**Keywords:** Martin Heidegger, Christianity, Eucharist, performativity, metaphysics, the other beginning

## 1. Introduction

One of the most powerful traits of Martin Heidegger's latter thought can be described as the desire to *overcome* metaphysics (*Überwindung der Metaphysik*). However this is not to be understood in the same way as, for example, Carnap's "elimination of metaphysics." The purpose of the *Überwindung* is rather a positive one, consisting in the pursuit of the "other beginning" (*der andere Anfang*) of thought. It is of utmost importance to note that we are not speaking about a "new" beginning, *i.e.* a break with the tradition and some sort of starting all over again from scratch. Moreover, between the classical metaphysical frame and the "other beginning" one cannot presume a relation of opposition. For the latter Heidegger, the paths that thinking takes do not go against or contradict each other; they rather complete themselves by offering thinking its full range and richness.

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Does all this belong exclusively to the thinking of the so-called Heidegger II? If we judge by the textual occurrences of these specific termini, then the answer is without a doubt affirmative. However, if we question this from a wider point of view, things could become problematic. First, it is not at all clear that Heidegger's *Kehre* – m which took place around the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s – means a repudiation of some sort of his earlier work. Second, Heidegger himself agreed with Richardson's distinction between a "Heidegger I" and a "Heidegger II" under the explicit proviso that "only by way of what [Heidegger] I has thought does one gain access to what is to-be-thought by [Heidegger] II. But the thought of [Heidegger] I becomes possible only if it is contained in [Heidegger] II" (Heidegger 2003, XXII). This "double implication" of Heidegger I and Heidegger II will constitute, in what follows, the main assumption of this paper. More precisely, the entire argument of my paper presupposes that, in order to better understand Heidegger II, one must first read Heidegger I, but in doing this, one should not neglect hearing possible "echoes" of that which in the chronological order of Heidegger's complete works is yet to come.

This paper focuses in fact on texts that constitute the so-called early period of Heideggerian thought, i.e. the first Freiburg courses. At the same time, the main hermeneutical hypothesis I develop is to a significant extent informed by elements to be found in latter Heideggerian thought, more precisely by those mentioned above: overcoming of metaphysics and the other beginning. In the center of my hermeneutical endeavor stands Heidegger's course *Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion* (*Einleitung in die Phänomenologie der Religion*, volume 60 of Heidegger's complete works), delivered in the winter semester of 1920–21. My intention is not to offer a complete reconstruction of Heidegger's account of the religious life, but rather to read his interpretations of the Pauline epistles from the viewpoint of a distinction regarding European thought, namely, the distinction between Eastern and Western thought – a distinction that is somewhat alien to Heidegger himself.

Although this separation does not appear *per se* in Heidegger's early work, I argue that such a reading can nevertheless be worthwhile. First, as I attempt to show, it can contribute to a wider understanding and contextualization of Heidegger's thought. Second, in the long run, it can prevent the further development of some already emerging misunderstandings of Heidegger's implicit relation regarding East and West. This type of misunderstanding can even be dangerous, in that it can lead to justifying more or less sound ideological, economic, or political claims starting from Heidegger's philosophy. However, in this paper I deal only with the first aspect, considering this one further only as a token of the importance of understanding Heidegger's connection with the (also political) distinction between East and West.

In the first part of my paper, I sketch the relevant aspects of Heidegger's interpretation of the Pauline letters. I also argue that Heidegger's interest in primary Christianity can be seen as an attempt to find an alternative access to

the basic structures of life, other than that offered by Greek metaphysical thought. In short, I argue that, already in these lectures, the *overcoming of metaphysics* is at work. In the second part, I expand my argument by showing that this alternative to metaphysical thought took Heidegger in the proximity of what we call Eastern tradition. To this end, I take up a series of accounts concerning Patristic and Orthodox literature, and also Zizioulas's description of Eastern Christianity's understanding of *time* in the Holy Liturgy. Moreover, the distinction between Eastern and Western thought will also become clearer throughout this endeavor. In the third and last part, I attempt to show that the common ground of Heideggerian and Eastern thought can be expanded towards a discussion about what we could call the *performativity* of discourse. Following the extensive considerations in Antonio Cimino's book *Phänomenologie und Vollzug* on the performativity of phenomenology, I intend to show that understanding it in the horizon of Eastern thought can shed more light on something that might be later called *the other beginning*.

## 2. Theory and Scholasticism. The Context of Heidegger's Interpretation of Pauline Epistles

Let us begin with a short overview of Heidegger's aims in his first lectures after the First World War. Heidegger's entire thinking path between 1919 and 1923 can be viewed as a laborious battle with theory, theorization and objectification. This is explicitly taken up in his dispute with the Neo-Kantian School (Natorp, Rickert, Windelband) concerning the problem of value. Heidegger's view is that the source and starting point of philosophical (phenomenological) thought should be exclusively lived experience, and not a derived attitude such as the theoretical one. That is, our usual dealings, our day to day behavior in our world, the way in which we understand things as valuable in the context of our dealings with them, the way in which we meet the other in our daily trade within the frames of the with-world (*Mitwelt*) – all these should be the spring of philosophical knowledge.

Still, how is it that the main attitude of our cultural tradition is the theoretical one? From Heidegger's considerations – which stretch over more than one lecture – we can see that he is already beginning to form his thesis about metaphysics as the product of theoretical thought. Heidegger finds the origins of this attitude not in some mistaken philosophical view or agenda, but rather in a basic tendency of life itself. At the same time, however, he shows that the Greeks, mainly Plato and Aristotle, were dominated by this tendency and thus determined the course of the history of Western metaphysics as theory. Again, this is not to say that Plato and Aristotle were wrong, or that all they did was metaphysics, but that some basic traits of their thought, of vital importance for the history of philosophy, can be traced back to the derived attitude of theorizing.

Now, if philosophy is determined by a derivative attitude, and its access to the original structures of life is to a significant extent banned, how are we then to proceed? Besides Heidegger's criticism of theory, he develops at the same time something that could save phenomenology from falling prey to theoretical influences. In his scarce methodological considerations, Heidegger talks about the so-called *formal indication.* This should be the way in which phenomenological discourse proceeds, radically different from the classical one, i.e. without objectification or theorization. How is this "methodological principle" to be understood? Attempting to answer this question we arrive in the proximity of the lecture concerning the phenomenology of religious life. In this course, Heidegger opened his considerations with extensive remarks concerning formal indication, and only later did he arrive to the explication of concrete religious phenomena starting from the epistles of St Paul.

The fact that the most extensive discussion about formal indication is to be found in the beginning of a series of lectures concerning the phenomenology of religious life is of great importance. By developing the formal-indicative methodology of phenomenological discourse, Heidegger brings to light an alternative to metaphysics. Reading the history of philosophy in a formal-indicative manner would mean to be aware of the specific attitude at work in it, which would be the theoretical one, for the most part. Moreover, it would also mean becoming aware of one's own attitude towards matters at hand, and engaging in a *performative* unfolding of what is thought. That means taking on your own the task of thinking, following and reenacting (*vollziehen)* the thought that is disclosed in the philosophical text. More precisely, this task presupposes that there is something like a *basic life experience* from which thought emerged, and toward which discourse indicates by its formal-indicative termini.

This can now be better understood in connection with the phenomenology of religious life because, as we shall see, the specific attitude of primary Christianity is one that resists theorization, and the way in which the letters function is different from the simple communication or sharing of an abstract, theoretical argument. My thesis is that by performing a formal-indicative reading of St Paul's epistles, Heidegger is led precisely towards seeing "formal indication" at work. This is not at all a vicious circularity; it is rather an expression of the fact that formal indication is not something like an exterior methodological part to some system of phenomenology. In other words, it is an excellent example of the hermeneutical circle: At the "core" of formal indication lies the idea that it is not something already determined, but that it is of a processual nature, determining itself again and again (as "method") as well as its termini, starting from and returning to that basic life experience that the text (in our case the epistles) allows to be seen.

Heidegger's discontent with theoretical thought is also to be seen in his dispute with the *theology* and *philosophy of religion*. The specifics of this dispute are relevant to our main topic because they reveal a similarity with Eastern

thought: the necessity of an underlying basic experience as source of discourse. Precisely this focus on the basic lived experience is what constitutes in my view the early Heidegger's attempt of overcoming metaphysics. In the course that preceded *Introduction…*, *Phenomenology of Intuition and Expression* (*Phänomenologie der Anschauung und des Ausdrucks*, volume 59 of Heidegger's complete works), Heidegger stresses the *necessity* of a confrontation with Greek philosophy in order to gain access to the authentic understanding of Christian theology:

> There is the necessity of a fundamental confrontation with Greek philosophy and its disfiguration of Christian existence. The true idea of Christian philosophy; Christian not a label for a bad and epigonal Greek one. The way to a primordial Christian – Greek-free [griechentumfreien] – theology (Heidegger 2010, 72).

The deformations that Greek thought is guilty of, in Heidegger's view, have to do with the fact that Greek thought determined the specific systematic way of understanding the soul, the faith, and other religious phenomena by objectification. According to Capelle, this is precisely what Heidegger thinks it's the case with the system of Catholicism:

> […] Catholicism excludes an original and authentic religious experience not mediated by the philosophical and dogmatic edifice. This predominance of the theoretical in Catholic tradition originates, after Heidegger, in Medieval Scholastic (itself heir of the Aristotelian transfer of the metaphysics of being over the categories of sciences of nature) which, in its turn, gravely endangered, in the bosom of the Medieval Christian world, the *immediacy* of religious life (Capelle 1998, 166).

It must be noted that Capelle develops this reading in discussing the notes Heidegger made for a projected lecture series between June and October 1918 on the medieval mystic. Although the lectures were never delivered in front of an audience, Capelle stresses their importance in showing Heidegger's own distancing from the Catholic Church. The reasons for this can also be found, although in a shorter and unclear form, in Heidegger's letter to Engelbert Krebs. In short, it is clear that Heidegger, in the period following the First World War, after returning from the war front, grew more and more aware of the inauthenticity of theoretical, systematic approaches that were prevalent in Catholic oriented philosophy of religion and even inside the Catholic Church.

In the lectures from 1919 and until his departure from Freiburg, Heidegger developed the idea of phenomenology in a tight connection with the task of an authentic consideration of religion and its basic life structures. In doing this, besides developing tools like "destruction," or the formal indication, Heidegger brings to light from a new perspective one of the main themes of his first magnum opus, Being and Time, namely *historicity*:

> [o]ne of the most meaningful, *founding* elements of meaning in religious experience is the *historical*. However, that which gives the specifically religious

> meaning is already found in experience. The religious world of experience is centralized in its originality – not in its theoretical-theological separateness – into one great unique historical form (personally affecting fullness of life). The constitutive character of the concepts of revelation and tradition in the essence of religion is connected to this (Heidegger 2004, 244).

Or, historicity constitutes one of the basic concepts for the understanding of the overcoming of metaphysics, which is developed in the writings of later Heidegger in the wide frames of the *history of being.*

## 3. Eastern and Western Thought in Their Essential Connection with Christianity

In this section I develop the argument that Heidegger's recourse to the Pauline epistles as an attempt to overcome metaphysical thought brings him in the proximity of what could be called *Eastern thought*. The importance of this argument can be stressed in a twofold manner: First, it can be seen as a *hypocritical* gesture, weakening the rather harsh distinction between East and West. Heidegger, a Western thinker, schooled in the scholastic-metaphysical tradition of Catholicism, becomes aware of his own cultural determinations and engages on a thinking path which, stemming from the core of Western thought, leads him in the vicinity of Eastern thought. In my opinion, this can be understood as a clue for the inner connection between what may seem at first to be just terms of a radical antagonism. Second, following closely the previous statements, my argument can bring more clarity to some contemporary debates concerning the often problematic and antagonistic relation between East and West. This clarification can offer a better identification of the ideological traits that permeate contemporary discourse and vitiate the dialogue.

So far, it can be seen that the link between Heidegger and Eastern thought is primary Christianity, i.e. as it expresses itself in St. Paul's epistles. However, in order to fully clarify this statement, one ought to show the connection between *Eastern thought* (Orthodox Church) and *primary Christianity*. By doing this, we also gain a better understanding of that which until now remained to some extent unclear: Eastern thought.

### 3.1. The Meaning of the East: Theology and the Experience of *Theosis*

What is Eastern thought and how does it relate to primary Christianity? The straightforward answer identifies Eastern thought by referring to what is known as the Schism of 1054 or the East-West Schism between the Byzantine and the Roman Church. The institutional and dogmatic disputes, as well as the history of the schism, are widely known and studied. Therefore, we will not dwell further on this aspect. More relevant to the task at hand is another kind of answer, which goes beyond institutions and dogmatic quarrels, and which offers an account of the peculiar traits and genealogy of the basic structures and ideas that constitute the so-called *Eastern thought paradigm.* Moreover, this second answer avoids

assuming an opposition from the start, *i.e.* a sort of negativity or conflict through which and in which Eastern thought would be understood.

Eastern thought can be seen as originating from the early writings of the Cappadocian Fathers of the Church and remaining close to its origin: primary Christianity. The closeness to primary Christianity is clear in the writings of the Holy Fathers, namely in their insistence on the inseparability of *teaching* (theology) and *life*:

> One of the basic concerns of the Orthodox Church, as well as of primary Christianity, is that of not allowing, on the one hand theology (as teaching of the Church) and on the other hand the Christian's life to move in different directions (Larentzakis 2003, 107).

What Larentzakis stresses here is the *positive* formulation of what Heidegger, as we previously saw, criticizes: *the theoretical approach*. Keeping together life and teaching (*theology*) means nothing else than *resisting* theorization. As Larentzakis further argues in his work *Theology and Life in the Orthodox Church*:

> Theology refers directly to Christian life [...], and must not transform itself into rational-philosophical, theoretical-cognitive speculation, detached from concrete life and perceived as an alien body in Church's organism, and, on this ground, rejected (Larentzakis 2003, 107).

We observe the same notes that constitute Heidegger's leitmotif. Concrete life means, in this context, factical, day by day life, and not the special moments of one's life, e.g. Sunday in Church. By following Meyendorff, Larentzakis further explains the Christian's life in its connection with the dogmata of the Church by showing that

> the duty of the Christian is not just the reading of Christ's Gospel or the simple knowledge of dogmata, but the living of one's life unto Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Larentzakis 2003, 108).

In Heidegger's interpretation of the Pauline epistles, the problem of dogma is explicitly taken up in connection with the so-called context of enactment (*Vollzugszusammenhang*). Here, Heidegger stresses the lack of a theoretically or dogmatically colored content, and gives the following explanation:

> The dogma as detached content of doctrine in an objective, epistemological emphasis could never have been guiding for Christian religiosity. On the contrary, the genesis of dogma can only be understood from out of the enactment of Christian life experience (Heidegger 2004, 79).

How does dogma come to be? Larentzakis explains this by showing that, in the beginnings of the Christian communities, their new way of life was constantly being endangered by different kinds of heresy. This is why the Church had to respond with an "official" doctrine,

> […] to show the Christians in what to believe and how to live. […] Thus dogmatizations are concrete actions of the Church in a certain time and in a certain and concrete historical and cultural context (Larentzakis 2003, 109).

Following the role of the dogma in Eastern thought leads us to another key point of proximity between Orthodox Church, primary Christianity, and Heidegger's interpretations, namely the role of *experience* (*Erlebnis*) and its connection with *discourse*. If, as we have seen, dogmatization represents an action that is asked for in a certain context, what kind of *truth* does it hold? Larentzakis mentions that at stake here is the divine truth, conserving at the same time the "human" character of the expression. This amounts to a weakening of the power of words, and to an indication of something that remains behind the text as it is, i.e. to a certain kind of *experience*. Speaking about the function of words and language as it is understood in Patristic literature, Romanides shows what is the *origin*, the *inspiration* of the holy texts of Christian tradition:

> And when and if he will reach theosis, then he will know from the experience of theosis itself what the words signify and the meanings he encounters in the Holy Scripture. […] words and meanings used in the Holy Scripture by the ones who are deified and wrote the Holy Scripture, as well as the words and meanings used in the writings of the Holy Fathers of the Church and of the Saints are *inspired by God*. That means that each of them either had the experience of illumination, either of theosis, and they wrote what they wrote on its ground (Romanides 2011, 104).

It is thus not a revealed language, but an *experience*. Accordingly, a theologian is no longer like a scientist, an expert in Biblical texts, ancient languages, and so forth. He is someone who in speaking relates constantly to a lived experience. Moreover, Romanides quotes St. Gregory the Theologian on the forbiddance of theologizing by those who are not at least illuminated:

> Not to every one, my friends, does it belong to philosophize about God; not to every one; the Subject is not so cheap and low; and I will add, not before every audience, nor at all times, nor on all points; but on certain occasions, and before certain persons, and within certain limits. Not to all men, because it is permitted only to those who have been examined, and are passed masters in meditation, and who have been previously purified in soul and body, or at the very least are being purified. For the impure to touch the pure is, we may safely say, not safe, just as it is unsafe to fix weak eyes upon the sun's rays.

The access to the "thing itself" of the discourse is that which actually allows the discourse to be. Without the guiding basic experience it would not be safe. The danger stems from the fact that here we are no longer having to deal with a universal truth, obtainable by means of reason and rules of logic. However, as Heidegger also noted in other regards, it would be completely false to interpret St. Gregory's forbiddance in terms of the irrational and illogical. More precisely, the danger, in my interpretation, is not that of irrationality, but that of falling into heresy. The weakness of the eyes upon the sun's rays echoes, to some

extent, the Platonic situation of the one who exists in the cave. The difference, however, is that the light does not belong to something similar to an *idea*, and the weakness is not that of an untrained, constantly deceived intellect. This touch of the impure could "apotropaically" begin forging conceptual idols, representations, coining terms that would *define* God, etc. The impure touch could end up somewhere just South of heaven.

Theology, thus, differs in the Eastern thought from its understanding in the West precisely by being essentially dependent on a basic experience of divinity. Still, this experience does not seem to say a lot about the life of Christians, since not every Christian is illuminated or deified. If the vital recourse to experience applies just to the special case of revelation, then it would mean that we are dealing with something entirely different than in Heidegger's case. As we have discussed in the first part of this paper, Heidegger thinks of phenomenological discourse as always relating to a basic *life* experience, i.e. something that each and one of us can experience in facticity, not in an ultimate, rare experience.

However, I argue that it is not the case that in this respect Heidegger cannot come to terms with Eastern thought. Cleansing, illumination, and theosis are, for the Orthodox Tradition, the ultimate goal. The entire Orthodox Tradition, as understood by the Holy Fathers, is a *method of therapy*, of leading the Christian on the way to spiritual health. This implies that the entire life is projected unto the horizon of theosis, and thus that the experience is a continuous one. One cannot speak about an experience of theosis without having had the experience of cleansing and illumination, i.e. of Christian life. The Orthodox "therapy"

> is not a simple transfer of knowledge from books, but a transfer and succession in *experience*, in the experience of illumination and in the experience of theosis (Romanidis 2011, 62).

Knowing of God, as the ultimate goal of Christian life, begins, in the first place, with the acceptance (*Annehmen*) of tradition, which, in its turn, is nothing else than the knowing of God by those who experienced theosis. In short, the experience of theosis is based on an entire life process, and is meant to *communicate* through words the revealed truths in order for the other, in their turn, to be able to reach theosis. Tradition understood in this way has a pronounced character of enactment (*Vollzug*).

### 3.2. Proclamation, History and Temporality: The Novelty of the Holy Eucharist

Let us not forget that St. Paul himself is one of those "snatched up to the heavens," who have experienced theosis and is now

> aware that his mission's success, and his very salvation, are bound up with the faithfulness to the gospel that the Thessalonians will preserve till the parousia (Vattimo 2002, 129).

In this condensed expression of Heidegger's view, Vattimo captures the relation of St. Paul with the Thessalonians and, at the same time, the relation with the basic event of Christian life: *parousia*.

The problem of communication, as we have provisionally named it, is tackled by Heidegger in the interpretation of *euaggélion, proclamation* (*Verkündigung*). This particular phenomenon is to be further singled out from the context of which it is part of – *calling, proclamation, doctrine, warning* –, because, Heidegger argues,

> in it the immediate life-relation of the world of self of Paul to the surrounding world and to the communal world of the community is able to be comprehended. It is thus a central phenomenon (Heidegger 2011, 55–56).

The life-relation is determined by the precise situation in which Paul writes the letter, as von Herrmann puts it:

> Paul *experiences* the *Thessalonians* in their 'having become (genēthēnai) *as his and the Lord's followers*, and by this he *also experiences* that the Thessalonians who follow him 'have a knowledge of their having-become' (von Herrmann 2007, 25-26).

This "having-become," in Heidegger's view, is nothing else than having already accepted the proclamation. This, in turn, means that the *being* of the Thessalonians is precisely this "having-become." The "knowing" of which Paul is aware is not of the sort of theoretical knowledge, rather it refers to the fact that their behavior in their factical lives has now changed, *i.e.* they have turned from the idols towards God.

Here lies a special understanding of temporality, which Heidegger will latter identify as the authentic manner in which Christianity lives temporality. Namely, a non-sequential, intensional temporality. In this case, the Thessalonians hear from St. Paul what they in fact *already know*. Vattimo rejects the reading that would imply a sort of "textual" knowledge of what St. Paul earlier said:

> To reduce *egeneto* to the recent memory of Paul's preaching implies a literal reading that Paul himself refutes (and that we, as interpreters, cannot ignore), since his first preaching to the Thessalonians is the announcement of what they already are by virtue of Christ's redemption (Vattimo 2002, 127).

Thus, in the phenomenon of proclamation, the *historicity* of factical life as such appears: not in the sense that each proclamation is a lecture on history, but that the proclamation itself is accessible and is being enacted in the context of already having accepted the word of God.

At the same time, and on the other hand, St. Paul also follows his calling, in that he proclaims the word of God to the Thessalonians and to the others. He becomes what he is only in that *they* steer their lives accordingly. Moreover, a particular meaning of theology, which is close to the Eastern one, surfaces here. The fact that they *know* about their becoming

> is the starting point and the origin of theology. In the explication of this knowledge and its conceptual form of expression the sense of a theological conceptual formation arises. The *déchesthai* is characterized in its how as an *en thlípsei* (in despair). The acceptance consists in experiencing the anguish of life. A joy is bound up therewith, one which comes from the Holy Spirit and is incomprehensible to life (Heidegger 2011, 66).

This is, in Heidegger's view, the original, authentic source of theology, i.e. the context of Christian facticity.

The central themes of the Eastern Church upon which we have come so far – *experience, tradition, history*, and *temporality* – can further be explained in their proximity with Heideggerian thought by following certain observations of Ioannis Zizioulas on the *Divine Eucharist* and its role in the life of Christians. I hope here to show that the way in which Heidegger understands the life of the primary Christianity comes very close to the one peculiar to Eastern thought.

In the center of our argument lies the different understanding of *temporality* that defines the Eastern tradition of the Church:

> The Eucharist is not a repetition or continuation of the past, or just one event amongst others, but it is the penetration of the future into time. The Eucharist is entirely live, and utterly new; there is no element of the past about it (Zizioulas 2008, 155).

We are not presented here with a denial of the past. The character of being utterly new of the Eucharist is not something like the everyday novelty that in passing by catches one's eye: a new gadget, a new car, a new commercial, etc. The new, in the context of the Eucharist, depends entirely on the intensity with which the event is lived, and on the authentic appropriation of an essential past. In other words, it is new insofar as it does not constitute a simple remembering of what has been, in a historical manner, utterly exterior; it is new because the present is understood as *being* at the same time past. This is why we could say, using Heidegger's term from *Being and Time*, that we are dealing with an *essential past*, and not with a past understood merely in a chronological (Aristotelian) manner as *that which no longer is*.

This temporality, I argue, is the same as that which Heidegger formally identifies as the one lived by primary Christianity: "Christian religiosity lives temporality" (Heidegger 2011, 73). It is a temporality, Heidegger continues, that cannot be encountered *objectively*, or determined by a certain concept of time, that lacks order (*Ordnung*) and demarcations (*feste Stellen*).

> 'Now is the judgment of the world' (John 12.31). This 'now' of the Fourth Gospel refers to the Eucharist, in which all these events represent themselves immediately to us, without any gaps of history between them (Zizioulas 2008, 155).

What does the lack of history mean here? More precisely, the lacking of the historical *gap*? The so-called historical gap or gaps of history presuppose a sequential time, a continual flow of the *nows*. The distance between this *now* and

another, regardless of how small, constitutes such a gap or interval. The *waiting* as we understand it today is configured as a being situated in the interval: we are oriented toward a *now*, toward a moment that is on its way here, which will come. Being situated in this interval means the *passing* of time, and it is often attuned by *boredom*. The endless passing of consecutive moments determines the approaching of the future as well as the distancing of the past. The more something gets closer, the more real it seems to us, and the more something sinks into the mists of the past, the more unreal it becomes, as though it never existed; it is effaced by oblivion.

Now, the lack of a historical gap does not mean *simultaneity*, as if every time the events would occur concomitantly. Rather, the absence of historical gaps shows the unmediated presence in the life of the Christian of something that in our everyday understanding can seem a simple historical fact, that took place long ago and of which, maybe, the believers are ought to be remembered from time to time. We are not dealing, thus, with a *lack* of history, better yet, with a *privation* of history, or with an ahistoricism, but with the outmost authentic retrieval and appropriation of history itself. History is no longer seen as something having to do with that which has happened and passed, but as something that in an essential manner determines our lives. It is in this way, precisely, that we can read Heidegger's sentence: "The character of 'having been' arises, in a certain way, from the future" (Heidegger 1962, 373). In the context of the present interpretation, this means the same as "the penetration of the future into time." The "Now" of which Apostle John spoke is a radically different one than Aristotle's. The judgment of the world that takes place now, or the *parusia* that already took place, takes place, and will happen, are to be understood in the manner of intensional or kairological temporality.

For Zizioulas, this understanding of time and Eucharist is specific to the Eastern tradition of Orthodoxy. In that which concerns the Western thought, he identifies, as Heidegger also did, its historicist tendency: the chronological understanding of time form the perspective of the subject:

> The whole force of the Western intellectual tradition attempts to separate history and eschatology and fit Christian doctrine into its historicist and immanent mentality. Either the end of times is a separate chapter that will take place 'afterwards,' or it is the charismatic experience of a select few, set apart from the historical community. However, the eschaton means the end of all separate, disconnected times, the reconnection and reconciliation of our separate histories and the arrival of their future and fulfilment (Zizioulas 2008, 155).

## 4. Performativity of Phenomenological Discourse and the Way Towards the *Other Beginning.* Concluding Remarks

In this final section, let us return to the more general context of this paper, namely the overcoming of metaphysics, the other beginning, and the new

research direction into the performativity of phenomenological discourse. We set out to show that Heidegger's interpretations of St Paul's epistles represented the alternative to Greek metaphysical thought. Moreover, I tried to prove that in doing this, Heidegger's way of thinking converges with the Eastern Orthodox one. This proximity became manifest in some of the common pillars of these two manners of thought: understanding of history, time, life, experience and discourse.

However inciting this vicinity may be in itself, it remains of course still problematic and insufficiently elaborated and nuanced, the task stretching way beyond the scope of this paper. Still, although fundamentally incomplete, the present attempt could prove deficient if we were to resume ourselves to the simple observation of two ways of thought. What these final remarks thus puport to show is how the possibility of philosophy stemming from primary Christianity (Eastern thought) is, in fact, a figure of *the other beginning*. Moreover, one of its essential traits is the so-called *performativity*.

Performativity is a concept that has a significant carreer in the 20th century analytical philosophy. Following the publication of Heidegger's early Freiburg Lectures, however, the idea of performativity entered, by means of the excellent contributions of Antonio Cimino, into the frames of phenomenology. Performativity, as it is presented in Cimino 2013, and as we will further understand it, would have never been of such great importance if it was not for Heidegger's hermeneutics of facticity. As Cimino's book proves it, the discussion about performativity in Heidegger's works is complex. Still, I should try to sketch the basic ideas behind it that are also in direct connection with our previous analysis.

Heidegger noted that the center of Christian life experience is the world of the self as a distinct feature of the Christian life. The original structure of the life-world, developed in extenso in the course *Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (*Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, volume 58 of Heidegger's complete works) comprises the with-world (*Mitwelt*), surrounding world (*Umwelt*), and world of the self (*Selbstwelt*). Coextensive to this distinction, Heidegger also describes the threefold sense structure of factical life: content sense (*Gehaltssinn*), relational sense (*Bezugssinn*) and sense of enactment (*Vollzugssinn*). These formal divisions presented by Heidegger are not valuable in themselves, as coined terms. They are meant to help directing the phenomenological gaze toward that which is *original* (*ursprünglich*). Metaphysics, in this context, can be understood as being the fruit of a precise relational sense, namely the theoretical attitude, and a favoring of the content sense, the *what* (*Was*) of the considered object.

According to this Heideggerian interpretation of the theoretical attitude, the self-world withdraws in focusing itself on the *whatness* of the object, on the content of experience, analyzing, ordering, etc. Thus the detached subject of modern metaphysics, in Heidegger's view, is possible. Now, in saying that Christian life is centered in the self-world and that here we have to deal with an

"intensification of facticity," Heidegger identifies pre-theoretical experience as the *locus* of original attitude and authentic thought, and institutes phenomenology, in its attempt to access this original sphere, as a performative *science* because "[t]o a thematic originality must also correspond a methodological originality" (Cimino 2013, 162). According to Cimino, performativity is to be understood under three further determinations: 1) as originality (*Ursprünglichkeit*), 2) validity (*Echtheit*), and 3) authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*). All of these presuppose phenomenology as a way of life:

> The phenomenological life form is more original, as it is more performative, i.e. as it is more capable of expressing the performative dynamic of the factical life. (Cimino 2013, 163)

Therefore, phenomenology as a performative discourse is no longer a theoretical description of phenomena. Its central impetus is the *enactment* of an original life experience. In other words, phenomenology becomes hermeneutics of facticity: interpreting the everyday life as a basic experience of life. This also means total involvement from the phenomenologist, assuming the first-person perspective. The performative discourse as discourse of the first-person is clearly connected with its centering in the self-world. The reenactment of the context of experience presupposes something like *transposing* (*Sichversetzen*) oneself into history, i.e. directing one's attention towards the *way in which* (*Wie*) experience is enacted, being in the situation. In our present context, this would be the situation of the Christian. This situation Heidegger did not at all exhaust, as he did not offer a systematic overview of the Christian life; instead, he offered basic indications which allow the reader to gain as authentic an access as one can, i.e. knowing how to behave in relation to one's own surrounding world, with-world, and self-world.

Heidegger's interpretations of St. Paul's epistles are indeed such performative endeavors. At the same time, they contribute to the development of the enactment-oriented phenomenological method itself. Its importance for philosophy can be seen from this observation of von Herrmann:

> And now comes the most important indication, that only out of this temporalizing contexts of enactment of Christian factical Life, 'the meaning of the Being of God' (117) can be *philosophically* determined (von Herrmann 2007, 29).

This is where the connection of performativity and *the other beginning* is to be found. Heidegger's thesis concerning the medieval philosophy, but also scholastic and modern metaphysics, is that it can be called *onto-theology*. This means that each of them needs a *concept* of the transcendent God in order to function as a system, without having an authentic understanding of His being or at least understanding this as a problem. Not only does Heidegger identify this problem stretching throughout the history of philosophy, but in this lecture we find a certain indication of a path, which heads out from the basic everyday life

context of primary Christianity. On this path, the problem of the overcoming of metaphysics may indeed develop as the overcoming of onto-theology, avoiding the fusion of Greek and Christian thought that ultimately led, as Vattimo shows, to

> [...] a history in the course of which the authenticity of the Christian message has been misunderstood, and that runs parallel to the history of the metaphysical forgetting of Being (perhaps not so much parallel to as intertwined with it; by the same token, onto-theology is only another name for metaphysics) (Vattimo 2002,132).

The other beginning could mean overcoming of theory, preserving the vitality of life and of thought, remodeling of discourse according to the desideration of performativity. All these would not entail going beyond ourselves, or jumping over our own shadow, but coming closer to our innermost possibilities as Europeans: understanding the original unity between the East and West, between life and theory. As I have tried to show, in the *overcoming of metaphysics* there is no talk of abandoning our heritage. Rather, we can now see that it offers the key to regain it by accessing the original life contexts from which it stems. Finally, our question could very well be one concerning the possibility of *the other beginning*: Can *theory* lead back into life, and not be just its opposite?

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# Does the Origin of Normativity Stem from the Internalization of Dominance Hierarchies?*

Emilian Mihailov

**Abstract:** Many natural scientists explain the evolutionary origin of morality by documenting altruistic behaviour in our nearest nonhuman relatives. Christine Korsgaard has criticized such attempts on the premise that they do not put enough effort in explaining the capacity to be motivated by normative thoughts. She speculates that normative motivation may have originated with the internalization of the dominance instincts. In this article I will challenge the dominance hierarchy hypothesis by arguing that a proper investigation into how and when dominance inhibits behaviour does not seem to reveal a minimal normative dimension.

**Keywords:** Christine Korsgaard, dominance, normativity, authority, evolution of morality

Beginning with Darwin, many natural scientists have explained the evolution of morality as a matter of degree; specific characteristics develop from basic elements or from the interaction between separate processes. Darwin tentatively believed that moral conscience resulted from an interplay of social and cognitive abilities:

> Any animal whatever, endowed with well-marked social instincts, would inevitably acquire a moral sense or conscience as soon as its intellectual powers had become as well developed, or nearly as well-developed, as in man (Darwin 2009, 71).

Recently, the primatologist Frans de Waal, argued along Darwinian lines, that a gradual evolution from sympathetic feelings to targeted helping and cognitive empathy:

> has provided us with the psychological makeup, tendencies, and abilities to develop a compass for life's choices that takes the interests of the entire community into account, which is the essence of human morality (de Waal 2006, 58).

Natural selection has fostered sympathy and empathy because cooperation and sharing produces great advantages for survival and reproduction.

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Christine Kosgaard (2010) has dubbed this naturalistic approach *content based evolutionary explanations*, because morality is defined by a characteristic outcome such as helping behaviour, reconciliation, loyalty, cooperation, sharing, empathy. Against this type of explanation, Korsgaard argues that an important feature of morality is ignored, namely what she calls "normative self-government" – a capacity to be motivated and act according to what we believe we ought to do upon reflection (Kosgaard 1996, 2009, 2010). Human beings reflect upon their beliefs, have doubts and engage in an inner dialogue to figure out what is the right thing to do. Subsequently, such normative thoughts have motivational power over future action. Kosgaard explains,

> the capacity to act from what we familiarly call a sense of obligation, grounded in consciously held principles of good or right action. To be morally motivated in this sense is not just to have motives with a certain characteristic content (Kosgaard 2010, 6).

She rightly points out that evolutionary accounts of morality that focus on prosocial behaviour (helping, avoiding aggression or refraining from inflicting harm) are incomplete. An origin story needs to be told about how we acquired the capacity to be normatively motivated. Korsgaards's account suggests that the origin of normative self-government may have started with the internalization of mechanisms of dominance, which gave us the possibility to inhibit our instinctive reactions. Why should we look at dominance? Korsgaard believes that dominance has a normative dimension similar to authority. Where authority is recognised, an individual will refrain from taking an action which contravenes authoritarian demands or, alternatively, might perform a required action even without the autonomous desire to do so.

In this article I will challenge the dominance hierarchy hypothesis. First, I will differentiate normative motivation from content based motivations as presented in Korsgaard's evolutionary account. My argument will be premised on the following considerations. A proper investigation into how and when dominance inhibits behaviour does not seem to reveal a normative dimension of authority. I will make the case that dominance inhibits behaviour based on an imbalance of power, rather than on attaching some value to conformity *per se*. Third, I consider possible reactions to my analysis, and conclude that evidence from natural history about modern humans' unique collaborative abilities points to a different framework as the origin of normative motivation, which, nevertheless, fits easily with Korsgaard's work on practical identity.

## The Problem of Normative Motivation

We praise and demand altruistic behaviour. People who help others and at least do no harm are often regarded as individuals of good moral standing. For example, firemen, and other emergency services, who sacrifice their lives to save others, or individuals living in poverty who still share their last reserves of food

with others in need. To be loyal, altruistic or demonstrate solidarity inspires us to action.

The essential feature of human morality is therefore comprised of two components. One the content – the actions of morality that are praised and demanded and two the need to justifying one's actions. Since early stages of development, children are trained to provide reasons for their actions. Parents often ask their children why they acted in certain ways towards other children. For example, when a child intentionally harms another child, they are required to provide answers with some justificatory force (e.g. the child who was hurt had instigated the fight by acting in a mean manner). At mature stages of development, the process of providing reasons becomes fully internalized and more complex. Sometimes we manage to stop at the brink of taking action to ask ourselves if this is really what we ought to be doing and whether our motives are the correct ones.

In his famous derivation of the duty against false promising, Kant suggests the thought process that takes place in such reflective moments:

> Another sees himself pressured by need to borrow money. He knows full well that he will not be able to repay, but also sees that nothing will be lent to him unless he solemnly promises to repay it at a determinate time. He feels like making such a promise; but he still has enough conscience to ask himself: is it not impermissible and contrary to duty to help oneself out of need in such a way? (Kant 2011, 4:422).

By the term "enough conscience" Kant means there is a moral baseline which functions as a measure for when actions digress. The agent is pulled by his inclinations to make false promises, but at the same time his consciousness signals that the course of action is not the appropriate one. It is this awareness that initiates a process of normative reflection.

The process of taking a "reflective distance" from the motive of action, followed by normative questioning, is defined as a capacity for normative self-government (Korsgaard 2010, 18). The ability to take a reflective distance gives rise to the need to justify actions because we are able to raise normative questions, in the same way that the subject does from Kant's story. When I am aware that a lack of material resources pushes me to make false promises, I am still able to question my actions and ask whether it is morally justified. The answers to such questions constitute the normative making features that motivate us to avoid false promises. In line with this, Korsgaard's point is that

> what makes some actions required and some wrong must also be the source of our motivation for doing and avoiding them accordingly (Korsgaard 2010, 15).

This approach implies that moral motivation cannot rest only on sympathetic feelings. I may feel sympathy towards someone and, consequently, relieve his distress. However, if I am not moved to action by what makes it a required action, without further intervening factors, I am not normatively

motivated. Therefore, to be normatively motivated one must recognize that right making features have authority over us as rational beings. This is what Kant called the "authority of the moral law" (5: 38). It is the value we attach to respecting what the moral law demands from us. In military organizations, one has to obey orders from superiors because this is required by the nature of the hierarchic order. Recognizing the authority invested in superior positions makes people respect and conform to orders. In some cases, orders might not make complete sense or we might not agree with the individuals who issue them but they are still obeyed because we accept that orders, in certain situations, have to be respected outright. Thus, when we are normatively motivated we presuppose that the right making features of an action have the authority to guide our behaviour and that respect for what authority demands is the appropriate course. Korsgaard contends that this is a unique feature of human moral motivation which needs evolutionary explanation, alongside the natural history of solidarity/cooperation and altruistic behaviour.

## Korsgaard's Origin Story of Normative Self-Government

How did we become normatively governed animals? Korsgaard suggests that a constant effort to inhibit our instinctive responses, to be aggressive against our own instincts, has led to an increase in mental capability, which grew into a new form of self-consciousness, namely the awareness of how our mental activity contributes to perceiving the world. Here, the capacity for normative self-government becomes the solution to the need for justification posed by the awareness of our potential motives for action. This is explained fully in the following paragraphs.

Korsgaard relies on theories offered by Nietzsche and Freud to suggest how the control over instincts might have originated. Both Nietzsche (1967) and Freud (1950, 1961) believed that guilt is not just a feeling that signals wrongness of behaviour, but a dark psychological mechanism which springs from our aggressive nature to hurt ourselves when we cannot hurt others. Once aggression is turned against our instincts, an interesting psychological structure emerges that allows us to forgo some of the strongest behavioural causes.

What is important for Korsgaard in Nietzsche and Freud's reflections is the formal structure of behaviour which allows mental activity to inhibit instinctive responses. Reflecting on the natural science of social animals, Korsgaard fills in this structure with the dominance hierarchy hypothesis to explain how mental controls may have formed. A dominance hierarchy among social animals is an advantageous evolutionary strategy to reduce fatal conflicts. Animals do not have to fight each time for food, water or mating partners if there is an established hierarchy which informs the group who is first in line to benefit any of the resources available. When an animal dominates a rival in singular or reiterated encounters a relationship of superiority is established for future interaction. If the dominated animal manages to control his impulses, he has

more chances to avoid potential troubles. Thus, it becomes possible to avoid fighting each time when there is competition (both want the same resource). For examples, high ranking chimpanzees do not only dominate weaker individuals in conflicts over food or mating partners, they also intervene and settle conflicts that disturb the whole group; they do policing work and control the social dynamics of the group, sometimes even setting aside social ties (de Waal 2014).

Korsgaard takes interest in dominance hierarchies because it seems to have a normative dimension:

> I think that such dominance is interesting in this context, because dominance looks a lot like something that we think of as essentially normative: it looks like *authority* (Korsgaard 2010, 20).

She explains that what makes a dominated animal refrain from doing something that it needs or desires is not because the circumstances are unfavourable to the outcome of the action – for example when the animal is outnumbered by competition – but rather because avoiding a specific course of action is required due to his place in the group hierarchy. The fact that a low ranked animal recognizes the standing of a high ranked animal in itself inhibits the instinctive responses. It is not necessary for the dominating animal to send threat signals to the dominated animal in order for the latter to be submissive. Korsgaard points out that

> in some animals dominance hierarchies can be inherited and apparently go unchallenged for longish stretches of time (Korsgaard 2010, 20).

In such cases, the use of aggression is not necessary to maintain hierarchies.

We observe that authority based motivation seems to share an important feature of normative motivations – the intrinsic value that makes an action right also motivates that action, without any intervening mechanism. Similarly, authoritarian dominance determines the prohibition of an action and, at the same time, constitutes a source of motivation for avoiding that action, without the use of aggression. Animals in dominance hierarchies are motivated to avoid certain actions by ways of status recognition. This is why Korsgaard believes that fear of consequences does not always play a role in status recognition as an inhibitory mechanism. She argues, for instance, that when a pet dog is trained and controlled successfully, the nature of this relationship is not based on fear. The dog submits to commands not because he is afraid, but because he recognizes a relationship in which he is supposed to follow orders. The acknowledged dominance is the main motivation for the dog's submission.

Established relationships in dominance hierarchies seem to motivate by themselves the actions which should be avoided, without involving directly prudential calculations. To a certain extent it influences behaviour independently of desires or prudential rationality. According to Korsgaard, dominance based authority has a normative dimension because it is not always established, maintained and transmitted by use of punishment, and because fear

of consequences does not always play a motivational role. Mainly, the recognition of a relationship in which an animal dominates others seems to motivate them to override their instincts.

Korsgaard suggests that normative self-government through a mechanism of dominance may have originated as an inhibitory system. This, she argues, is independent from direct cost-benefit calculation:

> we began to become rational animals when we began, as individuals, to exert a kind of dominance over ourselves – to inhibit our own instinctive responses (Korsgaard 2010, 21).

The manner in which we began to exert restrictions over our own actions must be a significant one because not every instinct control mechanism has been overcome by mental activity. When a hungry animal sees prey he does not immediately attack, but rather plans his moves and waits for a good chance to be successful. On many occasions youngsters may spoil food opportunities, yet as they gain experience in controlling their reactions success will come about. Short term planning, thus, is not possible without some behavioural sensitisation. However, in order to make the transition to rationality, a more ambitious mental control is needed. Korsgaard believes that controlling our actions by internal guidance of status recognition may have the potential to put significant pressure on a much wider range of instinctive responses, producing important changes in our mental activity resulting in a general takeover.

In concurrence with Nietzsche, she contends that the process of controlling our instincts independently of threats, fear of consequences or desires, is linked with a development of mental activity, or as she puts it with "a kind of deepening of consciousness itself" (Korsgaard 2010, 21). In order to take place, the process of internalization needs more mental abilities than the mere inhibition generated by fear of consequences. So, we can imagine that dominance hierarchies create an authority based inhibitory system that overtime expands mental activity, perhaps in order to conform to more easily.

## Do Dominance Hierarchies Have a Normative Dimension?

In what follows my analysis does not aim to question Korsgaard's general speculation that internalized authority may have led to a general takeover over our mental life, but rather to challenge how she instantiates the general speculation by appealing to the dominance hierarchy hypothesis. I will provide details of how dominance hierarchies are learned, established and maintained, which are in tension with Korsgaard's description of the inhibitory system involved in recognizing dominance.

An experiment was carried out with Rhesus monkeys. To start the monkeys went without water for three hours, when later provided with water they drank in hierarchical order (de Waal 1993), behavioural data suggests an elusive normative dimension inspired by hierarchical dominance. It has been

shown that in circumstances where resources are limited, and where one might expect the rational survival behaviour to disobey hierarchies, rhesus monkeys continue to act in conformity with a dominance order. However, a closer look at the documented behaviour of primates will reveal that hierarchical dominance does not look like the authority that marks the inception of normative motivation.

Dominance hierarchies are an evolutionary response to manage competition for limited resources and mating partners, having the function to reduce costly aggression. Coe and Rosenblum (1984) designed an experiment to see how dominance influences sexual behaviour in low-ranking macaques and other primates. They set up two conditions, one in which the alpha male had visibility over the group but was kept in a transparent box, and another in which the alpha male was removed from the premises. In the first condition, low-ranking males kept the distance from females even though the alpha male was confined to a box, indicating that, despite the possibility to mate without any short term costs, low-ranking males were guided by hierarchic order. However, as soon as the alpha male was removed from the premises, the same males immediately approached the females and began copulating. It is also reported that when reuniting with the alpha male the low-ranking males greeted him with wide submissive teeth-baring. Coe and Rosenblum take this to suggest an implicit recognition of social code violation. Nevertheless, such an interpretation is ambitious. The submissive gesture might indicate a willingness to endure aggression in exchange for reduced punishment. The possibility of being seen, even if the alpha male is absent, should be taken into account by the strategy of submissiveness, which signals to the potential aggressor that there will be no retaliation in the face of punishment. The alpha male might be satisfied with scaling down punishment if there are no costs for retaliation. Even if we grant the interpretation that the submissive gesture is an implicit recognition of social code violation, it does not follow that the violation of hierarchic order *per se* triggers remorse or guilt feelings. It might be other factors, such as fear of consequences, anxiety of uncertain outcomes or possible damages to valuable relationships play a role in submissive behaviour in the context of social code violation. Obedience can function as a precautionary declaration of peace or as a disposition to settle potential conflicts at minimum costs.

In several studies of "guilty-looking" behaviour in dogs after violation of human imposed rules, it has been documented that beyond the effect of direct human behaviour there is no sign of rule internalization (Vollmer 1977; Horowitz 2009). Prohibitions do not trigger any psychological disturbance for dogs when there is no direct human consequence. Others report studies show more cunning "disobedience" in the face of hierarchic order (Tomasello and Call 1997). For example, in one investigation, a female baboon ingeniously managed to deceive an alpha male in order to groom with a subdominant male. In spite of the fact that the alpha male had visibility, which involves high risks of severe

punishment, she slid her body behind a boulder in a way that only her head was within sight of the alpha male. In that position, the female began to groom with the subdominant male. This shows that submission to hierarchic order is conditioned to the presence or absence of dominant individuals.

Korsgaard claims that dominance is not always established by aggression arguing that

> in some animals dominance hierarchies can be inherited and apparently go unchallenged for longish stretches of time (Korsgaard 2010, 20).

It seems that in such cases it is not the fear of consequences that guides the behaviour of a dominated animal but the recognition of the standing of another animal. This recognition is what makes the dominated animal to inhibit the course of action he would otherwise pursue. While aspects of this are true, Korsgaard's claim is an overstatement about how dominance hierarchies can be maintained. Status recognition does motivate the inhibition of instincts, but more needs to be said about how the standing itself of the dominant animal is established and maintained. What do dominated animals actually recognize in the standing of a dominating animal?

The rank in a hierarchic order is established primarily by domination through physiological size and strength, and it is learned and enforced by punishment and exclusion (Aunger and Curtis 2015; de Waal 2014). The dominance-subordination relationship is, therefore, characterised by an asymmetric distribution of power (Preuschoft and van Schaik 2000, 78). Juvenile rhesus monkeys and apes, for instance, ignore the hierarchic order until their third or fourth year of life, and only learn the rank order afterwards, mainly through punishment. Frans de Waal reports that the rank order is forcefully established for youngsters with dramatic punishments especially when they dare to approach sexually attractive females:

> Young males need only one or two such lessons. From then on, every adult male can make them jump away from a female by a mere glance or step forward (de Waal 2014, 189, 53)

After severe punishment, it is enough for young males to sense threat signals in order to control their sexual drive, which shows that fear of consequences for disrupting the rank order is the main effective inhibitor of instinctive reactions. Thus, punishment and aggression must be at the heart of dominance hierarchy if it is to be maintained and transmitted to younger generations. Moreover, the preservation of social order is dependent on the presence of powerful alpha males. Flack and her colleagues (2005) show that temporary removal of powerful conflict managers generates group destabilization, defined as increased levels of conflict and decreased positive interaction.

Korsgaard also overstates her claim when she says that hierarchic orders may go unchallenged for longer periods of time, implying that the hierarchy by itself will keep defectors at distance without other intervening mechanisms.

Again, more needs to be said to understand the social dynamics involved in maintaining the overall ranking order and what is behind the decision not to challenge dominance orders. Indeed, it is part of the dominance order to be an evolutionary stable strategy that reduces the costs of social contests for access to resources (Cummins 2006). It is expected not to be challenged constantly since everyone wins something even if only a few get the biggest prize. However, attention to the detail of how dominance hierarchies are secured and challenged will throw some light on to the kind of authority that is at play.

Dominant primate males must first obtain their status by a means of aggression and establish decisively the asymmetry of power to demonstrate that their rank can be defended. If the asymmetry of power is not clearly secured, the new status is hard to defend, becoming more vulnerable to challenges. This is why alpha males, even after establishing their rank, continue to communicate their power superiority and seek to gain the support of the group. It has been observed that high ranking males constantly perform the typical bouncing displays of high-status, they signal fighting abilities and show off (de Waal 2014, Aunger and Curtis 2015). The asymmetry of power provides opportunities to successfully maintain the rank order. Winners of past contests tend to escalate conflicts, whereas losers are less likely to do so, securing the hierarchy by a reinforcement mechanism (Aunger and Curtis 2015, 57). When an animal has power superiority he will be more willing to engage in conflicts which easily confirm his status. The more confirmations, the more positions of standing are entrenched and will be acknowledged and accepted within groups. Thus, the occurrence of conflicts favours dominant individuals because they gain leverage to reinforce and advance the existing rank order. We may say that this puts dominant individuals in a "virtuous" circle and dominated ones in a "vicious" one.

Those who hold dominant positions also get involved in third parties fights, providing further opportunities to reinforce hierarchy positions by exerting dominance. For example, high-ranking male chimpanzees often intervene to stop fights or to reduce the level of aggression among group members (de Waal 2014). By virtue of power superiority, dominant individuals acquire the reputation of effective conflict managers requiring others to ask for their intervention. When in-group conflicts escalate, bystanders inform the alpha male and ask for his intervention to control the situation (de Waal 2014). These are further opportunities to perfectly demonstrate that dominance has been well established, although in such situations the benefits are distributed across the group by maintaining social harmony. If a dominant individual is able to keep social harmony then the group has an additional interest to accept the existing hierarchic order.

Dominant individuals also try to win the support of the group by social measures, which can be less costly than direct aggressive measures. Apes have a preference to interact with those individuals who manifest positive attitudes (de Waal 2014). This implies that the group will prefer "good guys" over "bullies."

There are mainly two types of dominant individuals among hierarchic orders in primates: aggressive dominants and group leaders (de Waal 1989). Aggressive dominants have a bullying profile, harassing others without justification, whereas leaders do not use force immediately, choosing first rather to send warning signals. Also, leader dominance tends to calm things down after fights through the use of calm gestures and reconciliation. De Waal emphasises that "it is these diplomatic dominants who enjoy popularity, not the bullies" (de Waal 1989, 253). Since the group's support (for a leader) is also fostered by pro-social means, dominants have incentives to take into consideration such attitudes, at least when it contributes to the acknowledgement of their position in the overall ranking.

Because a hierarchic order determines the priority of access to resources, it becomes attractive to conserve and improve one's status. Thus, status motivates individuals to improve their social position in order to have priority of access to resources (Aunger and Curtis 2015, 58). Low ranking individuals will seek to enhance their position, whereas high ranking will seek to maintain the *status quo* and to monitor it. This develops into informal challenges and tactics. Low ranking individuals will make targeted contributions to their social group and draw attention to these contributions, submit more easily to authority or join dominant aggressors against other subordinate individuals (Aunger and Curtis 2015, 58; Preuschoft and van Schaik 2000, 88), while high ranking individuals will monitor closely the dynamics of power, form coalitions, alliances and opportunistic reconciliations (de Waal 1989, Preuschoft and van Schaik 2000).[1]

Once we identify the challenges and tactics occuring at the high end of the hierarchy, it becomes clearer that hierarchic authority is vulnerable to struggles for power because the asymmetry – superior or inferior – is not a stabled fix position. Frans de Waal suggests possible rank challenges at the high end of the hierarchy in a chimpanzee colony (de Waal 1989, 20). In one observation the group was dominated for a long time by a coalition of two adult males, Nikkie and Yeroen. Nikkie was more powerful, but Yeroen had more experience in power games. Nikkie managed to become leader and maintained the position with the help of Yeroen. However, this placed him in a relationship of dependency for he could not defend on his own the dominant status. As long as their relationship was harmonious, they could easily enforce the rank order, nevertheless when they fought each other third party challenges emerged. While Nikkie and Yeroen were chasing each other, a third male, Luit, made his move of claiming dominance by "spectacular intimidation displays, hooting with his hair on end and hurling stones and branches in every direction" (de Waal 1989, 21). Luit continued to terrorize the females and show off closer and closer to the two

[1] Low ranked individuals are interested in power dynamics and take part in forming coalitions but their position hardly allows them to lead the effort.

dominant males. When Nikkie felt that the challenge was quite serious he started to make reconciliatory gestures to Yeroen, by stretching his hand with a broad nervous grin on his face. As soon as Yeroen accepted to make up, Nikkie went to reinforce his position in front the rival by performing a display of dominance. In return, Luit responded with submissive behaviour, acknowledging Nikkie's continued dominant status.

This story about complicated group relationships deeply illustrates that hierarchic orders will be challenged if the asymmetry of power between dominant and subordinate individuals is narrow enough for potential candidates to have a chance of overturning the group ranking. Competition for status in the overall ranking of a group is pervasive in primate societies. Subordinates are opportunists who will use any unbalance in power relationships (Chapais 1992, 1995). On the other side, the reason why most of the time hierarchic orders will go unchallenged is that the asymmetry of power between dominants and subordinates is too wide for rivals to even begin considering the possibility of reshaping the group ranking. Dominance hierarchies are most secure over time when there are no changes in individual or coalition strength (Preuschoft and van Schaik 2000, 87).

By reflecting on the way dominance hierarchies are learned, established and maintained, I have suggested that this is not consistent with Korsgaard's picture of how dominance motivates behaviour. Indeed, dominance is not always established by aggression and hierarchies may go unchallenged for long periods of time. This does not suggest that this behaviour is motivated by mere recognition of a hierarchic relationship. A closer look at the documented behaviour in social settings of dominance hierarchies tells another story. Submission to authority in dominance hierarchies takes place in the presence but not in the absence of dominance, which implies that the effect of status recognition on instinct inhibition is drastically limited to direct visibility and monitoring. The hierarchic order succeeds in keeping defectors in line when dominant figures are in a position to monitor group interactions. But when dominant positions have no direct visibility or social interaction subordinates transgress rank prohibitions, and the social order may even break down. So, it appears that the presence of high rank individuals is the glue for conformity to hierarchy and maintaining social order, implying that status recognition is mixed with the acknowledgement of potential aggression. The essential mechanism of establishing dominance is through exerting and communicating fighting abilities. Hierarchic order is mainly learned and enforced by punishment, threats of punishment, exclusions and escalation of aggressiveness because it is ultimately based on fighting abilities. Where aggression is not used, dominants capitalize opportunities to strengthen their position, gaining group support through prosocial behaviour and conflict management. Regarding the maintenance of hierarchy, Korsgaard is right that it can go unchallenged for a long period of time, but it is misleading if she associates this to prohibitions and concludes rank

order has sufficient authority alone to discourage disruptions. The main two reasons why dominance hierarchies go unchallenged for long periods of time is because of the wide asymmetry of power between dominants and subordinates and lack of changes in individual or coalition strength. When strength superiority is ambiguous, hierarchies are seriously vulnerable to power shifts.

All this suggests that the dominance does not have the features that Korsgaard expects to have. Dominance functions as an inhibition system limited to direct encounters and monitoring. As soon as direct monitoring lacks or can easily be avoided, self-inhibition breaks down. I am not claiming that dominance did not contribute to a better control of mental activity. It may have increased the capacity of self-control to a certain extent and made behaviour more flexible in the face of instinctive reactions or, as others claim, formation of hierarchies in primates may have been an emergent property of individual behavioural rules (Aunger and Curtis 2015). Also, submissive behaviour facilitates rule following. However, what I am claiming is that a proper understanding of documented behaviour in dominance hierarchies suggests that the internalization of dominance is not an appealing starting point to explain the origin of normative motivation. Once individuals are presented with opportunities for defection, dominance loses its motivational power. This contrasts with the fundamental feature of internal normative guidance which is much more independent from prudential reasoning when situations present advantages with small costs of breaking the rules. Animals in hierarchic orders are still opportunists who will attend their instincts when "authority" is not around. Moreover, without the dominants' superiority to impose sanctions, hierarchic orders are vulnerable. The authority inspired by dominance hierarchies evaporates when there is no direct control and no clear power asymmetry.

Korsgaard might reply that after all her speculation is that dominance hierarchies contain only the thing that becomes one's authority over oneself *once it is internalized*, not that the dominance hierarchy embodies a genuine form of normativity or authority. However, Korsgaard needs to explain why she chosen dominance authority. What is so special about inherent features of dominance that once they are internalized it becomes an authority over us? The answer would still have to face the conclusions of my analysis because there must be a close connection between the inherent features of dominance that once they are internalized it becomes an authority over us and germinal forms of normative motivation. If there is no close connection then it is not clear what features can become an authority over us once they are internalized. Kosgaard herself says that dominance is interesting because it is similar to normative authority.

Further, she could say that the kind of internalization which is at the origin of normative motivation is more extended in scope and range, so that behaviour will normally conform to rank order even in the absence of high-ranking individuals and inarticulate power superiority. This is a deeper internalization of dominance based authority which indeed could be a source of normative

motivation. But one has to ask how this fits with natural history. The transition from primates to *homo* species marked a significant shift in group structure and resource allocation. The rise of early humans produced profound shifts in behavioural patterns and cognitive abilities, previously unseen in primates. It is unlikely that the internalization of dominance based authority has expanded, because early humans experimented with new ways of social interaction.[2]

It is documented that *homo sapiens* had an egalitarian social order, and it is likely that dominance hierarchies may have been wore away already by hominids (Boehm 1999). The specific feeding ecology of foraging caused humans to adopt highly collaborative strategies, creating an interdependence which is unprecedented in the primate order (Tomasello and Vaish 2013). The profound changes in how individuals collaborate levelled the playing field, thus, tempering the competitive mental setup which is the framework in which dominance hierarchies emerge.[3] There is conclusive evidence that modern humans have unique levels of cooperation, collaboration and social cognition (Tomasello 2009, 2014). These highly developed behavioural repertoires are, among others, the building blocks of human uniqueness. So, it seems more appealing to look in this direction for the origin of normative motivation. For example, Philip Kitcher (2011) has argued that the only available source of genuine normative guidance is the practice of group members to discuss and formulate commands. Whilst, Michael Tomasello (2014) proposes that collective intentionality, which lacks in primates, may have led to normative self-governance.[4] Collective intentionality has pushed individuals to think of themselves as group members with a particular group identity. This group-mindedness has led to collective moral expectations that motivate behaviour towards group members.

Interesting enough, Korsgaard's work on the meta-ethical sources of normativity fit with this approach. Her claim is that ultimately the source of normative reasons is what she calls practical identities, defined as a set of normative standards of "dos and don'ts" (Korsgaard 2009, 21). For example, the practical identity of motherhood contains what mothers should do in order to fulfil their role. Similarly, we can imagine that group identities specified the "dos and don'ts" which were internalized more deeply once individuals identified themselves with the group. It seems to me that it is more natural for Korsgaard

[2] Because early human were not significantly dismorphic, this can be taken as additional evidence for dropping out dominance hierarchies due to the fact that dimorphism favours dominance hierarchies (Coolidge & Wynn 2009, 90)

[3] I suspect that this might be a deeper issue for Korsgaard's proposal, but I will not develop here. The fact that dominance hierarchies are responses to problems in competitive settings may be a decisive reason why mental activity control has not developed more in the direction of becoming less opportunistic.

[4] In his account of the origin of normative thinking, Tomasello makes reference to Korsgaard's meta-ethical work on normative self-governance. See also Tomasello and Vaish (2013).

to look at the dynamics of collaborative expectations and commitments for the origin of normative motivation.

## Conclusion

Korsgaard's insistence that there is more to morality than its specific content has significant merits to developing a more complete outlook of the origin of morality. Independent of morally good motives, which spring from sympathy with others' conditions, the capacity to govern ourselves in accordance with what we believe we ought to do for its own sake is also central to human morality. Korsgaard proposes that dominance has a normative dimension because it looks like authority. I have argued that a closer look at the documented behaviour in social settings of rank order reveals that dominance does not contain the features which are relevant for normative authority. Dominance inhibits instinctive reactions without being exercised each time, but it fails to guide behaviour beyond its presence, communication of strength and clear power superiority. We must look for authority somewhere else if Korsgaard's speculation is to become more robust.[5]

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# Explorations in Humanities

# Minding Literature's Business: Cultivating a Sense of Evanescence Within Political Affairs*

Roxana Patraş

**Abstract:** The paper investigates the relationship between political oratory and literature in Romania during the second part of the 19th century. Extending the theories of Jacques Rancière, Fredric Jameson, Slavoj Žižec, and Leonidas Donskis, I analyze the relationship between politics and literature by comparing a set of illustrative speeches delivered by Take Ionescu and P. P. Carp, who distinguished themselves as brilliant political orators and also as personalities who gave up literature in order to assume a political career. My main goal is to determine how much of one's appetite for aesthetic autonomy turns into mere appetite for political autonomy, and thus for *dissent* and *dissidence*. Both examples chosen for illustration brought me to the conclusion that prior literary habits and practices into a politician's public career can determine his/her ways of legitimizing party-switches or volatile doctrinarian attitudes.

**Keywords**: dissidence, dissent, aestheticism, decay/decadence, androgynous orator

## 1. Introduction

The present paper reflects on the relationship between political oratory and literature by taking into consideration the wider context of cultural modernisation that occurred in Romania during the second part of the 19th century. The case of Romania is particularly interesting for research because it illustrates one of the political exceptions from the South-Eastern Europe. Even though a small national state, Romania secured its right of self-government and could afford to discuss on equal terms with the empires that disputed their interests in the region. After Serbia, The Kingdom of Romania becomes the second constitutional monarchy, which therefore reinforces not only a tradition of autonomy in foreign affairs, but also a tradition of free individual choice, free public speaking, and deliberative democracy. Extending the theories launched by Jacques Rancière (2006), Fredric Jameson (1981, 2010), Slavoj Žižec (1989), and Leonidas Donskis (2005, 2008), I shall analyse the relationship between politics and literature by comparing a set of illustrative speeches delivered by Take

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Ionescu and P. P. Carp, who distinguished themselves as brilliant political orators at the turn of the century. They are also perfect examples – along with many others from the same age – of personalities who gave up literature in order to assume a political career. First, the research will follow the extension of the statesman's literature into politics and the projection of the statesman's politics onto the larger frame of aesthetics/ morals. The analysis will proceed by determining what are the rhetorical, ideological and imaginary transfers occurred in these two processes. Second, my aim is to determine how much of one's appetite for aesthetic autonomy turns into mere appetite for political autonomy, and thus for dissent and dissidence. Nevertheless, a former literate's political speech retains his original mind-habits and rests permeable to the surrounding aesthetic paradigm (in this case, Decadence or what Matthew Potolsky (1999) calls "perennial decay"). I am particularly interested in the relationship established between aestheticism and political oratory, both of them styling themselves throughout the tropes of evanescence. Hence, the tribune man does not manifest as preacher anymore, but as a multifarious dandy, who freights the attention of the public. Both examples under scrutiny act as autonomous figures, as personalities-as-large-as-institutions, who are not able anymore to stick to a political creed for much time and, eventually, turn into real catalysts of dissidence. Developed from a tradition of "charismatic authority" and hero-worship, these orators – literates and politicians at the same time – are definitely the vouchers of liberty values, sometimes brought close to anarchy. Given their mission onto the public domain and perhaps their frustrated literary resources, the political speeches belonging to this period unveil themselves as cultural artefacts, reinforcing both the state's authority and the orator's personal reaction to it. This way, the speeches produced now by the Romanian masters of political oratory are not only fabrics of signifiers (rhetorical, ideological, imaginary, cultural), but also large basins where individual styles of political talk can be related to their pragmatic conditions.

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The political oratory delivered within the Romanian Parliament and its premises (political clubs, electoral meetings) in the second half of the 19th century reflects not only the process of institutional modernization, but also a particular transition from **political thinking** to **political talk**. Modernization comes with great challenges that convulse the Phanariote memories of the Romanian society and launches it in search for a new political identity. Connected to these new problems, political modernity localizes in the small South-Eastern European state either as revolutionary radicalism (ruptures and convulsions of the old tribal structure of authority) or as import of Democratic practices from the most successful government models: the French Republic, the British Commonwealth, the German Reich. As a matter of fact, it has been already pointed out that the process of modernization imposed gradually, in two stages:

first came admiration for Western culture and imitation, then differentiation and affirmation of local identity.

Here, I have to make a short introductory comment. It is well-known that, due to its cultural legacy, France used to nurture the Romanian intellectuals both with an ideal of public action and with an over-emphasized rhetoric. Yet, this happened until around 1877, when the local politicians drive their attention towards the British Empire and its own way of sorting out the disputes between centralization and decentralization, absolute monarchy and constitutional monarchy, State order and individual freedom under one single label: *the commonwealth*. Since the two Principalities, Moldavia and Wallachia, did not succeed in harmonizing entirely their administrations and their regional claims, it is natural that some of the Romanian politicians try to assume and theorize such a far-fetched government model. For a nation that wanted to be congruous inside and independent outside, the only solution was to come with a "partisan fabrication:" to exchange national history with structures from other nations' past (Schlanger 2010, 132), to import the political memory of the best state institutions. Therefore, some of the political orators invest the young Romanian Parliament with the features of an archetypal structure, in the sense that it should be able to re-enact the original principles and protocols of Westminster Parliament. Similarly, the king, who had been adopted by the Romanian nation through popular consent, was conceived of not only as an embodiment of authority, but also as a redemptive authority, as a savior.

Alongside with the process of institutional modernization, one may also notice the speakers' growth into adulthood, that is to say, a refinement of political thinking through means of political talk. While at the beginning of Charles I's reign (in 1866), statesmen were mainly concerned with the preservation of a broad "constitutional" frame, at the end of the century, their polemics gain in focalization and some of the political speakers become professionalized parliamentary orators. Actually, scholars such as Sorin Adam Matei (Matei 2004, 76-114) and Sorin Alexandrescu (Alexandrescu 1999, 47-91) have shown that, at the end of 19th century, Romanian intellectuals used to rally into political factions such as the "Junimea" circle of Iasi, which did not carry the message of a specific social class, be it the aristocracy, the bourgeoisie, the working class or the peasants. Nevertheless, the doctrinarian amassment of intellectual forces introduces a critical distance, that is to say, an "aesthetic" way of making politics. Generally, political talk grows into self-awareness. It is conscious of its strong and weak points. It forms a system of aesthetical appreciation/ valorization. Moreover, it can even propose a gallery of canonical figures who consecrate themselves in the following order: *C.A. Rosetti, Mikhail Kogălniceanu, Barbu Katargiu* and *I.C. Brătianu* until 1866; *P.P. Carp, Titu Maiorescu, Alexandru Lahovary, N. Fleva* and *P. P. Grădișteanu* until 1888; *G. Panu*, *Alexandru Marghiloman, C. Dissescu, C. C. Arion, Take Ionescu, Barbu Ștefănescu Delavrancea, N. Filipescu* during the last decade of the 19th century and after. All

in all, there are three generations of tribune-heroes that bear witness for dramatic historical shifts such as the 1848 Revolution, the Union of the two Danube's Principalities (1857), Romania's independence (1877).

The phenomenon reinforces what was happening within the literary field. During what has been coined as Romanian Biedermeyer (Nemoianu 1998, Cornea 2008) or Decadence as such (Mitchievici 2011), Romanian writers develop a sense of shared interests coming along with the awareness of their profession's singularity and full autonomy. Romanticism makes possible the equation between "political freedom" and "aesthetic freedom," between social change and aesthetic revolution. If artists can treat any subject, no matter its lack of greatness, then art in general functions according to an aesthetic or democratic regime, which destroys the barrier that used to separate artistic rules from the order of social occupations (Rancière 2006, 23). The trespassing of this barrier leads to the fact that the paradigm of aesthetic autonomy turns into the paradigm of revolution. As Laurent Jenny points out, while the metaphor of "revolution" silently permeates the older definitions of "literature," any literary innovation will be taken from now on as a species of political emancipation (Jenny 2008, 5). Yet, this comes with the acknowledgement that literature has become a "skeptic art," which internalized its own refutation: "Le propre de la littérature deviant alors le rapport négatif à soi, le movement qui la pousse à se suprimer au profit de sa proper question" (Rancière 1998, 170).

## 2. Literature and Doctrinarian Appetite

Such being the case with arts (both literature and political oratory included) and their own way of turning out a negotiable, and thus, a political meaning, we must investigate now a pair of commonplace considerations, shared by both historians and testimonies of the 19th century Romanian life: 1. The Romanians are inborn poets (Vasile Alecsandri); 2. The Romanians have no doctrinarian appetite (C. Bacalbaşa, R. Rosetti, N. Suţu, I. Bulei,). Is there any determination between the two clichés that brand Romanian literature, on the one hand, and Romanian politics, on the other? During the entire 19th century, individualism, freedom and even anarchy are among the main drawbacks of the Conservative Party (Bulei 1987, 19). However, they actually describe an all-consuming passion for politics on both sides, as much for the Liberals' as for the Conservatives', a diffuse and dissolutive force, which is specific to modern Romania. Knowing that doctrines and ideological affiliations really articulate only at the end of the century, when the two so-called 'historical' parties are founded (1875, 1880), we must ask what conditions bear responsibility for such a delay. Is this a shadow-effect of slow cultural development? Or we should rather look for something which is apt to inhibit and slow down the doctrinarian aggregation? Has the slow doctrinarian aggregation anything to do with the fact that Romanians are inborn poets? For the first question, the answer comes right away from the theorists of Romanian civilization such as Titu Maiorescu, Eugen Lovinescu and G. Ibrăileanu. Even

though their overall views might differ, all of them share a common point on the fact that Romanians are pretty good at mimicking great cultures and quite fast at taking in foreign forms of civilization. We must return then to the second question and look for something that functions as an inhibiting drive, a delayer in the process of doctrinarian amassment.

First thing that comes to mind pertains to the domain of *political subjectivization*. Any political subject, as Ranciere notices, is an

> *empty operator* that produces cases of political dispute by challenging the established framework of identification and classification (Ranciere 2006, 90).

Since the "empty operators" can take essentially opposed meanings, political subjectivization is responsible for anarchy, fragmentation, individualism and dissidence. Even though they should not be taken as pernicious phenomena, during the 19th century, dissidence and fragmentation are harshly judged among the political practitioners as the worst enemies of public morals and healthy political thinking. To be a "dissident" means to practice a "discourse of the heart," to dismiss the mind's advice, to be the victim of endless political rambling, eventually, to perpetuate, within the manly world of politics, a feminine behavior, which packs together with idle talk and with unchecked, unpredictable reactions.

Truth is that, over the last two decades of the 19th century, Romania's most relevant debate, a sort of sum of all debates, can be downsized to the augmented "politicizing" of all public and private sectors. *The legal admission of minorities*, *the assimilation of the foreign dynasty*, *the reformation of education*, *the independence of justice*, *the efficiency of state administration*, *the regulation of private and public property*, everything goes round the discovery that Romanians would rather talk than do things. As a matter of fact, politicians accuse each other to have lost the sense of 'simple morality' and to have skidded to mind sophistry. Once corrupted the political thinking, political talk enters into a stage of "perennial decay." Thus, not only literature experiences now a "decadent" turn; the harsh words "corruption" or "decadence" are thrown upon the entire Romanian society by orators such as P. P. Carp, Take Ionescu, Nicolae Filipescu and Barbu Ştefănescu Delavrancea. Turned into topics of parliamentary debate, *volatile loyalty, party-switching* and *dissidence* gather under the umbrella of generalized "decadence."

Among the most praised political speakers of this period (1877-1899), the Conservative P. P. Carp and the Democrat-Conservative Take Ionescu provide us with the best cases of delayed doctrinarian aggregation. Fully aware of their talents' powers and limits, the two establish not only as canonical figures of Romanian oratory, but also as commentators, testimonies and judges of their day's public discourse. Irrespective of ideological biases, P. P Carp's and Take Ionescu's tribune interventions unveil the paradoxical coexistence of subjection and domination within the same political practice: even though committed to a form of art consecrated as "democratic," that is to say, to oratory, they undertake the excellent speech as an attribute of the supreme power. Certainly, they know

that their talents can virtually dis-crown kings and open their own way to the highest form of authority. Consequently, they engage a problematized relationship with their own tribune deliveries, as long as both of them would rather prepare speeches *mentally* (Duca qtd in Carp 2000, Xeni 1930). Moreover, they appear to refuse the very act of taking ideas down on paper. As if the written word were a more fragile deposit for thinking than the spoken word; as if the written word could block the mind's tendency towards looking ahead; as if the written word would contain a self-implied sense of revolution, felt as a disruptive force for the orator's mental focalization.

So, did P. P. Carp and Take Ionescu hate written words? Did they hate modern literature's way of being skeptical, of turning former intentions into latter refutations? Did they refuse a poet's mind and sensibility, inscribed in both their natural talents and in their very Romanian-ness? As a matter of fact, they didn't. Not always have they shown such distrustful attitude towards the world of letters. Their cases become more and more intriguing once one discovers substantial literary aspirations conveyed throughout translations, literary criticism, essays, memoirs, short-stories and poetry. P. P. Carp is a fine essayist, an acute critic of dramatic art and a brave translator of Shakespeare. I say "brave" because he undertakes Shakespearian plays such as *Macbeth* and *Othello* directly from English and not from French as his Romanian fellow-translators used to do. Take Ionescu, in his turn, launches himself under the pseudonyms Juanera and Tya and publishes poetry (*Contemplation*, *Autumn Refrain*, *To the Moon*), short prose (*White and Red Roses*, *A Page from a Dreamer's Life*, *A Teardrop*, *The Spirits of Year 3000*) and literary criticism. Both orators seem to be pretty warned on the time's literary dynamics and it is not seldom that they take sides. Even though he comes in the open rather occasionally, P. P. Carp proves to be the most intuitive critic of Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu's historical plays. Likewise, Take Ionescu's *The Spirits of Year 3000* proves a complete and up-to-date knowledge of the young writer's literary environment (Eminescu 1943, 222-223). One must notice, though, that while P. P. Carp gave up completely the business of literature, the mature Take Ionescu continued to indulge himself into this futile occupation by approaching lately the very popular form of memoirs (*Souvenirs*) and nature/ travel account (*In the Carpathians*).

Yet, for the long-run politician P. P. Carp, the contact with literature must have awakened his great political themes and his diffident view on the political world in general. It is interesting that his attention gets caught by *Macbeth* and *Othello*, two plays that topicalize double talk, honor and honesty, which will also become his recurrent political themes in speeches such as *The Social Order* (1881), *The New Era* (1884), *King Charles I and the Romanian Soldier* (1886), *The Political Justice vs. the Moral Justice* (1889-1890), and so on. His theory, slowly turned into a doctrine, is that morality and strong beliefs should keep away the Romanians from politicizing everything; they should also solve Romania's dispute between centralization and decentralization and build the new

institutions on the scheme of state-order. Whereas political order mirrors higher universal order, decadence comes from the democratic regime of words having power to act garrulously or silently, from "empty operators" that can be Conservative and Liberals, Liberals and Socialists, Conservative and Socialists or the whole set of doctrines at the same time. As early as 1879, P. P. Carp was admitting that Romania had "a Liberal Constitution," yet still needed "a Conservative social organization" (Carp 2000, 95). Five years after, he would say that the differences between the so-called "historical" parties are only "psychological," wherefore Carp's distance and diffident attitude in all doctrinarian concerns:

> … one called himself a Conservative, other, a National-Liberal or a Sincere-Liberal, while a third declared himself free and independent …, and when I'm picking my brains to say which one is my flag, I just find that all paths have been already taken by individualities more or less grouped around our long-run politicians… Even the public opinion is pretty confused, and, driven by despair, named us 'Junimists,' a label which can weigh rather much for certain people… for [some], the 'Junimists' are the purports of cosmopolitism and I do not know what else; [for others] instead, it represents a Conservative machination. Yet, among consecrated political terms, the word 'Junimism' does not stand for anything at all (Carp 2000, 185).

In Take Ionescu's case, the inner circuits of ideological transcodation function according to the same path: literature's *extension* to the sphere of politics and political talk's *projection* to the sphere of aesthetics. One of the most startling writings Take Ionescu has ever published is a utopian SF story entitled *The Spirits of Year 3000*, inspired by Louis Sébastien Mercier's *The Spirits of Year 2440*. The young prose-writer narrates how the clime, the geography and the inhabitants of our planet will change, how people will manage to create an artificial island and the city called Liberty right in the centre of this future world. A character named Aru guides the narrator to the utopian world; he is a somehow dwarfed creature and wears a Greek costume. He tells the time-traveller that all nations have united into the Kingdom of Frankness, and that they are now devoted to the Religion of Reason. There is no other God but Consciousness. What the time-traveller finally discovers is the fact that he is the primogenitor of a noble lineage, that he is a blazon owner! It is time that his feeble frame and his spleen were disaffirmed by his aristocratic blood, which will ensure highlife standards, visits to respectable families, meetings with fine ladies. Even if Take Ionescu's utopia seems to stem from a socialist core, its deeper strata already announce both the aristocratic mystifications and conservative fits from *Souvenirs* as well as from his twisted political talk. Anyway, on doctrinarian matters, Take Ionescu shares P. P. Carp's diffident view:

> they would try, by playing upon the words such as 'Conservatives,' 'Liberal-Conservatives,' 'The Great Conservative Family,' 'Conservative Elements' … 'Conservative concentration,' 'New Conservatives' and so on and so forth, to pass as parties, as definite formations, what had been nothing else but

> transitory and mismatched marriages; to hide under the same word both the government and the opposition, eventually, to create such a confusion that, unable to find its place in the midst of all these confusions, the public opinion ended by not understanding anything at all (Ionescu 1897, 364-365).

## 3. Strong and Shallow Characters in Politics: Blank Pages

On a superficial examination, P. P. Carp and Take Ionescu appear to illustrate cases of former literati who throw away literature for the higher calling of politics. Excellence in the art of oratory comes somewhere between literary talents and the fascination of authority. But can this renunciation to literature be reverted back only to frustrated talents, anxiety of influence or fascination of absolute power? Of course not, since literary pursuits are not completely exchanged with political interests and both orators provide us, from the beginning to the end of their political careers, with a detached and diffident vision on their professed ideas. In the first case, P. P. Carp's experience as a Shakespearian helps him to develop a theory of strong characters in politics: a feeble person (too hesitant or too nervous), says Carp, cannot turn into a dramatic subject, whereas only someone who actualizes the universal core of human passions can give the true measure of power. In Carp's view, politics is conceived as a theatre of great passions, as a Shakespearian tragedy. It follows that not only is the political orator an actor, but he is also the embodied voice of passions, the medium of unconscious drives. The same goes for Take Ionescu, who is described by his biographers as a sort of "sorcerer," shaman with an "apocalyptic diction" that takes out from the seas of unconscious passions what the public has been expecting for a very long time (Xeni 1930, 145). One of Take Ionescu's oratorical models is provided by Alexandru Lahovary, whose personality is celebrated for acting upon the inspiration of a mysterious force. This supernatural force, Take Ionescu believes, can take the orator out of the world and carry him away where

> the horizon confounds with infinity and where one enters into the universal harmony (Ionescu 1903, 647-651).

However, whereas P. P. Carp addresses a symptomatology of unconscious drives on strong personalities (theorized in the ethos on morality and order), Take Ionescu describes the unconscious imprints on shallow personalities (theorized in the ethos of ambition and modularity). In Carp's case, we can speak about methodical diffidence, about philosophical distance, applied to his own literary talents, to the powers of literature and to the potential of political talk in general. In Take Ionescu's case instead, it is not only about being diffident on what words can say or do. For him, "dissidence," that is to say putting oneself at the disposal of circumstances, turns into method of preserving one's feeble powers. Far from being the only political swinger at the end of 19th century, Take Ionescu should be attached to the issue of dissidence because it is a matter on which he returns over and over again. Indeed, he begins by being a liberal

under I. C. Brătianu's flag (1884), then he passes into the dissident liberal fraction (rallied against Brătianu's authoritarian regime, called by contemporaries "Caesarism," "Vizierate," "Personal Regime" or "Omnipotence"), and speaks on behalf of the joint opposition for seven years. Afterwards, he enters the Conservative Party in 1891; but he would also split with them in 1908, and eventually form his own party, named in the fashion of English politics "Conservative-Democratic Party." Both volatility and personality cult blend into Take Ionescu's public actions. Hence, upon the models provided by Charles Fox, William Pitt the Younger, Benjamin Disraeli, William Gladstone and Joseph Chamberlain, he will patent "dissidence" and theorize it as a desirable political behavior.

This portrait of the political orator as a "blank" and "modular" creature, able to freight the audience's attention, able to awake what the Decadent artists used to call "sacred horror," drives us to the figures of ancient oracles. Tiresias, the legendary prophet in Oedipus, was opened toward both blindness and insight, toward both conscious and unconscious. We all know that Tiresias is a hermaphrodite, whose gender lies between manhood and womanhood, whose speech lies between sense and nonsense. The orator as an oracle is a hypostasis that, by and large, corresponds to the new regime of literature, the aesthetic regime, and to its skeptical turn.

Take Ionescu and P. P. Carp are quite aware that they are the agents of a power that is beyond their complete command. Eventually, they realize that not only literature, but also the art of oratory is built on "words" that contain their own silence. The orator is an interface, a blank page that cannot help but convey two opposed ideas simultaneously. For Take Ionescu *diffidence* in his own art turns into theorized *dissidence*. In the same manner, Benjamin Disraeli, who himself was one of the most exquisite political orators of the 19th century and a model to both P. P. Carp and Take Ionescu, used to define his identity as a blank page: "Madam, I am the blank page between the Old Testament and the New."

## 4. Conclusion

Drawing near to an end, I might say that, in both cases I have just analyzed, the transition from political thinking to political talk is delayed by a diffident attitude concerning literature. For the two Romanian orators consecrated in the last two decades of the 19th century, literary remnants are something that swerve political thinking from its progressive, linear direction and prevents it from focalization and, thus, from doctrinarian aggregation. Altogether, literature gives political talk the speed and easiness of nonsense and turns it into mere "politicizing." Even if related to both oratory and politics, Take Ionescu and P. P. Carp tried to pluck out literary business from the circuit formed by political thinking and political talk. They had probably discovered that, in those times, literature could corrupt not only a farmer's daughter such as Emma Bovary, but also hardened politicians.

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# Social Science Investigations

# Transduction and Meaning–Making Issues Within Multimodal Messages*

Oana Culache

**Abstract:** This paper analyzes transduction as an action of transposing information from one mode to another within the communication process and its implications in terms of meaning and coherence of a multimodal message. First, I discuss the multimodal method and its conjunction with some key concepts such as: sign, meaning, mode, transduction. Secondly, I approach transduction as an essential method of translating messages across the media variety, describing my interdisciplinary approach – that brings together semiotics and communications – and proposing a framework of explanation for transduction in the field of advertising. Drawing from a previous model (Culache 2015), I illustrate the way transduction takes place and identify its meaning-making issues while introducing the concept of 'dominant mode.'

**Keywords:** multimodality, transduction, social semiotics, meaning-making, dominant mode

## I. Introduction

The multiplicity of semiotic resources that we dispose of in order to ensure communication reflects in numerous semiotic opportunities to build signification across the various and ever-developing media landscape. Social semiotics has been concerned in the last decades with the diversity of interplays between sets of semiotic resources, also known as modes, and the way they manage to create meanings in different semiotic situations. The method of deploying at least two different sets of semiotic resources i.e. multimodality, is one of the pillars of the most recent social semiotic developments.

As Kress (2010) defines it, multimodality is omnipresent across messages, therefore the multimodal method can be identified as a valid ground for any communication act in the field of marketing, branding, advertising, education, arts, etc. When approaching these areas particularly, we notice not only their deployment of multimodality, but also their versatility, as multimodal messages get to be transposed in different media: textbooks become animations, novels become movies, commercials become print advertisements, ideas become brand logos. In this context, we can ask ourselves whether the new messages built on transposed modes are truly effective in conveying intended meanings.

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This aspect is of a great importance in many areas of interest, especially in advertising, as long as brands are supposed to deliver consistent and unitary meanings about themselves. I believe that these modal permutations (in a semiotic sense) engender a set of implications that are worth being studied. In this respect, the issues I intend to expose in the current paper might be found useful to clarify management decisions within the field of communication.

## II. A Multimodal Way of Making Meaning

A sign is a means for creating and conveying information that grounds any meaningful process of communication. In the literature, Saussure (1916) considered signs as dyadic entities consisting of a signifier and a signified, whereas Peirce (1931-1958) defined them in a triadic manner, as entities encapsulating a representamen (also known as the sign vehicle), an object and an interpreter.

Peirce's theory, one of the most common theories in semiotics, depicts signs in the form of a triangular set of relationships between its three components, whose interaction – also known as semiosis – engenders meaning (Sebeok 1994). Meanings can be both literal and figurative: literal meanings refer to cases when there is an explicit and conventional relationship between the sign and its object, whereas the figurative meanings refer to cases that require inferences, even though there is still a certain degree of conventionalism (Cobley 2001).

Apart from stocking information, signs also participate at the meaning-making process, by interacting with other semiotic resources within a semiotic system (cf. Saussure 1998). Thus, signs are usually used in combinations that form sets of semiotic resources or modes. The development of modes is strictly correlated to social, historical, and cultural practices that validate them (Bezemer and Jewitt 2010). Kress (2010), one of the most important pioneers in multimodality, mentioned colours, layout, soundtrack, writing, images, typography, 3D objects, music, gestures, and speech as examples of modes. As a second-degree set of semiotic resources, multimodal messages are artefacts containing at least two merged modes (Ravelli 2000, Kress 2010, López Rodríguez, Prieto Velasco, and Sánchez 2013). Implicitly, as López Rodríguez et al. (2013) pointed out, this repertoire of signs finds its use in the way that it permits the adaptation of signs to the needs of different users.

Multimodality is a way of making meaning by using sets of signs that interlace and complement each other in a way that engenders a particular meaning. They are not defined by redundancy, but by their way of interacting (Kress 2010). Lemke (1998) considered multimodality as a very useful method people can deploy in other to make sure they are understood, by avoiding any feeling of self-repeating.

The power of multimodality resides in the fact that multimodal messages are clusters of meanings which together form a macrosign able to convey a more

complex meaning than the very sum of its parts (Lim 2004). As multimodality turns simple signs into a powerful semiotic tool, in the next section, we shall notice that this framework has also some semiotic challenges that compete with its undoubtful force of making meaning.

## III. Theorization and Problematization of Multimodal Translation

Considering the extended media types available to send messages, social semioticians interested in multimodality have brought into discussion the case when multimodal messages get to be adapted to new types of message supports. In this case, senders are forced to adjust messages, i.e. to transpose their components from one modality to another. In the literature, this action is called 'translation' and it takes place both at an intrasemiotic and an intersemiotic level (O'Halloran 2005, Aguiar and Queiroz 2012, Aguiar and Queiroz 2013). As presented in the literature, the difference between the two resides in that intrasemiotic translation implies transposing data within the same type of modes, such as translating from one language to another, whereas intersemiotic translation regards the cases when translation is transmodal, i.e. it implies replacing a mode with a different one.

First discussions about this semiotic process belong to Jakobson (1959, 114), as his interest in linguistics generated some questions regarding 'intersemiotic transmutation,' i.e. interpreting signs by means of a different sign system. Even if intrasemiotic translation is a still viable subject for discussion, in my paper, I shall try to better understand the intersemiotic process of translation, also known as 'resemioticization' (Iedema 2003, 30), 'transduction' (Kress 2010, 43), or 'semantic reconstruals' (O'Halloran 2005, 165).

Drawing from the literature, resemioticization can take place within a message, in order to better express a meaning – in this case I shall name it 'complementary translation;' also, the same process can take place across two or more messages, by recreating a meaning in a different communicational context, in which case I shall name it 'replacement translation.'

When approaching transduction within the multimodal framework, we notice that transduction does not only concern the modes per se, but the entire 'semiotic hybrid' (Lemke 1998, 87), that is the message as a unitary entity, as multimodality implies that the multiplicity of semiotic sets of signs or modes are coordinated in a single meaningful semiosis whose output is a unitary meaning. In this respect, Thibault (2000) argues that multimodal analysis must not divide meaning according to codes or channels deployed, on the contrary, it should treat the message as an ensemble. Also, researchers are divided between those claiming that modes are able to replace each other (O'Halloran and Liu 2009), and those insisting that different meaning-making systems are incommensurable and cannot remake meaning in one-to-one correspondence (Lemke 1998, Chiew 2004, Aguiar and Queiroz 2012, Aguiar and Queiroz 2013).

In virtue of the Saussurean thesis stating that meanings do not reside within signs, but in the relationships between signs (Saussure 1916), I also hypothesize that replacement transduction automatically implies a semantic difference between the original and the duplicated set of signs, because the translation process is not able to translate elements' interplay. Thus, when replacing modes, we should consider that we do not only discuss the analogy of signs, but also the isotopy of the relationships built between signs.

Developing Aguiar and Queiroz's research (2012, 2013), in a previous paper, I proposed a model of comparative analysis that illustrates the complexity of interactions taking place within the multimodal framework. The model depicts the sign as a result of the interplay between different modes whose joint deployment creates a 'Merging Space,' i.e. a place of semantic expansion (Culache 2015). The model encompasses Peirce's triad consisting of the representamen, the object and the interpretant (Peirce, 1931-1958, C 5.484). Thus, the model shows that translation of multimodal messages implies not an individual transduction of elements, but the transduction of their integrated meaning. In this case, chances are that some modes remain in the model and some modes are replaced (translated), depending on the media possibilities of representation. For example, a video commercial and a radio commercial both have in common the sound, thus any music, soundtrack or speech may be kept in both messages, as the corresponding media (television and radio) permit it. On the other hand, the replacement modalities, together with the preserved ones from the original message, get integrated in a new cluster of meanings: the new message.

## IV. Replacement Translation and Meaning Ratio in Multisensoriality

My goal to investigate transduction's implications in terms of meaning and coherence of a multimodal message is achievable if we engage in an analysis of the way different multimodal messages complete their task of loyally representing meanings. In this respect, I shall define a universe of speech, namely advertising, so that I can use a particular framework.

Advertising, as a form of brand communication, is a continuous process of delivering coherent and consistent meanings at every contact point between brands and stakeholders. According to their identity, brands have a common set of meanings to convey via every message they create. Many brands choose multi-channel communication, as a very effective way to reach their target, in line with their media preferences: watching television, browsing Youtube channels, going to the cinema (video commercials), listening to radio (radio commercials), reading magazines (print ads), web browsing (ad banners), online networking (social media ads), etc.

In order to identify the meaning implications within multimodal translation, first, I must remind you the main types of modalities that Kress (2010) mentioned and identify the representative sensory dimensions they touch:

**Table 1 - The sensory dimension of modalities**

| Modalities | Representative sensory dimension |
|---|---|
| colours | visual |
| layout | visual |
| soundtrack | auditory |
| writing | visual |
| images | visual |
| typography | visual |
| 3D objects | visual, tactile |
| music | auditory |
| gestures | visual, tactile |
| speech | auditory, visual |

As the table depicts, the visual dimension is the most common between modes. This means that, in most cases, modes implying the visual sense will be involved in an intersemiotic translation, whether as transducted or replacement modalities. When transducted, a visual mode will be replaced by another visual mode or by a tactile or auditory mode.

By addressing the intersemiotic translation model I proposed (Culache 2015) as an adaptation of Aguiar and Queiroz's model (2012, 2013), we can notice that the model permits complex messages consisting of a merged space which encapsulates various modalities (multimodal message) blending in a unique message. In order to deliver a relevant result, I shall discuss intersemiotic translation across sensory dimensions. In subsidiary, I do take into consideration that the shift from a visual mode to another visual mode, such as from colours to writing, implies really interesting aspects in terms of signification. Nonetheless, I find it even more challenging to explore the meaning ratio between modes that address different senses.

I believe that multimodal messages, and especially multisensory messages, have a particular impact on the receiver, depending on the entity that we identify as the dominant mode (DM) in terms of sensory experience.

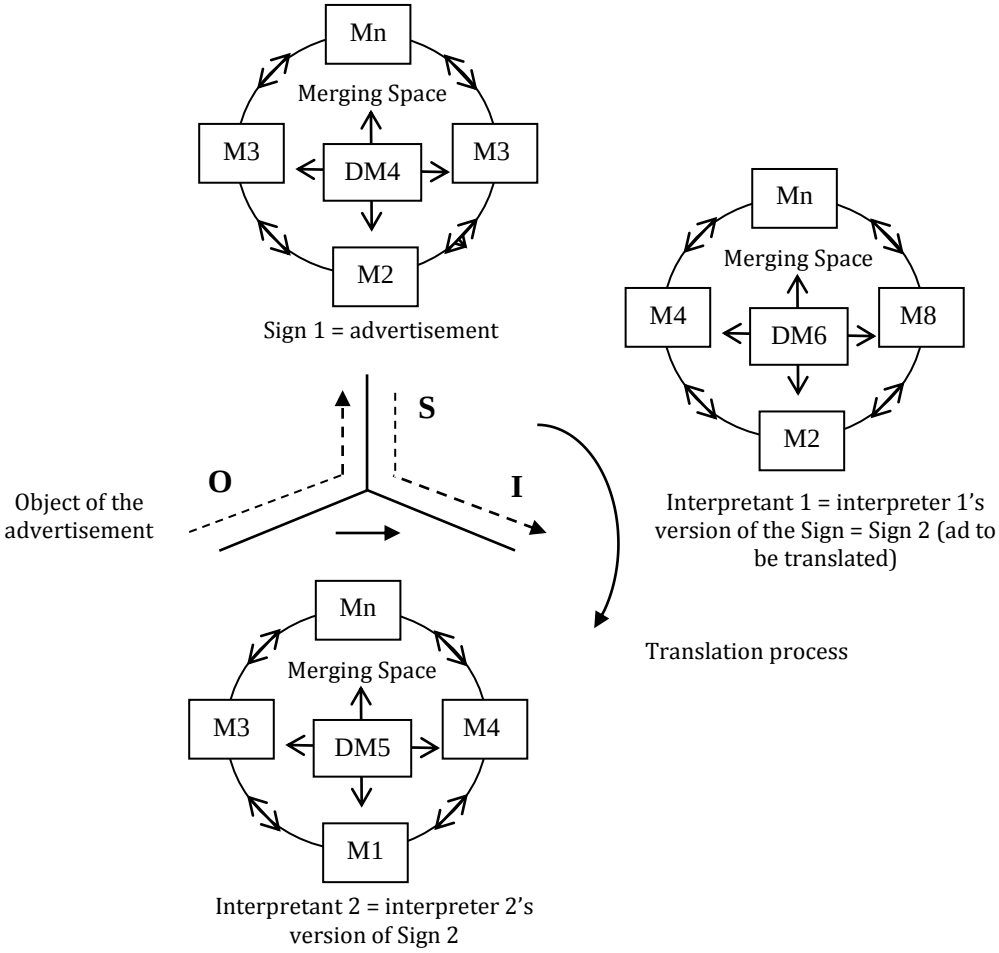


Figure 1 – Meaning transduction in multimodal advertisement

(adaptation from Culache 2015)

The dominant mode is strategically conceived so that to have a greater impact within the interpretation model. The selection of this type of modality takes into consideration the sensory dimension of the message, according to the medium of distribution it deploys. Thus, there are some media with a greater meaning potential when combined with a particular mode.

As depicted in the model of semiotic transduction (Figure 1), the dominant mode does not deny the cooperation between modes in order to create meaning. Yet, we should take into consideration the possibility that this type of mode

affects the way the blending takes place between all modes and, implicitly, the final meaning that is being created in the merging space.

## V. Discussing Transduction Issues and Meaning-Making

When shifting from one dominant mode to another mode as a result of an intersemiotic translation, we perceive the risk of meaning alteration. Even though we manage to keep some of the modalities that compose the original message, we cannot keep the entire spectrum of relationships built within the message, between modes. Ipso facto, the way the dominant mode interacts with the other modes that makes it more visible and dominant, will be lost in the interpretation process, when new interplays and new modalities come to replace the original ones, in order to form a new sign in the mind of the interpreter. Furthermore, the second sign is once again subject to a semiotic process, as it is translated by following the same pattern – new modalities, new relationships, new sign.

If we apply this set of processes to an advertising campaign, we can foresee various effects in terms of meaning coherence. An advertising campaign implies a unique powerful message that brand managers intend to communicate to their stakeholders: a promotion, a new product, new product improvements, brand attributes, etc. Every advertisement has to comply with the meanings to be sent, so that the communication, irrespective of the medium it deploys, to be coherent and consistent. Thus, it is of great importance to assess the way multimodal transduction impacts the meaning of various multimodal messages in an advertising campaign.

A commercial can have a more powerful impact via its soundtrack, which manages to address memories, feelings and ideas that are more inspiring than those addressed by other modes from the commercial. Print ads can deliver a greater experience by using writing as a mode, as it expresses meaningful and interesting ideas. By using these criteria, advertisers are able to create a message capable of conveying powerful meanings, in conformity with the highest potential of representation and impression.

The dominant mode can have an impact regarding the way an advertisement determines an interpretant, as a result of an interpretation process. The merged meaning of a multimodal ad becomes another set of merged meanings, i.e. the new sign or interpretant. When dominant modes are involved, message transduction becomes a problematic action, as it automatically implies the intersemiotic translation of the dominant mode's impact within the semiotic process. We also take into consideration the fact that different modes interact: colours, images, soundtrack, speech, etc., depending on the medium of distribution and its capability in terms of sensory affordances, and then the modes blend in a unitary meaning. In analogy with the gestalt theory, within the interpretation process, most of the consumers take a snapshot of the message as

a complex of meanings, thereof the dominant mode becomes the most visible and impressive part.

When making a new version of the advertisement, the specialists try to translate meanings by using other modes, according to the new medium they use. When shifting from visual media to auditory media, for instance, the intersemiotic translation's effects are visible from an ideational perspective. If the dominant mode is a visual or tactile one, for instance, in the case of auditory media, there is an imminent switch of the dominant mode, from the visual or tactile to the auditory one. This change reflects on the part of the interpreter in a way that implies a different meaning and a different attitude towards the advertised product or brand.

## VII. Conclusion

The field of advertising is a proper context for explaining the multimodal framework and its meaning-making issues when intersemiotic translation is needed. Its relevance resides in the capability of illustrating various connections between modalities and their transposition across different sensory messages. In my view, multimodal messages engender a complex interaction of modes, thereof I identified a dominant mode, as the most visible and memorable meaningful part of a message. When multimodal messages are recreated within a replacement translation, and especially when translation implies different sensory mechanisms, resemioticization of multimodal messages is defined by a particular modal interaction in the Merging Space, where the dominant mode acts as a divergent entity, as long as different senses are not able to replace each other properly.

## VIII. Limitations of the Study and Further Research Directions

My study has a set of limitations. First, the research on the topic addressed here requires a more practical follow-up, by means of a case study. Second, the modified model I proposed implies a prior verification of the original model (Culache 2015), for validation.

Future research should continue the investigations in the field of multimodality and intersemiotic transduction, as many issues can rise in the process of semantic reconstrual. The subject is of great interest, as its application in many research areas, such as marketing and advertising, might prove useful for a better integrated communication strategy.

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# Contemporary Representations of the Female Body: Consumerism and the Normative Discourse of Beauty*

Venera Dimulescu

**Abstract:** In the context of the perpetual reproduction of consumerism in contemporary western societies, the varied and often contradictory principles of third wave feminism have been misunderstood or redefined by the dominant economic discourse of the markets. The lack of homogeneity in the theoretical debates of the third wave feminism seems to be a vulnerable point in the appropriation of its emancipatory ideals by the post-modern consumerist narratives. The beauty norm, particularly, brings the most problematic questions forth in the contemporary feminist dialogues. In this paper I will examine the validity of the concept of empowerment through practices of the body, practices that constitute the socially legitimized identity of women in a consumerist western society. My thesis is that the beauty norm is constructed as a socio-political instrument in order to preserve the old, patriarchal regulation of women's bodies. Due to the power of invisibility of the new mechanisms of social control and subjection, the consumerist discourse offers the most effective political tool for gender inequality and a complex discussion about free will and emancipation in third wave feminism debates. This delicate theoretical issues question not only the existent social order, but the very political purposes of contemporary feminism.

**Keywords:** third wave feminism, the beauty myth, consumerism, corporeality, empowerment, gender equality

## Introduction

In the context of our present digital age, new technologies and the widespread of consumerist marketplaces, cultural norms about gender relations have been reconstructed and dispersed through new ways of communication. Mass-media, advertising and popular culture are perpetuating and reinventing gender roles that penetrate every home in this world that is familiar with mass communication devices. The mechanical reproduction of images, videos and words has fastened the diffusion of the dominant discourses and transformed them into implicit symbolic laws.

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Gender relations have been a key element in every dominant discourse in human history. The grand narratives of modern thought, as Lyotard (Lyotard 1979) called them, were constructed within hetero-normative principles of identity, principles that were founded in dichotomous patterns of thought that gave birth to the major opposite and hierarchical concepts between mind/body, nature/culture, respectively, masculine/feminine.

The evolution of feminist theories and gender studies has allowed theoreticians of the 20th century to explore the masculine/feminine opposition and analyze its role in the shaping of social, political and economic structures.

The concept of the body, particularly, of the female body, has been thoroughly discussed and constructed throughout centuries under the authority of philosophy and Christian morality. It is now common knowledge that philosophical tradition devalued corporeality and femininity and denounced the deceptiveness of the senses as obstacles on the path to authentic knowledge (Spelman 2014).

Women's bodies have long been the docile and passive recipients of male's will to knowledge and obsession for order and meaning. Until the second part of the 19th century, the cultural representations of female corporeality have been reduced to women's role within the domestic contract and the social institution of the family, role that was filled with the duties of reproduction and motherhood. Thus, the body never belonged to women per se, but to diverse forms of male domination that described, coerced and controlled it (King 2004).

However, the rise of feminism and activism at the turn of the 20th century and the expansion of capitalism, have created a fertile ground for new gender representations.

Consequently, the right questions to ask are what kind of inscriptions are there to be seen on the female body in contemporary western societies? Whose bodies are those which appear to represent and practice patterns of gender identity in postmodern modes of thought?

In order to answer to these questions, I shall focus my research on the contemporary beauty discourse, as it appears to be significant in the construction of women's identity and cultural representations.

## Gender Identity, the Beauty Norm and the Practice of Choice Through Consumption

According to Wolf, the feminine ideal of physical beauty is a relatively new cultural representation of women. Until the 1830s, the physical properties of the female body were not socially perceived as gender norms. Moreover, the traditional gender roles distributed to women were shaped within the domestic space as practices of the physiological heritage where fertility and nurturing skills were considered to be two necessary conditions to be a woman, which consequently meant to be a mother. Virginity and youth were two vital conditions for the social gratification of women as well, and sexual ignorance

was an essential feature of legitimate female representation (Wolf 2008). This way, the universal identity of women was defined as cultural interpretations of biological functions. Social selection and discrimination of women were made according to strict behavior rules that envisaged the hegemonic representation of gender relations. However, during the first decades of the 19th century, women's physical appearance became an object of documentation and admiration:

> In the 1840s the first nude photographs of prostitutes were taken; advertisements using images of *beautiful* women first appeared in mid-century. Copies of classical artworks, postcards of society beauties and royal mistresses, Currier and Ives prints and porcelain figurines flooded the separate sphere to which middle-class women were confined (Wolf 2008, 15).

For a century and a half, the concept of beauty has been an instrument in the cultural representations of women as objects of knowledge and the product of three major historical revolutions: industrial, technological and sexual. The industrial revolution belittled the authority of the family as a social institution and gave women the opportunity to join the work force (Wolf 2008, Bordo 1995, Vance in Snitow, Stansell and Thompson 1983). Hence, physical beauty evolved as a substitute for women's maternal status and former exile in the domestic space. It became a new type of discourse in gender identity representations (Wolf 2008). The technological revolution strengthened the female beauty discourse by improving, highlighting and perpetuating cultural representations through photographs, ads, videos, books and TV shows. Ultimately, the sexual revolution regained women's right to sexual expression and sexual knowledge and encouraged a shift in gender relations and identity, one which would advocate for sexual liberation of women beyond marital contracts and social stigmatization. That implied a new definition of female beauty, one that would also incorporate the sexual expression as part of women's identity (Gill and Scharff 2011, Gill 2007, Gill 2008, Wolf 2008).

Contemporary representations of female beauty within western societies are by-products of multiple economic, political and cultural factors. Under the emerging forces of consumerism, female beauty has become an industry and has penetrated all economic areas. In the context of redefining sex as a pleasurable practice and a viable financial resource regardless of gender identity, the beauty industry redefined female corporeality as the main object of discourse and observation. Thus, beauty became what Rosalind Gill named "a bodily property" (Gill 2007, 6). There is a significant cultural shift in the public discourse of gender identity, from the representation of woman as reproductive force and object in the preserving power of the social institution of the family, to the image of woman as a sexually assertive subject for whom physical beauty is a form of empowerment:

> Instead of caring or nurturing or motherhood being regarded as central to femininity (all of course, highly problematic and exclusionary) in today's media

> it is possession of a *sexy body* that is presented as women's key (if not sole) source of identity (Gill 2007, 6).

Moreover, the identity of women was not only redefined, but also presented as an available, approachable and desirable model for all female subjects, regardless of class, race or age. It was transformed, in Michelle Lazar's terms, into "the right to be beautiful" (Lazar in Gill and Scharff 2011, 39). The right to be beautiful is conceived in terms of the now traditional practices of body shaping, particularly hair removal and weight loss, and it is represented as the freedom to wear anything, that is, equal access for all women to the universal discourse of female beauty in contemporary western societies. The association between women's personal identity, beauty and style is a contemporary construct within the consumerist hegemonic discourse (Lazar in Gill and Scharff 2011, Wolf 2008, Bordo 1995, McRobbie 2008).

There are several concerns which have to be taken into account when we talk about the intersection of normative beauty and consumerism.

Firstly, in contemporary popular culture and mass-media the act of engaging in the prescriptive beauty norm is constructed as a performed personal choice. It implies that the act of consumption is a practice of empowerment on a personal level (independent lifestyle choices) and on a social one (one's choice contributes to the emancipation of women and the abolition of gender inequalities). Hence, we may ask how can an individual distinguish between personal choice and consumerist commitment and how can it become an improvement in women's lives by reclaiming autonomy over their own bodies?

Secondly, the contemporary concept of female beauty is defined as a human right, as a practice of social equality among all women of what it seems to be an emancipatory lifestyle: a way of being, looking and acting that makes one socially and culturally intelligible as a woman. The accessibility of the right to be beautiful, by involving the eradication of privilege among women and stressing the promise of social recognition, represents more than just another practice of femininity, it becomes the feminine ideal par excellence. If contemporary representations of the female body are articulated solely in terms of physical beauty, then physical beauty is the reference of what a woman not only should look like, but also be like, as one's personal look requires certain acts of behavior to authorize it. Consequently, being a woman implies, according to the present discourse of gender identity, that one *must* be beautiful, and what is defined as an equal right becomes a non-discriminating obligation, regardless of race, class or nationality.

Under those circumstances, another matter would involve the practice of control that cultural representations manifest over its subjected individuals and the question, in this case, would be how can empowerment become a tool for women's social and political awareness and gender equality?

First of all, the intercrossing of consumerism and the concept of personal choice is an effect of the assimilation and re-contextualization of feminist ideas and identity politics within the public discourse.

In a consumerist global economy the assimilation of feminism was possible in the context of privatization, deregulation and the increasing power of corporations over the economic sector of a state. The main factors that facilitated the conjugation of the two discourses are the diminished authority of state apparatuses and the reorientation of neoliberalism to the *politics of recognition*, due to the growing voices of minorities and their political awareness:

> The turn to a politics of recognition, women pouring into the labor force replacing expensive male workers, the emphasis on self-determination over state tutelage and the disproportionate attention in international struggles on violence against women at the expense of fighting poverty – all this resonated well with neoliberal prescriptions. Feminism's elective affinity with capitalism including a shared distrust of traditional authority facilitated its co-optation into capitalist projects. The result was an enmeshing of feminist ideas with neoliberal agendas and feminism providing legitimacy to the neoliberal transformation of capitalism. (Prugl 2014, 4-5).

Mainstreaming ideas about gender equality and female emancipation was the key element in the creation of economic projects that would respond to greater markets and carry the promise of economic growth of the companies. The feminist messages which are used in the consumerist discourse belong to the anti-essentialist perspectives of the third wave political discourse that emphasizes women's right to agency and free choice (D'Enbeau and Buzzanell 2011, Lazarus 2010, Klein 1999).

The integration of commodities into specific narratives of gender politics has a major role in the shaping of customers' needs and perceptions. Miller describes the subject-object relation in consumerist societies as the process of objectification, which implies the transformation of the object seen as an external, standardized valuable good, into an internalized value shaped by the needs of the customer. This way, the object can be represented as part of the individual's personal development (Miller 1987).

Through objectification, the very act of consumption becomes an actual life choice, an individual choice that constructs personal identity. The role played by advertisers, for example, resembles the work of storytellers which makes even more confusing to determine agency. Ads do not only sell commodities, they sell fictions, often personal ones, that seduce the customer and invites him to access their realm through the act of consumption.

Thus, the beauty industry has constructed similar commodities and practices that can be incorporated into the private lives of women and satisfy their most urgent needs, such as the need for autonomy and free will. Cosmetics, plastic surgeries, diet medication and other body shaping rituals have been taken over the consumerist markets for decades now:

> Culture not only taught women how to be insecure bodies, constantly monitoring themselves for signs of imperfection, constantly engaged in physical *improvement;* it also is teaching women (and let us not forget, men as well) how to *see* bodies. As slenderness has consistently been virtually glamourized, and as the ideal has grown thinner and thinner, bodies that a decade ago were considered slender have now come to seem fleshy (Bordo 1995, 57).

Being beautiful, feeling beautiful and looking beautiful are social and cultural practices associated with women's identity and self-worth. By performing them, one is integrated within the social and cultural meaning of gender. Moreover, the beauty ritual is socially instituted as a practice of taking care of one's body and self through acquiring goods, making the distinction between personal choice and consumption more problematic.

The contextualization and objectification of commodities as personal stories is explained by Wolf as women's constant need for models, nourished by diverse mechanisms of lowering self-esteem and public shaming. The entering of women's identity into the public discourse is made through the careful surveillance of media culture. Hence, images of idealized empowered women accompanied by the all too mediatized discourse of the obligation to be beautiful are mechanisms of lowering women's self-esteem and intensify their hunger for social and personal approval.

The ritual of taking care of one's body becomes, as Gill argues, a disciplinary practice of the self, "a narcissistic self-surveillance" controlled by normative representations of what it is prescribed as female and feminine (Gill 2007, 10).

Consequently, the beauty industry becomes another process of subjection that claims to give women back their property over their own bodies but instead it is selling them images of liberation and gender equality at the cost of starvation, physical mutilation and constant need for approval.

Yet one will ask how does the narrative of the empowered beauty become a form of male domination since the obsession for body surveillance has reached not only femininity but also masculinity?

Chancer argues that the ideology of *look-ism*, as she defines the fetishization of corporeal beauty, is not essentially gender specific. Having transgressed the cultural representation of reproductive force and motherhood, women's identity is now placed within a complex narrative than begins to construct physical beauty as a normative principle of identity that is gender blind. Thus, body shaping and its preservation of youthfulness are manifested as an effect of the human fear of death:

> (...) insofar as look-ism manifest itself in the form of attraction to youth, this may reflect human beings' still very immense fear of death, a fear related to biology that, unlike concerns about reproductive survival, there is no reason to think it has or will become less well-founded in the foreseeable future (Chancer 1998, 107).

This paradigm not only changes our perspective on gender inequality but also transforms women's bodies into incidental cultural constructions. The reconstruction of the beauty myth into a gender blind commodity has, however, different social effects on femininity and masculinity. As corporeality is never defined only in terms of aesthetic principles, but also as patterns of behavior linked to sexual expression and gender performativity, the ways in which men and women experience beauty are not identical within contemporary western societies as they are continuously dependent upon patriarchal representations. For example, although female and male sexuality are both represented as forms of empowerment, the former is systematically reproduced as a legitimized consent of the latter: female beauty is not rehearsed as an act of expressing one's sexual desire, but as the act of making oneself desirable (Gill 2008).

Moreover, the problematic discourse of choice in the context of gender representations is discussed within contemporary feminist debates, as an effect of internalized structures of power:

> Feminine bodily discipline has this dual character: on the one hand, no one is marched off for electrolysis at the end of a riffle, nor can we fail to appreciate the initiative and ingenuity displayed by countless women in an attempt to master the rituals of beauty. Nevertheless, in so far as the disciplinary practices of femininity produce a *subjected and practiced* and inferiorized body, they must be understood as aspects of a far larger discipline, an inegalitarian system of sexual subordination. This system aims at turning women into the docile and compliant companions of men just as surely as the army aims to turn its raw recruits into soldiers (Bartky 1990).

According to Bartky's statement, female sexual agency is the product of the hetero-normative discourse of gender which becomes, through the active, participative subjects, an indirect form of male domination. The exclusion of direct practices of domination of women's bodies and sexuality from the public discourse has made it difficult to recognize the instances of authority and thus, the process of subjection. There is no imposed figure of authority, no coercive law that sanctions your actions, yet there is a pattern of conformity that can be traced in the unification of the majority of women's choices:

> The contemporary backlash is so violent because the ideology of beauty is the last one remaining of the old feminine ideologies that still has the power to control those women whom second wave feminism would have otherwise made relatively uncontrollable: it has grown stronger to take over the work of social coercion that myths about motherhood, chastity and passivity no longer can manage (Wolf 2008, 10).

What Wolf asserts is that the male gaze, as the regulatory force which describes and monitors women's appearance and behavior has materialized, beginning with 19th century, into specific surveillance devices which could replicate, extend and maintain male domination over the social, cultural and political representations of women. The various photographic techniques, the

birth of cinematography and the new technological apparatuses of contemporary mass-media have produced different forms of normative female beauty that were more precise, explicit and thus, more restrictive and essentialist. With their direct and arresting representations, the power of control and authority of such devices located in popular culture and the media are hidden behind the consumerist discourse of choice and empowerment, discourse that borrowed its principles from the non-judgemental policy of third wave feminism repackaged as object of consumption (Chancer 1998, Klein 1999, Gill and Scharff 2011, Snyder-Hall 2010).

Wolf articulated this idea very clear using the metaphor of the iron maiden (Wolf 2008). At origin, the iron maiden is considered to be a former German medieval instrument of torture used to punish victims by incarcerating them into a vertical vault with the shape of a maiden. The insides of the vault were decorated with metal spikes that would pierce through the naked body of the convicted and induce slow, painful death often by starvation or simply due to the sharp wounds. The two words that describe the instrument, iron and maiden, suggest a relation between two opposites, the strong, immune metal and the fragile, infantile and youthful virgin. Hence, the iron maiden is the innocent and joyous display of the ideal female body that hides a long and hurtful process of compliance, a process that shapes the body by mutilation. The fact that it is recognized as a former medieval instrument of torture is a good reference for both the present and past intention of its usage: punishment and shame. According to the author, like in the medieval ritual, women are being punished for non-conformity through painful procedures, shame and low self-esteem (Wolf 2008, 17).

Wolf's metaphor seems crucial in the context of contemporary practices of beauty. Yet its foundation seems invalid as the iron maiden is just a cultural carcass that imprisons the body, as if the body, its natural state of being, is suffocated and cannot manifest itself. But what does the natural body mean in those circumstances? What sort of natural aesthetics and practices of behavior are violated? If there is a natural body therefore there is a truly free and autonomous choice to be made towards its manifestation. Following Butler, I would argue that cultural norms are not mere uncomfortable masks that we are seduced to wear, but the very invisible actors of our identity formation or what the author calls "restriction in production:"

> The prison acts on the prisoner's body, but it does so by forcing the prisoner to approximate an ideal, a norm of behavior, a model of obedience. (...) he becomes the principle of his own subjection. This normative ideal inculcated, as it were, into the prisoner is a kind of psychic identity, or what Foucault would call a *soul*. Because the soul is an imprisoning effect, Foucault claims that the prisoner is subjected in a more fundamental way than by the spatial captivity of prison, which provides the exterior form or regulatory principle of the prisoner's body (Butler 1997, 85).

Consequently, when you are imprisoned and aware of your captivity, you *know* that you are imprisoned. You witness your body's mutilation and pain. That makes the iron maiden visible.

Yet when you don't acknowledge your deprivation of freedom, the iron maiden with metal spikes doesn't exist, hence the illusion of freedom. The assumption that there is a pre-discursive body prior to disciplinary practices of subjection implies that there is an attested and recognizable identity to which we must return, that is, an already established hegemonic order of the body. What makes Butler's argument sustainable is her account about the process of internalizing disciplinary practices that makes the body natural and her insistence upon the fact that we do not have a prior and natural state of the body to return to. The body becomes natural by its submission to the normative symbolic order and so it is forced into becoming real:

> (...) what we take to be an internal feature of ourselves is one that we anticipate and produce through certain bodily acts, at an extreme, a hallucinatory effect of naturalized gestures (Butler 1990, 15).

Indeed, the beauty myth isn't a capsule in which the body passively dwells, but the very action through which the latter is socially recognized as real.

## Conclusions

Contemporary practices of disciplining the body, their power of invisibility, reside in their wondrous display of agency and free will and their simultaneous discreet force of unconscious determinism. The sexualized female body becomes abstract through rituals of transforming it into an ideal or a fetish, rituals that disconnect it from their right to freedom of expression. Women's right to sexual liberation is thus, jeopardized and their control over their own corporeality is unsecure and bashful as their internalized social stigma demands.

However, the concept of women's empowerment should also be discussed as a question of the possibilities of free will. The discourse concerning freedom of choice is deeply complex and problematic due to modern forms of domination and subjection that make personal choice seem intangible.

On the other hand, along all the political achievements of feminism there is one essential goal that third wave feminists have pointed out, a goal that rather became a matter of ethics within contemporary postmodern thought: the promise of non-judgemental feedback (Snyder-Hall 2010). Poststructuralist thought has rendered us the necessary instruments to acknowledge how power and legitimized prescriptions function and in this respect, feminism, as a poststructuralist theory, should show women that they're not mere objects of knowledge, but subjects that can own their meaning. That ownership cannot be prescribed by anyone but the conscious subject, for we must be careful not to create a new symbolic order that would proclaim its own methods of censorship and domination.

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