HERMENEUTICS
AND
LITERATURE

phainomena

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HERMENEUTICS AND LITERATURE

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IN MEMORIAM

De Profundis
Fragilitas Boni, Dolorum Tempus et Capacitas Interpretandi

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I.

February this year is the cruelest of months. Brother is killing his brother. Ukraine is scorched and soaked in blood. From the depths of distress and suffering, we hear: *Exaudi nos Domine*: "Lord, hear our cry." Indeed, from the depths, we cry to Thee.

Psalm 130, *De Profundis* (*Biblia Sacra Vulgata*)

De profundis clamavi ad te, Domine;
Domine, exaudi vocem meam. Fiant aures tuæ intendentes
in vocem deprecationis meæ.
Si iniquitates observaveris, Domine, Domine, quis sustinebit?
Quia apud te propitiatio est; et propter legem tuam sustinui te, Domine.
Sustinuit anima mea in verbo ejus:

Speravit anima mea in Domino.

A custodia matutina usque ad noctem, speret Israël in Domino.

Quia apud Dominum misericordia, et copiosa apud eum redemptio.

Et ipse redimet Israël ex omnibus iniquitatibus ejus.

Out of the depths, I call to you, O Lord;

Lord, hear my cry. Let your ears be attuned

To the voice of my pleading.

If you, O Lord, keep an account of iniquities, Lord, who will withstand?

Only with you is forgiveness; because of your law, I have borne you, o Lord.

My soul trusts in his word.

In the Lord, my soul confines.

From the morning watch until night, the Israelites are hoping in the Lord.

Mercy is with the Lord, and with him abundant redemption.

And he will deliver Israel from all its iniquities. (My translation.)

In the unmistakable uniqueness of our individual humanity, we cry "out of the depths." This cry, *lamentatio*, is an expression of our being in the world with Others that narrate our personal story of self-realization. The beginning of knowledge is the experience of the absolute feeling of dependence (Schleiermacher's *schlechthinniges Abhängigkeitsgefühl*).[1] In 2 Cor 4:7, we read:Ἔχομεν δὲ τὸν θησαυρὸν τοῦτον ἐν ὀστρακίνοις σκεύεσιν, ἵνα ἡ ὑπερβολὴ τῆς δυνάμεως ᾖ τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ μὴ ἐξ ἡμῶν: "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us." These ὀστρακίνοις σκεύεσιν, *vasis fictilibus*,[2] *zerbrechliche Gefässe*, jars of clay indicate that the very depth and breadth of human existence is an absolute feeling of dependence.[3]

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1 "The translation of Schleiermacher's key phrase 'das schlechthinnige Abhängigkeitsgefühl' is a matter of some contention. It has been suggested that the traditional translation ('feeling of absolute dependence') is in fact inaccurate and that it should be replaced with the accurate 'absolute feeling of dependence.'" (Finlay 2005, 81.)

2 Cicero wrote in a *Letter to Atticus*: "Sed heus tu, in felicatis lancibus et splendidissimis canistris, olusculis nos soles pascere; quid te in vasis fictilibus appositurum putem?" Cf. Follin Jones 1945.

3 In Gen 7:5, we read about Noah, who, never having built a boat before, constructed an ark "according to all that the Lord commanded him." The ark withstood the greatest storm the world has ever known.

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The second part of the "Psalm 130" is a profound expression of trust in God, *professio et declaratio*. The recognition of human misery and the cry for mercy are the genuine "doors of faith," θύραν πίστεως, *porta fidei* (Acts 14:27). If faith is active participation in the divine life, there is no real separation between the call for mercy and the trust in God. All human efforts do not need to be diminished. On the contrary, the cry for mercy is essentially possible because of trust in God.

A close reading of the "Psalm" discloses its musical character.[4] The two phrases, *exaudi vocem meam* and *apud Dominum misericordia, et copiosa apud eum redemptio* build the foundation of human existence: the orientation toward God (*desiderium naturale*, *optio fundamentalis*) expresses human inclination toward Indetermination, Infinity, and Transcendence. It is not a simple antidote to the fear of disorientation which motivates the inclination toward God. It is an authentic quest for relation with the Divine.

Augustine asks in his *Confessions* (10, 20):

> Quomodo ergo te quaero, domine? cum enim te, deum meum, quaero, vitam beatam quaero. quaeram te, ut vivat anima mea. vivit enim corpus meum de anima mea, et vivit anima mea de te. quomodo ergo quaero vitam beatam? quia non est mihi, donec dicam: sat, est illic, ubi oportet ut dicam. quomodo eam quaero? (Augustine 2022.)

> How, then, do I seek You, O Lord? For when I seek You, my God, I seek a happy life. I will seek You, that my soul may live. For my body lives by my soul, and my soul lives by You. How, then, do I seek a happy life, seeing that it is not mine till I can say, It is enough! in that place where I ought to say it? How do I seek it?

Searching for God means seeking a beatific life. Augustine is very resolute: despite not knowing how he can search for God, he will inquire and explore.

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4 "Psalm 130" has received a lot of attention from the world's most acclaimed composers: Bach, Handel, Liszt, Mendelssohn, Mozart, to name but a few, set this psalm to music.

The ultimate reason for seeking God is nothing less than the life of his very soul: *quaeram te ut vivat anima mea*. This is the search for a solid foundation, which stands in clear opposition to the inauthenticity of ungrounded commitments. Seeking God is not an easy and indolent excuse for rigorous thinking; on the contrary, it empowers and frees a human being for the task of thinking without subscribing to the Enlightenment's unsubstantiated trust in human reason and calculative rationality. It is precisely the trust in God that intensifies the art of asking primordial questions.

"Psalm 130" offers a generous legitimization of human existence oriented toward God as a form of life. There are other possibilities of this legitimization, including Heidegger's "arrogance of thinking (*Anmaßung des Denkens*)."[5] Following Nietzsche, Heidegger considers philosophy as nothing if it is not arrogant. Furthermore, it should be arrogant as a persistent overbearingness of the human voice. The task of philosophy is to disclose the necessity of a radical reflection in and from itself (*Notwendigkeit einer radikalen Besinnung in ihr selbst und aus ihr selbst heraus*): "Thinking does not overcome metaphysics by climbing still higher, surmounting it, transcending it somehow or other; thinking overcomes metaphysics by climbing back down into the nearness of the nearest." (Heidegger 1977a, 230–231.)

Since hermeneutic truth is the truth of interpretation, we will always understand our human condition in our *status viatoris* in the horizon of human finitude. Our self-knowledge is the knowledge mediated by language, history, and culture.[6] The truth of ourselves unfolds hermeneutically. Being not self-

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5 "Philosophische Forschung ist und bleibt Atheismus, deshalb kann sie sich, die 'Anmaßung des Denkens' leisten, nicht nur wird sie sich sie leisten, sondern sie ist die innere Notwendigkeit der Philosophie und die eigentliche Kraft, und gerade in diesem Atheismus wird sie zu dem, was ein Großer einmal sagte, zur 'Fröhlichen Wissenschaft.'" (Heidegger 1979, 109–110.) The English translation reads: "Philosophical research is and remains atheism, which is why philosophy can allow itself 'the arrogance of thinking.' Not only will it allow itself as much; this arrogance is the inner necessity of philosophy and its true strength. Precisely in this atheism, philosophy becomes what a great man once called the 'Joyful science.'" (Heidegger 1985, 113.) See Amthor 2012. Cf. also Wierciński 2010, 211–219 (i.e., the chapter "From the 'Necessary Atheism of Philosophy' to a Religion beyond Theism and Atheism").

6 For Ricoeur, a human being is a mediated self: "The subject is never given at the beginning. Or, if it were so given it would run the risk of reducing itself to a narcissistic

transparent, we acknowledge our finitude. Seeing ourselves with limited clarity (obscure = ἐν αἰνίγματι = *aenigmaticam*; 1 Cor 13:12: βλέπομεν γὰρ ἄρτι δι᾽ ἐσόπτρου ἐν αἰνίγματι, *Videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate*), we acclaim:

> De profundis clamavi ad te, Domine;
> Domine, exaudi vocem meam. Fiant aures tuæ intendentes
> in vocem deprecationis meæ.

> З глибини я взиваю до Тебе, о Господи: Господи, почуй же мій голос! Нехай уші Твої будуть чулі на голос благання мого!

> Из глубины воззвах к тебе, Господи; Господи, услыши глас мой. Да будут уши твои внемлюще гласу моления моего!

II.

There is a cry from the depths that is not an opening to Transcendence. On the contrary, it is a decisive voice of accepting death as the transgression to nothingness. Moreover, it is a symphony of voices, masterfully put together by Dmitri Shostakovich in his *Fourteenth Symphony*. Shostakovich reportedly answered his critics in *Testimony*:

> They [Critics] read this idea in the Fourteenth Symphony: "Death is all-powerful." They wanted the finale to be comforting, to say that death is only the beginning. But it's not a beginning, it's the real end, there will be nothing afterward, nothing.
> I feel that you must look truth right in the eyes. Often composers haven't had the courage for that, even the greatest ones, like Tchaikovsky or Verdi. Just think of *The Queen of Spades*. Gherman dies and then

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ego, self-centered and avaricious—and it is just this from which literature can liberate us. Our loss on the side of narcissism is our gain on the side of narrative identity. In the place of an ego enchanted by itself a self is born, taught by cultural symbols, first among which are the stories received in the literary tradition. These stories give unity—not unity of substance but narrative wholeness." (Ricoeur 1986, 132.)

comes music which was described by the old cynic Asafiev as "the image of a loving Liza hovering over the corpse." What is that? The corpse is just that, and Liza has nothing to do with it. It doesn't matter to the corpse whose image hovers over it.

Tchaikovsky gave in to the seduction of solace—you know, the best of everything in this best of all possible worlds. Something will hover over your corpse too. Liza's image or some banners. This was a cowardly act on Tchaikovsky's part.

And Verdi did exactly the same thing in *Otello*. Richard Strauss entitled one of his tone poems *Death and Transfiguration*. Even Mussorgsky, certainly a just and courageous man, was afraid to look truth in the face. After Boris's death in *Boris Godunov*, the music moves to such a major key that you can't be any more major.

To deny death and its power is useless. Deny it or not, you'll die anyway. But understanding that is not tantamount to bowing to death. I don't make a cult of death, I don't praise it. Mussorgsky didn't sing the praises of death either. Death in his song cycles looks horrible, and most important, it comes before it should.

It's stupid to protest death as such, but you can and must protest violent death. It's bad when people die before their time from disease or poverty, but it's worse when a man is killed by another man. I thought about all this when I orchestrated *Songs and Dances of Death*, and these thoughts also found reflection in the Fourteenth Symphony. I don't protest against death in it. I protest against those butchers who execute people. (Volkov 1984, 181–182.)

Shostakovich does not shy away from expressing his rage about the political crimes happening at that time. His composition carefully explores the phenomenon of death as it shows itself in human life in all its diversity. His faithful companion is as ever poetry. He reaches to Federico García Lorca.

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De profundis

Los cien enamorados
duermen para siempre
bajo la tierra seca.
Andalucía tiene
largos caminos rojos.
Córdoba, olivos verdes
donde poner cien cruces,
que los recuerden.
Los cien enamorados
duermen para siempre.

De profundis

The hundred lovers
rest forever
in the parched ground.
Travel through Andalusia
long red roads.
Green olive trees stand around Cordoba,
where a hundred crosses are to be erected
to commemorate the dead.
The hundred lovers
rest there forever. (My translation.)

Shostakovich concludes his journey with the poets with the memorable verses by Rainer Maria Rilke from *The Book of Images*:

Der Tod ist groß.
Wir sind die Seinen
lachenden Munds.
Wenn wir uns mitten im Leben meinen,
wagt er zu weinen
mitten in uns.

Death is almighty.
We are its
cackling mouth.
When we perceive ourselves immersed in life,
death ventures to cry
immersed in us. (My translation.)

For Shostakovich, death is indeed almighty, all-powerful: "*Всевластна смерть!*" This truly frightening experience motivated him to compose music by strengthening his relationship with his fellow human beings. The *Fourteenth Symphony* allowed him to come to terms with the inevitability of his own death. The emotional emptiness of this prelude is typical of a grief that is so exhausted that it cannot even speak its name. There are many ways to commemorate the death: a gravestone, a simple cross, or a symbolic reminder. As a tribute to all who have died in pain, Shostakovich offers his music to the memory of others. Like Miłosz in the poem "You Who Wronged":

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You who wronged a simple man
Bursting into laughter at the crime,
And kept a pack of fools around you
To mix good and evil, to blur the line,

Though everyone bowed down before you,
Saying virtue and wisdom lit your way,
Striking gold medals in your honor,
Glad to have survived another day,

Do not feel safe. The poet remembers.
You can kill one, but another is born.
The words are written down, the deed, the date.

And you'd have done better with a winter dawn,
A rope, and a branch bowed beneath your weight.

Washington, D.C., 1950 (Miłosz 2001, 103.)

Poetry and music allow their compositional instability, (dis)harmony, and tension to evoke the uncertainty, pain, and suffering that is caused by war. Listening today to Shostakovich, it is difficult not to feel his wise indication (*formale Anzeige*) of the demoralizing senselessness, emptiness, and inhumanity of any war.

Shostakovich brilliantly shows through the way he modifies poetic verses he uses and brings them together with music that human life is one cycle; the end is the beginning. Taking seriously the univocal notion of death as the permanent cessation of the integrated functioning of the human being in the world, Shostakovich firmly believed that Art will last forever.

III.

And there is another cry from the depth: Oscar Wilde's *De Profundis* (cf. Wilde 1994, 980–1059). A long letter to "Bosie" (Lord Alfred Bruce Douglas) is a monological journey of discovery through self-interpretation, a pilgrimage to the source of artistic vocation and creativity.

Like Boethius's *De consolatione philosophiae* (cf. Boethius 2022) written in 523 A.D., in one-year imprisonment, while awaiting his trial, Oscar Wilde's *De Profundis* is a letter from H. M. Prison Reading authored between January and March 1897, "*in carcere et vinculis.*" It is difficult not to see the reference to St. Paul's "Letter to the Ephesians," where the Apostle writes to the pagans (6:20): "ὑπὲρ οὗ πρεσβεύω ἐν ἁλύσει, ἵνα ἐν αὐτῷ παρρησιάσωμαι ὡς δεῖ με λαλῆσαι." In King James's translation, we read: "For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak."

Oscar Wilde writes from the prison with a clear state of mind: he is the real Elder (πρεσβεύω), respected as trustworthy, loyal, and knowledgeable, an absolute genius who can boldly express what needs to be said in this horrible hour of distress and need. He gives powerful testimony to the fundamental bond between the truth spoken and the thought of his own life. His confident address (παρρησία) expresses his unreservedness in speech. It is "a modality of truth-telling"[7] Wilde does not offer in his letter one overriding argument.

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7 "Parrhesia is not a skill; it is something which is harder to define. It is a stance, a way of being which is akin to a virtue, a mode of action. Parrhesia involves ways of acting, means

Since it is a genuine self-discovery, the letter gives him an opportunity to look at his life and love from different perspectives. He boldly states: "I made art a philosophy, and philosophy an art."

De Profundis is a hermeneutic reading of Wilde's life *par excellence*. He examines the events in his life, not for the sake of reliving them as they were, but to experience them in their *Wirkungsgeschichte*. It is not a form of *Wiederleben* and *Nachleben* but experiencing them as the events that formed and transformed his life. Writing the letter is a very constructive and productive process of unweaving his life. It is definitely not a conceptual undertaking toward producing a rational narrative of his life. The coherent narrative embraces all the conflicting interpretations that are not aiming at reaching a final conclusion, but rather present an unstable equilibrium in his life. Since weaving historically was perceived as a predominantly female activity, unweaving offers a more gender-inclusive vision of a human being as an acting and suffering person (*l'homme agissant et souffrant*).[8] *De Profundis* is very intimate and intense, and it is precisely because of its particularity that it is universal. It does not offer any magisterial reading of life but invites every reader to work on the meaning of life, and follow the logic of one's life story while telling the truth of being in the world with Others. It is this *incommunicabilis proprietas* that is proper to a person as a single individual. Wilde is very conscious of creating a participatory ethos by embracing endless possibilities of interpretation without prioritizing a particular reading *ex-cathedra*.

For Plato (Book X of *The Republic)*, "poetical limitations are ruinous to the understanding of the hearers, and the knowledge of their true nature is the only antidote to them." In a conversation with Glaucon, Socrates laments the temptation of the beautiful verses and calls Homer "the great captain and teacher of the whole of that charming, tragic company." It is precisely in this context

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brought together with a view to an end, and in this respect it has, of course, something to do with technique, but it is also a role which is useful, valuable, and indispensable for the city and for individuals. Parrhesia should be regarded as a modality of truth-telling, rather than [as a] technique [like] rhetoric." (Foucault 2012, 14.)

8 In her 2007 poem cycle *Niemands Frau*, Barbara Köhler returns to Homer's *Odyssey*. By offering her reading of Penelope's unweaving of Laertes's shroud, she provides an alternative to a teleological meaning behind Odysseus's inner journey home. See Köhler and Wolfensberger 2007. Cf. Paul 2013 and Johnson 2019.

that Socrates makes his famous statement that "a man is not to be reverenced more than the truth" (Hofstadter and Kuhns 1976, 30). Reexamining his life, Wilde attributed Bosie's negative influence on him to his lover's lack of artistic integrity and intellectual rigor. The most devastating thing was the lack of the synthesis of life and work. Acknowledging the intellectual potential as well as the danger of the paradoxes, Wilde can consistently repeat: "Life imitates Art far more than Art imitates Life." (*The Decay of Lying*; in Wilde 1994, 1071–1092). It is a very gloomy prospect when there is not much to imitate.

De Profundis is a hymn to love in prose as delightful and moving as Edith Piaf's song:[9]

> If the sky should fall into the sea
> And the stars fade all around me
> Of the time that we have known dear
> I will sing a hymn to love
> We have lived and reigned we two alone
> In a world that's hinder very own
> With its memory ever grateful
> Just for you, I'll sing a hymn to love
>
> I remember each embrace
> The smile that lights your face
> And my heart begins to sing
> Your arm, the hands secure
> Your eyes that said "be sure"
> And my heart begins to sing
>
> If one day we had to say goodbye
> And our love should fade away and die
> In my heart, you will remain, dear
> And I'll sing a hymn to love

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9 "Hymne à l'amour" was translated into English as "Hymn to Love" by Eddie Constantine. Edith Piaf recorded it on her album *La Vie En Rose. Édith Piaf Sings in English* (1956).

Those who love will live eternally
In the blue, where all is harmony
With my voice raised high to Heaven
Just for you, I'll sing a hymn to love

He unites all those who loved before … (Piaf 2022.)

Some readers might be tempted to call Wilde a secular Messiah. His most significant question was about liberating a human being toward being free to address everything that transgresses simple boundaries carefully established by different close-minded cultures and streams of thought. His distaste for inauthenticity and social cowardliness was constantly and carefully nourished by a symbiosis of life and art in order to intensify the feeling of being alive in the world. The whole world was a stage to him. Performing on this stage was his highest vocation, both in terms of living his life to the fullest and writing his most memorable pieces. Consistently living up to his maxim that the best way to resist temptation is to yield to it, Wilde's life and love are nurtured by the imagination. Its indisputable potential builds pathways of creativity and responsivity (also responsibility) in human ways of dealing with the challenges of the increasingly polarized world.

> Love is fed by the imagination, by which we become wiser than we know, better than we feel, nobler than we are: by which we can see Life as a whole: by which, and by which alone, we can understand others in their real as in their ideal relations. Only what is fine, and finely conceived, can feed Love. But anything will feed Hate. (*De Profundis*.)[10]

Wilde's comparing himself to Christ is a reference at the deepest ethical level: like Christ, he wants to achieve the betterment of society by educating people toward reinterpreting the values in their lives. His initial self-pity turns into pitying the crowd that pitied him:

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10 Cf. Prewitt Brown 1997.

Everything about my tragedy has been hideous, mean, repellent, lacking in style. Our very dress makes us grotesques. We are the zanies of sorrow. We are clowns whose hearts are broken. We are specially designed to appeal to the sense of humour. On November 13th 1895 I was brought down here from London. From two o'clock till half-past two on that day I had to stand on the centre platform of Clapham Junction in convict dress and handcuffed, for the world to look at. I had been taken out of the Hospital Ward without a moment's notice being given to me. Of all possible objects I was the most grotesque. When people saw me they laughed. Each train as it came up swelled the audience. Nothing could exceed their amusement. That was of course before they knew who I was. As soon as they had been informed, they laughed still more. For half an hour I stood there in the grey November rain surrounded by a jeering mob.

For a year after that was done to me I wept every day at the same hour and for the same space of time. That is not such a tragic thing as possibly it sounds to you. To those who are in prison, tears are a part of every day's experience. A day in prison on which one does not weep is a day on which one's heart is hard, not a day on which one's heart is happy.

Well, now I am really beginning to feel more regret for the people who laughed than for myself. Of course when they saw me I was not on my pedestal. I was in the pillory. But it is a very unimaginative nature that only cares for people on their pedestals. A pedestal may be a very unreal thing. A pillory is a terrific reality. They should have known also how to interpret sorrow better. I have said that behind Sorrow there is always Sorrow. It were still wiser to say that behind sorrow there is always a soul. And to mock at a soul in pain is a dreadful thing. Unbeautiful are their lives who do it. In the strangely simple economy of the world people only get what they give, and to those who have not enough imagination to penetrate the mere outward of things and feel pity, what pity can be given save that of scorn?

I have told you this account of the mode of my being conveyed here simply that you should realise how hard it has been for me to get anything out of my punishment but bitterness and despair. I have however to do

it, and now and then I have moments of submission and acceptance. All the spring may be hidden in a single bud, and the low ground-nest of the lark may hold the joy that is to herald the feet of many rose-red dawns, and so perhaps whatever beauty of life still remains to me is contained in some moment of surrender, abasement and humiliation. I can, at any rate, merely proceed on the lines of my own development, and by accepting all that has happened to me make myself worthy of it.

People used to say of me that I was too individualistic. I must be far more of an individualist than I ever was. I must get far more out of myself than I ever got, and ask far less of the world than I ever asked. Indeed my ruin came, not from too great individualism of life, but from too' little. The one disgraceful, unpardonable, and to all time contemptible action of my life was my allowing myself to be forced into appealing to Society for help and protection against your father. To have made such an appeal against anyone would have been from the individualistic point of view bad enough, but what excuse can there ever be put forward for having made it against one of such nature and aspect? (*De Profundis*.)

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Wilde, as the troubadour of the sanctity of human relations, composes and sings the glory of friendship, the glory of connection between friends like David and Jonathan,[11] and the drama of the relationship between Casius and Brutus, Judas and Jesus. Wilde's sensitivity to the contingency of fate, especially with regard to friendship, helps him to treasure the value of friendship despite unfaithfulness and betrayal. While in prison, Wilde tried to find solace and friendship in reading and occasionally in writing. He is a reminder and testimony to the fierce appetite for the culture of questioning, for addressing the question of what it means to question the question without subscribing to the established patterns of thought toward the primordial practice of thinking, the piety of thinking (*Frömmigkeit des Denkens*).[12]

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11 For the influence of 1 and 2 Samuel on Oscar Wilde, see Harding 2013, 403–406.
12 At the end of his essay "The Question Concerning Technology" (*Die Frage nach der Technik*), Heidegger states: "Thus questioning, we bear witness to the crisis that in our sheer preoccupation with technology we do not yet experience the coming to

"The Love that dare not speak its name" in this century is such a great affection of an elder for a younger man as there was between David and Jonathan, such as Plato made the very basis of his philosophy, and such as you find in the sonnets of Michelangelo and Shakespeare. It is that deep, spiritual affection that is as pure as it is perfect. It dictates and pervades great works of art like those of Shakespeare and Michelangelo, and those two letters of mine, such as they are. It is in this century misunderstood, so much misunderstood that it may be described as the "Love that dare not speak its name," and on account of it I am placed where I am now. It is beautiful, it is fine, it is the noblest form of affection. There is nothing unnatural about it. It is intellectual, and it repeatedly exists between an elder and a younger man, when the elder man has intellect, and the younger man has all the joy, hope and glamour of life before him. That it should be so, the world does not understand. The world mocks at it and sometimes puts one in the pillory for it. (*De Profundis*.)[13]

Oscar Wilde teaches contemporary readers that life of the mind and love will save humanity. His life was devoted to the moral imperative of Beauty. Its summoning power and an arresting quality form and transform us. Receiving and transmitting the love frequency in the sympathetic resonance (*vibration sympathetique*), we can sensitize our tuning to the vibrations in the cosmos and let them have their way.

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Being discloses itself in the Beautiful as a powerful interplay of ἀλήθεια, of concealment and unconcealment (*Verbergung/Entbergung*). In the happening

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presence of technology, that in our sheer aesthetic-mindedness we no longer guard and preserve the coming to presence of art. Yet the more questioningly we ponder the essence of technology, the more mysterious the essence of art becomes. The closer we come to the danger, the more brightly do the ways into the saving power begin to shine and the more questioning we become. For questioning is the piety of thought (*das Fragen ist die Frömmigkeit des Denkens*)." (Heidegger 1977b, 35.) See Beck 2017.
13 Lord Alfred Douglas's poem "Two Loves" was first published in *The Chameleon* in December 1894. For Wilde's trial, cf. Wilde 2022.

of unconcealment (*Unverborgenheit*), Being's self-disclosure is brought to shine (φαινέσθαι).[14] Since "the horizon of interpretation changes constantly, just as our visual horizon also varies with every step that we take" (Gadamer 2006, 61), the Beautiful is the self-attesting radiance of truth.

Reading a text is a spiritual exercise of patient discovery of the world of the text that is mysteriously unveiling in front of our very eyes. Inhabiting the world of the text is the most challenging exercise for an artist who, like the virtuoso, finds the path through the labyrinth of meaning to arrive at home. This homecoming does not have a singular meaning. On the contrary, it is interpreted in every instance anew. And the necessity to interpret and face the interpretation discloses the inescapability of hermeneutics. Hermeneutic generosity, which happens in the tension between sympathy and critique, is not so much a question of the gracious and benevolent attitude of the reader toward the text, but the intellectual and moral imperative *par excellence*.

Hermeneutic reading is a serious engagement with the Other that has a powerful transformative character. It forms and transforms the reader. It discloses before the reader the world of the text that is always bigger than the world of the author and the reader. This disclosure is a graceful reminder that there is always something new that will uncover in front of us. Thus, the task of interpretation is an infinite task. And we are invited to participate in listening to the disclosure of Tradition and speak in a voice that expresses what needs to be said here and now. It will never be a final word, never a closure, but always a disclosure, which calls for further unfolding. We are the guardians and caretakers of this revealing word (*Wächter und Hüter des Wortes*) and, thus, put in charge of carrying it with uttermost attention and love.

A hermeneutic reading of literature opens before the reader the world of the text. It encourages a rigorous and critical engagement with the text and the world of the text as well as the world of the reader without subscribing to established and thus predictable ways of interpretation. The unpredictability of literary engagement is not a postulate for the sake of achieving liberation from

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14 The happening of truth (*Geschehen der Wahrheit*) is an event, not only at the origin of the work of art, but also in every case, when the artwork is interpreted in its *Wirkungsgeschichte*. See Lammi 1991. See also Dostal 2021.

the conventional and obvious, but an insight into the nature of understanding that calls for openness toward the unknown, unexpected, and even conflicting interpretations. Since the interpretation always begins from within a history of interpretation, what we understand is the meaning of the original text in its *Wirkungsgeschichte.* Literature as an infusion of beauty in life offers us the unprecedented opportunity of investigating, questioning, and reinventing ourselves. It gives us a chance to entertain different possibilities of maturing as human beings and exploring our identities by narrating our own life stories. We can increase our understanding of ourselves and the world by getting educated through literature. Literature can assist us in our existential task of facing life and in our lifelong self-education, not in the sense of cumulating more knowledge about ourselves and the world, but in the sense of understanding ourselves. Gadamer believes that we can only learn through conversation.[15] In such conversation, our social world has its growing possibilities. And only in conversation does language fulfill itself.

If reading literature will help us to grasp the hermeneutic nature of self-knowledge, to become uneasy about apparently easy and self-explanatory meanings, to get attentive and diligent in close reading, then we will sharpen our engagement with reality that permanently escapes being put into words. Hermeneutic reading is a vocation (*vocatio*) and, as such, is a response to the call of the Other. Thus, it is not limited to the reading of the text, but the totality of human existence in the world with the Other and everything that calls for understanding. Hermeneutic reading as *vocation* embraces *invocatio* et *provocatio*. It is a call from the Other that requires responsivity and responsibility. A hermeneutic reading is an ethical activity. Experiencing the polyphonic character of understanding and interpretation, and witnessing the conflict of interpretations, a hermeneutician is convinced that no single interpretation can exhaust the irreducible excess of meaning. Therefore, a hermeneutic

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15 Cf. Gadamer 2002. "The Gadamerian notion of conversation is of considerable significance to the contemporary philosophy of education. Like in a genuine conversation, the participants in the event of education learn from each other by listening to each other. In that respect, education promotes a culture of listening to each other. In a genuine conversation, we situate the understanding of the other in the horizon of our own understanding." (Wierciński 2019, 267–268.)

reading is a participation in the infinite task of interpretation by offering a reading that invites subsequent readings instead of suffocating the voices that sound unfamiliar and strange. Attempting to understand what the text says means constantly reflecting on our presuppositions and preunderstandings and placing what needs to be understood in its *Wirkungsgeschichte*.

Oscar Wild's decay of lying "as an art, a science, and a social pleasure" persuasively discloses that:

> […] what is interesting about people in good society […] is the mask that each one of them wears, not the reality that lies behind the mask. It is a humiliating confession, but we are all of us made out of the same stuff. (*The Decay of Lying.*)

His painful constatation that the "dreadful universal thing called human nature" is "a most depressing and humiliating reality," and it means that we "differ from each other purely in accidentals" (ibid.). Unfortunately, we put far too much stress on analyzing those differences in accidentals instead of living "the highest art [that] rejects the burden of the human spirit" (ibid.). The term "the narcissism of small differences" (*Narzissmus der kleinen Differenzen*), as coined by Freud (1991, 131, 305), describes the tension between close groups wanting to (over)emphasize details of differentiation. Freud's *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (*Civilization and Its Discontents*) deals with the uneasiness in the culture by highlighting the clash between the desire for individuality and the expectations of society. A hermeneutic reading that is genuinely faithful to detail helps one understand the importance of differences without falling prey to narcissistic tendencies. Neither simple multiplication of distinctions and differences for the sake of making them and fighting over them for the pleasure of fighting nor an artificial avoidance of differentiation, in order to evade tension and conflict, can serve as sound advice. What can successfully lead us through the long routes of interpretation is the logic of an argument elaborated on in the horizon of an unstable equilibrium.

"Hermeneutics and Literature" appears as a double issue of *Phainomena*. It is always a pleasure to work with and for this journal, especially in a precious collaboration with Dr. Andrej Božič. We are very grateful to the authors from around

the globe who worked with us toward bringing together different expressions of the word's innate power with its claim that captivates us as writers and readers. We are indebted to the reviewers whose discrete influence is felt by authors and editors. It is because of the dedicated work of so many scholars that we are able to offer a hermeneutic voice for the critical reception of literature. "Hermeneutics and Literature" is not a question of (un)disciplined interdisciplinarity, but rather an insight into a hermeneutic nature of understanding that requires disciplined transdisciplinarity. We hope that reading literature in this destitute time (*dürftige Zeit*) will help us to understand that virtually any time is a destitute time. Our radical responsibility is to recognize that *our time* is the opportune time (καιρός) to respond to the voices that speak to us.

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Parentheses of Reception
What are Philologists for in a Destitute Time?

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Abstract

The encounter between received poetic traditions and rational critique appears to characterize reception itself as an interruption. The tradition impinges on present discourse and calls for an evaluation in terms of the present. Regarded as such, reception requires a translation that would negotiate the relationship. The consequence of formulating the question of reception in this way is that the received past subsists parenthetically, inserted into the present while remaining somehow apart from the

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present. An especially provocative illustration of the disruptive and parenthetic nature of reception, including the strategies of translation that it instigates, can be found in the life and work of Martin Heidegger who, perhaps more than any other philosopher of the twentieth century, persistently reflected on the interchange between poetic tradition and thinking.

Keywords: tradition, reception, translation, parenthesis, M. Heidegger.

Parenteze recepcije. Čemu filologi v ubožnem času?

Povzetek

Zdi se, da srečanje med sprejetimi pesniškimi tradicijami in racionalno kritiko recepcijo sámo zaznačuje kot prekinitev. Tradicija se dotakne sedanjega diskurza in kliče ovrednotenje z vidika sedanjosti. Kot takšna, recepcija zahteva prevod, ki se spoprime s tovrstnim razmerjem. Posledica takšne opredelitve vprašanja recepcije je, da sprejeta preteklost obstaja parentetično, vključena je v sedanjost, čeprav je od nje hkrati nekako razločena. Posebej provokativno ponazoritev prelomne in parentetične narave recepcije, zaobsegajočo tudi strategije prevajanja, je mogoče najti v življenju in delu Martina Heideggra, ki je vztrajno, morda bolj kot katerikoli drugi filozof dvajsetega stoletja, reflektiral medsebojni odnos med pesniško tradicijo in mišljenjem.

Ključne besede: tradicija, recepcija, prevod, parenteza, M. Heidegger.

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The encounter between received poetic traditions and rational critique (what Plato's Socrates memorably referred to as "the ancient quarrel between poetry and philosophy" [παλαιά τις διαφορὰ φιλοσοφίᾳ τε καὶ ποιητικῇ, *Rep.* 10, 607b]) would appear to characterize reception itself as an interruption. The tradition impinges on present discourse and calls for an evaluation in terms of the present. Regarded as such, reception requires a translation that would negotiate the relationship. In the *Republic*, this translative management consists in receiving the *what-is* of the past and conceiving it in terms of a present *what-for*. Accordingly, Socrates's interrogation of the traditional poets *in absentia* turns on the question of purpose: What are poets for in the ideal city?

As the following essay suggests, the consequence of formulating the question of reception in this way is that the received past subsists *parenthetically*, inserted into the present while remaining somehow apart from the present: a relationship of "difference" or "variance" (διαφορά) between the *what-is* of the past and the *what-for* of the present. An especially provocative illustration of the disruptive and parenthetic nature of reception, including the strategies of translation that it instigates, can be found in the life and work of Martin Heidegger who, perhaps more than any other philosopher of the twentieth century, persistently reflected on the interchange between poetic tradition and thinking.

1.

On December 29, 1926, the writing of poetry and the act of thinking—*Dichten und Denken*—suffered a temporary setback. In the early morning hours of this winter's day, at the Clinique Valmont, a sanatorium nestled in the Swiss Alpine landscape of Glion-sur-Montreux, Rainer Maria Rilke passed away gently in the arms of his doctor. Three days later, on the New Year, Martin Heidegger learned of the poet's death while paying a visit to Karl Jaspers in Heidelberg. It had been Heidegger's intention to finish reviewing the galleys of the first volume of his major work, *Sein und Zeit*, as well as complete the draft of the project's continuation; but that plan suddenly came to a halt.

Fourteen years later, in 1941, during his lecture course on the *Metaphysics of German Idealism*, Heidegger interrupted his conceptual presentation to recount what happened:

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(The decision to break off the publication [of *Sein und Zeit*] was made on the day when the news of R. M. Rilke's death reached us. —Certainly, at the time I was of the opinion that over the course of the year I could say everything more clearly. That was a delusion.)[1]

The casual remark to his students, sequestered within the brackets of a parenthesis, is striking. Heidegger's terseness and the light cover of the passive voice, the misguided conviction and the acknowledged self-deception—all invite conjecture. What, we might ask, is the parenthesis for?

The bracketed reminiscence poses at least three principal questions.

The first is *intrinsic*: How should we read the coincidence between Rilke's death and Heidegger's decision to stop writing? Is the relation causal or are the two events merely fortuitous? Is the intrusion from real life simply accidental or does it not, perhaps, point to something more essential, something more substantive in regard to the philosophical work?

The second question is *extrinsic*: How does this personal anecdote of 1927 connect to the 1941 lecture, in which it is recounted? Is this autobiographical information useful, illustrating the matter under discussion, or is it just a curious digression, possibly seductive, leading us down a false path or *Holzweg*? Incidental or not, it is immediately clear that both questions, intrinsic and extrinsic, entail an interruption of sorts. Just as the death announcement in 1927 interfered with Heidegger's publishing agenda, so does the personal recollection in 1941 detain the philosophical presentation at hand. Just as Rilke's passing coincided with the suspension of Heidegger's project, so does the recollection of this postponement, fourteen years later, temporarily delay the professor's explication of German Idealism.

The brief story about an interruption in the past thus interrupts the philosophical argument in the present, which leads finally to the third question: How do these two disruptions relate to each other? Are they thematically analogous, somehow complementary, or are they merely structurally similar?

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1 "(Der Entschluß zum Abbruch der Veröffentlichung wurde gefaßt an dem Tage, als uns die Nachricht vom Tode R. M. Rilkes traf. – Allerdings war ich damals der Meinung, übers Jahr schon alles deutlicher sagen zu können. Das war eine Täuschung.)" (Heidegger 1991, 40.)

The complexity seems to lie in the general nature of *parentheses*. Like every *parenthesis*, the note is placed *into* the text, *en-thetically*, yet as something that appears simultaneously *off to the side*, *para-thetically.* The positing or *thesis* is both *in* and *beside* the current discourse, both *en* and *para*, a part of the whole while being apart from the whole. This double aspect makes it difficult to ascertain how any parenthesis relates to the main argument. For this reason, Pierre Fontanier advises that one should always be cautious in employing a parenthesis, since it "tends necessarily to produce encumbrance, obscurity, confusion."[2] Again, what purpose, we might ask, does Heidegger's parenthesis serve? Is he trying to confuse us? Is he trying to be obscure? What are the grounds for this encapsulated account, which ventures to overstep the very boundaries of the discourse, in which it is embedded? Does the anecdote offer anything more than a simple case of synchronicity, a somewhat uncanny concurrence, a *by-the-way* that Heidegger pauses to say on the way to thinking?

On the face of things, the interruption in 1941 is perfectly justified. Within the context of his lecture on the "concept of existence," the parenthetical note helps Heidegger explain why his mode of ontological inquiry became subject to gross misinterpretation. The reason, he claims, is quite simple: he never published the subsequent parts of *Being and Time,* his most well-known work. As he explains, on the day he learned of Rilke's death, he shelved the project; and if he had persisted, he might have pre-empted the confusion that followed. All the same, the turn to this autobiographical episode is somewhat odd, insofar as Heidegger opened this very lecture by warning explicitly against conflating the concept of existence with ontic notions of human "subjectivity" and "personality." Thinking, Heidegger just insisted, must be directed towards Being and not towards the personality of the thinker. The philosopher's life must be bracketed out in considering the philosopher's work. And yet it is precisely at this point in his lecture that Heidegger inserts a bracketed account from his personal life.

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2 "Mais par cela même qu'elle interrompt le discours, et qu'elle détourne pour un moment l'attention de son objet principal, elle [la Parenthèse] tend nécessairement à produire l'embarras, l'obscurité, la confusion." (Fontanier 1977 385.)

It is often presumed that Heidegger consistently discouraged appeals to biography in philosophical investigations. The evidence for this claim is invariably taken from the introductory lecture to his course on the *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, held during the summer semester of 1924 at Marburg: "Regarding the personality of a philosopher, this alone is of interest: he was born at such and such a time, he worked and died." (Heidegger 2009, 4; translation modified.)[3] The particular circumstances of the thinker's life are taken to be inconsequential, irrelevant for understanding a thinker's thought. Needless to say, for later critics of Heidegger, divorcing the philosopher's work from his personal history can only be seen as a ruse. The political stakes, of course, are high. Should one dismiss the news of Rilke's death as an insignificant coincidence in regard to the trajectory of Heidegger's thinking, then one might go so far as to feel justified in separating Heidegger's philosophy as a whole from the circumstances of his life, including, above all, any complicity with the National Socialist regime. Heidegger's many detractors, to this day, would argue otherwise. That Heidegger's parenthetical reminiscence occurs in 1941 should give one serious pause. Even if, or especially because, Heidegger would reject seeing any causal link between his work and his personal life, the fact that he inscribes an autobiographical remark, parenthetically, in the midst of his lecture, should be taken into account. After all, what Heidegger wants to bracket out, appears, but appears, of course, in brackets. The phenomenological *epochē* is performed, but not so that one may regard a matter more purely. Rather, the bracketing takes place so that what is bracketed itself stands in full view, hiding in plain sight.

Quintilian defines *parenthesis* as a figure of thought (*figura sententiae*), which occurs "when some thought in the middle interrupts the continuation of a discourse" (*cum continuationi sermonis medius aliqui sensus intervenit*, *Inst. orat.* 9, 3.23). In modern typography, this interruption is generally marked by brackets which introduce a further element of difference or heteronomy vis-à-vis the body of the text (cf. Authier-Revuz 1984). If a parenthesis does indeed always constitute some kind of intrusion, then the news of Rilke's death has

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3 "Bei der Persönlichkeit eines Philosophen hat nur das Interesse: Er war dann und dann geboren, er arbeitete und starb." (Heidegger 2002, 5.)

always been parenthetical: first appearing concretely, in 1927, at the moment when Heidegger abandoned his plans; and then appearing as a memory, in 1941, at the moment when Heidegger digressed from his lecture. In both the recounted episode and in the recounting, Rilke's death, including the impact it might or might not have had on Heidegger's personal life, infringes on thinking. But again, what purpose might this intrusion have? What might it tell us about the connection between poetry and thinking, *Dichten und Denken*, or, for that matter, between thinking and life, between thinking and death?

To be sure, a bracketed statement need not be interpreted solely as an included exclusion. In the rhetorical tradition, a *parenthesis* is generally regarded as a type of amplification that assumes many useful, integrative functions: to provide supplemental information, to make a relevant qualification, or to furnish a clarifying specification. At times, a parenthesis can be employed to announce a theme to be expanded afterward, at some later point. In all these examples, the parenthesis is a rhetorical technique that fills in the text. Still, precisely by supplementing the text, the parenthesis implies that the text would be otherwise deficient or wanting, in need of completion. Moreover, the bracketing of a portion of the past is emphatically selective: it brackets out the rest of the past. This gesture is typical for any classical program which selects from the entirety of antiquity only that which is deemed of superior value. In formulating its canon and prescriptive poetics, the classicizing poet implies that antiquity would be deficient without his artistic-critical labor.

Tellingly, in the 1941 lecture, Heidegger leads up to the parenthetical anecdote by confessing that, in 1927, he came to realize that his draft for the continuation of *Being and Time* was "insufficient" (*unzureichend*). Was it the news of Rilke's death that caused Heidegger to come to this difficult assessment? And is the later evocation of the obituary meant to address this insufficiency? In hindsight, could Rilke's passing finally be taken as a sufficient reason for thinking otherwise, as *ein zureichender Grund* for a project once deemed *unzureichend*? The question now is: What is the poet for? Or rather: What is the poet's death for? What kind of ground might it supply? As Heidegger himself might ask: Is the author in full control of this technique or does the technique threaten to undermine his intentions?

2.

Regarding the personality of a philosopher, this alone is of interest: he was born at such and such a time, he worked and died. As mentioned, Heidegger's notorious restriction on biographical criticism comes across as a parenthetical aside in the introductory session of his 1924 course on Aristotle's fundamental concepts or *Grundbegriffe*. The opening methodological comment on Aristotle's life is intended to dissuade his students from striving to construct a coherent philosophical system based on the notion that the philosopher was a masterful subject exercising complete technical control over his concepts. Instead, Heidegger wants to investigate how many of Aristotle's terms came to be formed from words that already existed in customary usage and how this common usage, rooted in a distinctively Greek experience, continued to qualify the terminological usage in essential ways. To this end, Heidegger endorses an approach that differs from conventional philosophy:

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> What must be seen is the *ground* [or *soil*: *Boden*] out of which these fundamental concepts have grown, and *how* they have grown, i.e., the fundamental concepts should be considered in their *specific conceptuality*, so that we may ask, *how the matters themselves meant here are seen, whereupon they are addressed, in which way they are determined.* If we bring this point of view to bear on the matter, we shall enter into the setting [*Milieu*] that is meant by concept and conceptuality. The fundamental concepts are to be understood in regard to their conceptuality, and specifically with the purpose [*Absicht*] of *gaining insight into the fundamental demands of all scholarly research.* Here, it is not philosophy being offered or even a history of philosophy. If *philology* means: the *passion for knowledge of what has been expressed* [*and of what expresses itself*], then what we are doing is philology.[4]

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4 "Es muß gesehen werden der *Boden*, aus dem diese Grundbegriffe erwachsen, und

The phenomenological thrust of these remarks is clear. The concepts that are to be examined—"the matters themselves," *die Sachen selbst*—must be allowed to show themselves. This passive imperative—*es muß gesehen werden*—cannot be accomplished by regarding Aristotle's key terms solely as abstract expressions that have been cognitively deployed by the philosopher. Rather, the words must be seen as subsisting within a concrete context and possessing a certain degree of agency. In Heidegger's view, the aim is *philological*, insofar as it engages in a reading that directs us toward the midst of things, to the living *milieu*, where we may attend to the very soil that underlies and nourishes philosophical research. It enables us to draw closer to what Aristotle confronted, to enter upon the path that his thinking has opened up for us. We must detect not simply meaning, but rather how that meaning initially came to be formed. As Heidegger underscores throughout the lecture course, we are too distant from the being-in-the-world that pervades Aristotle's language. And so, we must approach the distinctive soil that gave rise to the concepts that appear in his texts; we must approach the original Greek experience of Being; and we must do so, finally, from our own historical position, motivated by philology, by "the passion for knowledge of what has been expressed and of what expresses itself."

For Heidegger, the task of the translator does not merely consist in transposing concepts from one language into another. Rather, it is the translator who must be translated, transported into a foreign domain of experience, while remaining aware of the gaps that prevent any perfect, transparent translation.[5]

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wie sie erwachsen sind, d.h., die Grundbegriffe sollen betrachtet werden auf ihre *spezifische Begrifflichkeit*, so daß wir fragen, *wie die da gemeinten Sachen selbst gesehen sind, woraufhin sie angesprochen werden, in welcher Weise sie bestimmt sind*. Wenn wir diese Gesichtspunkte an die Sache heranbringen, werden wir in das Milieu dessen gelangen, was mit Begriff und Begrifflichkeit gemeint ist. Die Grundbegriffe sind im Hinblick auf ihre Begrifflichkeit zu verstehen, und zwar in der Absicht, *Einblick zu gewinnen in die Grunderfordernisse jeglicher wissenschaftlichen Forschung*. Es wird hier *keine Philosophie* oder gar Philosophiegeschichte geboten. Wenn *Philologie* besagt: die *Leidenschaft der Erkenntnis des Ausgesprochenen* [*und des Sichaussprechens*], dann ist das, was wir treiben, Philologie." (Heidegger 2002, 333; emphasis in text; the bracketed phrase is taken from Heidegger's handwritten note.)

5 See Heidegger's remarks in his 1942/1943 lectures on Parmenides (cf. Heidegger 1992, 16).

The dismissal of the thinker's biography and personality, therefore, does not reject the role of history or especially the meaning that history should have for us. The philological aim is most emphatically *our* aim, *our* passion. It encourages us to read what is there in its being-there within the limits of our own facticity, which together comprise the "hermeneutic situation." Philology, Heidegger would say, is historical without being historiographical. It does not strive to accumulate information objectively and neutrally in a technical, calculating manner.[6] On the contrary, philology is an impassioned enterprise that remains fully aware of its "presuppositions," including above all a pronounced "faith in history," by which "we presuppose that *history and the historical past, insofar as the way is made clear for it, have the possibility of giving a jolt to the present or, better, to the future.*"[7] For Heidegger, this collision of the present and the past is precisely what motivates the "passion"—the *Leidenschaft*—that is philology.

Thus, Heidegger reiterates his approach:

> The lecture has no philosophical aim at all; it is concerned with understanding fundamental concepts in their conceptuality. The aim is *philological*; it intends to bring the *reading* of philosophers somewhat more into practice.[8]

Heidegger's intention to replace philosophy with philology belongs to an overarching project that would continue to characterize his career—namely, the dismantling or de-structuring (*Destruktion*) of the philosophical and theological systematizations that have been layered upon original events of thinking. The case of Aristotle is exemplary, insofar as the Aristotelian corpus

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6 Heidegger's definition of the historiographical is provided in the Parmenides course (cf. Heidegger 1992, 94).

7 "[…] den *Glauben an die Geschichte* in dem Sinne, daß wir voraussetzen, daß *Geschichte und geschichtliche Vergangenheit, sofern ihr nur die Bahn frei gemacht wird, die Möglichkeit hat, einer Gegenwart oder besser Zukunft einen Stoß zu versetzen.*" (Heidegger 2002, 6.)

8 "Die Vorlesung hat gar keine philosophische Abzweckung, es handelt sich um das Verständnis von Grundbegriffen in ihrer Begrifflichkeit. Die Abzweckung ist *philologisch*, sie will das Lesen von Philosophen etwas mehr in Übung bringen." (Heidegger 2002, 5.)

has been entirely integrated into a formidable metaphysical tradition beginning with Aquinas and continuing across the centuries. Aristotle, so to speak, has been buried alive; and Heidegger, in an Orphic key, wants to recover the event of his thinking—to bring the ancient philosopher, and with him the Greek experience of being-there, back to the light of day.

To this end, Heidegger explicates key terms through textual cross-references and etymological speculations. At times, he turns to the ancient glosses of Themistius or the late antique commentaries by Simplicius of Cilicia; he occasionally considers the critical apparatus prepared by modern textual critics; yet he brackets out, so to speak, all the scholastic interpretations and philosophical histories that have gathered around Aristotle's language and smothered it beneath the weight of cogent erudition. In this regard, Heidegger's philology is not only Orphic, but also resonates with the Lutheran criterion of *sola scriptura*. Aristotle thus comes across as "his own interpreter" (*sui ipsius interpres*).[9] Leery of any universal or Catholic authority that aims on fixing the discourse and stabilizing its terms, Heidegger insists on listening to the text as he hears it, philologically and passionately, in the hope of grasping some trace of Being, even if Being, like Eurydice, withdraws in the moment of self-revelation.

By considering Aristotle's terminological usage in vital relation to customary usage, Heidegger's philology follows a different path of thinking, a *Denkweg* that departs from the method of formal logic established by scholasticism and upheld in the work of Immanuel Kant. Logic, as Heidegger portrays it, consistently distinguishes between *intuition* and *concept*. Whereas an entity perceived by intuition is a mental representation of the singular (*representatio singularis*), an entity understood as a concept is a generalized representation based on features held in common among multiple entities (*representatio per notas communes*). The concept thus acquires a definition, which determines the purpose or use of the entity. To illustrate, Heidegger paraphrases Kant's own example:

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9 Cf. Michalski 2005, 65–80.

A savage sees a house, whose *what-for* [*Wozu*] he does not know, quite different from us [...]. To be sure, he sees the same entity, but the knowledge of the *use* escapes him; he does not understand what he should do with it. He forms no concept of house.[10]

Conceptual clarity requires bifocality: the definition comprises both intuition and concept, it sees the entity in its singularity and simultaneously understands its technical purpose, its *Dasein* and its *Wozu*, its *what-is-there* together with its *what-for*. However, in a phenomenological mode, Heidegger charges that the scholastic definition causes the singularity of *what is there* to dissolve entirely into the technical possibilities of the *what-for*. In Heidegger's view, the scholastic definition of definition is a reduction and hence "a symptom of decline, a mere technique for thinking that was once the basic possibility of human speech."[11] Scholastic logic traffics with a repertoire of definitions that have been abstracted from the purposes once embedded in a distinctive context. The original τέχνη, which once revealed an entity's use within historical, concrete experience, has become "a mere technique for thinking [*eine bloße Denktechnik*]."

In contrast, philology strives to engage with the incipient ground that continues to determine concepts in a concrete and vital sense.[12] A philological reading of the philosophical text is called for in order to attend to each concept's "autochthony" or *Bodenständigkeit*. Aristotle's fundamental concepts

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10 "Ein Wilder sieht ein Haus dessen *Wozu* er nicht kennt, ganz anders als wir [...]. Er sieht zwar dasselbe Seiende, aber ihm fehlt die Kenntnis des *Gebrauchs*, er versteht nicht, was er damit soll. Er bildet keinen Begriff von Haus." (Heidegger 2002, 11.) Heidegger is referring to Kant's introduction to his lectures on Logic: "In jeder Erkenntniß muß unterschieden werden *Materie*, d. i. der Gegenstand, und *Form*, d. i. die Art, wie wir den Gegenstand erkennen. — Sieht z.B. ein Wilder ein Haus aus der Ferne, dessen Gebrauch er nicht kennt: so hat er zwar eben dasselbe Object wie ein Anderer, der es bestimmt als eine für Menschen eingerichtete Wohnung kennt, in der Vorstellung vor sich. Aber der Form nach ist dieses Erkenntniß eines und desselben Objects in beiden verschieden. Bei dem Einen ist es bloße Anschauung, bei dem Andern Anschauung und Begriff zugleich." (Kant 1923, 33.)
11 "[...] eine Verfallserscheinung [...], eine bloße Denktechnik, die einmal die Grundmöglichkeit des Sprechens des Menschen gewesen ist." (Heidegger 2002, 13.)
12 For further discussion, see Kisiel 1993, 286–295.

are emphatically indigenous, having grown from the native Greek soil. To take a single brief example, when Aristotle says οὐσία, which Heidegger translates as "being-there" (*Da-sein*), the term should still be heard as a word rooted in customary usage and thus in the particular lifeworld of ancient Greek culture, in which οὐσία denotes "property or real-estate, a personal possession." In order to come closer to what Aristotle meant by οὐσία, it is necessary to explore this common ground which continues to steer how the concept is meaningful. As Heidegger concludes: "It can only be a matter of understanding the customary meaning in such a way that we take from it *directions* on the terminological meaning." (Heidegger 2009, 18 f.)[13] In other words, the concept in its conceptuality is set in the ground and yet detached, both embedded in customary *life* and removed in terminological *work*—life and work, intertwined yet apart, parenthetically, as it were.

3.

On December 29, 1946, to mark the twentieth anniversary of Rilke's death, a small group of acquaintances gathered in Heidegger's cabin in Todtnauberg to listen to an informal lecture from their host. Although the theme announced was Rilke's poetry, Heidegger chose for his title the well-known line from Friedrich Hölderlin's elegy, *Brod und Wein*: *Wozu Dichter in dürftiger Zeit?* ("What are Poets for in a destitute time?") Hölderlin's poetic question concisely rehearses the conditions for Heidegger's earlier philological investigations— namely, how the technical conception of purpose (the *Wozu*) should be seen within the factical experience of a specific epoch and culture. Here, however, it is not some historically distant time that must be read, but rather the present time of the thinker himself, a time, moreover, that is represented as somehow deficient, impoverished, and feeble—*eine dürftige Zeit*.

That the present time was one of profound indigence and spiritual turmoil would hardly have required any persuasion among Heidegger's German audience. Without question, the aftermath of the war had been personally devastating for Heidegger. In addition to having part of his home requisitioned

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13 "Es kann sich nur darum handeln, die geläufige Bedeutung so zu verstehen, daß wir bei ihr *Anweisungen* auf die terminologische entnehmen." (Heidegger 2002, 24.)

by the occupying forces, in addition to seeing the old town of Freiburg lying in rubble, in addition to witnessing the confusion and the desperation, the intolerable guilt and the unfathomable shame, Heidegger was dismissed from the faculty, banned from all university buildings, and had his teaching license revoked. Although the French Denazification Committee initially voted to treat the philosophy professor with leniency, the University Senate pushed for a harsher sentence, having been compelled by the testimony of Karl Jaspers who denounced his old friend's pedagogical approach as "unfree, dictatorial and uncommunicative." Twenty years before, it was at Jaspers's home that Heidegger resolved to curtail the publication of *Sein und Zeit*; and now it was Jaspers himself who played a direct role in curtailing Heidegger's career. By the spring of 1946, Heidegger suffered a complete mental and physical breakdown. It would take months to recover, and then, only after submitting to a prolonged course of psychosomatic treatment in the Sanatorium Hausbaden under the care of Victor Baron von Gebsattel, a former student of Ludwig Binswanger, whose own brand of phenomenological psychiatry was indebted to Heidegger himself (cf. Mitchell 2016).

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Meanwhile, Heidegger further despaired, disingenuously or not, over misrepresentations and crude generalizations of his work through facile appeals to his personal life. In the private pages of the so-called *Black Notebooks*, Heidegger once expressed the wish that such biographical matters be bracketed out—a wish underscored, once again, by his own parenthetical gesturing:

> That a thoughtful grounding again becomes a sort of collection of sayings, well protected against idle talk and unharmed by all hurried misinterpretation; that the works of twenty or more volumes including all the concomitant snooping into the author's life and utterances (I mean the usual "biographies" and collections of correspondence) disappear and the work itself will be strong enough and kept free from the disfavor of being explained by the inclusion of the "personal," i.e., from being dissolved into base generalization [*Vergemeinerung*].[14]

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14 "Daß dann das denkerische Gründen wieder eine Art Spruchsammlung wird, gut verwahrt gegen das Gerede und unverletzlich durch alle eilige Mißdeutung, daß dann

Inevitably, long after appeals to the indigenous soil have lost any and all innocence, the publication of these carefully preserved notebooks in 2014, re-ignited debates over the complex relationship between the philosophical project and the philosopher's life. Heidegger himself appears to surrender to the notebooks' utterly parenthetical force. Destined, according to the author's own instructions, to be published as the final volume of his *Gesamtausgabe*, his most personal and at times most shameful admissions would be included within the work by remaining to the side of the work. In 1946, although consigned to the margins of Todtnauberg, Heidegger would continue to intervene, both as an insider and as an outlier—a self-styled philologist in a destitute time.

Yet, the impoverished time that Heidegger evokes in his Rilke lecture only indirectly alludes to the recent misery of the postwar period. For he views the present nocturnal state as the culmination of a much longer, more essential history. As Hölderlin's poem proposes, the destitute time begins with the disappearance of the gods—Dionysus, Herakles, and Christ—; a time of mourning, waiting, and vague expectation. Still, what makes the present moment especially abysmal is that God's "absence" or "failed presence" (*der Fehl Gottes*) is no longer even perceived as a failure or fault. In Heidegger's assessment, this obliviousness is symptomatic of rampant, all-encompassing technologization, the relentless exploitation of the earth at the will of the metaphysical subject. Heidegger's well-known critique of technology, which he will develop over the remainder of his philosophical career, is resumed here, in his first attempt to re-engage with poetry after Germany's defeat, having just emerged from what was arguably the most severe personal crisis of his life.

The critique of technology from this point forward will be fairly consistent. Modern technology regards nature as a "standing-reserve" (*Bestand*), which reduces *what is* to something ready-to-hand, something available for human use and human purposes. This technological reduction has left human being without ground. *Dasein* thus stands upon an abyss or *Abgrund*. To be sure,

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die 20-und-mehr-bändigen Werke samt den beigegebenen Lebensbeschnüffelungen und Äußerungen (ich meine die üblichen 'Biographien' und Briefsammlungen) verschwinden und das Werk selbst stark genug ist und freigehalten von der Ungunst, durch das Zutragen des 'Persönlichen' erklärt, d. h. aufgelöst zu werden in die Vergemeinerung." (Heidegger 2014, 328.)

technology in itself is not the problem. For τέχνη, like ποίησις, allows beings to appear and therefore very much belongs to the history of Being. Aristotle is explicit on this point: ἔστι δὲ τέχνη πᾶσα περὶ γένεσιν ("All art [*technē*] is concerned with bringing into existence [*genesis*]," *Nic. Eth.* 6, 1140a10–11). Yet, whereas "poetic making" (ποίησις) lets something come forth of its own accord, τέχνη renders it conducive to a determined end. Τέχνη, in other words, is pragmatic and clearly a part of human being-in-the-world, insofar as it allows human beings to make ordered sense the world. In Heidegger's account, when τέχνη is allied to ποίησις, it manifests itself as a craft or an art, as a mode of unconcealment that is inherently differential. Yet, modern technics foregoes its poietic kinship and thus imposes itself as a reductive totalization.[15] Indeed, the current era is precipitating to the point where technical, calculative thinking will dominate over all other possibilities for interacting with the world. With increasing persistence, modern technics is occluding alternative ways of unconcealment; above all, by suppressing ποίησις. And precisely by precluding poietic and other modes of transacting with the world, technology leaves us with a yawning deficiency, lost in a meager and needy nighttime.

To address this desperate situation, Heidegger turns the technical question, *Wozu* ("what for"), back on itself. What are poets for in a destitute time? Heidegger's response is both immediate and simple: true poets, like authentic thinkers, reach into the present abyss, into the present absence. Analogous to the *philological aim* outlined in the early lecture course on Aristotle, the *poetic aim* returns to the ground of being, where the *what-for*, the *Wozu* of technical conception, is concretely bound to the *being-there*, to the historical *Dasein* that determines this conception. Heidegger's legerdemain is as brilliant as it is seductive: If the thinker is more a philologist than a philosopher, then the philologist is also a poet.

Within the first page of his essay, Heidegger has already answered the title question. In fact, he is less concerned with the answer, if only because we have not yet understood the question properly. Hence, Heidegger poses a fresh question: "Ist R. M. Rilke ein Dichter in dürftiger Zeit?" ("Is R. M. Rilke a poet in a destitute time?" [Heidegger 1977a, 274.]) Does Rilke's poetry, like

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15 Cf. Fóti 1992, xvi.

Hölderlin's, trace the absence of the gods? Can it guide us to the ground or soil, where thinking may encounter the revelation of Being? Can Rilke assist us in "turning away from the abyss" that has resulted from the total technologization of the world? To think on this series of questions, Heidegger adduces a poem from Rilke's *Sonnets to Orpheus* (*Sonette an Orpheus*, I, 19):

Wandelt sich rasch auch die Welt	Even if the world changes swiftly
wie Wolkengestalten,	like shapes of clouds,
alles Vollendete fällt	everything consummated falls
heim zum Uralten.	home to the primeval.
Über dem Wandel und Gang,	Above change and passage,
weiter und freier,	farther away and freer,
währt noch dein Vor-Gesang,	your fore-song still endures,
Gott mit der Leier.	god with the lyre.
Nicht sind die Leiden erkannt,	Not recognized are the sorrows,
nicht ist die Liebe gelernt,	nor is love learned,
und was im Tod uns entfernt,	and what removes us in death,
ist nicht entschleiert.	is not unveiled.
Einzig das Lied überm Land	Only the song above the land
heiligt und feiert.	sanctifies and celebrates.

(Heidegger 1977a, 274–275.)

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In Heidegger's view, the sonnet suggests that Rilke certainly recognizes the time's destitution, in which the tyranny of technical, calculative thinking detaches us from nature, deluding us into believing that we stand *apart* from the world rather than *in* the world. Technical thinking is *parathetic* without being *enthetic*. In a destitute time, sorrows are not recognized, love is not learned, death is not unveiled. Like Rilke, Heidegger has always insisted that death individuates human being authentically, by defining the finite temporality of human existence. In its attempt to master nature, modern technology presumes to triumph over death, to gloss over its inevitability. Enthralled to technology, Dasein acquires but a delusional immortality. Thus, the sonnet's movement from transience to endurance should not be confused with the calculated

ordering that characterizes technical thinking, since Orphic song unveils the finitude that technology conceals. What remains is poetic song. What endures is poetic language, attending to the trace of the holy, abiding mournfully until, like Orpheus himself, it reaches into the abyss to retrieve what has been buried, even though Being, in its unconcealment, withdraws from the Orphic gaze that strives to grasp or comprehend it.

Beginning with his first lecture course on Hölderlin in 1934, held immediately after he resigned from the university rectorate, Heidegger's engagement with poetry employed his own idiosyncratic brand of philology, one that limits itself to focused, if not tendentious comments, rather than offer a comprehensive reading of the text. His parenthetical-philological method is tellingly selective in that he adduces specific verses for his interpretation while bracketing out the rest. Accordingly, Heidegger's discussion of Rilke's sonnet readily yields a message that accords closely with the account of death that Heidegger outlined in *Being and Time*, death as "one's ownmost and uttermost potentiality for Being" (Heidegger 1977b, 406), but also death as one's ultimate impossibility, when being-there is no longer there. For Heidegger, death is, so to speak, parenthetical, included in Dasein by always remaining outstanding. Death is projected into a future that never arrives, neither phenomenologically (for it never appears) nor ontologically (for it does not exist).[16] In reading Rilke's sonnet, Heidegger attends to the poet-as-Orpheus who reaches into this abyss, but fails to grasp the love he aims to retrieve. What Heidegger overlooks in the poem, however, is the death of Orpheus himself. It is the slaughtered Orpheus, whose scattered limbs spread "farther and freer." It is Orpheus's death that results in an apotheosis, where the poet, post-mortem, is transformed into a heavenly constellation, *la lyre d'Orphée,* the "god with the lyre." For Rilke, death is not something forever unachievable, forever beyond grasp, but rather a completion, a sublimation.

In this essay composed in the aftermath of the war, Heidegger curiously rehearses the gesture made five years before. After his brusque reading of Rilke's sonnet, Heidegger, once again, silently sets the poet's death in brackets. Just as in 1927 and reported in 1941, the death of the poet coincides with an interruption

16 Cf. Gosetti-Ferencei 2014.

in thinking. And again, now in 1946, the bracketing allows his thinking to take a fresh turn—namely, towards the essence of modern technology, which evades the ontological structure of death. The move ultimately leads Heidegger to enlist Rilke, justifiably or not, in the metaphysical tradition. *What are poets for in a destitute time?* Rilke has been invited to respond to Hölderlin's question, but only in a way that the response stays extrinsic to the question.

4.

If philology, as Heidegger once formulated it, is truly "a passion for knowledge"—*eine Leidenschaft der Erkenntnis*—, then the aim of philology, its *Wozu*, may be to counter the destitute time, in which, as Rilke writes, "sorrows are not known" (*Nicht sind die Leiden erkannt*). Heidegger's philology and Rilke's poetry share this conjunction of suffering and knowledge, *Leiden* and *Erkennen*. And should philology be understood as a passion, it would be impossible to divorce the philologist's work from the philologist's life, however much one might wish to place one's own life into brackets.

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For the 1953 edition of his *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (*Introduction to Metaphysics*)—a lecture course that he gave in 1935—, Heidegger explains in a prefatory note that he has used square brackets to distinguish new additions from passages in round brackets, which, he claims, belonged to the original manuscript. This rather innocuous sounding typographic matter came to cause graver concerns towards the end of the book, where one reads the following passage:

> What today is being passed around entirely as the philosophy of National Socialism, but what hasn't the slightest to do with the inner truth and greatness of this movement [*Bewegung*] (namely with the encounter [*Begegnung*] of planetary-determined technology and modern man), does its fishing in the troubled waters of "values" and "totalities." (Heidegger 1959, 199; translation modified.)[17]

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17 "Was heute vollends als Philosophie des Nationalsozialismus herumgeboten wird, aber mit der inneren Wahrheit und Größe dieser Bewegung (nämlich mit der Begegnung der planetarisch bestimmten Technik und des neuzeitlichen Menschen)

The parenthetical amplification suggests that Heidegger, already in 1935, was critical of the Nazi regime, regarding it as the fateful and fearful alliance of modern humanity and planetary technologization. He cites one of Hitler's favorite tags—"the inner truth and greatness of the movement"—only to undercut the purported grandeur with a parenthetical aside. Heidegger's subtle use of the demonstrative pronoun—"the greatness of *this* movement"— like the use of *iste* in classical Latin, already seems to signal the thinker's critical distance. In a published reply to Jürgen Habermas's denunciation of Heidegger's complicity with National Socialism, Christian Lewalter cited this very passage as sufficient evidence for exonerating the old philosopher. Heidegger himself was so grateful for Lewalter's intercession that he fully endorsed his interpretation in a letter published in *Die Zeit* in September 1953.

The ensuing debate hinged on a decidedly philological matter. Did Heidegger in fact write the parenthetical remark in 1935, proving that he already held the regime in some contempt? Or was it inserted only much later, after the catastrophe, for the 1953 publication? How is it that Heidegger would have employed the phrase "planetary-determined technology" in 1935, when he adopted this phrase consistently only in the 1950s? Heidegger again, in the 1966 *Spiegel* interview, would refer to these "explanatory brackets," insisting they were, without question, written down in 1935.[18] Still, anachronisms have always triggered philological suspicion. The doubts would eventually lead Otto Pöggeler, in 1983, seven years after Heidegger's death, to consult the archives in Marbach.[19] Although the archived manuscript from 1935 was in excellent condition, the page in question was the only one that was mysteriously missing. The parenthetical critique of technology might have acquitted the thinker, but the positive evidence is gone, concrete proof will forever remain wanting, *dürftig*—and that, perhaps, after all, may be precisely what philologists are for.

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nicht das Geringste zu tun hat, das macht seine Fischzüge in diesen trüben Gewässern der 'Werte' und der 'Ganzheiten.'" (Heidegger 1983, 208.)

18 Interview with Rudolf Augstein and Georg Wolff, September 1966 (cf. Augstein, Wolff, and Heidegger 1976, 193).

19 Cf. Pöggeler 1988, 17–63.

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Zur Nähe von Denken und Dichten beim frühen Heidegger
Eine Spurensuche

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On Proximity of Thinking and Poetizing in Early Heidegger. A Search for Traces

Abstract

The paper discusses the question of the role of the relationship between thinking and poetizing, which is of immense importance for Heidegger's late work, in his early hermeneutics of facticity. Heidegger's early thinking is denoted with the search for the

unconditionality of factical life in its historicity that cannot be comprehended neither under the conditions of a worldview nor of a strict science in Husserl's sense. In his search, he continually encounters the realms of art and poetry, which he experiences as fundamental points of orientation. Although Heidegger does not expressly reflect upon them, such experiences of the proximity of thinking and poetizing did leave traces in his lectures.

Keywords: Martin Heidegger, hermeneutics, facticity, thinking, poetry.

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O bližini mišljenja in pesnjenja pri zgodnjem Heideggru. Iskanje sledi

Povzetek

Članek obravnava vprašanje vloge razmerja med pesnjenjem in mišljenjem, ki je sicer osrednjega pomena za njegovo pozno delo, znotraj Heideggrove zgodnje hermenevtike fakticitete. Njegovo zgodnje mišljenje opredeljuje iskanje tistega brezpogojnega znotraj zgodovinskosti faktičnega življenja, kakršne ni mogoče zajeti niti pod pogoji svetovnega nazora niti stroge znanosti v Husserlovem smislu. Pri svojem iskanju Heidegger nenehno srečuje področji umetnosti in poezije, ki ju izkuša kot temeljna kažipota. Čeprav jih ne reflektira na izrecen način, so tovrstna izkustva bližine mišljenja in pesnjenja pustila sledi v njegovih predavanjih.

Ključne besede: Martin Heidegger, hermenevtika, fakticiteta, mišljenje, pesnjenje.

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1. Die Kehre „vor" der Kehre? Denken und Dichten in Heideggers Frühwerk

In den folgenden Überlegungen steht die Frage danach, welche Rolle das für Heideggers Spätwerk so zentrale Verhältnis von Denken und Dichten in seiner früher Hermeneutik der Faktizität gespielt hat, im Vordergrund. Eine solche Frage bedarf einer Vorbemerkung, die ihr Anliegen und ihre Problematik zumindest kurz skizziert. Denn dass es überhaupt ein solches Verhältnis gibt, ist fraglich. Die Frage danach zu stellen, so scheint es, bedeutet, den Denk*weg* Martin Heideggers nicht ernst zu nehmen. In der frühen Phase seines Denkens interessiert sich Heidegger nämlich noch nicht für eine explizite philosophische Auseinandersetzung mit der Literatur und insbesondere mit der Dichtung, auch wenn er selbst bereits als junger Mann Gedichte geschrieben hat[1] und 1957 in seiner Antrittsrede zur Aufnahme in die Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften betont hat, dass er bereits im Jahr 1908 „durch ein heute noch erhaltenes Reclambändchen seiner Gedichte zu Hölderlin" gefunden habe und wie wichtig für ihn die „erregenden Jahre zwischen 1910 und 1914" mit, u. a., der Veröffentlichung der „Übersetzung der Werke […] Dostojewskis" sowie von „Rilkes Dichtungen und Trakls Gedichte[n]" gewesen seien.[2] Wenn es beim jungen Heidegger eine Auseinandersetzung gibt, die über den Bereich der Philosophie im strengen Sinne hinausreicht, so ist dies seine für seinen weiteren Denkweg entscheidende Beschäftigung mit dem Christentum und der christlichen Theologie wie z. B. mit Paulus, Augustinus, Luther oder Kierkegaard, die dazu führte, dass er die Philosophie von der Religion bzw. dem religiösen Vollzug radikal abgrenzte und als „atheistisch" bestimmte.[3]

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1 Für seine frühen Gedichte vgl. Heidegger 1983, 5–7; Heidegger 2000, 16–17, 36. Zur Dichtung Heideggers vgl. Grotz 2003, 92–111; zum Verhältnis des jungen Heidegger zur Literatur vgl. auch Schaber 2014, 170–192.

2 Für diese Rede vgl. Martin Heidegger: „Vorwort zur ersten Ausgabe der ‚Frühen Schriften'" (1972), in: Heidegger 1978, 55–57, hier 56.

3 Vgl. Martin Heidegger: „Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles. Ausarbeitung für die Marburger und die Göttinger Philosophische Fakultät" (1922), in: Heidegger 2005, XXX; vgl. auch Martin Heidegger: „Der Begriff der Zeit (Vortrag

Erst ab den 1930er Jahren sollte Heidegger sich in einer doppelten Krise – der Krise der Nicht-Vollendung von *Sein und Zeit* und der nicht minder bedeutsamen Krise des Scheiterns des Rektorates 1933/34 – und in einer sich aus seinen Krisenerfahrungen ergebenden Sprachnot der Dichtung Hölderlins zuwenden.[4] Hölderlin, so schien es ihm, hatte nicht nur eine ähnliche Sprachnot erfahren, sondern konnte auch mögliche Wege aus ihr heraus weisen. Die Erläuterung seiner Dichtung sollte ihm daher, wie Hans-Georg Gadamer treffend schrieb, die Zunge lösen.[5] Auf seinem weiteren Denkweg hat Heidegger sich dann intensiv mit der Sprache und dabei in besonderer Weise mit der Sprache der Dichtung – nicht nur Hölderlins, sondern auch Rilkes, Trakls oder Georges – beschäftigt.[6] „Möglich ist aber auch und zuweilen sogar nötig", so Heidegger Anfang der 1950er Jahren in „Die Sprache im Gedicht. Eine Erörterung von Georg Trakls Gedicht", „eine Zwiesprache des Denkens mit dem Dichten, und zwar deshalb, weil beiden ein ausgezeichnetes, wenngleich je verschiedenes Verhältnis zur Sprache eignet".[7]

Das bedeutet aber nicht, dass Heidegger nicht schon in seinen Freiburger Anfängen eine philosophische Zwiesprache mit der Dichtung – wie auch mit der Sprache – gehalten hätte. Die „Fragen nach Dichtung und Kunst", so Heidegger rückblickend in den 1950er Jahren, standen – wie die „Thematik ‚Sprache und Sein'" – auch im Hintergrund seiner Denkversuche Anfang der 1920er Jahre.[8] „In jener Zeit des Expressionismus", so Heidegger weiter, „waren mir diese Bereiche stets gegenwärtig, mehr jedoch und schon aus meiner Studienzeit vor dem ersten Weltkrieg die Dichtung Hölderlins und Trakls." (Heidegger 1985, 88.) Auch Stefan George, der für Heideggers

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1924)", in Heidegger 2004, 105–125, hier 105.

4 Zu Heideggers Erläuterung von Hölderlins Dichtung vgl., u. a.: Böhmer 2020; Hamacher 2020; Bojda 2016; Bambach 2013.

5 Vgl. Hans-Georg Gadamer: „Die religiöse Dimension", in Gadamer 1987, 308–319, hier 317.

6 Vgl. hier, u. a.: Frischmann 2014, 9 –19.

7 Martin Heidegger: „Die Sprache im Gedicht. Eine Erörterung von Georg Trakls Gedicht" (1952), in: Heidegger 1985, 31–78, hier 34.

8 Martin Heidegger: „Aus einem Gespräch von der Sprache. Zwischen einem Japaner und einem Fragenden" (1953/54), in: Heidegger 1985, 79–146, hier 87 f.

Spätwerk wichtige Dichter des „Wesens der Sprache",[9] scheint ihm in diesen frühen Jahren gegenwärtig gewesen zu sein. Denn schon in der Vorlesung *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie* aus dem Wintersemester 1919/20 findet sich ein Verweis auf Stefan George, „der", wie Heidegger betonte, „so stark unmittelbar sehen kann", der also, mit anderen Worten, ein dichtender „Seher", ein „Phänomenologe" sei. Den Titel von Georges Gedichtband *Der Teppich des Lebens* greift Heidegger in dieser Vorlesung auf, um das zu bezeichnen, was er den Erfahrungszusammenhang des faktischen Lebens nennt[10] – und damit genau jenen Zusammenhang, um dessen Erschließung er sich in seinem Denken, das er wenig später als „Hermeneutik der Faktizität" fassen konnte, bemühte. Mit seinem hermeneutischen, auf „Mitteilung" des faktischen Lebens hin orientierten Verständnis der Phänomenologie steht zudem implizit auch der Zusammenhang von Sprache und faktischer Existenz bzw. Sein im Vordergrund seines Interesses. Auch darauf hat der späte Heidegger – nämlich in dem für sein späteres Selbstverständnis wichtigen „Gespräch von der Sprache. Zwischen einem Japaner und einem Fragenden" – ausdrücklich aufmerksam gemacht: „Ich weiß nur dies eine", so der Fragende als Heideggers Alter Ego in diesem Gespräch, „[w]eil die Besinnung auf Sprache und Sein meinen Denkweg von früh an bestimmt, deshalb bleibt die Erörterung möglichst im Hintergrund" (Heidegger 1985, 88).

Man mag kritische Anfragen an Heideggers spätere Selbstinterpretation richten und fragen, ob Heidegger nicht retrospektiv Momente seines späteren Denkens auf frühere Wegstücke seines Denkweges überträgt, man mag aber auch, seine Hinweise ernst nehmend, Heideggers frühes Werk mit einer Hermeneutik des „Hintergrundes" erschließen, also einer bei der Beschäftigung mit seinem Denken oft notwendigen Hermeneutik des Verborgenen oder Verschwiegenen, dessen also, was nicht – oder noch nicht

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9 Vgl. Martin Heidegger: „Das Wesen der Sprache" (1957/58), in: Heidegger 1985, 147–204.

10 Heidegger 1993, 69: „Das Erfahrene hat einen merkwürdigen Charakter des Gemischten, des Vielerlei, des Gesprenkelten, doch nicht unter einem mehr oder minder scharfen Hervortreten eines Musters – [ich möchte diesen Aspekt bezeichnen mit der Aufschrift, die Stefan George, der so stark unmittelbar sehen kann, einem seiner Gedichtbände gegeben hat: Der ‚Teppich' des Lebens]." Vgl. hier, neben George 1984, für Heideggers spätere George-Deutung auch: Herrmann 1999.

– ausdrücklich gesagt ist, der noch unklaren, aber zugleich hintergründig präsenten Dimensionen, die sich erst von später her voll erschließen, und der „Subtexte", die sich im Vollzug des Denkens selbst eröffnen. Eine solche Hermeneutik dürfte zu einem differenzierteren Urteil über die Bedeutung der Dichtung für Heideggers Frühwerk führen und seiner Selbstinterpretation recht geben. Denn seine Bestimmung dessen, was Philosophie eigentlich ist, geschieht zumindest *unthematisch* vor dem Horizont eines Zwiegespräches mit der Kunst und der Dichtung und dem in ihr sich ausgestaltenden Verständnis von (menschlichem) Sein und Sprache. Diese Einsicht ist nicht nur für das Verständnis des frühen Freiburger Denkens Heideggers und seiner „Entwicklung" bedeutsam, sondern auch für die Interpretation des gesamten Denkweges Martin Heideggers. Denn oft scheint einfach vorausgesetzt zu werden, dass sich Heidegger erst nach der sogenannten Kehre mit der Dichtung auseinandergesetzt habe und dabei das Denken in ein nachbarschaftliches Verhältnis zur Dichtung gesetzt habe (bzw. es dort vorgefunden und vollzogen habe). Diese Deutung ist oft mit einer Hermeneutik des Bruches – etwa zwischen einem frühen und einem späten Heidegger oder einem Heidegger I und einem Heidegger II – verbunden. Doch ist bekannt, dass dieser interpretative Zugang in der Philosophie oft nur gewisse heuristische Vorteile hat und bei genauerer Betrachtung Grenzen zeigt. Denn man sieht aus dieser Perspektive gewisse Momente in ihrer Differenz deutlicher, die aus anderer, vertiefter Perspektive als Teile eines einheitlichen, wenn auch kontinuierlich sich wandelnden Ganzen zu verstehen sind. Genau das gilt auch für Heideggers Werk, das sich in einer auf Tiefendimensionen und zunächst verborgene Zusammenhänge achtenden Interpretation gerade als Denkweg in seiner Einheit zeigt. Wenn es nun möglich ist, bereits in der frühen Phase dieses Denkweges ein zumindest implizites Gespräch mit der Dichtung (oder auch der Kunst im Allgemeinem) und zumindest Hinweise einer Nähe von Dichten und Denken nachzuweisen, so fände eine These Bestätigung, die in der Auseinandersetzung mit seinem Werk mehr und mehr an Bedeutung gewonnen hat. Diese These lautet, dass Heideggers Spätwerk vor dem Hintergrund der „Hermeneutik der Faktizität" zu verstehen ist und dass es mitunter – in den Worten Gadamers – „großartige Antizipationen seines späteren und spätesten Denkens" (Gadamer 1987,

309) gibt.[11] *Sein und Zeit* wäre dann, wie Günter Figal argumentiert hat, ein „folgenreiches Zwischenspiel" (Figal 1999, 48 ff.; 94 f.). Heideggers Denkweg nach diesem „Zwischenspiel" kann dann als eine gewisse Rückkehr zu seinen Anfängen gelesen werden (vgl. Figal 1999, 163). Denn die Kehre, wie Gadamer pointiert formuliert hat, „war vor der Kehre".[12]

Allerdings ist der Nachweis dieser Dimensionen des frühen Denkens Martin Heideggers nicht leicht zu führen. Über die konkreten philosophischen Auswirkungen der auch literarisch „erregenden Jahre" zwischen 1910 und 1914 auf Heideggers philosophisches Selbstverständnis lässt sich leider kaum etwas sagen. Die wenigen vorhandenen Zeugnisse aus dieser Zeit lassen, so hatte Otto Pöggeler Mitte der 1980er Jahre argumentiert, diese „Erschütterungen […] nicht spüren".[13] Das gilt trotz einer im Allgemeinen weit besseren Editionslage auch heute noch. In der so bedeutenden Phase seines Denkens, die von der Habilitation bis zur letzten frühen Freiburger Vorlesung *Ontologie (Hermeneutik der Faktizität)* reicht, finden sich nur minimale „Spuren" einer Nähe von Denken und Dichten. So steht das Schlusskapitel von Heideggers Habilitationsschrift, die er der mittelalterlichen Kategorien- und Bedeutungslehre des Thomas von Erfurt (nicht, wie er noch annehmen musste, des Duns Scotus) widmete, unter dem berühmten Novalis-Fragment: „Wir suchen überall das Unbedingte und finden immer nur Dinge".[14] Vielleicht hat der Philosoph und Dichter Novalis ihm mit diesen dichterischen Worten einen denkerischen Weg gewiesen (oder anders: vielleicht lässt sich Heideggers früher Denkweg auch von diesem Fragment her erschließen): Heidegger sucht in seinem frühen Denken das Unbedingte des faktischen Lebens in seiner Geschichtlichkeit, das weder unter den Bedingungen einer Weltanschauung oder einer strengen Wissenschaft im Sinne Husserls zu erfassen ist, und findet dabei – zunächst einmal – nur Dinge ohne Leben, Vorgänge und

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11 Vgl. hierzu auch: Kisiel 1995, 458.

12 Hans-Georg Gadamer: „Heidegger und das Ende der Philosophie", in: Gadamer 2000, 195–207, hier 207.

13 Vgl. Otto Pöggeler: „Heideggers Begegnung mit Dilthey", in: Pöggeler 1999, 81–115, hier 90.

14 Martin Heidegger: „Die Kategorien- und Bedeutungslehre des Duns Scotus", in: Heidegger 1978, 131–354, hier 399.

Zusammenhänge, die theoretisch erschlossen werden, um vor diesem Befund sein eigenes Denken zu entwickeln, das über die bloßen „Dinge" hinausweist und den unbedingten, nicht kausal zu erklärenden, sondern im Vollzug selbst sich erschließenden Lebenszusammenhang – den „Teppich des Lebens" – zu erschließen sucht. Bei dieser Suche nach der Faktizität des Lebens stößt er – darauf verweist ja auch der bereits zitierte kurze Bezug Heideggers auf Stefan George – immer wieder an die Grenze zur Kunst und Dichtung, die er als wegweisend und „wegdeutend" erfährt. Diese „Grenzerfahrungen" – Erfahrungen der Nähe von Denken und Dichten – werden von ihm jedoch nicht ausdrücklich reflektiert. Sie haben sich aber spurenhaft in seinen Vorlesungen niedergeschlagen. Einigen dieser Spuren soll im Folgenden nachgegangen werden.

2. Verborgene Nähe? Spuren der Nähe von Denken und Dichten in Heideggers früher hermeneutischer Phänomenologie

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In den frühen Freiburger Vorlesungen ringt Heidegger mit der Frage nach der Bestimmung der Philosophie derart, dass es für ihn zunächst einfacher ist, die Philosophie *ex negativo* zu bestimmen. Philosophie ist vor allem keine Weltanschauung für ihn. In seiner Ablehnung des Verständnisses von Philosophie als Weltanschauung schließt sich Heidegger seinem Lehrer Husserl und seiner Kritik an den Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts verbreiteten Weltanschauungsphilosophien an. Doch wird ihm zunehmend – nach Versuchen, zunächst noch die Philosophie als vortheoretische Urwissenschaft des Lebens zu bestimmen – auch Husserls Bestimmung der Philosophie als strenger Wissenschaft fraglich. Denn Leben in seiner Geschichtlichkeit lässt sich, wie Heidegger u. a. am Beispiel des religiösen Lebens erfährt und verdeutlicht, nicht in den überlieferten, auch von seinem Lehrer vorausgesetzten Modi wissenschaftlicher Philosophie verstehen. Heidegger wirft der Philosophie vor, sich in vielfältiger Weise aus der Geschichte herausgestohlen und die geschichtliche Dimension menschlichen Lebens verdrängt zu haben.[15] Was

15 Vgl. für den philosophisch sich, u. a., in der platonischen Tradition, bei Spengler, Dilthey oder Simmel zeigenden „Kampf des Lebens gegen das Historische", z. B., Martin Heidegger: „Einleitung in die Phänomenologie der Religion", in: Heidegger

aber ist die Philosophie, wenn sie weder Wissenschaft noch Weltanschauung ist? Heidegger beschäftigt sich immer wieder mit dieser (für seinen gesamten Denkweg zentralen) Frage. Dabei erfolgt seine Bestimmung der Philosophie immer auch implizit, und zwar performativ: Er zeigt die „Bestimmung" der Philosophie nicht, indem er über die Philosophie doziert, sondern indem er selbst philosophiert.[16] Im „Tun" zeigt sich somit – nicht was Philosophie wesenhaft als universitäre Disziplin ist, sondern wie sich Philosophieren als hermeneutischer Vollzug des Menschen, der für sich selbst wach wird, vollzieht und worum es dabei geht: „Die Hermeneutik selbst", so Heidegger, „bleibt so lange, als das Wachsein für die Faktizität, das sie zeitigen soll, nicht ‚da' ist, unwichtig; alles Reden *darüber* ist grundsätzliches Mißverstehen ihrer selbst." (Heidegger 1988, 20.) Hermeneutik ist also für Heidegger nicht etwas, über das sich reden ließe oder das sich objekthaft fassen und bestimmen ließe, sondern ein Handeln, ein Vollzug des Menschen. Gerade aber, wenn die Hermeneutik denkerisch auf das „Wachsein" für die je eigene Faktizität hin vollzogen wird, scheint gelegentlich die Nähe von Denken und Dichten bzw. Denken und Kunst auf.

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Im Kriegsnotsemester 1919 verweist Heidegger in der Vorlesung *Die Idee der Philosophie und das Weltanschauungsproblem* in seinem Bemühen, die Phänomenologie als „vortheoretische Urwissenschaft" zu bestimmen, ausdrücklich auf die Dichtung – nämlich auf die *Antigone* des Sophokles, die für sein späteres Denken eine bedeutende Rolles spielen sollte.[17] In dieser Vorlesung unterscheidet er zwischen „Vor-gang" und „Erlebnis". Mit „Vor-gang" bezeichnet Heidegger das „objektivierte Geschehen, das Geschehen als gegenständliches, erkanntes", also das, was in einem „theoretischen Verhalten" von einem „theoretischen Ich" erkannt wird (Heidegger 1999, 74). Davon unterscheidet er das „Erlebnis", in dem sich dem Ich „etwas aus einer unmittelbaren Umwelt" gibt (ibid., 72) und in dem „Ich […] (als historisches Ich) auf dieses oder jenes Welthafte" zulebe (ibid., 74). Um den fundamentalen Unterschied zwischen theoretischem Verhalten – orientiert auf einen „Vor-

1996, 1–156, 38 ff.
16 Zu diesem Aspekt des Heideggerschen Denkens vgl. Cimino 2013.
17 Vgl. hierzu Vukićević 2003.

gang" – und dem vortheoretischen Leben in einer Umwelt – ein „Erlebnis" eröffnend – zu illustrieren, bedient sich Heidegger des Phänomens des Sonnenaufgangs als eines konkreten Beispiels. Dieses Phänomen untersuche ein Astronom als einen „bloßen Vorgang in der Natur", während der Chor der Sophokleischen *Antigone* es nach einem mit Erfolg beendeten Kampf ganz anders erlebe (ibid., 74). Der Unterschied liege im „Wie" des jeweiligen Sehens. Denn während einmal der Sonnenaufgang als ein distanziertes Objekt des theoretischen Erkennens gesehen wird, erscheint er im anderen Falle – nämlich des vortheoretischen Sehens – als etwas, das dem Ich widerfährt und es radikal angeht.

Im Rahmen seiner Überlegungen zum vortheoretischen Erlebnis nutzt Heidegger nicht nur die impersonale Formulierung „es weltet" für die (Um-) Welteröffnung im Erlebnis (ibid., 72 f.), sondern auch schon – *mutatis mutandis* – die für sein Spätwerk entscheidende Sprache des „Ereignisses": „Das Er-leben geht nicht vor mir vorbei, wie eine Sache, die ich hinstelle, als Objekt, sondern ich selbst er-ereigne es mir, und es er-eignet sich seinem Wesen nach." (Ibid., 75.) (Er-)Leben ist kein Ding, sondern ein Vollzug, der geschieht und sich im Wechselspiel von Ich und Welt ereignet. Dieses Wechselspiel kann nicht Gegenstand einer transzendentalen Reflexion werden, sondern lässt sich nur hermeneutisch – mitteilend und mitverstehend – erhellen und auslegen. Mit Theodore Kisiel kann man in diesem Semester daher Heideggers „Durchbruch zur hermeneutischen Phänomenologie" ansetzen.[18] Heidegger wird sich bewusst, dass Husserls transzendentale Phänomenologie vom Paradigma der Mathematik oder Naturwissenschaft her ausgeht und in einer theoretischen Einstellung Phänomene als „Vorgänge" oder „Dinge" deutet, während er selbst seinen Ausgangspunkt beim Lebendigen finde, das sich als geschichtliches Phänomen nicht auf einen theoretisch fassbaren „Vorgang" reduzieren lässt, sondern eines fundamental anderen Blicks bedarf.[19] Deutlich ist allerdings

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18 Vgl. hierzu Kisiel 1992, 105–122; vgl. auch Gander 2001, 173.

19 So Heidegger auch ausdrücklich in einem Brief an Heinrich Rickert vom 27. Januar 1920: „Während Husserl wesentlich an der mathematischen Naturwissenschaft orientiert ist, sich von da die Probleme nicht nur vorgeben, sondern auch mehr als vielleicht berechtigt bestimmen lässt, versuche ich ein Fußfassen im lebendigen geschichtlichen Leben selbst, und zwar in der faktischen Umwelterfahrung, deren

auch, dass er bei allem Bewusstsein um die Differenz zwischen seinem eigenen Denken und dem Ansatz Husserls noch um ein angemessenes Verständnis der Methode seines Denkens ringt. Dass in diesem Zusammenhang in einer Distanzierung vom objektivierenden Paradigma der Naturwissenschaften ein Wort der Dichtung eine Rolle spielt, um das vortheoretische oder faktische Erleben in den Blick zu nehmen (denn die Dichtung ist ein Zeugnis des „Wachseins für die Faktizität"), zeigt eine frühe Nähe von hermeneutischem Denken und Dichten, über die Heidegger allerdings nicht ausdrücklich nachdenkt.[20] Der Bezug auf die Dichtung bleibt hier Episode.

Das gilt auch für einen Hinweis auf die Musik bzw. Kunst in der Vorlesung *Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles. Einführung in die phänomenologische Forschung* aus dem Winterssemester 1921/22. In dieser Vorlesung bedient sich Heidegger, um das, was er unter „Philosophieren" versteht, näher zu charakterisieren, einer Entsprechung, die im Kontext der Frage nach dem Verhältnis von Denken und Dichten zumindest implizit – in diesem Zusammenhang spricht er nämlich nicht ausdrücklich von der Dichtung, obwohl sich seine Überlegungen leicht auf das Dichten übertragen ließen – äußerst aufschlussreich ist. Seine Ausführungen zeigen sowohl die

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phänomenologische Aufhellung erweiterte und bestätigte, was Sie in spezifisch erkenntnistheoretischer Einstellung in der Kategorie der Gegebenheit ans Licht brachten." (Heidegger und Rickert 2002, 48). Für das komplexe Verhältnis Heideggers zu Husserls vgl., u. a.: Herrmann 2000; Gander 2001, 167 ff.; Bernet, Denker und Zaborowski 2012.

20 So auch mit Bezug auf diese Vorlesung und das Beispiel der unterschiedlichen Verhaltensweisen zum Phänomen des Sonnenaufgangs César Lambert: „Es geht hierbei um die Kennzeichnung des atheoretischen Umwelterlebnisses, wofür das Dichten als Beleg herangezogen wird. Dies weist darauf hin, daß das Denken in einem ganz neuen Wesensverhältnis zur Dichtung steht. Das Dichten wird nicht mehr als eine schöne, aber untergeordnete Wissensform betrachtet, die unter die höchste Wissensform des Philosophierens gestellt wird. Mit der Ansicht, daß das fundamentale Untersuchungsfeld der Philosophie als Urwissenschaft die atheoretische Lebenssphäre ist, ist zugleich die Einsicht in ein neues Wesensverhältnis des Denkens zum Dichten gewonnen. Man kann daher von diesem Verhältnis als von der *Nachbarschaft zwischen Denken und Dichten* sprechen." (2002, 104 f.) Jedoch ist, so die These des vorliegenden Aufsatzes, diese Nachbarschaft Heidegger noch nicht voll bewusst und wird daher – anders als in seinem Denken ab den 1930er Jahren – von ihm auch noch nicht ausdrücklich reflektiert.

Nähe seines Philosophierens zum künstlerischen Vollzug wie auch eine Aporie. Heidegger, so wird sich zeigen, kann diese Nähe, mit der er auch später immer wieder gerungen hat, (noch) nicht recht fassen.

Im zweiten Teil dieser Vorlesung beschäftigt sich Heidegger mit der Frage nach der Definition oder dem Wesen der Philosophie. In diesem Zusammenhang weist er zum einen die These, die Philosophie sei eine Weltanschauung, zurück, und zwar äußerst radikal: „Das Verhängnis, das dieses Wort repräsentiert, wird nur überwunden, bzw. zunächst, was die Hauptangelegenheit ist, erst einmal radikal erkannt, wenn man das ‚Wort‘ und seinen bedeutenden Einstellungszusammenhang kaltstellt.“ (Heidegger 1994, 44 f.) Sein Bemühen, Philosophie zu definieren, schließt auch eine kritische Diskussion des Verständnisses von „wissenschaftlicher Philosophie“ ein. Hatte er 1919 noch ohne Abstriche am wissenschaftlichen Charakter der Philosophie festgehalten, so zeigt er nun, bei allem bleibenden Bemühen, die „Wissenschaftlichkeit“ der Philosophie zu bewahren, zugleich eine Distanzierung von dieser für Husserl so zentralen Charakterisierung der Philosophie:

> Der Ausdruck „wissenschaftliche Philosophie“ ist ein Pleonasmus, ein bezüglich seiner eigenen Bedeutung überfüllter Ausdruck, und ein solcher, wo das „Zuviel“ „wissenschaftlich“ selbst zu wenig ist, d. h. es reicht dieses Prädikat gar nicht aus, um den Wissens- und Forschungs- und Methodencharakter der Philosophie zu bestimmen. (Heidegger 1994, 46.)

In den nun folgenden Überlegungen orientiert sich Heidegger am Sprachgebrauch, der das Verb „philosophieren“ gegen die Disziplin „Philosophie“ „ausspielt“ und der dem Verb somit einen „Vorrechtsanspruch“ verleihe. Was dieser Gebrauch näherhin bedeutet, illustriert Heidegger an einer „Gegensetzung“ (ibid., 47) und stellt dabei fest:

> Zum Wort „Biologie“, „Biologie treiben“, haben wir nicht das entsprechende „biologisieren“, zu „Philologie“ nicht „philologisieren“. Man kann es bilden, man versteht aber auch sofort, dass auch dann

im „Philosophieren" „mehr" ausgedrückt ist: Es besagt nicht nur „Philosophie treiben", „sich beschäftigen". (Heidegger 1994, 47.)

Was aber bedeutet dieses „Mehr", das für Heidegger so wichtig ist? Womit lässt sich das „Philosophieren" vergleichen, wenn eben nicht mit den – aus guten Gründen – nicht gebräuchlichen Worten „Biologisieren" oder „Philologisieren"? Heidegger beantwortet diese Frage mit einem Vergleich mit der Musik bzw. mit dem Vollzug des Musizierens:

> Wir sagen, wenn auch nicht gut, „Musik treiben", „Musik machen" (vgl. *Plato*, Phaidon) und sagen besser: „musizieren" […]; und ein wirklich Musizierender, ein echter Musikant, von dem wir ursprünglich sagen: er musiziert, ist ein solcher, daß er gerade in und mit dem Musizieren ist, was er ist. Musizieren ist hier nicht ein bloßes Sichverhalten zu einem möglichen „Betrieb", eine Technik beherrschen. (Heidegger 1994, 47 f.)[21]

Die Biologie als Wissenschaft, so Heidegger, setzt eine Distanz zwischen dem Menschen – dem, was ein Mensch ist – und der Biologie voraus. Wer Biologie „treibt", verfügt innerhalb eines vorgegebenen Bereiches über bestimmte Kompetenzen. In diesem Sinne ist die Biologie eine „technische" oder theoretische Disziplin, die das Leben als Objekt in den Blick nimmt (wie der Astronom, der den Sonnenaufgang als Objekt betrachtet). Wer jedoch musiziert, verfügt nicht allein über technisch-theoretische Kenntnisse, sondern musiziert als er selbst.

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21 Für die Kritik am „Betrieb" vgl. auch: Heidegger 1988, 32: „Solche Sichtgabe ist die Maske, in der das faktische Dasein sich selbst begegnen lässt, in der es sich vor-kommt, als sei es; in dieser Maske der öffentlichen Ausgelegtheit präsentiert sich das Dasein als höchste Lebendigkeit (des Betriebes nämlich)." Für den Gegensatz von technisch-theoretischem und transzendental-idealistischem wissenschaftlichem „Betrieb" und sich vollziehender Phänomenologie vgl. auch: ibid., 74: „So steht es, anstatt daß man die Phänomenologie in ihrer Möglichkeit ergreift. Von diesem Betrieb (scil. dem nach Heidegger verbreiteten Missverständnis der Phänomenologie, H. Z.) her ist es unmöglich, etwas über die Phänomenologie auszumachen oder eine Definition zu gewinnen. Die Sache ist hoffnungslos! Alle derartigen Tendenzen sind Verrat an der Phänomenologie und ihrer Möglichkeit. Der Ruin ist nicht mehr aufzuhalten!"

Das Musizieren ist ein Vollzug unseres ganzen Daseins, in dem sich unser „Sein", unsere „faktische Existenz" zeigt. Wir treiben nicht etwas, das uns bei aller möglichen Begeisterung äußerlich bliebe, sondern wir vollziehen uns selbst als wir selbst, ohne dass wir in diesem Vollzug – im Musik-Spielen – überhaupt eine Differenz zwischen uns und dem, was wir tun, feststellen könnten. Wir gehen, wie man Heideggers Denken interpretierend sagen kann, darin auf.

Heideggers Phänomenologie des Musizierens ist äußerst kurz, trifft aber recht genau das spielerische Wesen dieses menschlichen Vollzuges wie auch anderer künstlerischer Vollzüge – und somit auch des Dichtens. Bei diesen Vollzügen gilt auch, wenn man sie wirklich, ihrem eigentlichen Sinne nach vollzieht, dass man nicht einfach Kunst oder Dichtung „treibt", sondern im künstlerischen oder dichterischen Vollzug „ist, was man ist" (ähnlich wie der Chor in der *Antigone* in seinem selbst dichterischen Gesang zum Sonnenaufgang „ist, was er ist"). Ganz ähnlich verhält es sich für Heidegger auch mit dem Philosophieren. Zwischen dem „Musizieren" und dem „Philosophieren" bestehe also eine „,Analogie'" (Heidegger 1994, 48). Allerdings ist es seiner Ansicht nach wichtig, diese Entsprechung nicht vorschnell falsch zu verstehen. Darauf verweisen schon die Anführungszeichen, in denen das Wort „Analogie" steht. Er kann, wie er zugeben muss, nicht recht fassen, was mit dieser „Analogie" gemeint sein könnte:

> Und wenn wir einen radikalen und scharfen Sinn von „Analogie" und „analog" hätten – ein Vollzugssinn des *legein*, der bis heute auf seine philosophische Interpretation wartet –, dann wäre in der Besprechung der Analogie leicht weiter zu kommen. (Heidegger 1994, 48.)

Einen solchen Sinn, so Heidegger, haben wir allerdings nicht, so dass auf eine weitere „Besprechung" „verzichtet werden" müsse, „umso dringlicher heute, als es von vornherein die Meinung abzuwehren gilt, aufgrund dieser Analogie lasse sich auf eine Verwandtschaft der Philosophie mit der Kunst schließen" (Heidegger 1994, 48) Eindrücklich warnt Heidegger daher davor, „über das Verhältnis von Philosophie und Kunst als ein gegebenes Thema für Alleswisser und Flachköpfe bei einer Teegesellschaft ein oberflächliches Geschwätz zu beginnen" (ibid.)

Genauso wenig wie das „Philosophieren" als Vollzug des Menschen vorschnell mit den theoretischen Wissenschaften oder den Weltanschauungen gleichgesetzt oder verglichen werden dürfe, könne das Philosophieren mit der Kunst gleichgesetzt werden oder könne von einer Verwandtschaft der Philosophie mit der Kunst gesprochen werden, auch wenn Heidegger später – nämlich im Oktober 1932 – in einem Brief an Elisabeth Blochmann davon sprechen sollte, „daß ich immer bei der Arbeit die Stimmung dessen habe, der mit Hammer und Meißel arbeitet" (Heidegger und Blochmann 1990, 54 f.)[22] Er erwägt in der frühen Phase seines Denkens „höchstens" die These, dass die Kunst mit der Philosophie verwandt sei:

> […] nicht so zwar, daß künstlerisches Schaffen und Bilden „einen Teil" der Philosophie ausmachte, sondern nur so, daß, was im Philosophieren zu radikalstem Ausdruck kommt und zu rücksichtslosesten Eigenerhellung in der Vollzugsleidenschaft selbst, in der Kunst ein bestimmt konkretes Wie der Erfahrungs- und Seinsmöglichkeit sich bildet – formal entsprechend wie in den Wissenschaften, nur daß hier alles wieder anders und in den verschiedenen Wissenschaften wiederum anders gelagert ist. (Heidegger 1994, 48.)[23]

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Ohne Frage bewegen sich für Heidegger also Philosophie und Kunst – also: der Vollzug des Philosophierens und der künstlerische Vollzug, denen die Erhellung des eigenen Existenzvollzuges gemeinsam ist – nicht auf derselben

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22 Kontext dieser Selbstdeutung ist das Geburtstageschenkt Blochmanns „Rodins Testament" (Auguste Rodin, *Testament*, Halle 1932), das, so Heidegger, „mitten in meine Stimmung" traf und „im Innersten" ansprach. Es sei, so Heidegger weiter, „nicht nur für Bildhauer u. Maler geschrieben" (Heidegger und Blochmann 1990, 54).
23 Vermutlich aufgrund der hier betonten Nähe von Philosophie und Kunst schreibt Heidegger auch der kunstgeschichtlichen Betrachtung (im Gegensatz zur naturwissenschaftlichen Betrachtung, die die Natur „theoretisiert") eine besondere Bedeutung zu: „Auch dem Kunsthistoriker stehen Gegenstände gegenüber. Aber sie tragen noch die Patina des Durchgangs durch das historische Ich an sich. Das Kunstwerk ist als Kunstwerk gegeben, der Erlebnischarakter ist festgehalten." (Heidegger 1999, 207.) Zur Kunstgeschichte (und der Problematik der historischen Geisteswissenschaften, die die Kunstgeschichte, so Heidegger, missverstehen und nachahmen) vgl. auch die kurzen Ausführungen in: Heidegger 1988, 57.

Ebene. Die beiden Superlative („radikalstem", „rücksichtslosesten") zeigen, dass Heidegger der Philosophie immer noch eine über die Wissenschaften und die Kunst hinausreichende Sonderrolle in der „Eigenerhellung" zuweist. So wie Heidegger sich immer wieder darum bemühte, das, was seiner Ansicht nach Philosophie eigentlich ist, von falsch verstandenen Philosophieverständnissen oder von Religion und Mystik abzugrenzen, so grenzte er die Philosophie hier auch von der Kunst (und somit auch von der Dichtung oder der Literatur) ab und kritisiert eine Philosophie, die „blind in der eigenen Geschichte umher" läuft, „sich bei Literaten in Geltung gesetzt" hat oder sich anstellen lässt, „eine Pseudoreligiosität" zu propagieren (Heidegger 1994, 46). Nach diesen kurzen, aporetisch endenden Ausführungen zum Musizieren, zur Kunst und zur „Analogie" von Philosophie und Kunst wendet Heidegger sich wieder der Geschichte – nämlich Platon – zu. Doch ist gerade die Ratlosigkeit bezüglich der „,Analogie'" zwischen dem philosophischen und dem künstlerischen Vollzug als Spur von großer Bedeutung: Denn sie verweist auf eine nicht weiter reflektierte Nähe zwischen seinem Verständnis des Philosophierens und dem künstlerischen und somit auch dichterischen Vollzug, die Heidegger, vermutlich weil er sie noch nicht recht verstehen konnte und sie ihm so missverständlich erschien, so sehr er sie anerkannte, zugleich relativieren musste.

Ähnliche Spuren einer Nähe von Denken und Dichten zeigen sich auch in der Vorlesung *Ontologie (Hermeneutik der Faktizität)*, in der Heidegger viele Motive seines frühen Denkens aufgreift und mit großer Entschiedenheit die Grundmotive einer hermeneutischen Phänomenologie formuliert. Dies geschieht in noch stärkerer Absetzung von Husserls Phänomenologie als im Kriegsnotsemester 1919 oder im Wintersemester 1919/20. Dieser wirft er, u. a., „Geschichtslosigkeit" und den „Dilettantismus, mit dem Meinungen aus der Geschichte aufgegriffen und weitergebildet werden", vor (Heidegger 1988, 75). An Husserl bemängelt er ausdrücklich, dass für ihn die Mathematik das „Vorbild für jede Wissenschaft überhaupt" sei (ibid., 71). Heidegger wendet sich erneut gegen die problematische Idealisierung der Mathematik und das damit verbundene Verständnis von Philosophie und ihrer Strenge. Dagegen setzt er sein Verständnis der Philosophie als einer „Hermeneutik" des faktischen Lebens. Sie ist ein „ausgezeichnetes *Wie der Forschung*" (ibid., 74), in dem das

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Dasein für sich selbst „wach" wird.[24] Auch in dieser Vorlesung gibt es keine ausdrückliche Reflexion auf die Dichtung und ihr Verhältnis zur Philosophie. Doch gibt es einige Hinweise, die auf eine noch unreflektierte Nähe schließen lassen. So bedient sich Heidegger erneut der Kunst, um seinem Auditorium ein Beispiel für die Radikalität seiner Hermeneutik des faktischen Lebens im Vergleich zur Philosophie als einer wissenschaftlichen Disziplin zu geben:

> Ein Exempel: *Vincent van Gogh* schreibt einmal in der kritischen Zeit, in der er auf der Suche nach seinem eigenen Dasein war, an seinen Bruder: „Ich sterbe lieber eines natürlichen Todes als daß ich mich durch die Universität dazu vorbereite, …"

Heidegger kommentiert dieses Zitat folgendermaßen:

> Das sei hier nicht gesagt, um dem allerorts hörbaren Geseufze über das Ungenügen der heutigen Wissenschaften zu einer höheren Sanktion zu verhelfen. Es sei vielmehr gefragt: Und was geschah? Er arbeitete, riß sich Bilder gleichsam aus dem Leibe und wurde über der Auseinandersetzung mit dem Dasein wahnsinnig. (Heidegger 1988, 32.)[25]

Heidegger findet, so legen diese dramatischen Worte nahe, im Leben van Goghs eine Entsprechung zu seiner eigenen denkerischen „Auseinandersetzung mit dem Dasein", die sich nicht auf universitäre Wissenschaft reduzieren lässt, sondern der Arbeit und Erfahrung eines Künstlers entspricht. Auch in einem Brief an Karl Löwith – geschrieben am 8. Mai 1923, also genau in der Zeit, in der er diese Vorlesung gehalten hat – hat Heidegger sich auf van Goghs Briefe und die in ihnen artikulierte Erfahrung bezogen, um seine eigene Situation zu verdeutlichen, und zwar, anders als in der Vorlesung, nun explizit:

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24 Vgl. hierzu auch: Heidegger 1988, 29 ff.
25 Vgl. hierzu auch: Lambert 2002, 32.

Seit Semestern begleitet mich eine Äußerung van Goghs an seinen Bruder: „Ich fühle mit aller Kraft, daß die Geschichte des Menschen gerade so ist, wie beim Weizen. Wenn man erst in die Erde gesetzt ist um aufzublühen, was tut's, man wird gemahlen, um Brot zu werden. [Nr. 592] Wehe dem, der nicht zerrieben wird –!" Zwar war ich als Theologe schon zwischen den Mühlsteinen – aber gerade heute ist das Dasein so unheimlich harmlos – ich möchte aber nicht vermessen sein. – (Heidegger und Löwith 2017, 88.)

Das – und das bedeutet: sein eigenes – Dasein ist vermutlich deshalb so „unheimlich harmlos", weil sich in der Harmlosigkeit schon das Gemahlen-Werden ankündigt. Dieses hat Heidegger nicht nur als Theologe bereits erfahren. Er erwartet, auch als Philosoph gemahlen zu werden, damit daraus etwas Wichtiges entstehen kann – wie der Künstler van Gogh.[26] Dies ist eine Erwartung, die der theoretische Wissenschaftler gar nicht kennt und kennen kann.

68   Es gibt in dieser Vorlesung noch eine andere Stelle, die – wiederum implizit und spurenhaft – die Nähe zwischen Denken und Dichten zeigt. Denn um sein Verständnis von „Hermeneutik" zu erläutern, erörtert Heidegger zu Beginn der Vorlesung den „traditionellen Begriff" der Hermeneutik. Dabei geht er auch auf Platons Ansicht ein, die Dichter seien „nur die ‚Sprecher' der Götter". Der „Sprecher" oder „Hermeneus" sei, so Heidegger zusammenfassend, „wer an jemanden das mitteilt, kundgibt, was ein anderer ‚meint', bzw. wer solche Mitteilung, Kundgabe, ihrerseits vermittelt, nachvollzieht" (Heidegger 1988, 9).[27] Heideggers Hermeneutik vermittelt weder göttliche Botschaften noch ist sie überhaupt die Mitteilung der Meinungen anderer Menschen. Und doch

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26 Für ein Bekenntnis zur eigenen denkerischen Herausforderung, das künstlerischen Erfahrungen ähnlich und, so impliziert Heidegger, streng wissenschaftlichem Arbeiten wie in der Husserlschen Phänomenologie entsprechend unähnlich ist, vgl. auch: Heidegger und Löwith 2017, 87: „Aber meine ‚Ontologie' kommt immer wieder ins Rutschen – wird aber sichtlich besser. – Es fallen darin die Hauptschläge gegen die Phänomenologie – ich stehe jetzt völlig auf eigenen Beinen. Aber die Mitteilung der Dinge bringt mich oft zur Verzweiflung – und doch erfahre ich immer wieder, wie die neuen Begriffe förmlich aufschießen."

27 Heidegger bezieht sich auf Platon, *Ion* 534 e und 535 a.

knüpft er gegen das moderne Verständnis von Hermeneutik als „Lehre *von der Auslegung*" an ihre „ursprüngliche Bedeutung", d. h. ihre Bedeutung im Kontext der griechischen Geschichte und Philosophie, ausdrücklich an, um sie als „eine bestimmte Einheit des Vollzugs des *hermeneuein* (des Mitteilens), d. h. des zu Begegnung, Sicht, Griff und Begriff bringenden *Auslegens der Faktizität*" zu bestimmen. Die Hermeneutik Heideggers lehrt also nicht, wie etwas – zum Beispiel ein Text – ausgelegt werden soll, sondern ist selbst eine Auslegung und steht als solche in der Tradition der von Platon als Hermeneuten, als „Sprecher der Götter" bezeichneten Dichter. Heidegger hat über die „ursprüngliche" Bedeutung des Hermeneutischen, die eine Nähe zur Dichtung impliziert, nicht derart nachgedacht, dass für ihn das Verhältnis von Denken und Dichten ausdrücklich Thema geworden wäre. Auch in dieser Vorlesung ist die Nähe von Dichten und Denken eine noch weitestgehend unbewusste, verborgene Nähe, die im Hintergrund verblieben ist. Sie sollte ihm erst später auf seinem Denkweg deutlich werden.

3. Der „Dichtungscharakter" des Denkens? Frühe Abgrenzungen von der Literatur und spätere Annäherungen an die Dichtung und ihr Denken

Heidegger möchte, so hat sich schon gezeigt, auf keinen Fall die Philosophie zu nah an die Literatur oder Dichtung gerückt sehen oder gar den Eindruck erwecken, er stelle explizit oder auch nur implizit die Grenze zwischen Philosophie und Dichtung in Frage – gerade weil die Philosophie für ihn weder eine populäre Weltanschauung noch Mystik oder Kunst, sondern die für die Universität zentrale wissenschaftliche Disziplin mit einer ihr eigenen Strenge ist: „Die *Strenge* der philosophischen Wissenschaft ist nicht dieselbe wie die der mathematischen Naturwissenschaft, sie ist nicht die Strenge einer zwingenden Argumentation", so betont er im Wintersemester 1919/20, um fortzufahren:

> Aber Philosophie ist deswegen nicht weniger streng als Mathematik […]. Strenge des philosophischen Ausdrucks besagt Konzentriertheit auf die Echtheit der Lebensbezüge im konkreten Leben selbst. Es handelt sich nicht um Mystik oder Schwärmerei, um ein Sich-los-Lassen

und „Schauen". – Sondern die echte Konzentration hat ihren eigenen Maßstab, den man nicht ermessen kann an anderen Gebieten wie Kunst oder Religion. (Heidegger 1993, 231.)[28]

Aufgrund dieses Anspruchs auf philosophische Strenge unterlässt der junge Heidegger das explizite Gespräch mit Literatur oder Dichtung und sieht sich, wie bereits ansatzweise deutlich geworden ist, darüber hinaus gezwungen, sein eigenes Denken immer wieder von der Literatur oder Dichtung ausdrücklich abzugrenzen. Daher finden sich in den frühen Freiburger Vorlesungen Distanzierungen von „Schwärmerei, Oberflächlichkeit und Literatengeschreibe" (Heidegger 1994, 46) oder die ausdrückliche Wendung gegen „romantisch tragische Selbstbespiegelung und Selbstgenuß" (ibid., 35) in der Philosophie.[29]

Eine solche Abgrenzung von der Dichtung war sicherlich auch deshalb notwendig, weil man Heideggers frühes Denken im Kontext der philosophischen Debatten der 1920er Jahre durchaus hätte missverstehen können, und zwar nicht nur durch Heideggers oft selbst expressionistische Sprache, sondern auch durch seinen philosophischen Anspruch, der eine gewisse Verwandtschaft mit den Idealen künstlerischer oder literarischer Kreise – etwa des Kreises um Stefan George – aufweist. So geht es ihm in der Zeit der Krise der theoretischen Wissenschaft um das „Vorleben" und die „Gestaltung" einer bestimmten Lebensweise. Heidegger hat sich hierzu in seinen Vorlesungen deutlich geäußert: „Die Erweckung und Erhöhung des Lebenszusammenhangs des wissenschaftlichen Bewußtseins ist nicht Gegenstand theoretischer Darlegung, sondern vorbildlichen Vor*lebens* – nicht Gegenstand praktischer Regelgebung, sondern Wirkung ursprünglich

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28 Implizit setzt Heidegger sich hier, u. a., von Werken wie Graf Hermann Keyserlings *Philosophie als Kunst* (Darmstadt 1920) ab. Vgl. hierzu Heidegger und Karl Löwith 2017, 36, 42, 60.

29 Vgl. hier auch die Kritik Heideggers an dem, was er das „Literaturhafte" der Schreibereien von Paul Ludwig Landsberg nennt, in einem Brief an Karl Löwith vom 27. März 1925: „Landsberg war mal einige Tage da – er arbeitet über Augustinus vermutlich in derselben Art wie über Plato und das Mittelalter – er ist aber nicht mehr so arrogant und merkt allmählich das Literaturhafte seiner Schreibereien." (Heidegger und Löwith 2017, 123.)

motivierten persönlich-unpersönlichen *Seins*." (Heidegger 1999, 5.) Es geht ihm darum, in Absetzung von Husserl und seinem Anspruch Philosophieren aus dem faktischen Leben selbst heraus zu verstehen und sich damit gegen die „Entlebung im Theoretisierungsprozess" (ibid., 217) und gegen die „,Entgeschichtlichung des Ich'" (ibid., 206) zu wenden. „Geistiges Leben", so Heidegger bereits im Juni 1918 in einem Brief an Elisabeth Blochmann, „kann nur vor*gelebt* u. gestaltet werden, so dass, die daran teilhaben sollen, unmittelbar, in ihrer eigensten Existenz davon ergriffen sind." (Heidegger und Blochmann 1990, 7.) Das „geistige Leben", so Heidegger weiter an Blochmann, müsse in einer Zeit, in der die Universitäten nicht mehr Ausdruck eines rechten „geistigen Seins u. Lebens" seien, „wieder ein wahrhaft *wirkliches* werden – es muss eine aus dem Persönlichen geborene Wucht bekommen, die ‚umwirft' u. zum echten Aufstehen zwingt [...]" (ibid.). Dieser frühe Brief Heideggers verrät sehr viel über sein philosophisches Selbstverständnis, das die Philosophie, wie sich gezeigt hat, in „Entsprechung" zum Musizieren nicht auf eine in einem bestimmten „Betrieb" ablaufende „Technik" reduziert, sondern ihren gemeinschaftlichen Vollzug und die Orientierung am Vorbild – nämlich eines „umwerfenden" „Meisters" – betont.

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Der philosophische Anspruch, der sich in seinen frühen Vorlesungen oder auch in seinem Brief an Elisabeth Blochmann zeigt, mag oberflächlich betrachtet unwissenschaftlich und gar unphilosophisch klingen. Wird für Heidegger die Philosophie nicht zur einer Art Kunst, die dann auch an der Universität fehl am Platze wäre? Hätte man Heidegger nicht für einen „Guru" halten können, der den wissenschaftlich-aufgeklärten Anspruch der Philosophie verriet und dem es um eine treu folgende Schülerschaft ging? Manche Kritiker Heideggers werfen ihm genau dies heute noch vor. Doch wusste Heidegger selbst um die Gefahr solcher Missverständnisse, weshalb er sich in seinen frühen Vorlesungen so vehement gegen jede Verwechslung oder Vermischung der Philosophie mit Kunst oder Dichtung (oder auch Religion und Mystik) wandte. Ihm war bestens bekannt, welche problematische und unphilosophische Rolle die Phänomenologie in manchen – ebenfalls problematischen und unphilosophischen – „Schüler-Kreisen" gespielt hat. Darauf verweist die Kritik am „Betrieb" dieser Kreise und die Warnung vor phänomenologischem „Mystizismus", die er im Sommersemester 1923 formulierte:

Der Betrieb der Schülerschaften hat die Zugänge zur wirklichen Ergreifung verlegt. Der Georgekreis, Keyserling, Anthroposophie, Steiner usw. – alles läßt Phänomenologie in sich wirken. Wie weit es gekommen ist, zeigt ein neu erschienenes Buch: Zur Phänomenologie der Mystik, das im offiziellen Verlag und mit offiziellster Patenschaft erscheint. Es soll hier davor gewarnt werden! (Heidegger 1988, 74.)[30]

Heidegger wollte keine ihm treu ergebende Schülerschaft und, wie aus einem Brief an Karl Jaspers aus dem Sommer 1923 deutlich wird, auch keinen „„Bund‟, keinen „„Kreis‟‟ und keine „„Richtung‟‟ bilden,[31] sondern Menschen durch sein Vorbild, sein „Vorleben‟ dazu führen, aus eigener Freiheit heraus zu denken. Ihm ging es um das „je eigene‟ Dasein, das durch die Philosophie für sich selbst wach werden sollte. Das „Thema der hermeneutischen Untersuchung‟, so Heidegger dementsprechend, „ist je eigenes Dasein, und zwar als hermeneutisch befragt auf seinen Seinscharakter im Absehen darauf, eine wurzelhafte Wachheit seiner selbst auszubilden‟ (Heidegger 1988, 16). Wachheit kann nur die je eigene Wachheit sein. Gerade dieses Bemühen zeigt die Nähe von Denken und einem Dichten, das als Verstehensvollzug des lebendig-geschichtlichen Ich zu verstehen ist. Und es zeigt die Distanz zu jeder Art von Kunst oder Literatur, der es um ideologisch orientierte Anhänger- oder Schülerschaften geht. Bei aller Nähe bleibt Heidegger jedoch ein Denker, der in seiner Radikalität über die Grenzen der überlieferten philosophischen Sprache hinausging – wie ein Dichter, in „Entsprechung‟ zu einen Dichter, aber nicht als Dichter. Man verstand am Ende, wie Gadamer über die frühen Vorlesungen berichtet, „daß es nicht Poesie und nicht Wachträume des Gemütes sind, wenn man sprachliche Potentiale aufbietet, deren Sinngehalt

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30 Heidegger bezieht sich auf Gerda Walthers Buch *Zur Phänomenologie der Mystik* (Halle 1923).
31 Vgl. Heidegger und Jaspers 1990, 42: „Meine größte Freude ist, daß ich hier durch Vormachen Wandel schaffen kann und jetzt frei bin. […] Und je organischer und konkreter und unauffälliger der Umsturz sich vollzieht, um so nachhaltiger und sicherer wird er sein. Dazu bedarf es einer unsichtbaren Gemeinschaft – das ist eigentlich zuviel und sieht nach ‚Bund‘ und ‚Kreis‘ und ‚Richtung‘ aus. Viel Götzendienerei muß ausgerottet werden […].‟

sich nicht an die Tafel schreiben läßt".[32]

Dies gilt auch noch für den späten Heidegger. Auch wenn die Sprache und das Verhältnis zwischen Sprache und Sein immer mehr in die Mitte seines philosophischen Interesses rückt und auf seinem Weg „unterwegs zur Sprache" das Zwiegespräch zwischen Denken und Dichten eine zentrale Rolle einnimmt, so bleibt die Differenz zwischen Denken und Dichtung für ihn zentral. Allerdings erfährt und thematisiert er nun eine Nähe, die er Anfang der 1920er Jahren noch nicht zulassen konnte. Die Auslegung der Dichtung Hölderlins hat Heidegger nicht nur die Zunge gelöst – so, als sei die Dichtung Hölderlins ein Katalysator gewesen, der Heideggers Denken in Gang gesetzt hätte. Man kann, weit darüber hinaus, ebenfalls mit Gadamer von „Heideggers Anlehnung an Hölderlins Dichtung für seine eigenen Gedanken" sprechen.[33] Doch geht es ihm dabei nicht darum, die „Dichtung zu einer Belegstelle für das Denken" herabzusetzen und so „das Denken zu leicht" zu nehmen.[34] Die Dichtung Hölderlins ist für ihn kein „Steinbruch", dem er bestimmte Gedanken entnehmen könnte, sondern ein Wahrheitsgeschehen. Gerade wenn das Denken in seiner „Schwere" ernst genommen wird, ergibt sich für Heidegger als Denker, der Hölderlins Dichtung erläutert, daher ein Verhältnis zum Dichten, das über eine „Anlehnung" noch weit hinausreicht. Das Gedicht kann manchmal auch zu einer radikalen Infragestellung des Denkens führen: „Um des Gedichteten willen muß die Erläuterung des Gedichtes danach trachten, sich selbst überflüssig zu machen. Der letzte, aber auch der schwerste Schritt jeder Auslegung besteht darin, mir ihren Erläuterungen vor dem reinen Dastehen des Gedichtes zu verschwinden", schreibt Heidegger im Vorwort zu den *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* (Heidegger 1981, 8).

In seinem Bemühen, die Metaphysik zu verwinden, das Ereignis der Sprache neu zu denken und sich für eine neue Erfahrung mit der Sprache, in

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32 Hans-Georg Gadamer: „Vom Anfang des Denkens", in: Gadamer 1987, 375–393, hier 383.

33 Hans-Georg Gadamer: „Danken und Gedenken", in: Gadamer 2000, 208–213, hier 208.

34 Martin Heidegger: „Das Wesen der Sprache" (1957/58), in: Heidegger 1985, 147–204, hier 156.

der der Mensch den „eigentlichen Aufenthalt seines Daseins" hat, zu öffnen,[35] tritt der Denker Heidegger vor dem Gedicht zurück. In der Nähe von Denken und Dichten werden ihm sogar die Grenzen fließend. Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens berichtet er: „Der Dichtungscharakter des Denkens ist noch verhüllt."[36] Doch deutet sich für ihn nicht nur ein „Dichtungscharakter" des Denkens an, sondern es zeigt sich auch ein „Denkcharakter" des Dichtens. „Wird in einem Gedicht auch noch gedacht?", so fragt er in seiner Interpretation von Stefan Georges Gedicht „Das Wort", um zu antworten: „Allerdings, in einem Gedicht von solchem Rang wird gedacht, und zwar ohne Wissenschaft, ohne Philosophie." (Heidegger 1985, 154.) Für den späten Heidegger verweist das „dichtende Denken", das „in der Wahrheit die Topologie des Seins" (Heidegger 1983, 84) sei, auf die Zukünftigkeit eines andersanfänglichen Denkens, das sich im „Namenlosen" hält, jenseits von „Titeln" wie Hermeneutik oder Phänomenologie.[37] Möglich sind schon „Winke", die Heidegger mit Blick auf das Ereignis des Seyns folgendermaßen charakterisiert:

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> „Winke" sind keine Dichtungen. Sie sind auch nicht eine in Verse und Reime gebrachte „Philosophie". Die „Winke" sind Worte eines Denkens, das zu einem Teil dieses Aussagen braucht, aber in ihm sich nicht erfüllt. Dieses Denken hat im Seienden keinen Anhalt, denn es denkt das Seyn.[38]

Im Denken des Seyns – als „Gegenwart des Unzugangbaren" – stößt Heidegger auf das Danken, das, insofern es stiftender als das Dichten und gründender als das Denken sei, der Nähe von Dichten und Denken „vorausliegt" und aus dem heraus diese Nähe gedeutet werden kann: „Stiftender als Dichten, / gründender auch als Denken", so schrieb Heidegger als Dank nach seinem 85. Geburtstag, „bleibet der Dank. / Die zu danken vermögen, / bringt er zurück vor / die Gegenwart des Unzugangbaren, / der wir Sterbliche / anfänglich ge-eignet

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35 Vgl. hierzu Heidegger 1985, 149.
36 Martin Heidegger: „Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens" (1947), in: Heidegger 1983, 75–86, hier 84.
37 Vgl. hierzu Heidegger 1985, 114 ff.
38 Martin Heidegger: „Winke", in: Heidegger 1983, 23–33, insb. 33 für die Charakterisierung der „Winke".

sind." In diesem späten Dank klingt noch die Erschütterung nach, die der frühe Heidegger angesichts des „Erlebnisses" und des faktischen Lebens empfunden haben mag und die dazu führte, dass er nicht einfach Philosophie trieb, sondern ins Philosophieren und Denken hineingeriet und somit dem Dichten nahe kam.

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Martin Heidegger und Georg Trakl

Die andere Zwiesprache zwischen Denken und Dichten

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Martin Heidegger and Georg Trakl. The Other Conversation between Thinking and Poetizing

Abstract

In the paper, I develop some thoughts on the relationship between thinking and poetizing on the basis of Heidegger's understanding of Georg Trakl's poetry. I attempt to appropriately illuminate Heidegger's interpretation in two steps: first through a

discussion of Trakl's poem "Ein Winterabend" ("A Winter Evening") and subsequently through a contemplation on Trakl's "Nachtgesang" ("nightly song"). The poet sings and the thinker can only contemplate upon his poetry. Of central importance are the question about the calling of the poet, whereby he calls being forth, and about the human mortality. Where can hope still be found in an era of the gods who have fled?

Keywords: Heidegger, Trakl, poetry, contemplation, the essence of man, gods who have fled.

Martin Heidegger in Georg Trakl. Drugi razgovor med mišljenjem in pesnjenjem

Povzetek

V članku na osnovi Heideggrove interpretacije pesništva Georga Trakla razgrnem nekaj misli o razmerju med mišljenjem in pesnjenjem. Heideggrovo tolmačenjem skušam primerno osvetliti v dveh korakih: najprej s pomočjo obravnave Traklove pesmi »Ein Winterabend« (»Zimski večer«) in nato s pomočjo osmislitve njegovega »nočnega speva« (»Nachtgesang«). Pesnik poje in mislec lahko samo naknadno razmišlja o njegovem pesništvu. Osrednjega pomena sta vprašanji pesnikovega klicanja, s katerim priklicuje prikazovanje bivajočega, in človekove smrtnosti. Kje je še mogoče najti upanje v dobi pobeglih bogov?

Ključne besede: Heidegger, Trakl, pesništvo, osmislitev, bistvo človeka, pobegli bogovi.

In diesem Aufsatz möchte ich einige Gedanken zum Verhältnis vom Dichten und Denken entfalten. Nach einigen einführenden Betrachtungen werde ich versuchen, die Zwiesprache zwischen Martin Heidegger und Georg Trakl zu erläutern. Im ersten Teil werde ich mich mit dem Gedicht „Ein Winterabend" von Trakl und Heideggers Gedanken zum Gedicht befassen. Der zweite Teil ist dem Nachtgesang von Trakl gewidmet.

Martin Heidegger bringt in seinem schmalen Hüttenbuch *Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens* auf der linken Seite mit Winken, die alle mit „Wenn" anfangen, in die Stimmung, in welcher die auf der rechten Seite festgehalten Denkerfahrungen zum Ausdruck kommen.[1] Dadurch eröffnet er nicht nur die räumliche, sondern auch die zeitliche Dimension seiner Heimat als Zeitspielraum. Auf Seite 85 finden wir einen für unser Thema bedeutungsvollen Wink. Heidegger beschreibt erst die Stimmung: „Wenn das Abendlicht, irgendwo im Wald einfallend, seine Stämme umgoldet…" Es ist Abend, weil das Abendlicht, der Mondschein im Wald einfallend, seine Stämme umgoldet. Wo fällt das Abendlicht ein? Irgendwo im Wald, d. h. in die Lichtung. Das Abendlicht scheint in die Lichtung im Wald und umgoldet seine Stämme. Es ereignet sich die Unverborgenheit. Das Abendlicht, der Mondschein, kann nur im Winter in die Lichtung scheinen, deshalb muss Heidegger sich an einem Winterabend in dieser Stimmung befunden haben, anders gesagt, seine Befindlichkeit war so gestimmt, und in dieser Stimmung kamen die folgenden Gedanken zu ihm:

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> *Singen und Denken sind die nachbarlichen Stämme des Dichtens.*

> *Sie entwachsen dem Seyn und reichen in seine Wahrheit.*

> *Ihr Verhältnis gibt zu denken, was Hölderlin von den Bäumen des Waldes singt:*

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1 Vgl. Heidegger 1983, 75–86.

„Und unbekannt einander bleiben sich,
solang sie stehn, die nachbarlichen Stämme." (Heidegger 1983, 85.)

In einer Zeit, in der alle lebendigen Sprachen sich in einem ständigen Absterben befinden und der Bildgewalt der neuen Medien jedes Hören auf das Ungesprochene überschreit, scheint der Versuch einer Erörterung poetischer Sprache ein unzeitgemäßes und hoffnungsloses Unternehmen zu sein. Was könnte Dichtung uns, heutigen Menschen, noch sagen? Wie sinnvoll könnte es sein, sich denkerisch auf Dichtung einzulassen? Es gibt bestimmt wichtigere und lebensnähere Aufgaben zu lösen. Ökologische Katastrophe, Terrorismus, nuklearer Bewaffnungswettlauf, politische Radikalisierung sind doch die Themen, mit denen jeder ernsthafter Denker sich auseinandersetzen soll. Wozu Dichtung? Wozu Dichter? Wozu Denker? Die Antwort auf diese Fragen ist eine ganz einfache: Im Dichten und Denken findet die menschliche Freiheit – *„Freiheit* ist unser und der Gottheit Höchstes" (Schelling 1992, 79) – ihren vollkommensten Ausdruck. Im Dichten und Denken eröffnet sich erst die menschliche Welt in ihrer ganzen Breite und Tiefe. Nur im Dichten und Denken kann das Wesen des Menschen gerettet werden. *„Singen und Denken sind die nachbarlichen Stämme des Dichtens."* Aber, woraus besteht ihre Nachbarschaft? *„Sie entwachsen dem Seyn und reichen in seine Wahrheit."* Das heißt: sie wurzeln im Seyn selbst, und nicht im Sein, wie es in der Metaphysik als Seiendheit interpretiert wurde. Nur weil sie im Seyn wurzeln, können sie in die Wahrheit des Seyns, das heißt in die Lichtung oder Unverborgenheit, reichen. Nur deshalb kann das Mondlicht in die Lichtung hineinscheinen und seine Stämme umgolden, die uns hier als alles Seiende zugewinkt werden. In den letzten beiden Zeilen bringt Heidegger seine Denkerfahrung, dass die beiden Bäume oder Stämme einander unbekannt bleiben, solange sie stehn. *„Ihr Verhältnis gibt zu denken, was Hölderlin von den Bäumen des Waldes singt: // ‚Und unbekannt einander bleiben sich, / solang sie stehn, die nachbarlichen Stämme.'"* Wenn sie stehn bleiben, bleiben sie stumm und können nicht hören voneinander. Erst in der Zwiesprache zwischen Dichter und Denker können die beiden Stämme sich gegenseitig umgolden.

Der Denker denkt und der Dichter singt – auch wenn sein Leben kurz ist und überschattet von Alkoholmissbrauch und Drogensucht. Georg Trakl

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wurde am 3. Februar 1887 in Salzburg geboren. Am 2. November 1914 starb er durch Kokainvergiftung im Feldhospital in Krakau. Sein Lebenswerk ist nicht umfangreich – zeitlebens wurde nur ein schmaler Band mit Gedichten publiziert.[2] Den zweiten Band *Sebastian im Traum*[3] hat er noch zusammengestellt, aber der Band erschien erst 1915 posthum.

Der Dichter singt. In seiner Dichtung entspricht er der Sprache. Der Dichter ist der Hörende. Er hört auf das ihm Zugesprochene und ruft es in seiner Dichtung hervor. Erst wenn das Seiende ins Wort gerufen wird, *ist* es und kann es sich dem Menschen in seiner Unverborgenheit zeigen. Das Sein des Seienden ist Sinn. Der Dichter stiftet Sinn und eröffnet so erst die sinnvolle Welt, in der der Mensch immer schon zuhause ist und die ihm immer wieder verloren geht. Dichtung ist nicht eine besondere Art des Sprechens – sie ist das Wesen der menschlichen Sprache. Unsere Alltagssprache ist eine arme, beschränkte, sich selbst überschreiende Sprache, die ihre Poesie verloren hat.

Der Denker sinnt nach. Er hört auf das vom Dichter Gesungene und erschließt den Sinn. Der Dichter eröffnet die menschliche Welt in ihren vielfältigen und undurchschaubaren Strukturen – der Denker sinnt diesen Strukturen nach und versucht das Wesen des Menschen zu bestimmen. Sowie jeder Denker nur einen einzigen Gedanken denkt, dichtet jeder Dichter nur aus einem einzigen Gedicht. Der Denker denkt seinen einzigen Gedanken, indem er diesen in einer Vielfalt von Arbeiten zum Ausdruck bringt; und dennoch bleibt dieser eine Gedanke unausgesprochen im Werk. Der einzige Gedanke ermöglicht das Werk, seine Gliederung und Systematik. Die eigentliche Zwiesprache mit dem Gedanken eines Denkers ist allein die denkende: das denkende Gespräch der Denker, das wir die Geschichte der Philosophie nennen. Der Dichter dichtet nur aus einem Gedicht, d. h. das Gedicht bleibt ungesprochen. Keine der einzelnen Dichtungen, auch nicht ihr Gesamt sagt alles. Das eigentliche Gedicht bleibt ungesprochen. Die dichtende Zwiesprache kann das dichterische Gespräch der Dichter sein. Trakl antwortet in seiner Dichtung auf Hölderlin, Rimbaud und andere Dichter.

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2 Das Buch Gedichte erschien als Band 7/8 der Reihe *Der jüngste Tag* (Leipzig 1912).
3 Georg Trakl: *Sebastian im Traum* (Leipzig 1915).

Die Zwiesprache des Denkens mit dem Dichten ist notwendig, weil der Sinn von Sein nur in der Dichtung gesungen wird. Ohne die schon immer in der Dichtung erschlossene sinnvolle Welt würde es nicht zu denken geben. Da sie wie die Eule der Minerva erst in der einbrechenden Dämmerung ihren Flug anfängt, das heißt, wenn das Abendlicht, irgendwo im Wald einfallend, seine Stämme umgoldet, kann die Philosophie nur nachsinnen. Das Gespräch des Denkens mit dem Dichten ist gefährlich und es verlangt eine sorgfältige Zurückhaltung. All zu leicht kann das Denken das Singen des Gedichts stören und verstummen lassen. Denkend hören auf eine Dichtung ist nachdenklich werden, und nur in diesem besinnlichen Nachdenken kann das Denken das Wesen der Sprache hervorrufen, damit wir wieder erfahren, was es bedeutet, in der Sprache zu wohnen.

Winterabend

Zuerst werden wir den Dichter hören; und erst danach werden wir Heideggers Erläuterungen zu diesem Gedicht nachzudenken versuchen.

EIN WINTERABEND

Wenn der Schnee ans Fenster fällt,
Lang die Abendglocke läutet,
Vielen ist der Tisch bereitet
Und das Haus ist wohlbestellt.

Mancher auf der Wanderschaft
Kommt ans Tor auf dunklen Pfaden.
Golden blüht der Baum der Gnaden
Aus der Erde kühlem Saft.

Wanderer tritt still herein;
Schmerz versteinerte die Schwelle.
Da erglänzt in reiner Helle
Auf dem Tische Brot und Wein.[4]

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4 Zitiert nach Martin Heidegger: „Die Sprache" (1950), in: Heidegger 1959, 17.

Warum hat Heidegger gerade dieses Gedicht ausgewählt? Es gibt bestimmt poetisch bedeutendere Gedichte von Trakl. Aber ich glaube, dass gerade dieses „einfache" Gedicht Heidegger ermöglicht, seine Sprachphilosophie zu entfalten. Der zentrale Gedanke ist, dass die Sprache spricht. Die Sprache spricht, weil sie das Haus des Seins ist. Nicht Menschen haben die Sprache, sondern die Sprache spricht zu uns. Das Sein ist sinnvoll und spricht uns zu. Alles Seiende spricht in seinem Sein und deshalb können wir das Sein des Seienden verstehen. Trakls Gedicht nennt den Schnee, der am späten Nachmittag lautlos ans Fenster fällt. Lang läutet die Abendglocke. Das Nennen ruft in die Nähe. Aber es bringt es nicht leiblich näher. Wenn wir Trakls Gedicht lesen, fängt es nicht zu schneien an, und doch ruft es den Winterabend in die Nähe. Das Gedicht ruft das Genannte hervor in die Anwesenheit und zugleich in die Abwesenheit. Es ist heute ein Sommertag und kein Winterabend. Der Schnee und die Glocke sind anwesend im Ruf des Nennens. Die erste Strophe ruft die Dinge und bittet sie zu kommen. Sie ruft den Schnee – er bringt uns unter den Himmel. Die läutende Abendglocke bringt uns als Sterbliche vor die Göttlichen. Das Haus ist wohlbestellt und der Tisch gerichtet. Die erste Strophe heißt die Welt kommen. Sie eröffnet die Welt als Geviert: Erde und Himmel, Sterbliche und Göttliche.

Entscheidend ist der zweite Vers der dritten Strophe: „Schmerz versteinerte die Schwelle." Die Schwelle ist der Grundbalken, der das Tor im Ganzen hält und damit auch den Unter-Schied trägt. Der Unter-Schied zwischen innen und außen. Aber warum Schmerz?

Was ist Schmerz? Der Schmerz reißt. Er ist der Riß. Schmerz ist der Streit zwischen Ding und Welt. Der Riß ist der Unterschied zwischen dem Geviert und der Welt und die Identität von beiden. Ohne Geviert gibt es keine Welt, aber ohne Welt gibt es keinen Platz für das Geviert.

Der dritte und vierte Vers: „Da erglänzt in reiner Helle / Auf dem Tische Brot und Wein", heißen die Welt und die Dinge kommen. Dieses Heißen ist das Sprechen des Gedichtes. Der Unter-Schied stillt die Dinge in die Welt, aber das ist nur möglich, wenn dieses Stillen zugleich das Aufstellen einer Welt ist. Brot und Wein rufen Erde und Himmel, und auf dem Tisch des letzten Abendmahls zugleich die Sterblichen und die Göttlichen. Sprache spricht in der Dichtung als das Geläut der Stille.

Nachtgesang

Eine von Trakls Dichtungen, „Die Nacht der Armen", sagt: „Es dämmert!"[5] Der Dichter ruft die Nacht in eine Nähe her. Er heißt sie kommen. Sein Singen bringt uns die Nacht näher, ohne sie der Ferne zu entreißen. Die Anwesenheit, in die der Dichter die Nacht ruft, ist nicht die der Gegenwart. Es wird nicht hier und jetzt Nacht. Die Anwesenheit des Gerufenen ist eine andere und wesentlich tiefere. Des Dichters Rufen sagt uns erst, was die Nacht ist. „Es dämmert!" Die Strophe, in die dieser Satz gehört, fährt fort:

> Und dumpf o hämmert
> Die Nacht an unsre Tür!
> Es flüstert ein Kind:
> Wie zittert ihr
> So sehr!
> Doch tiefer neigen
> Wir Armen uns und schweigen
> Und schweigen, als wären wir nicht mehr! (Trakl 1969, 260.)

„Dumpf hämmert die Nacht an unsre Tür." Die Dämmerung kündigt das Kommen der Nacht an. Und die Nacht ist die Zeit der Finsternis. Die Nacht kann schrecklich sein, weil sie uns blind macht und in ihr alles Seiende in das Nichts versinkt. Die Angst überfällt uns und lässt uns zitternd zurück. Sie ist eine Grundbefindlichkeit der menschlichen Existenz und erschließt das Leben des Menschen in seiner Unheimlichkeit. In der Angst befindet der Mensch sich im Nichts und Nirgendwo. Sein In-der-Welt-sein als solches und sein Mit-Anderen-sein verschwinden in der Angst, so dass er in seiner Vereinzelung mit der Endlichkeit seiner eigenen Existenz konfrontiert wird. Der Mensch wird sterblich und weiß vom Tode. In der Angst wird alles finster und verstummt jedes Sprechen. Das Kind flüstert, weil es in seiner Unschuld noch keine Angst kennt. Aber die Dämmerung kommt wieder, weil auch die längste Nacht vorübergeht. Der Morgen dämmert am Ende der Nacht und mit ihm geht der Tag wieder auf.

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5 Die Gedichte Trakls zitiere ich nach der historisch-kritischen Ausgabe der *Dichtungen und Briefe* (vgl. Trakl 1969).

Trakls Dichtungen leben von der Mehrdeutigkeit der Sprache. Seine Sätze sind keine Aussagen. Sie rufen das Seiende in die Unverborgenheit. Die Nacht ist schrecklich, aber dies bedeutet nicht, dass sie reine Finsternis ist, da sie auch besinnlich macht. Die Mystik weiß von der Urgewalt der Nacht. Erst wenn alles Sinnliche in der Nacht verschwindet, werden die unsinnlichen Dinge sichtbar und nähert sich Gott dem Menschen. Die Nacht gehört zum Tag, sowie der Tod zum Leben.

Die erste Strophe einer Dichtung, die „Nachtlied" überschrieben ist, singt:

> […] Ein Tiergesicht
> Erstarrt vor Bläue, ihrer Heiligkeit.
> Gewaltig ist das Schweigen im Stein; (Trakl 1969, 68.)

Welches Tiergesicht könnte hier gemeint sein? Es erstarrt vor der Heiligkeit der Bläue. In der Erstarrung sammelt sich das Gesicht des Tieres. Dieses Tier hält sich an sich, um in seinem gewaltigen Schweigen das Heilige anzuschauen. Die dritte Strophe gibt uns einen weiteren Wink:

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> O! ihr stillen Spiegel der Wahrheit.
> An des Einsamen elfenbeinerner Schläfe
> Erscheint der Abglanz gefallener Engel. (Ibid.)

Im Spiegel der Wahrheit schaut dieses Tier das Heilige an. Die Tierheit dieses Tieres ist unbestimmt und schwankend. Es ist das noch nicht festgestellte Tier: der Mensch als *animal rationale*. Der Abglanz gefallener Engel erinnert uns an das verlorene Paradies und den Baum der Erkenntnis von Gut und Böse. Das Schweigen ist gewaltig im Stein – der Stein ist das Gebirge des Schmerzes. Der Mensch ist in dem Moment, als er die Bläue der göttlichen Heiligkeit anschaute, sterblich geworden. Das Leben ist schmerzhaft. Eine andere Dichtung des gleichen Titels, „Nachtlied" sagt:

Triff mich Schmerz! Die Wunde glüht.

Dieser Qual hab' ich nicht acht!

Sieh aus meinen Wunden blüht

Rätselvoll ein Stern zur Nacht!

Triff mich Tod! Ich bin vollbracht. (Trakl 1969, 261.)

Der Schmerz der Endlichkeit wird vom Dichter besungen. Dieser Schmerz ist eine glühende Wunde. Er gibt dieser Qual der Endlichkeit nicht Acht, weil er sterblich geworden ist. Der Mensch ist der Sterbliche. Sterblich sein heißt: vom Tode getroffen werden, und dadurch von ihm wissen. Und aus diesem schmerzlichen Wissen blüht rätselvoll ein Stern zur Nacht. Welcher Stern dieser ist, werden wir später erfahren. Wenn der Tod zum Leben gehört, dann geht mit dem Tod das Leben nicht zu Ende.

Aber die Nacht bringt nicht nur den Tod näher. Ihr Dunkel ist auch das Dunkel der Lust und der Erotik. Das Leben geht aus der Nacht und dem Dunkel hervor.

Die blaue Nacht ist sanft auf unsren Stirnen aufgegangen.

Leise berühren sich unsre verwesten Hände

Süße Braut! (Trakl 1969, 313.)

Blau ist die Nacht, weil sie die Heilige Nacht der Hochzeit ist. Der Dichter singt von der süßen Braut. Die Hände sind verwest; die Hochzeit bedeutet ja das Ende der Kindheit. Die Nacht ist die Zeit „der dunklen Spiele der Wollust" (Trakl 1969, 160). In einer anderen Dichtung „Nachts" heißt es:

Die Bläue meiner Augen ist erloschen in dieser Nacht,

Das rote Gold meines Herzens. O! wie stille brannte das Licht.

Dein blauer Mantel umfing den Sinkenden;

Dein roter Mund besiegelte des Freundes Umnachtung. (Trakl 1969, 96.)

Das rote Gold und „Dein" roter Mund; die still brennende Liebe – rot ist die Farbe des Blutes, der Liebe, des Lebens. Der Dichter singt: „Die Nacht":

Dich sing ich wilde Zerklüftung,

Im Nachtsturm

Aufgetürmtes Gebirge;

Ihr grauen Türme

Überfließend von höllischen Fratzen,

Feurigem Getier,

Rauhen Farnen, Fichten,

Kristallnen Blumen.

Unendliche Qual,

Daß Du Gott erjagtest

Sanfter Geist,

Aufseufzend im Wassersturz,

In wogenden Föhren. (Trakl 1969, 160.)

In dieser Dichtung singt Trakl „Dich", die wilde Zerklüftung. Die wilde Zerklüftung ist der sanfte Geist, der Gott erjagt. Mit der Sterblichkeit des Menschen bricht das Seiende im Ganzen auseinander. Das Sinnliche und das Übersinnliche, das Endliche und das Unendliche, Mensch und Natur, Mensch und Gott; überall ist nur noch Zerklüftung. Aber die Zerklüftung ist auch die Lichtung, in der das Seiende in die Unverborgenheit gerufen werden kann. Unendlich ist die Qual der Erbsünde. In der zweiten Strophe singt der Dichter:

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Golden lodern die Feuer

Der Völker rings.

Über schwärzliche Klippen

Stürzt todestrunken

Die erglühende Windsbraut,

Die blaue Woge

Des Gletschers

Und es dröhnt

Gewaltig die Glocke im Tal:

Flammen, Flüche

Und die dunklen

Spiele der Wollust,

Stürmt den Himmel

Ein versteinertes Haupt. (Ibid.)

Ein versteinertes Haupt – das Haupt des nicht festgestellten Tieres – stürmt den Himmel und erjagt Gott. Der Dichter singt hier von der Nacht der entflohenen Götter. Es ist die Zeit des vollendeten Nihilismus, die er in den Schrecken des ersten Weltkrieges erfahren und die ihm das Leben geraubt hat. Gottesfinsternis ist auch die unendliche Qual. Ohne die Göttlichen kann es keine Sterblichen geben, und ohne Sterblichkeit geht dem Menschen sein Wesen verloren. In einem anderen Nachtgesang sammeln sich die Todesmotive. Die Dichtung ist überschrieben „Sommer":

Am Abend schweigt die Klage
Des Kuckucks im Wald.
Tiefer neigt sich das Korn,
Der rote Mohn.

Schwarzes Gewitter droht
Über dem Hügel.
Das alte Lied der Grille
Erstirbt im Feld.

Nimmer regt sich das Laub
Der Kastanie.
Auf der Wendeltreppe
Rauscht dein Kleid.

Stille leuchtet die Kerze
Im dunklen Zimmer;
Eine silberne Hand
Löschte sie aus;

Windstille, sternlose Nacht. (Trakl 1969, 136.)

Die Nacht ist windstill, sternlos, finster und bedrohend. Das Gedicht scheint klar zu sein. Der Dichter singt vom Sommer, und dennoch gibt es kein Licht. Schwarzes Gewitter droht. Alles wird still und lautlos. Das Laub der Kastanie regt sich nicht mehr. Die Klage des Kuckucks verstummt. Trakl erwähnt den Wind nicht. Aber wir fühlen seine Nähe im Neigen des Kornes, das den Mohn herunterdrückt. Es herrscht eine unerträgliche Spannung. Aber im Hause auf

der Wendeltreppe rauscht „Dein" Kleid. Es ist das Kleid einer Frau, der süßen Braut.

Die letzte Strophe scheint ganz klar zu sein. Eine silberne Hand löscht eine Kerze aus. Aber wenn wir genauer hören, verschwindet die Selbstverständlichkeit. Draußen auf dunklen Pfaden wanderten wir – aber jetzt sind wir heimgekommen. Das drohende Gewitter ist ausgeschlossen und das Geräusch des Kleides unserer Geliebten heißt uns willkommen. Es wird todesstill. Es ist nicht ganz dunkel und finster, denn stille leuchtet eine Kerze. Kann Stille aber scheinen? Ist es nicht das Licht der Kerze, das scheint? Aber die Kerze scheint im dunklen Zimmer. Die Kerze beleuchtet den Raum nicht mehr. Sie wurde erlöscht von einer silbernen Hand. Es ist eine windstille, sternlose Nacht. Dieser Satz verstärkt die Dunkelheit des Zimmers. Eine silberne Hand, wem gehört sie? Und könnte die Kerze die Seele unserer Geliebten sein? War das Rauschen des Kleides das Lauten ihrer Todesglocken? Ist es die silberne Hand, die Hand des Sensenmannes, der das Leben raubt und das Licht der Kerzen mit der sanftesten Berührung erlischt?

Diese sollen alle offenen Fragen bleiben. Der Dichter singt und der Denker kann seinen Dichtungen nur nachsinnen. Der Schlusszeile der Dichtung „Psalm" soll uns Hoffnung geben. Die Last der Sterblichkeit ist unerträglich ohne Hoffnung auf Erlösung.

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> Schweigsam über der Schädelstätte öffnen sich Gottes goldene Augen. (Trakl 1969, 56.)

Die Schädelstätte ist die Zeit der entflohenen Götter. Die goldenen Augen des kommenden Gottes öffnen sich schweigsam, weil Er vom Dichter noch nicht in die Nähe gerufen wurde. Wie Hölderlin, konnte auch Trakl nur sein Kommen vorbereiten.

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The Eternal (Re)Turn
Heidegger and the "*Absolutes Getragensein*" of Myth

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Abstract

This article aims to initiate the retrieval of Martin Heidegger's thinking on myth. Beginning with a reflection on the dilemmas and precedents of approaching myth, this paper turns to an extensive review of Heidegger's major, explicit treatments of mythology, the philosophy of myth, and *mythos*, ranging from the "mythical Dasein" of *Being and Time* and his review of Ernst Cassirer's *Mythical Thought* to the implicated hermeneutics of *mythos* in Heidegger's later ancient Greek lectures. On the basis of such

a panoramic excavation with interspersed commentary, it is argued that Heidegger not only increasingly intimated a particular significance for the (re)consideration of myth, but ultimately approached myth in no less than the light of the disclosure of Being. Thus, this article lays the preliminary groundwork to serve further inquiry into myth per/in Heidegger.

Keywords: E. Cassirer, M. Heidegger, hermeneutics, myth, mythology.

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Večno (pre)obračanje. Heidegger in »*absolutes Getragensein*« mita

Povzetek

Pričujoči članek želi spodbuditi ponovno obravnavo mišljenja Martina Heideggra o mitu. Izhajajoč iz razmisleka o dilemah in predhodnih načinih pristopanja k mitu, se prispevek posveti obširnemu pregledu Heideggrovih poglavitnih, izrecnih razpravljanj o mitologiji, filozofiji mita in *mythosu*, ki segajo od »mitične tubiti« v *Biti in času* in recenzije knjige Ernsta Cassirerja *Mitično mišljenje* do zapletene hermenevtike *mythosa* v Heideggrovih kasnejših predavanjih o starih Grkih. Na temelju takšne panoramske razgrnitve s pridruženim komentarjem avtor zagovarja misel, da je Heidegger ne samo vedno bolj naznanjal poseben pomen vnovičnemu (raz)motrenju mita, temveč se je nazadnje mitu približal nič manj kot v luči razkrivanja biti. Članek potemtakem priskrbi pripravljalno osnovo za nadaljnje raziskovanje glede mita po/pri Heideggru.

Ključne besede: E. Cassirer, M. Heidegger, hermenevtika, mit, mitologija.

Introduction

In 1928, less than one year before the two would engage in their historic debate at Davos, Martin Heidegger published a review of Ernst Cassirer's *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, Volume II: Mythical Thought*. Heidegger commended Cassirer's work for "having placed myth as a systematic problem, for the first time since Schelling, once again within the sphere of philosophical inquiry," but diagnosed that "the fundamental philosophical problem of myth is not yet reached" (Heidegger 1997, 190). For Heidegger, Cassirer's Neo-Kantian analysis did not, or rather could not, reach the ontological ground of "mythical Dasein," a curious designation which Heidegger had coined in a footnote in *Being and Time*, and briefly articulated in passing in his summer semester lectures contemporaneous with the review (Heidegger 2010a, 50, fn. 11; Heidegger 1992a). While this "mythical Dasein" was the subject of no more than a few lines in the latter, in his Cassirer review Heidegger issued a series of considerations suggesting his incubation of thoughtful engagement of this "fundamental philosophical problem of myth." Heidegger seems to promise no less when he advertises "our approach to the philosophy of myth" (Heidegger 1997, 186). Such preliminary orientations did not culminate in any fully-fledged treatment of the philosophy of myth. Sixty years following Heidegger's pronouncement of "mythical Dasein" and "the fundamental philosophical problem of myth," Richard Capobianco suggested in a brief paper that Heidegger "had little to say about myth, and, perhaps even more surprisingly, virtually no scholarly attention has been paid to the few places in his work where he does, directly or indirectly, address this issue" (Capobianco 1988, 183).

That Heidegger "had little to say about myth" is a perception, which, as this article seeks to illustrate, does not accord with a review of Heidegger's since increasingly accessible oeuvre, including some of its most pivotal points. That comparatively little scholarship (and at that rather incongruous) has been devoted to Heidegger's pronouncements on myth does indeed seem to remain the case.[1] Both of the latter points, however, are bound up with the larger

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1 See de Beistegui 1991; Gordon and Gordon 2006; Hatab 1991; Hyland 1997; Schalow 2001.

dilemmas and problematizations adjoined to any contemporary approach not only to "Heidegger and myth," but to "myth" in general. Heidegger's decades of activity did not lack diverse, prolific approaches to the conceptualization and study of myth, such as the works of Walter Otto (1874–1958), Ernst Cassirer (1874–1945), Károly Kerényi (1897–1973), Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908–2009), Mircea Eliade (1907–1986),[2] and Joseph Campbell (1904–1987), to name but an iconic few.[3] Since the turn of the 1980s/90s, however, a decisive trend in the literature on myth has been to adopt an exclusively deconstructive "critical historiography" toward this scholarly legacy and to the study of myth in general.[4] Within this paradigm, not only the very notions of "myth" and "mythology," but also any scholarship and philosophical deliberations on such face deconstruction as mere "ideologies in narrative form" (Lincoln 1999) deemed hopelessly entangled in and wholly reducible to political, sociological, and biographic-historiographical planes. Most notably, the ancient Greek *mythos* has not been spared from being written off as a purely "gendered-political" polemical term (Lincoln 1999) or modern fabrication (Detienne 1986). In the context of such an aversion to any "philosophy of myth" beyond interest in only the "political biographies" of mythographers or the concept of "modern political myth," it should hardly come as a surprise that any retrieval of Heidegger's (both explicit and implicit) thinking on myth is somewhat of a precarious endeavor. On the other hand, the retrieval of Heidegger's expressions on myth might ultimately offer a much-needed refreshing and deepening of perspectives, presenting an overlooked contribution to what Omid Tofighian envisions as "polymythic hermeneutics" (Tofighian 2016). As this study aims to show in preliminary outline, Heidegger himself contended for and recurrently inched toward a hermeneutics of myth.

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2 On the influence of Heidegger's thought on Eliade's ontology of myth and Eliade's role in Heidegger's publication in the United States, see Wasserstrom 1999, 135–139.

3 For an overview, see Dundes 1984; Segal 2016; Thompson and Schrempp 2020; Tofighian 2016.

4 Particularly representative of this trend are Ellwood 1999; Lincoln 1999; Strenski 1987, yet the initial line of deconstruction belongs to the debate between Detienne 1986 (1981) and Brisson 1998 (1982/94).

It bears preliminarily highlighting the relevance of retrieving Heidegger's attention to myth in terms of the "stakes" of such within Heidegger's project as a whole, as the latter encompassed a radical critique of the whole philosophical tradition, within which myth has been determined as such. The "classical" Modern Western (Enlightenment) narrative holds, as Cassirer representatively put it, that "the history of philosophy as a scientific discipline may be regarded as a single continuous struggle to effect a separation and liberation from myth" (Cassirer 1955, xiii). In the ancient Hellenic context, to which Western philosophy traces its origins, philosophers and historians have identified and debated such a "separation and liberation" in the relation between *mythos* and *logos*, the development of philosophy from Plato onward seen as entailing the prevalence of *logos* as the "logical" and "rational" of philosophical pursuit over the "irrational" and "illogical" of the sacred and folkloric tales and legends of *mythos*. In recent decades, much ink has been spilled on reconsidering the terms and significations of this arrangement and narrative, calling into question the very delimitation and fate of "canonical" Hellenic-cum-Western philosophy vis-à-vis *logos* and *mythos*.[5] For Heidegger, who endeavored to question the whole legacy of Western philosophy as such, the "*logos*" (mis)represented in this narrative is the unfolding of the history of philosophy as "metaphysics" or "onto-theo-logy," a legacy, which must be overcome through (and for the sake of) reopening the question and possibility of Being.[6] In his lectures and writings starting from the 1930s onward, Heidegger articulated that an "other beginning" (*anderer Anfang*) of thinking upon the "end of philosophy" has crucial orientations to be drawn from re-viewing the "history of Being" (*Seynsgeschichte*) back to its "first beginning" in ancient Greek thought, through excavating the primordial ("originary" or "inceptual"—*ursprüngliche*) "pre-metaphysical" disclosures of Being in pre-Socratic sources.[7] Heidegger's lectures on Heraclitus (Heidegger 2018) attempted such a reappraisal of *logos*, and one does not need to look far beyond the more familiar canon to recall Heidegger's insistences (paralleled by more than a few studies in the

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5 See, for instance, Buxton (ed.) 1999; Collobert et al. 2012; Morgan 2004; Hatab 1999; Tofighian 2016.
6 Cf. Wierciński 2003.
7 See Heidegger 1972; 1973; Dugin 2014.

history of ideas from recent decades) that *logos* and *mythos*, restored to their original significations, were not intrinsically conflictual or diachronically (dis) placable as the Enlightenment-derived narrative would have them; rather, in Heidegger's words, they "belong together essentially" (Heidegger 1992b, 70; Heidegger 2008b, 375–376). Heidegger's (re)considerations of *mythos* have remained less regarded. Nonetheless, Lawrence Hatab has already posed the question, would it not be myth and *mythos* that "express a kind of openness that philosophy closed off": "Was Greek myth in any sense a prefiguration of Heidegger's alternative to philosophy, namely [mytho-]poetical thinking, that which seeks an openness to what is concealed in the disclosure of Being?" (Hatab 1991, 45.) Ultimately, Hatab argues that the much-commented-upon, so-called "post-philosophical" language and thinking of Heidegger's later works approaches such a "mythical" or "mytho-poetic" form, which, far from being merely "stylistic," points toward a (re-)thinking of Being through a positive (re-)appropriation of mythical disclosure. Following this line, Heidegger's later works can be read in the vein of an implicit re-treatment and re-employment of myth. The implications of such are immense. The *Seynsgeschichte* as "mirrored" in Heidegger's own works would assume the shape of a loop, from myth to philosophy to a kind "mytho-philosophical" thinking (for naming which the words are historically lacking), a "non-conceptual openness to the meaningful mystery of Being […] which retrieves something archaic but which is also historically mediated by philosophy's liberation of thinking from total immersion in mythical forms" (Hatab 1991, 62).[8]

That Heidegger's treatment of myth is an overlooked dimension of his thought, which at once harbors considerable significance to the Heideggerian vision of the course of philosophy and Being since antiquity, seems to us to be a fruitful preliminary interpretation. Nevertheless, the original research groundwork remains lacking. It is vital to offer a (working) comprehensive retrieval and "coordination" of Heidegger's explicit considerations of myth. In this light, the present study commits to an inventory of Heidegger's major, explicit expressions on myth, following such chronologically over the course of Heidegger's works with interspersed yet necessarily restrained commentary on

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8 See further Hatab 1990.

the *Wege* contouring these engagements.[9] The scope of such a developmental outline entails the risk of a definite superficiality of treatment of one or another attestation, to which indeed whole separate studies need to be dedicated, or runs the danger of counter-holistic "extractions," not to mention simply "missing" certain keys, which still stand to be discovered in Heidegger's writings. Such an initial mapping of the terrain of Heidegger's mythical deliberations, necessitating as a preliminary step excavating the mythical attestations that remain otherwise scattered and "buried" throughout Heidegger's immense *Gesamtausgabe*, promises to be productive in, to "play" with Heidegger's methodological meditations in *Being and Time*, first discerning the "thatness" and "whatness" of myth in Heidegger's horizons. With this in mind, we leap onto the *Wege* of Heidegger's evocations of myth.

From "mythical Dasein" to the truth of *mythos*

Perhaps the most immediately striking feature of Heidegger's engagement of myth as a whole, i.e., as viewed panoramically over the course of his writings and lectures, is a certain "lopsidedness": for the early Heidegger, myth did not pose a "fundamental question" as he would come to appreciate in 1928. Only thereafter does myth emerge in Heidegger's works in seemingly sudden, interspersed spotlights implying a meditation whose background is undocumented, but whose "irruption" is highly charged. Therefore, contrary to merely producing a "stale" bibliographical procedure vested only in outlining "change" or "development" in some unilinear manner, beginning

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9 It bears recalling Heidegger's own "guideline" for approaching his works, which he formulated shortly before his death with the remark "Ways, not works (*Wege – nicht Werke*)." Wierciński (2019, 256, fn. 87) notes: "He chose 'collected edition' over 'collected works' (*Gesamtausgabe versus Gesammelte Werke*) explaining: 'The collected edition should indicate various ways: it is underway in the field of paths of the self-transforming asking of the many-sided question of Being… The point is to awaken the confrontation about the question concerning the topic of thinking… and not to communicate the opinion of the author, and not to characterize the standpoint of the writer, and not to fit it into the series of other historically determinable philosophical standpoints. Of course, such a thing is always possible, especially in the information age, but for preparing the questioning access to the topic of thinking, it is completely useless.' Heidegger, *Frühe Schriften*: 1912–16, GA1: 437–438."

with the early Heidegger vis-à-vis myth brings into relief the significance of Heidegger's later engagements and their thoughtful context. That "Heidegger in the mid-1920s only considers myth as an afterthought" (Schalow 2001, 93) is transparent: "myth," "mythology," and "*mythos*" hardly entered the vocabulary of Heidegger's early lectures, and if so, then without any original deliberation. This is evident in those courses, for which myth would have otherwise been a fitting and relevant topic. In *The Phenomenology of Religious Life* (1921), "myth," "mythology," "mythical," and "*mythos*" appear only in citations of Ernst Troeltsch's "subordination" of such as "peripheral" to the "religious *a priori*" of mystical experience (Heidegger 2010c, 17, 249). In his 1925 *History of the Concept of Time*, Heidegger even routinely employs the terms "mythical" and "mythological" throughout in the vulgar modern sense as adjectives connoting "erroneous," "unsound," or "fantastical" (Heidegger 1985).

The first hints at a philosophical consideration of myth emerge in Heidegger's 1926/27 lectures, *Basic Concepts of Ancient Philosophy*, and yet in a treatment, which, on the surface, hardly differs from the conventional framing of *logos* vs. *mythos*. Although the handful of attestations therein belong to that category of incomplete notes and partial student transcriptions, which do not lend easily to reconstruction and deciphering, the impression to be had is that Heidegger accentuates the contrast between philosophy as *logos–physis* and *mythos* as mere stories, tales which, as Schalow interprets, confine "the abysmal disclosure of being to something specific and fixed" (Schalow 2001, 93). In this case, Heidegger approaches *mythos* as fixed storying about beings and world-structuring by "divine involvement," of which Hesiod's *Theogony* is taken as the archetype (Heidegger 2008a, 28). In the "mythological explanation of the world" and in "mythical genealogies and cosmologies," Heidegger writes, "the coming to be of the world was narrated in a story: the lineage of the stages the cosmos has traversed" (Heidegger 2008a, 174). That *mythos* as "storying" of world-structuring is "inferior" or comparatively uninsightful to the inquiry into Being is clearly suggested in a topical remark, which, it cannot be understated, is to differ acutely from Heidegger's later treatment of the topic: on Plato's cave, Heidegger remarks that "Plato did not clearly expound these levels [of truth]. He availed himself of [*hilft sich mit*] a μῦθος" (Heidegger 2008a, 199; 2004, GA 22, 258).

In the *Ancient Philosophy* lectures, myth clearly falls out of the purview of Being into a compensatory structuring of beings through fixed narration. In this first substantive engagement of thinking *mythos*, however, a certain ambiguity, upheld by but not limited to the manuscript condition, leaves open a further pathway: myths of beings are not necessarily (and perhaps not at all) equated with just any ontic statements about beings; instead, myths or "mythological explanations" are related to a particular "way of disclosure," which is not strictly separable from the interplay of the "ever-constant versus the becoming" of *physis* (Heidegger 2008a, 174). However subtly, Heidegger therefore does not "dispense" with the mythical, but lets it stay somewhere in parallel to *logos–physis*, and resolves in a footnote to refer his interested listeners to Cassirer's *Mythical Thought* (Heidegger 2008a, 28, fn. 40). Both of the latter points resonate in Heidegger's only mention of myth in his *Basic Problems of Phenomenology Course* (1927): "All mythology has its basis in specific experiences and is anything but pure fiction or invention. It cannot be accidental and arbitrary that in this mythical view time is identified with the motion of the universe." (Heidegger 1982, 234.)

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Without venturing to pin any "logically ensuing framing" onto these first mentions of myth, it is not difficult to anticipate that Heidegger's first treatment of myth as a particular form of discourse on beings in/and the world, as well as his appreciation of a definite sense of time proper to mythology (as "anything but pure fiction or invention"), will in turn receive a hint of direction in *Being and Time*. Indeed, myth is therein referenced as pertinent to Dasein's factical self-understanding and self-interpretation:

> No matter how far removed from an ontological concept the distinction between existence and reality may be, even if Dasein initially understands existence as reality, Dasein is not just objectively present, but has always already *understood itself*, however mythical or magical its interpretations may be. For otherwise, Dasein would not "live" in a myth and would not take heed of its magic in rites and cults. (Heidegger 2010a, 300.)

Two crucial intimations are borne out in this passage. Firstly, myth and "mythical-self-understanding" are not to be discounted from the ontological

extrapolation of the ontic prefigurations intrinsic to Dasein's being-in-the-world. On the contrary, the "mythical" is recognized to be a particular "situation" or "mode" that is no exception to Dasein's interpreting of its being-in-the-world: "For otherwise, Dasein would not 'live' in a myth." In light of Heidegger's earlier passage and footnote on "primitive," "mythical Dasein," this mythical being-in-the-world is of particular significance insofar as:

> "Primitive phenomena" are often less hidden and complicated by extensive self-interpretation on the part of the Dasein in question. Primitive Dasein often speaks out of a more primordial [*ursprünglich*] absorption in "phenomena" (in the pre-phenomenological sense). The conceptuality which perhaps appears to be clumsy and crude to us can be of use positively for a genuine elaboration of the ontological structures of phenomena. (Heidegger 2010a, 50.)

According to the footnote appended to these preliminary remarks, this "conceptuality" is that which is expressed in myth, and the theme of philosophical interpretation to be sought in "primitive Dasein" is therefore "mythical Dasein" (Heidegger 2010a, 50, fn. 11). This "mythical Dasein" thus harbors some primordial and "less hidden" indications pertinent to the Being of Dasein in general.

Secondly, the basic understandings of myth and "mythical conceptuality," with which Heidegger was already in dialogue, are suggested in the former passage's speaking of "living" in myth. That "myth" is "not merely a story told but a reality lived," as Bronisław Malinowski famously put it in his *Myth in Primitive Psychology* (Malinowski 1926), expressed a fundamental trajectory in the philosophy of mythology whose milestone was laid in Schelling's 1842 *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology* (Schelling 2007). Perhaps the most iconic expression of the latter's theses, one which Heidegger would approvingly cite in his Cassirer review, was Schelling's pronouncement that "everything in it [mythology] is thus to be understood as mythology expresses it, not as if something else were thought, something else said" (Schelling 2007, 136). These words signaled that mythologies, the essence of which Schelling saw in theogonic and theologic plots, are not invented

euhemeristic tales, which are to be "explained" in natural or historical terms, but instead constitute a unified, distinctive reality of human consciousness entailing its own "mode of reality," its own necessities and "truth," its own logic and processes, its own "reason" or "rationality," its own "form of life," which philosophy must not "discard" but elucidate in terms of its integrality. Schelling thus proclaimed that the "systematization" of mythology "in its own truth," i.e., understanding mythology in terms of the "life" and "process" proper to it, constituted the "true science of mythology" and therefore "the philosophy of mythology" (Schelling 2007, 151). By unifying mythologies into a universal category of consciousness, by identifying mythology as a particular form of "life-reality," which cannot be reduced to one or another explanatory "primitivism," and by ascribing to the "process" of mythological consciousness a world-historical trajectory, Schelling set the stage not only for much of subsequent scholarship and philosophizing on myth, but for Heidegger in particular to speak of myth in terms of existence and reality, to conceptualize a "mythical Dasein," and, later, to ponder the "role" of myth in the "History of Being."[10]

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Cassirer's philosophy of myth, which Heidegger cited in the *Being and Time* footnote on "primitive-mythical Dasein" and would now turn to intensively review, took Schelling's "distinguishing" of mythology as a point of departure for the sake of "transferring it from the sphere of a philosophy of the absolute to that of critical philosophy" (Cassirer 1955, 10). For Cassirer, it was thanks to Schelling that "the relative truth of myth is no longer in question" (Cassirer 1955, 14). The unity of the "logic of the illogical" of myth could be harvested not through an idealist absolute, but through a Kantian epistemological model of inquiring into the symbolic forms, by which mythological consciousness structures and "objectifies" the world into/as a mythical whole. For Cassirer, moreover, there remained the problem (or, rather, the Kantian-Enlightenment imperative) of substantiating the paradigmatic difference between the "completeness" of "mythical logic" from that of (superior) scientific logic and the landscape separating them. Cassirer's neo-Kantian approach identified this distinction in a strictly dialectical-evolutionary consciousness. In mythical

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10 See Beach 1994; Schalow 2002.

thinking, the subject objectifies the experience of the world in complete, absorbed immersion, without realizing its subjectivity or the objectivity it is creating, no matter how structurally consistent the latter may be: "the whole existence of things and the activity of mankind seem to be embedded, so to speak, in a mythical 'field of force,' an atmosphere of potency which permeates everything" (Cassirer 1953, 63). Through or rather amidst this complete absorption in the "mythical field of force," human consciousness "does not recognize its role in the creation of mythic phenomena, it ascribes autonomous and non-human authority to its own linguistic creations" (Gordon 2005, 140–141). No matter how principled or "logical" mythical worlding may be, thus, myth's extreme "immersion" represents a form of alienation, which reveals itself as unfolding at a distance just as much in the development of language as in the history of religious conceptions. For all of its abundant illustrations of the rich, "independent" principles of mythical consciousness and mythical worlds attested across an immense span of materials, Cassirer's account thus ultimately sought to articulate the inferiority of myth and how "with the first dawn of scientific insight the mythical world of dream and enchantment seems to sink into nothingness" (Cassirer 1955, 14).

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While the fundamental philosophical problems, which Heidegger had with Cassirer's underlying approach, are not difficult to recall, it bears reemphasizing that Heidegger to a definite extent was inspired by and celebrated Cassirer's mythological scholarship, deeming it a "fruitful success" (Heidegger 1997, 186) in terms, which shed light on his own emergent thinking on myth. Heidegger expressed solidarity with Cassirer's "thoroughly unambiguous" and "devastating" critique of the study of myth from "naturalistic, totemistic, animistic, and sociological attempts at explanation," and appraised that Cassirer's *Mythical Thought* "brings the problematic of the positive research into myth to a fundamentally higher level by carrying out in a variety of ways the demonstration that myth can never be 'explained' by having recourse to determinate spheres of Objects within the mythical world" (Heidegger 1997, 186). Heidegger thus takes Cassirer's *Mythical Thought* as the occasion for his first and most sustained articulation of what he straightforwardly announces as "our approach to the philosophy of myth" (Heidegger 1997, 186).

Heidegger framed his Cassirer review, and hence his "own approach to the philosophy of myth," with three questions: (1) "What does this interpretation achieve for the grounding and guiding of the positive sciences of mythical Dasein (ethnology and the history of religion)?"; (2) What are the "foundations and methodological principles that support the philosophical analysis of the essence of myth"?; and (3) What is the "constitutive function of myth in human Dasein and in the all of beings as such?" (Heidegger 1997, 186.) As for the first point, Heidegger's assessment, partially quoted above, was positive: Cassirer had demonstrated the "uncovering of 'myth' as an original possibility of human Dasein, which has its own proper truth" and "its own laws" (Heidegger 1997, 180, 186). Among these possibilities and laws, Heidegger highlighted the "basic division between the sacred and profane" as the "articulation of the actual, to which mythical Dasein 'comports' itself," and the "actualizing that takes on the form of *cult* and *rite*," in which Heidegger saw being expressed "the most general character of Being, the 'how' whereby what is actual suddenly comes over the entirety of human Dasein" (Heidegger 1997, 182, 185). The latter expression is connected to perhaps one of the most explicit aspects of Heidegger's appropriation of Cassirer's account of myth: Heidegger repeatedly centralizes the "*mana*-representation" (*Mana-Vorstellung*) as the horizon of overpowering actuality, within which Dasein exists and has any understanding of self and world. The Melanesian "spiritual-force-field" of *mana* is taken to be the "original way of Being of mythical Dasein" (Heidegger 1997, 184). With *mana* and several comparable mythological concepts, Heidegger thus takes myth not as a designation of objects, but as a "particular configuration of 'being-in-the-world'" (Crowe 2008, 108–109).

It is precisely on the latter point that Heidegger draws the line between Cassirer's "representational-*mana*" as a "form of thought" and *mana* as constitutive of the fundamental-ontology of mythical Dasein. "In the mana-representation," Heidegger writes, "what becomes evident is nothing other than the *understanding of Being* that belongs to every Dasein as such." (Heidegger 1997, 186.) The condition of being-with(/)(-)in-*mana* defines the "throwness" underlying the ontological structure of mythical Dasein, wherein Dasein is "overwhelmed," "dazed," and "delivered over" to the "Being-character-of-overpoweringness (mana)," whereby the temporality of this

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thrownness is manifest in the "instantaneousness" of *mana* (Heidegger 1997, 181, 188). Mythical Dasein ontically understands itself as "bound to mana" (Heidegger 1997, 189). For Heidegger, these considerations emergent from Cassirer's study "remain a valuable starting point for a renewed philosophy of myth," but "the interpretation of the essence of myth as a possibility of human Dasein remains random and directionless as long as it cannot be grounded in a radical ontology of Dasein in light of the problem of Being in general" (Heidegger 1997, 187, 190). The "fundamental philosophical problem of myth," proceeding from such a fundamental ontology, would have to answer "in what way does myth in general belong to Dasein as such? In what respect is myth an essential phenomenon within a universal interpretation of Being as such and its modifications?" (Heidegger 1997, 190.) Thus, Heidegger is not interested in any delineation of the "insufficiency of mythical 'thinking'" (Heidegger 1997, 180), but in an ontology and hermeneutics of myth. It bears noting that Heidegger comes close to exhibiting an affinity with "myth-ritual theory"[11] when he suggests that "mythical narration is always only a derivative report of sacred dealings" wherein "mythical Dasein presents itself immediately" (Heidegger 1997, 185).

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Heidegger's review of Cassirer's *Mythical Thought* leaves much to be anticipated, indeed, no less than the evoked "renewed philosophy of myth" based on a fundamental ontological analysis of "mythical Dasein" in the dimensions of the sacred and the profane, cult and rite, and the all-surrounding "mythical force" (*mana*). In his contemporaneous lecture on the very same Kantian problematic, which he saw as misguiding *Mythical Thought*, Heidegger would broach this "mythical Dasein" once more in a particularly rich passage:

> This thrown dissemination [*Zerstreuung*] into a multiplicity is to be understood metaphysically. It is the presupposition, for example, for Dasein to let itself in each case factically be governed by beings which it is not; Dasein, however, identifies with those beings on account of its dissemination. Dasein can be governed [*tragen*], for example, by what we call "nature" in the broadest sense. Only what is essentially thrown

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11 See Segal 1998.

and entangled [*befangen*] in something can be governed [*tragen*] and surrounded [*umfangen*] by it. This also holds true for the emergence in nature of primitive, mythic Dasein. In being governed [*in seiner Getragenheit*] by nature, mythic Dasein has the peculiarity of not being conscious of itself with regard to its mode of being (which is not to say that mythic Dasein lacks self-awareness). But it also belongs essentially to factical dissemination that thrownness and captivation remain deeply hidden from it, and in this way the simplicity and "care-lessness [*Sorg-losigkeit*]" of an absolute sustenance [*Getragenseins*] from nature arise in Dasein. (Heidegger 1992a, 138; 1978, GA 26, 174.)

We have inserted the original German in several points here to draw attention to the sensitivity, and indeed centrality, of *tragen* (translated in the established English edition as "governed") to this "mythic Dasein." If, in *Being and Time*, Heidegger referenced myth as at once no exception to Dasein's factical self-understanding, and yet pertaining to a particularly primordial, "primitive" experience of self-understanding in "absorption," and if, in his Cassirer review, Heidegger argued for the need for a fundamental-ontological, existential analytic for "mythical Dasein," then here Heidegger accounts for the mode of "mythical Dasein" as essentially one of being "carried" (*tragen*), "being-carriedness" (*Getragenheit*), and "absolute carried-being" (*absolutes Getragensein*). Mythical Dasein is, like Dasein in general, thrown into dispersion in the world and among beings. In myth, however, Dasein is completely absorbed in this matrix to the point that it is "absolutely carried," absolutely "given unto" the whole matrix, e.g., of *mana*, of which it is an indelible part and therefore within which its existence is essentially characterized by "simplicity" (*Einfachheit*) and "*Sorg-losigkeit*." The latter designation is particularly curious and challenging. The essential structure of Dasein's relation to the world as "care" elaborated in *Being and Time* seems to be "-less," "lost" on mythical Dasein. Instead of "being-ahead-of-itself" in concern for its relations to and involvement in and with all other beings and the world, mythical Dasein in its thrownness and dispersion is "simply," "effortlessly," and "absolutely carried" by that which is already present to it, perhaps the mythical force of *mana* or the "givenness" of the beings of the cosmos presented in myth. The being

of the Dasein of myth is "being-carried" (*Getragensein*). Without a doubt, more questions than answers seem to beg themselves from this formulation. Heidegger's Cassirer review excludes the possibility that this "being carried by nature" would be reduced to any kind of "naturalistic" reading of myth—does this then mean that mythical Dasein is "carried" by *physis* as the Being of beings, as "nature" in the sense of some "manifestationist" paradigm associated with pagan mythology and religion?[12] Is mythical Dasein "carried" by other beings, i.e., the gods? If we turn to *Being and Time*, then we find *tragen* as "to bear: to take over something from out of belonging to being itself" (Heidegger 2010, 131). Alternatively—and perhaps supported by Heidegger's later expressions on myth—, this "being carried" of myth is not "by" something other than Dasein, implying some kind of alienation, but refers to a mode of disclosure of Being itself.

The challenge of interpreting this *Getragensein* of "mythical Dasein" is rendered perhaps even more significant by the very fact that Heidegger will not return to this concept. Although in a subsequent passage Heidegger emphasizes the significance of "beginning to approach with greater clarity the region of the mythic" (Heidegger 1992a, 209), this is the last place, in which Heidegger speaks of "mythical Dasein." This, however, should not be seen as a discontinuation, but as, in some light, a disclosure in connection with no less than the "trajectory" of Heidegger's thinking following *Being and Time*. It is at this point in Heidegger's *Wege* and *Werke* that the question of the much-debated *Kehre*, the "turn" following *Being and Time*, unavoidably faces us with relevance. At the risk of recapitulating a cliché, it bears repeating that any definition or delimitation of the "turn" is necessarily bound to be met with controversy from virtually any perspective of Heidegger historiography.[13] Nonetheless, the course of Heidegger's understanding and interpreting of myth clearly aligns with two major discernments of "turning" in Heidegger's thinking following *Being and Time* and assuming prominence in Heidegger's writings by the mid-1930s: (1) the "turn" "from the problematic of the existential analytic of Dasein to the thinking of [B]eing as such […] in the direction of the question of the

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12 See Travers 2018.

13 See the positions on the *Kehre* presented in Magrini and Schwieler 2018, 21–38.

truth of [B]eing" (Risser 1999, 2, 4), and (2) the intimation of Being in the essence of language. These dimensions of the "turn" are distinctly pronounced in Heidegger's subsequent treatment of myth. Having set forth a certain pathway for conceptualizing "mythical Dasein," having expressed a preliminary approach to a grounding for the philosophy of myth, and having spoken of "beginning to approach with greater clarity the region of the mythic," Heidegger will henceforth be concerned primarily and essentially with the word *mythos* as a "primordial saying" and its significance to the truth of Being in concealment and unconcealment. This opens up new horizons for understanding the seeming "abandonment" of "mythical Dasein" rather as a "turning" toward *mythos* in relation to Being, as well as part and parcel of Heidegger's "turning" between the analytical "hermeneutic phenomenology" of *Being and Time* and the "enacted" hermeneutics of Heidegger's turn to re-reading thinkers and poets in the "Historic-Happening of Being" (*Seynsgeschichte*).[14] That there is, indeed, such a fundamental relation constitutes perhaps the essential point of all of Heidegger's subsequent expressions on this subject, and might very well be the "new and more primordial beginning," which Heidegger beckoned toward myth in the footnote of *Being and Time* (Heidegger 2010a, 50, fn. 11).

It might then be no coincidence that Heidegger's 1933/34 rectorial edition of his 1931/32 lecture *On the Essence of Truth* already approaches myth as *mythos* in such a way. In contrast to his earlier remark that Plato's articulation of truth "helped itself to a mythos" in the sense of compensating for a lack of clarity or as a mere "storytelling about beings," Heidegger now emphasizes Plato's cave *as mythos* as its defining and profound character: this "*single center* [*Mitte*] *of Platonic philosophizing*" (Heidegger's emphasis) is an instance of how "[Plato] speaks in μῦθος when his philosophizing wants to say something essential with the greatest intensity" (Heidegger 2010b, 97, 98). This *mythos* means a story, which "we actually go through ourselves," on which point Heidegger emphasized to his listeners that the "authentic understanding of the μῦθος" means experiencing its speaking, its resonance as "something unavoidable" (Heidegger 2010b, 98). That *mythos* is such an experiential telling, a saying of something already given and structured (cf. *Basic Concepts of Ancient*

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14 See Palmer 1969; Wierciński 2002; 2005.

Philosophy) whose hearing is to be experienced for "authentic understanding," is underscored by Heidegger's differentiation between *logos* and *mythos* in the lecture's preliminary deliberation on the essence of language. "Because and *only* because human beings are of this essence [the 'bond to the superior power of Being'], they exist *in language*," and this ontological essencing of language is to be sought, Heidegger pursues, in the "coining of the word [that] arises from the prior and originary minting of the disclosure of beings" in the inceptual ancient Greek *logos* and *mythos* (Heidegger 2010b, 80, 89). *Logos*, Heidegger extrapolates from his reading of Heraclitus, "*is the law-giving gathering and therefore the openness of the structure of beings*"; in other words, "word" as *logos* expresses that "the human being, as a discursive being, stands by that very fact in confrontation with beings, and wills to become powerful in the face of multiplicity and obscurity and boundlessness through the simplicity, clarity, and stamping force of *saying*" (Heidegger 2010b, 90, 91). Therefore, language as *logos* culminates (or, perhaps, "originates") with philosophy, as human beings address beings in a juxtaposing, structuring, gathering, and reckoning discourse (Heidegger 2010b, 91–92). "But," Heidegger recalls, "the originary λόγος of philosophy remains bound to μῦθος; only with the language of science is the bond dissolved," and *logos* remains "only a very particular experience and conception of the essence of language," whereas "[t]he Greeks also know a second and older one: language and word as μῦθος" (Heidegger 2010b, 91, 92). *Mythos* as the more primordial word does not "brace itself against beings" for addressing and reckoning them, but instead "indicates this and that about the entirety of human Dasein. It is not the word in which human beings give their account of things [like *logos*], but rather the word that gives them a directive"; "The word as μῦθος gives clues and indicates" (Heidegger 2010b, 91, 92). That Plato's cave is not so much—or not at all—a mere "allegory," which Heidegger refers to it being most widely deemed only in scare quotes, but a *mythos*, suggests a more primordial telling, which is to be experienced and not strictly "logolized." Without too much of a stretch, one can sense here a definite sense of giving over to being "carried" by *mythos*, as opposed to the "carrying-forth against" of *logos*. It is precisely *mythos* in Heidegger's "word-essencing" that bears a definite pertinence to the truth of Being as the interplay of concealment and unconcealment revealed in Plato's

myth of the cave. Interpreting Heidegger's reading of the *mythos* of Plato's cave goes beyond the scope of this preliminary study, and just what hermeneutic is implied in this experiencing-hearing of *mythos* cannot be extracted out of the *Essence of Truth* lectures without such an extensive study. Nonetheless, nearly a decade later Heidegger would elaborate on precisely this question of the relation of mythos to Being and truth in his lectures on Parmenides.

Heidegger's 1942/43 Parmenides lectures are among the most densely "mythically-populated" sites of his works, wherein the mythical is central to Heidegger's whole reading, constantly returned to throughout the lectures. Like in his "foreword" to Plato's cave, Heidegger takes as the point of departure of definitive significance that Parmenides' poem is to be read (or rather heard and experienced) as a *mythos*. This, Heidegger explains, is warranted first and foremost by Parmenides' truth, ἀλήθεια, assuming the form of a goddess. Instead of accepting the modern prejudice that it be left "entirely understandable that in the first 'primitive' attempts at such thinking there might still be preserved remnants of 'mythical' representation" (Heidegger 1992b, 6), Heidegger insists that the retrieval of Parmenides's truth is to be approached primordially and essentially, which entails embracing precisely its mythical presentation. Heidegger recalls Plato's cave on this occasion as well, emphasizing its mythical character and urging that its interpretation requires "an experience of the basic character of myth in general" (Heidegger 1992b, 92). In *Parmenides*, Heidegger goes furthest of all in articulating what *mythos*, this "basic character of myth," and the grounds of approaching it mean. This comes in no less than the context of the *Parmenides* lectures' aim of retrieving primordial thinking for the sake of an "other beginning" of Western philosophy.

"*Μῦθος* is legend [*die Sage*]," Heidegger writes, "this word literally taken in the sense of essential primordial speech." (Heidegger 1992b, 61.) *Mythos* is "the Greek word that expresses what is to be said before all else. […] It is *μῦθος* that reveals, discloses, and lets be seen; specifically, it lets be seen what shows itself in advance and in everything as that which presences in all 'presence.'" (Heidegger 1992b, 60.) This primordial legend-saying, which reveals and discloses everything in advance, presenting everything all at once as presencing, is not a mere storying of beings as Heidegger had previously interpreted myth to be, and is never invented, but is "a response to the word

of an appeal in which Being itself dispenses itself to man and therewith first indicates the paths a seeking might take within the sphere of what is disclosed in advance" (Heidegger 1992b, 128). Myth is the "preserving word," preserving not mere "'images' which a pre-philosophical thinking does not transcend," but the very fact of concealment and unconcealment "experienced in such an essential way that just the simple change of night and day suffices to enhance the emergence of all essence into the preserving word, *μῦθος*" (Heidegger 1992b, 61). It is this that Heidegger "enshrines" as his sighting of the mythical, coming closer than ever and elsewhere to a "description": "When we use the expression 'mythical'," Heidegger says, "we shall think it in the sense just delimited: the 'mythical'—the *μῦθος*-ical—is the disclosure and concealment contained in the disclosing-concealing word, which is the primordial appearance of the fundamental essence of Being itself." (Heidegger 1992b, 70.)

In *Parmenides*, thus, Heidegger explicitly underscores the primordial relationship of *mythos*, *aletheia*, and Being. Myth conceals and discloses "in advance and everywhere and always and for every being and in all Being" (Heidegger 1992b, 67). The primordial "legend-saying" of *mythos* presents such "essential modes of disclosure and concealment" as "death, night, day, the earth, and the span of the sky" (Heidegger 1992b, 70). At the same time, Heidegger recognizes, "'myth' does of course have to do with the gods. 'Mythology' is about 'the gods.'" (Heidegger 1992b, 70, 60.) Here, however, Heidegger introduces the highly significant qualification that it is not by virtue of telling of the (Greek) divinities[15] that myth is "mythical," but rather the very disclosure of the divine is mythical, hence:

> The word as the naming of Being, the *μῦθος*, names Being in its primordial looking-into and shining—names τὸ θεῖον, i.e., the gods. Since τὸ θεῖον and τὸ δαιμόνιον (the divine) are the uncanny that look into the unconcealed and present themselves in the ordinary, therefore *μῦθος* is the only appropriate mode of the relation to appearing Being, since the essence of *μῦθος* is determined, just as essentially as θεῖον and δαιμόνιον, on the basis of disclosedness. It is therefore that the divine,

15 On "Heidegger's gods," see Crowe 2007.

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as the appearing and as what is perceived in the appearing, is that which is to be said, and is what is said in legend. And it is therefore that the divine is the "mythical." And it is therefore that the legend of the gods is "myth." (Heidegger 1992b, 112.)

This articulation of the relation between myth and the divine and Heidegger's ontological casting of the Greek gods is ripe for consideration in the context of the theological and religious dimensions of Heidegger's thinking. Essential here for our study is that Heidegger directly connects mythical concealing and disclosing with Being, an ontological affirmation, which starkly contrasts Heidegger's earliest remarks. In *Parmenides*, Heidegger seems to put forth that Being itself is revealed in *mythos*, that myth and mythical disclosure itself therefore pertain to Being in some primordial, essential way. Myth presents and preserves the original "setting forth" of Being and beings in the legendary word, as the telling, which immediately discloses everything as given and conceals this given. Being is concealed and unconcealed in the appearances and disappearances of the gods, of the essential facets of the cosmos (death, night, day, the earth, sky), and it is therefore mythical disclosure that is the "first" wording, the "first" essencing of the truth of Being, the "first" experience, which has been lost over the course of philosophy, on which Heidegger remarks: "The legendary word is not weaker; but man's perception is more variegated and dispersed and hence too volatile to experience as present the simple, which comes into presence originarily and therefore constantly." (Heidegger 1992b, 128.)

The propositions and insinuations of the *Parmenides* lectures seem to represent Heidegger's furthest reaching thinking on myth. A decade later, in *Was heißt Denken?* (1951/52; 1954), Heidegger echoed these mythical intimations in remarking: "*Mythos* is what has its essence in its telling— what appears in the unconcealment of its appeal. The *mythos* is that appeal of foremost and radical concern to all human beings which lets man think of what appears, what unfolds." (Heidegger 2008b, 375.) In the context of the *Parmenides* lectures' endeavor to recover the place and function of *mythos* in the onto-history of philosophy for a "new beginning," and in the light of *Was heißt Denken?*'s radical "re-thinking of thinking," the impression presents

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itself that Heidegger's thinking on myth culminated in an appreciation of the necessity of a "new and more primordial beginning" to myth as part and parcel of a "new beginning" of thinking Being, i.e., of going beyond the whole legacy of philosophy since the "schism" of *mythos* and *logos*.

In lieu of a conclusion, a new beginning

From the "re-orientation" of philosophy initiated by *Being and Time* to the "pre-" and "post-philosophical" meditations and "other beginning of philosophy," which preoccupied Heidegger's later thinking, Heidegger approached myth and *mythos* as of fundamental importance to the question, "history," and disclosure of Being. For the fundamental-ontology of Dasein, for the truth of Being, and for the History of Being, myth/*mythos* caries something primordial and originary. Heidegger broached or preliminarily intuited what this might be along several pathways. Down one path, this is inquiry into "mythical Dasein," into the Dasein whose understanding and interpreting is to be found in sacred narratives and rites and in the world-force of *mana*, in the Dasein whose existential analytic is that of "being carried." Down another, this is sensing a peculiar hermeneutics of reading, hearing, and "experiencing" *mythoi*, whether cosmologies or Plato's cave. This path, Heidegger ventured, is essentially linked to *mythos* as the "legendary word," as that which primordially conceals and unconceals in such a way that beings are immediately presented with a given sense, "directive" or "hint" of Being. From this path as well, Heidegger (re)turned to the relation between Being and the Divine. Purposefully and thoughtfully pointing toward one or another of these paths, Heidegger was proceeding along a *Weg*, which, never coming to be translated and framed into a whole *Werk*, remains open around the "end" of philosophy as (mis-)*logos* which began in some since-lost relation to the Being of *mythos*. In some sense, one might have the impression that Heidegger let himself be "carried" by myth, from confronting mythology with conceptualization ("mythical Dasein") to being open to listening to *mythos* as "primordial utterance." Myth "carries" in its presenting—the world, beings, story, legend—as a given to be absorbed into as primordial, as Heidegger proposed Plato's cave or Parmenides poem "let be." In his interpretations and carried-ways of myth, Heidegger's essential intimation was that of a "new and

more primordial beginning" to myth through the question of Being, and to Being through the question of myth. (Re)turning to myth, being carried into and by myth, is ultimately, most essentially, (re)turning and being carried toward a recovered openness to Being.

A number of lines of inquiry and interpretation deserve to be taken further from Heidegger's expressions on myth, whether in returning to the hermeneutic work begged by individual passages, approaching the broader relation between poetry and *mythos* (and the "mytho-poetic"), attempting to productively correlate "Heidegger's myth" with particular theories and cases in the study of myth, including revisiting Heidegger's engagement with Cassirer on myth and language, or even in taking up Heidegger's said and unsaid overtures toward a fully-fledged reconsideration of myth as such, etc. In any case, it bears recognizing that Heidegger did in fact have much to say about myth, and much more remains in the pivotal interpretive field of the unsaid, the otherwise-said, and the to-be-said. The hermeneutics of myth anticipated by Heidegger lies still ahead.

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On Home (*das Heim*) and the Uncanny (*das Unheimliche*) in Heidegger

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Abstract

The paper aims to argue that the question of home (*das Heim*) is one of the crucial elements of Martin Heidegger's philosophy, which has been tackled by the German philosopher throughout his lifework in close connection to its opposition, namely the uncanny (*das Unheimliche*). The paper discusses the different understandings of home in Heidegger's philosophy starting from the seminal works, such as *Being and Time* (1927) and *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1935), as well as *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*

(1942) and "Letter on Humanism" (1946) including "Building Dwelling Thinking" (1951). In his argumentation on the topic from 1935 onwards, Heidegger developed the question of home within the hermeneutical analysis of Sophocles's *Antigone*, specifically the first verse of the famous choral song and the term δεινόν. In the conclusion, the standpoints of Jacques Derrida and David Farrell Krell on the subject are confronted, in order to discuss the paradoxical structure of the topic of home in Heidegger's philosophy and, more generally, within philosophy of architecture.

Keywords: home (*das Heim*), Martin Heidegger, *das Unheimliche*, uncanny, Antigone.

O domu (*das Heim*) in nedomačnem (*das Unheimliche*) pri Heideggru

Povzetek

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Članek želi izpostaviti, da je vprašanje doma (*das Heim*) eden izmed ključnih elementov filozofije Martina Heideggra, s katerim se je nemški mislec v celotnem poteku svojega življenjskega dela ukvarjal v bližnji povezavi z njegovim nasprotjem, namreč z nedomačnim (*das Unheimliche*). Prispevek obravnava različna razumevanja doma znotraj Heideggrove filozofije, začenši s temeljnimi deli, kakršni sta *Bit in čas* (1927) in *Uvod v metafiziko* (1935), in vključujoč predavanja *Hölderlinova himna »Ister«* (1942) ter znamenito pismo »O ‚humanizmu'« (1946) in spis »Gradnja Prebivanje Mišljenje« (1951). Od leta 1935 dalje je Heidegger v svoji argumentaciji vprašanje doma razvil znotraj hermenevtične analize Sofoklesove *Antigone*, zlasti prvega verza stajanke in besede δεινόν. V zaključku se z zadevnimi stališči Jacquesa Derridaja in Davida Farrella Krella spoprimemo, da bi obravnavali paradoksalno strukturo tematike doma znotraj Heideggrove filozofije in, splošneje, znotraj filozofije arhitekture.

Ključne besede: dom (*das Heim*), Martin Heidegger, *das Unheimliche*, nedomačno, Antigona.

Introduction

In the late 20th-century and contemporary philosophy, Heidegger's work stands as a significant reference point. In particular, the question of home has been the focus of many recent studies about Heidegger (Withy 2015; McNeil 1999; Vidler 1992). These studies have shown the significance of this multi-layered topic and an urge to rethink it within his philosophy. This paper aims to argue that the question of home (*das Heim*) is one of the crucial elements of Martin Heidegger's philosophy, which has been tackled by the German philosopher throughout his lifework in close connection to its opposition, namely the uncanny (*das Unheimliche*).

Heidegger's work has greatly influenced the humanities and arts, and has been a source of interest also in architecture.[1] In architectural theory, Heidegger has triggered a new theoretical approach to the understanding of the key elements of architecture, known as architectural phenomenology, where also the question of home stands at the center of the postmodern reshaping of architecture (Norberg-Schulz 1979 and 1985; Frampton 1983; Harries 1997).[2]

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Materials and methods: From *das Heim* to *das Un-Heim*

This paper discusses the different understandings of home in Heidegger's philosophy starting from seminal works, such as *Being and Time* (1927) and *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1935), as well as the lectures *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"* (1942) and "Letter on Humanism" (1946) concluding with the essay "Building Dwelling Thinking" (1951). In his argumentation on the topic from 1935 onwards, Heidegger developed the question of home within the hermeneutical analysis

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1 More on the topic also in Kurir 2018.

2 One could argue that the interpretation of Heidegger's work on the topic of home has been in many ways problematic within the realm of architectural theory. It is, thus, commonly taken for granted within architectural theory that Martin Heidegger proposed an ideal image of home with an old farmhouse in the Black Forest as described by the German philosopher in the essay "Building Dwelling Thinking" (1951). Heidegger is usually described as an intellectual who is close to the rural ("Why do I Stay in the Provinces"; 1934; cf. Heidegger 1981), to the unspoiled countryside (*Feldweg-Gespräche*; 1944/45), and who struggles with understanding the pressing issues of contemporary industrialized world and its urban character.

of Sophocles's *Antigone*, specifically the first verse of the Choral song. We will follow his hermeneutical approach and combine it with our methodological tools referencing works from philosophy, literature, and psychoanalysis.

In Heidegger's early works (*Being and Time*), the topic of home first extensively appears within a close connection to the question of being, presenting man as the one who is facing unhomeliness in the world. It persists in his later works as the destiny of complete homelessness and rootlessness of man ("Letter on Humanism"). The terms of home (*das Heim*), the familiar (*heimisch*), the secret and hidden (*heimlich*), but also of that which is unhomely and strange (*unheimisch*), and uncanny (*unheimlich*), hold an important place throughout Heidegger's early and late works. We suggest, thereupon, that there might be a common denominator to the intertwined fields of Heidegger's understanding of the position of man in space and, specifically, in home as such, which exposes the complexity of this topic in his philosophy: the term of *das Unheimliche*, the uncanny.

Home as a topic is intrinsically connected not only to Heidegger's work, but also to his personal life. We might even say that the topic of home is paradoxically structured within his work. Namely, Heidegger is usually taken as the German philosopher who gave speeches, such as "Why do I Stay in the Provinces?" (Heidegger 1981)—and spent all his life in a rural province in the South of Germany—, and who supposedly praised an old Black Forest farmhouse as the ideal image of the home and the homely ("Building Dwelling Thinking"). We will see, further on, that his notion of home within his philosophy was radically different and utterly modern. Additionally, Heidegger's philosophy has to be taken into consideration from the perspective of his close collaboration with the National Socialist regime: he did not only act as a member of the party, he also took his own philosophy to construct an ontological argumentation of the importance of the Nazi regime.[3] On the one hand, one cannot understand Heidegger's philosophy apart from his collaboration with the idea of National Socialism, as he was a philosopher of the Nazi regime, and, on the other hand, Heidegger is one of the most prominent, influential thinkers of the 20th century whose short collaboration with the Nazi regime is often attributed to a terrible (temporary) slip and a

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3 More on the topic in Safranski 1981 and Wolin 1992.

mistake. Both prejudices arise from undeniable historical facts; nonetheless, they do point to the core of the problem we would like to expose here.

Results: A hermeneutics of das *Heim* and *das Unheimliche*

In order to be able to elaborate upon the complexity of the topic, which might result in a Heideggerian hermeneutics of the terms home and the uncanny, we will firstly attempt to sketch a map of Heidegger's intertwined understanding of the term *das Heim*, using definitions that are captured in Heidegger's dictionary[4] (Inwood 1999) and different essays.[5]

Heim
[home, place of dwelling]

Heimat
[home, place of birth, home-town, homeland]

Heimweh
[homesickness]

Heimkehr
[returning home, homecoming]

Heimkunft
[homecoming]

Heimischwerden
[becoming homely]

geheim
[secret]

heimisch/Heimisch
[1.indigeneous, native, local 2.familiar, at home]

heimlich /Heimlich
[secret(ly) hidden, myterious]

Geheimnis
[secret, mystery]

unheimisch / Unheimisch
[unhomely,strange]

unheimlich/ Unheimlich
[uncanny, eerie, sinister lit: unhomely / not belonging to the home]

Heimatlosigkeit
[homelessness or »lack of homeland«]

Unheimischkeit
[unhomeliness]

Unheimischsein
[not-being-at-home, unhomely]

Unheimlichkeit
[not-at-home-ness, uncanniness, not-being-at-home]

Scheme 1:
An attempt of a terminological map of the term *Heim* in Heidegger's work.

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4 Inwood's dictionary opens with an important note: "Above all, words matter to Heidegger. Words matter as much as meanings. None of the senses of a potent word is ever definitively excluded from Heidegger's use of it, and no other word, whether in the same or a different language, is ever an exact synonym." (Inwood 1999, 2.) Heidegger was notorious for the invention of new words and new terminology, but also for some (problematic) etymological interpretations of a few basic philosophical terms (such as *techne*, *poiesis*, being, etc.). Michael Inwood's dictionary is one of many available analyzes about the main terms and key references in Heidegger's philosophy; a similar dictionary provides Dahlstrom 2013.

5 My main references are: McNeill 1999; Farrell Krell 1995; Warminski 1990; and Fóti 1999.

The significance of *das Heim* for Heidegger (and in German, in general) can be broadly associated with home and/or with a place of dwelling. One of the most known derivations of the term *Heim* is *Heimat*, which could also signify home or, more exactly, a home place, but mostly covers the term homeland, even if in Heidegger's thought *Heimat* is "a term that oscillates between home and homeland and yet means neither" (Hammermeister 2000, 312). Undoubtedly, Heidegger puts *Heim* and *Heimat* at the center of his philosophical quest, but he does also pause at a number of possible derivations of *das Heim*, which could be viewed as independent topics or autonomous fields of meanings.

Such terms are two adjectives, deriving from *das Heim*: *heimisch* and *heimlich*. The word *heimisch* in German once covered the significance of something that "belongs to the home," but has gradually enlarged and now also covers the meanings of the "local, indigenous, native," and partly still maintains the meaning of "known, at home," which is generally used in a situation when one feels at home in a certain place. With the negation of the word *heimisch*, one obtains a new term, *unheimisch*, which can be used by Heidegger also as a noun and be written as *Un-heimische*—the meaning of which is broadly translated as "un-homely"—denoting something not known and strange. The term *heimlich* used to cover in German the same meaning as *heimisch*, but eventually distanced from it, as is now closer to the meaning of "secret, hidden, mysterious." The affiliation of *heimlich* to *Heim* seems to be almost totally lost in the general usage in the German language. Additionally, this term also presents a peculiar meaning in its negation. With the application of the prefix *un-* (usually used in German to make a negation, an opposition of the selected word) to the term *heimlich*, the term *unheimlich* emerges, which in Heidegger's philosophy literary means "not-belonging-to-home," and at the same time ultimately sharpens the meaning of "hidden" and "mysterious," combining it with the significance of dreadfulness, meaning in the end something as "uncanny, eerie, strange." We can conclude, thus, that the meanings of *heimlich* and *unheimlich* can be in German seen as being quite close, and precisely this proximity was also elaborated at length by Freud in his celebrated essay *The Uncanny* (*Das Unheimliche*; 1919; cf. Freud 2001). One the other hand, we can notice that the specific tonality of "eerie" and "dreadfulness" makes *unheimlich* distinctively different from *heimlich*.

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In *Being and time*, Heidegger often uses the derivation of *unheimlich*, known as *Unheimlichkeit*, with which he marks, if we follow the reading proposed by Michael Inwood (1999), a distinctive way that could be understood as "not-being-at-home," as something that could be translated as "uncanniness" and "horrifying." Additionally, William McNeil has stressed that for Heidegger the term *das Heim* is essential, if we want to read the word *Unheimlichkeit* in its fullness. Thus, he adds: »For Heidegger is especially important the connection of *heimlich* with the hidden, the secret and the mystery (*Geheimnis*)." (McNeill 1999, 347.) With this contextual emphasis of the word *heimlich* that opens up a connection with the term *Geheimnis* as another key term deriving from *das Heim*, we are moving to the proximity of the definition of *unhemlich*. Notably, this is the nearness between *das Heim* and *unheimlich*, which was proposed in an observation by Schelling and is the one that is persistently repeated by Freud in his essay *The Uncanny*. Schelling observed that *unheimlich* is that which "*ought to have remained … secret [im Geheimnis] and hidden but has come to light*" (Freud 2001, 224).

We would like to add here two important notes. 1) Heidegger is interested in the uncanny and dreadful, present in the meaning of the word *unheimlich*, as well as in that which is hidden and mysterious, as in the word *heimlich*, even if he operates with *unheimlich* in some very distinctive places of his work. 2) The meaning of the four "key" terms, namely *heimisch*, *unheimisch*, *heimlich*, and *unheimlich*, is closely entangled, which is notably evident in translations into a variety of languages, where a range of diverse solutions has been used for each of them, mostly taking the context of the embracing text to choose the "correct" term, even if in some cases almost the same word is used for the four of them.

Heidegger frequently elaborates on the term *Unheimischkeit*, which is close to the meaning of an absent, missing home; it is generally translated within his work as "unhomeliness." In this realm, one finds also *Unheimischsein*, which Warminski (1990) translated as not-being-at-home (a "solution" sometimes used for *Unheimlichkeit*). Heidegger chose, in his controversial translation of the choral song from Sophocles's *Antigone*, to which we will return later, to translate the multilayered Greek word δεινόν (*deinon*) with the term *das Unheimliche*. Why is Heidegger's translation known as one of his most

problematic transpositions of a Greek term into German? Because it is usually translated into English as "fearful" or "terrible." Moreover, Hölderlin himself chose a different solution for the translation of this adjective into German: he chose *ungeheuer* ("monstrous") for δεινόν. Despite this debatable translation by Heidegger, we would like to underline here the triple meaning he attributes to δεινόν: he understands it as a meaningful unity of the fearsome, the powerful, and the extraordinary. With this triple meaning, the complexity of *das Unheimliche* is more evident.

Quite often in Heidegger's oeuvre we encounter four additional terms, which are also rooted in *das Heim*: one is *Heimatlosigkeit*, in the translations of his texts usually transposed into English as "homelessness" or "lack of homeland"; furthermore, one finds *Heimkehr* with the translation of "returning home" and standing closely to *Heimkunft* or "homecoming," then *Heimweh* or "homesickness"; and a crucial term for this article, *Heimischwerden*, translated as "becoming homely."

All the indicated terms, not only *unheimlich* or *das Unheimliche* and *Unheimlichkeit*, are seldom present Heidegger's philosophy. Heidegger otherwise often takes into consideration, within this realm, also the term *das Haus*, which can be read in its double meaning as "house" in English: as a building—this or that house—, but which partly also covers the meaning of home as such. When he wants to highlight the feeling to be at home, he uses the *zu Hause sein* or *zuhause sein*, and when he outlines its opposite, he speaks of *Un-zuhause*.

The questions of the homely and the unhomely or the uncanny, of *heimisch* and *unheimlich*, come to the surface of his philosophy already at its beginning, in 1925 and 1927, almost simultaneously with the question of Being and *Dasein*, and constantly re-appear in his work until later periods.

The differences between *das Heim* and *das Unheimlich* from 1927 to 1951

The question of home occupies an exposed position already in *Being and Time*. Two aspects in connection to the topic of home need to be underlined here. 1) Heidegger assigns home and being-at-home "only" to the everyday world of the average, of *They* or *das Man*. 2) The topic of the familiar (the

homely) and the unhomely, uncanniness (*Unheimlichkeit*) is disclosed through the analysis of anxiety.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger identifies the homely, the "being at home" (*Zuhause*) with the average, with the everyday openness of the public realm, as reflected within the majority. In the entire Heidegger's opus this might be the only point where the individual is originally awarded a shelter within the meaning of *Haus* or of that which is intimate and familiar, of *heimisch*. Only a very distinct phenomenon, which can be seen as a radically modern interpretation of the significant mood of the first half of the 20th century, can move *Dasein* from this safe universality of man's comprehensive mediocrity and anonymity to the other realm—to the haunting half of uncanniness (*Unheimlichkeit*): this is anxiety (*Angst*). Anxiety is a trigger, which pulls *Dasein* from *das Man*, it is the exact point where the transition of *Dasein*'s average everydayness to its singularity occurs and where the transition from being-at-home (*Zuhause sein*) to not-being-at-home (*Un-zuhause*) takes place, as anxiety is the phenomenon that shakes *Dasein* and pulls it towards its individuality.[6] Anxiety tosses *Dasein* from the alleged "home" into the non-familiar, into the not-at-home(ness). The uncanniness (of the unhomely) in the form of *Unheimlichkeit* is introduced here again and Heidegger tries to define it thus:

> In anxiety one has an "uncanny" ["unheimlich"] feeling. Here, with anxiety, the peculiar indefiniteness of that which Dasein finds itself involved in anxiety initially finds expression: the nothing and nowhere. But uncanniness ["*Unheimlichkeit*"] means at the same time not-being-at-home. (Heidegger 2010, 182.)[7]

Heidegger introduces one of the variations of the term *unheimlich* (which is initially secured between quotation marks) as a specific shade of anxiety. At this point, it is still not possible to grasp, *what* this term means, but what is obvious from this introduction, is that it discloses a transitional "stage" of *Dasein*, and,

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6 "Anxiety, on the other hand, fetches Dasein back out of its entangled absorption in the 'world.' Everyday familiarity collapses." (Heidegger 2010, 182.)

7 The word "*Unheimlichkeit*" in the last sentence, which is not present in the original translation, has been included by the author of the present paper.

even more important: Heidegger understands uncanniness (*Unheimlichkeit*) and not-being-at-home (*Un-zuhause*) as something very similar, if not even the same.

What does this mean? We emphasized above that Heidegger puts another equivalence in *Being and time*, namely that this being-at-home (*Zuhause*) can be identified only with the average, everyday openness of the public, of a world that is shown to the majority. Nevertheless, what should be stressed, here, is that this not-being-at-home (*Un-zuhause*) is a more primordial phenomenon than being-at-home, that can be found in the shelter of *das Man*, of "They." To quote Heidegger: "Not-being-at-home must be conceived existentially and ontologically as the more primordial phenomenon." (2010, 183.)

Namely, in *Being and Time*, the individual, referred to here as *Dasein*, does not—in the original and basic state—possess a home of any kind. In fact, *Dasein*'s position in the world in the context of this book is radically uncanny. It is a state of original homelessness that lies at the core of *Dasein*'s being and is revealed with another kind of urge, of immanence for this being—with anxiety, which cuts *Dasein*'s apparently safe and quotidian relationship with the average, with "They" (*das Man*).

Being at home (*Zuhause*) is opposed to two different states of *Dasein*, and not just one: its first opposition is not-at-home-ness (*Unheimlichkeit*), the other is not-being-at-home (*Un-zuhause*), which could be seen as a more direct negation of the familiarity of being-at-home. Even if Heidegger on some occasions uses these two oppositions as different terms, he also draws an equivalent between the two in connection with anxiety. Heidegger equates the two states of *Dasein*: "In anxiety one has an '*uncanny*' ['*unheimlich*'] feeling. Here, with anxiety, the peculiar indefiniteness of that which Dasein finds itself involved in anxiety initially finds expression: the nothing and nowhere. But uncanniness means at the same time not-being-at-home." (Heidegger 2010, 189.)

Anxiety is the basic mood that opens or discloses the not-at-home-ness as not-being-at-home, it is the mood that interrupts the immersion of our everyday life: with anxiety within a Heideggerian perspective, we are confronted with the truth of our world and our existence.

Das Unheimliche is referred to in *Being and Time* as a specific layer of anxiety. But, can we perhaps say that *das Unheimliche* is just one specific tone

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of anxiety? Heidegger scholars have been puzzled with this question. For Hubert Dreyfus, *unheimlich* reveals a "radical un-rootedness" or a human activity without proper foundation, which indicates that "people can never be at home in the world." William Richardson says that *unheimlich* indicates that ontic dwellings are not the true home for *Dasein*: this is the reason why to be permanently expelled is immanent for human essence; to be a man means to be in permanent exile. Richardson here refers to Heidegger's equation of not-at-home-ness (*Unheimlichkeit*) with not-being-at-home (*Un-zuhause*).[8] Farrell Krell points out that Heidegger made only one reference to the equation between *Unheimlichkeit* and *Un-zuhause* after *Being and Time*—in the lecture *History of the Concept of Time* in Marburg in 1925, which is actually an introduction to *Being and Time* (cf. Farrell Krell 2009).

With the introduction of *das Unheimliche Dasein*, in fact, opens to: 1) the ontological[9] (the world as the world); 2) its own main essence. The introduction of *Unheimlickeit* in *Being and Time* is closely intertwined with the understanding of home as such. But we are facing an open dilemma here, as Heidegger does not define home or its essence. Although we do not know exactly *what* home is, we know *where* it is: in the safe enclosure of mediocrity. The homely is thus the modus of the unhomeliness of *Dasein*, of the *not-being-at-home* (as the opposition to the homely or the familiar). *Dasein* is faced with a specific, existential disclosure: the inner constitution of *Dasein* is already constitutive and has banished it from any home. The home of *Dasein* may be located only in the non-familiarity, in the not-being-at-home.

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After *Being and Time*, almost ten years passed without a noticeable mention of *das Unheimliche* in Heidegger's work:[10] but when it did come back in two different lectures, it was not used in a marginal way as in 1927. *Das Unheimliche* became almost a key term in 1935: Heidegger uses it to name the core of human existence, it defines man as such.

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8 More on the topic in Withy 2011.

9 The ontological means—to put it in simple terms—that which refers to the being of Being, to the essence of all beings, whereas the ontical refers to the being, to everything that is.

10 Heidegger stops briefly on the topic also in *The History of the Concept of Time* and in *What is Metaphysics?*

Das Unheimliche is no longer just one shade of anxiety: it is almost a concept that has a decisive existential-ontological significance. It is no longer just a mood, because it moves within Heidegger's thought conceptually away from that fleeting feeling, as Freud has treated it, or of that affective state that is induced to humans by anxiety. In *Introduction to Metaphysics* and in *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*, *das Unheimliche* becomes a permanent enigma, which defines the indefinable: the essence of human existence.

Heidegger's work in the 1930s is dedicated to the thinking of Being outside metaphysics, which was never completed within Nietzsche's philosophy. In this period, his work is marked significantly by the figures of Nietzsche and Hölderlin, each of them giving their own interpretations of the void after the "expulsion" of God: Nietzsche replaced this lack with the concept of "the overman" (*Übermensch*), Hölderlin announced the arrival of new gods. Heidegger's thought echoes both of these perspectives, while he positions historicity at the core of his thinking, with the emphasis on the end of metaphysics and the new dialogue with poetry.

132   Freud had posed *das Unheimliche* at the heart of the Enlightenment project,[11] Heidegger, on the other hand, delves deeper into this concept; in order to establish the meaning of the homely and the unhomely, he goes as far back as Antiquity, to the first chorus song of *Antigone* from the 5th century B.C. The song, known also as "Ode to Man," occurs in the first scene of the tragedy, when at daybreak all decisive figures gather in front of the royal palace in Thebes. Creon's ardent conversation with the chorus and the guards takes place after the introductory scene, in which Antigone reveals to her sister Ismene that she will bury their brother Polynices despite Creon's ban. At the moment of this early morning, when the gathering of state elders and leaders takes place in the clearing of a new day, and when Creon positions himself on the throne and declares the judgment for the sons of Oedipus, the poet gives way to the first choral song about the mighty, powerful, and also terrible power of man. The song opens with the famous verses:

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11 More on this in Dolar 1991.

Polla tà deinà koudèn
anthrópou deinóteron pélei […]

This is usually translated into English as:

Wonders are many on earth,
and the greatest of this is man […] (Sophocles 1947, 148.)

Heidegger renders this in a rather negative fashion, as the English translation of his German interpretation divulges:

Manifold is the uncanny, yet nothing
more uncanny looms or stirs beyond the human being. (Heidegger 1996, 108.)

In Heidegger's extensive and controversial interpretation of these opening lines, he analyzes the song's central term, δεινόν, and defines it on three semantic levels: as fearsome, powerful, and extraordinary. He translates δεινόν with *das Unheimliche*: man is the one who brings *das Unheimliche* to Earth and inhabits it in being.

Thus, Heidegger's definition of *das Unheimliche* is almost word-for-word the same as Freud's: *unheimlich is the unfamiliar in the familiar*, the unhomely in the homely. Because of this connection and co-belongingness, it is possible that the unfamiliar (*das Un-heimische*) is at the same time the uncanny (*unheimlich*) in the sense of alienation and of haunting, which causes anxiety.

Das Unheimliche is the power that pushes man from the homely as that which is close to home (*Heim*). In 1935, Heidegger positions the concept of home at a specific location—in the *polis*. Man's journey into Being, with his knowledge as a violent activity, is what plunges him/her from the homely into the unhomely, writes Heidegger. This is the reason why, for Heidegger, Sophocles calls man a "*pantoporos aporos*," since at the very core of human essence lies an unsolvable aporia: man is constantly on the powerful journey into Being as a whole, and tries to dominate the earth, the ocean, animals, and everything else besides him/her; however, man has at the same time no

exit, when he/she faces the nothingness of death, since he/she is existential and primarily thrown into the limits of life. Death constantly sets limits to man, for a human being always "stands in the occurrence of death" and is "the occurrence of un-homeliness [*die geschehende Un-heimlichkeit selbst*]."[12] In the aporia of death, man finds himself/herself for the first time before the unstoppable power of δεινόν, because only by comprehending death man can fully understand what it means to be only and just as δεινόν. Death, as reflected upon in *Introduction to Metaphysics*, should be seen through the Greek, non-metaphysical, poetic definition of man: it is set is as extreme and immovable boundary that outperforms all other boundaries and puts man constantly in the unhomely.

When man intervenes in Being with (the violence) of his knowledge, he becomes unhomely, but at the same time he/she moves towards opening the *homely* as such. In Heidegger's understanding, when man becomes "aware" of this unhomeliness, the Being as a whole in an ontological sense unfolds to him/her. As Sophocles explains—at least the Sophocles as transmitted by Heidegger—, with the uncanniness of the unhomely (*das Unheimlichkeit*), Being opens to man. The Greeks stepped into Being with a decisive force, and this violence was the power of their knowledge. The entire Western civilization, and with it its metaphysics, derives from this violence of man against Being that forms man in the unhomely. Yet, and this is extremely important for a philosopher on the quest to answer the question of Being, in the uncanny of the unhomely, being unfolds itself to man. The unhomely of this δεινόν, which is transferred into modern thinking by Heidegger with the term *das Unheimliche*, thus does not have an "impact" only on the definition of man and his essence, in the middle of which man is immanently settled: this unhomely is also an ontological project that allows the opening of Being. This statement is decisive also in the light of Heidegger's later works, where he will go on to point out that man can be at home only ontologically, that is, in Being. No other "mode" of dwelling can be considered for him as a possible (authentic) position of being-at-home.

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12 Cf. McNeill 1999.

Seven years later, in the lecture *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*,[13] Heidegger reflects upon home within the proximity of the term of becoming homely (*Heimischwerden*). Becoming homely in this interpretation, mainly coming from Hölderlin's elegy on the river **Danube**,[14] stems from the local. The local, the journey, and the river are some of the key terms used in this lecture, forming a selected terminological triangle together with *becoming homely*. As the local is created in this interpretation by the river, becoming homely can also act as a point of fusion between the local and the journey, adds Heidegger. Furthermore, the river is the one that determines the essence of man's home, as it itself also dwells and forms man's historical path in his journey back home. The river, described phenomenologically by Heidegger, names the place of man's dwelling and at the same time posits man as a historical being; the river is present even more significantly as the one that forms man's way of being at home. In Heidegger's understanding, the river is the locality of the local in the home: the journey of the river is such that it begins and creates a home. The process of *becoming homely* is particularly significant for man, since in it rests his/her true essence. Becoming homely is closely connected to the locality and to the journey of the river. More precisely, becoming homely is exactly what is mysterious and difficult to reach—this is the original, the authentic, or, in Heidegger's language, one's own (*das Eigene*). One's own, in Heidegger's perspective, is something, which is the most hidden and to which only great poets, such as Hölderlin, can shed any light with their poetry. It is important to stress that precisely this part, where Heidegger in his

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13 Hölderlin wrote many hymns on rivers; Heidegger prepared lecture courses on the topics of his poems "Germania," "The Rhine," and "The Ister." In the lecture course on "Germania," Heidegger makes a known assumption on the topic of the place (*Ort*) and of the homeland (*Heimat*), which could shed some light also on the theme discussed here.
14 Heidegger includes, in his private notes to this lecture, an interesting anecdote stating that he was the grandson of a shepherd who used to take his sheep to the riverbanks of the Danube. His remarks are written in a highly complex manner and are ironically summarized by Otto Pöggeler thus: "To one of the grandchildren of the shepherd spoken of by Hölderlin (Heidegger wants to say) fell the task of asking, by way of an 'occidental conversation' with Hölderlin, how man can once again become 'the shepherd of Being' and win back a homeland. If one excludes the great politicizing pseudo-myths, it will be difficult to find many examples in our century of such self-mythologizing." (Pöggeler 1992, 123.)

reading of Hölderlin's hymn introduces one's own as that authentic principle, characteristic of home and the homely, is also the sequence in the whole lecture, where he comes closest to a specific Nazi rhetoric in speaking of the fatherland.[15] Continuing his remarks on the fatherland of the Germans, Heidegger adds: "This coming to be at home in one's own in itself entails that human beings are initially, and for a long time, and sometimes forever, not at home." (Heidegger 1996, 49.)

In *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*, Heidegger works extensively to build an argumentation of *a specific process*, during which a home of man can be built. If we try to simplify the rather complex and extensive interpretation, Heidegger passes through the duality of one's own and the foreign, and connects it to another pair of contrapositions, namely the homely and the unhomely, in order to finally conclude that becoming homely (*Heimischwerden*) stands at the center of these two counter-positions. For Heidegger, the homely (*heimisch*) always stands at the point of difference between becoming homely and the foreign: "Coming to be at home is thus a passage through the foreign." (Heidegger 1996, 49.) Heidegger writes about this process, following the lead of Hölderlin. This passage, this encounter with/through the foreign, which can lead to the homely, means also a point of discussion with the ancient Greeks. The Greeks are the foreign that can open the most authentic path to the core of the German. This (*only*) path to one's own (to the original, the authentic) and the homely can (*only*) be led to by a poet.

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15 Interpreting Hölderlin's hymn, Heidegger writes: "What is one's own in this case is whatever belongs to the fatherland of the Germans. Whatever is of the fatherland is itself at home with mother earth." (Heidegger 1996, 49.) In this sequence, Heidegger uses the term *das Vaterland* to refer to Germany as homeland, he does not use the word *Heimat*.

foreign (*das Fremde*) ⟶ one's own (*das Eigene*)

becoming homely

(*Heimschwerden*)

unhomely   homely (*heimisch*)
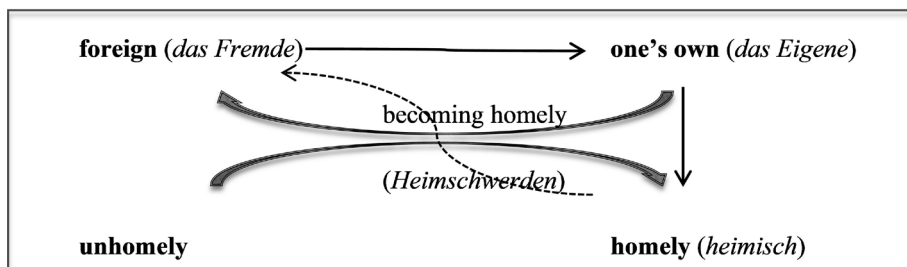
Scheme 2:
Heidegger's understanding of the unhomely, the homely, the foreign, and one's own.

Heidegger, following the poetic words of Hölderlin, chooses here to go into a (rather selective) foreign for the Germans, since he is taking a journey to Ancient Greece and to Sophocles. For Heidegger, the Greek tragedy does not only lead to the core of the Germans, but is also a paradigm for the thinking of history.[16] Heidegger's path of argumentation might be seen as bizarre from today's perspective, but we must take into consideration that Sophocles and his *Antigone* has been a constant reference point for a great number of German intellectuals who were building the "core" of the German national identity exactly within the connection of Germany to the Ancient Greece: this specific "movement" is present also in the writings of Goethe and Hegel.

Heidegger is mainly interested in *Antigone*, because for him it stands, as a poetical text, which opens the doors to a world, outside metaphysics. Here, he repeats the already known definition of man—proposed by Sophocles— as *das Unheimlichste*. In this lecture, in comparison with the interpretation of 1935, he stresses several times that he had chosen to translate *deinon* with *unheimlich*, because this word also covers the meaning of *unhemisch* or of something unhomely and not proper to home. He also connects the definition of man as *das Unheimlichste* with the notion of home, since man is always and immanently on the way to his hometown, but at the same time his home repeatedly rejects him/her. Therefore, man is substantially unhomely: "human beings in their innermost essence are those who are unhomely" (Heidegger

16 Cf. Schmidt 2001, 226.

1996, 90). Because of this double game, in which man is constantly turning between the homely and the unhomely, the highest level of *unheimlich* (the dreadfulness and uncanniness) is attributed to man. In this understanding of man as a terrible creature, as *das Unheimlichste*, Heidegger does not present man as a being that brings the worst terror and is the most frightening. What he was probably trying to do here is to define human essence in a fundamental way. This essence of man is best captured by the term *das Unheimlichste*, because it shows and includes in a specific way also the unhomely, as the negation of home, as *Un-heimische*. One of the most important conclusions Heidegger makes in *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"* is the equation between *das Unheimlich* and *das Unheimische*: the frightening nature of man comes from his inability to dwell in, to have a home. The conclusive step in Heidegger's argumentation is to connect the unhomely with the place of human dwelling:

> To say that the human being is the most uncanny being does not mean that human beings arouse most fear or instill the greatest terror. […] *Das Unheimliche*, however, the uncanny, is not meant to be understood in terms of an impression but to be conceived in terms of *das Un-heimische*, the un-homely, namely, that unhomely that is the fundamental trait of human abode in the midst of beings. (Heidegger 1996, 90–91.)

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In this cosmos, man always searches for his home, but his core is characterized by becoming homely (*Heimischwerden*) or, to use different words, in this constant *not-being-at-home*: "Dwelling itself, being homely, is the becoming homely of a being unhomely." (Heidegger 1996, 137.) This is one of the crucial points Heidegger makes in the lecture on "The Ister": the notion that man is *becoming homely* in the unhomely, or, moreover, that he is adjusting to his imperative homelessness.

This is not the only emphasis Heidegger makes: he also elaborates here on dwelling, which will take the central position in the apparatus of his late philosophy. One of the main texts, where Heidegger deals with the essence of dwelling, is the essay "Building Dwelling Thinking." Since this particular lecture and its almost famous implications, such as: "the essence of building

is dwelling" and "only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build," have been interpreted quite often by architects, architectural theorists, and philosophers, I will not stop on this topic at this point. I will focus only on the question of *das Unheimliche* and make my last stop in this journey of its evolution.

Heidegger highlights the basic position of *man as a being who is not at home* quite frequently in his later works. In this late period, he also describes this position in a more negative and extreme way. One of the most notorious statements on the topic can be found a few years prior to "Building Dwelling Thinking" in the "Letter on Humanism," where he states: "Homelessness is coming to be the destiny of the world." (Heidegger 2009b, 243.) The term of *Heimatlosigkeit* or homelessness is one of the central terms of Heidegger's late philosophy: within it, man is essentially seen as a being that cannot be at home and has a distinctive destiny: he is doomed to homelessness.

Homelessness as the dark side of dwelling is introduced by Heidegger in the very final part of "Building Dwelling Thinking." Here, he proposes a completely different reading of home than previously suggested in *Being and Time* with the concept of *das Man*, which is an important shift. The urgency of homelessness appears when man is thinking about the real plight of dwelling. Homelessness is a specific symptom that points to the oblivion of Being inside the whole history (of metaphysics) and can be seen as the first warning, the first indication that Being is being ignored, excluded, removed. In this context, homelessness is something man cannot escape. Thus, Heidegger concludes this essay with an appeal to (re)think homelessness: "Yet as soon as man gives thought to his homelessness, it is a misery no longer. Rightly considered and kept well in mind, it is the sole summon that calls mortals into their dwelling." (Heidegger 2009a, 363.) Only when homelessness appears, dwelling in its full meaning can commence.

Discussion: The paradox of home

One may argue that the topic of the uncanny (*das Unheimliche*) is one of the key terms of Heidegger's philosophy; it seems more relevant and central in comparison to the question of home (*das Heim*). Almost every time

Heidegger writes of the homeland, the home, and the homely, he adds that man essentially can never be at home in the world. As the essence of man is defined by uprootedness and by homelessness, his/her essential dwelling imminently distances him/her from the possibility to be at home in the world that surrounds him/her. As Heidegger defines this topic in *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*: man is forever, or for a long time, evicted from home. Man is originally without a home, but home and the homely are of crucial importance for this creature, which stands in the midst of being. Heidegger dwells on the other side of the homely: the unhomely, the uncanny. Strictly speaking, the uncanny is not only one form of *das Unheimliche* among others, it exceeds all others; this relationship is expressed by the poet who defines man as being the uncanniest. The biggest catastrophe of all, writes Heidegger, is man who is set in the midst of being and who is always forgetting Being. In this way, therefore, the home becomes a vain search, which is only filled with fleeting human activities.

If the destiny of modern man in Heidegger's philosophy is not to have a home, the question of architecture is not even posed: but when it is posed, in has to come exactly from this basic position, exactly from this specific dwelling of man upon his homelessness.

When Jacques Derrida wrote one of the most influential interpretations of Heidegger's philosophy in *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, he focused also on the intersection between Heidegger's philosophy and the Nazi regime. In the introduction, Derrida explores the difficulties of the task he is about to embark upon, since he will be talking about the question of *das Geist* in Heidegger. Here, he makes a remark, which could be seen as trivial or just a casual observation: "[…] the enigma of this deinon marks all the texts we will have to encounter here" (Derrida 1987, 17). This remark is a direct reference to the term of *das Unheimliche*, which was repeatedly used by Heidegger to translate the word *deinon*. Since Derrida was one of Heidegger's most in-depth interprets and scholars, it might be argued, that this remark confirms our hypothesis: the *deinon*, and with it *das Unheimliche*, is one of the key subjects of Heidegger's philosophy. Without the understanding of *das Unheimliche* and its controversial and notorious meaning, we might not be able to understand Heidegger's work, especially from the later period.

Derrida states that a meaningful reading of Heidegger should always take into account—besides the text itself—also what this German philosopher had left out, what he did *not* include, which arguments or poets[17] he included and who was left out. Sometimes, in Heidegger, that which is apparently left out, which is avoided, is part of the essential meaning of his whole argument. It seems that this is the case in the question of home Heidegger is proposing; a powerful misconception is continuously reiterated: that home for Heidegger stands in the countryside and that he is a philosopher of the rural and the provincial. In this article, we wanted to point out that Heidegger was speaking of something entirely different. His vision of a modern man is utterly different and radical: man is forever banned from home, into the abyss of the uncanny.

On the other hand, Derrida's book can also point out us something genuinely precious: there are some paradoxes in Heidegger's work that need to be considered. To come to the core of what Heidegger was aiming at, we sometimes need to think about both sides of the coin simultaneously. This is also the case that Derrida makes with Heidegger's involvement with Nazism: for him, the idea of Nazism stands at the core of Heidegger's work, since the idea of *Geist* is central to his philosophy and to Nazism itself. Nazism, in Derrida's terms, did not come from the desert or from an unknown location, but precisely out of the woods in the Central Europe. The woods that are the spring of the Danube, the river that presents the locality itself for Europe. Despite or because of that, Heidegger's philosophy is no less or more important—but in order to understand it, one needs to consider both sides of this paradox at the same time and think them together.

David Farrell Krell emphasized that Heidegger's thought on the topic of home (*das Heim*) revolves around a terrible irony: "human being is being in the world and dwelling on the earth—and yet we are never at home in the world, never rooted in the earth« (Farrell Krell 1995, 94). The irony of continuous openness and discontinuities on the earth and in the world for man as such is something that Heidegger never succeeded to overcome.

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17 Heidegger always chose "true" German poets, such as Goethe, Trakl, or Hölderlin. He never wrote an essay or proposed, for instance, a lecture about a Jewish poet or writer.

A detailed reading of Heidegger's reflections on the subject of home (*das Heim*) has shown that the presumed image of an idyllic home, often ascribed to Heidegger on the basis of his late work and the image of a homestead in *Schwarzwald* (cf. Heidegger 1951), is not grounded in his work. The question of home is thrown directly into the abyss of the uncanny. Instead of the presumed familiarity and warmth of a home in the traditional environment of the past, home for modern man is in his horrifying nature, which is perpetuated by the uncanny (*das Unheimlich*). This utterly modern understanding of man's essence, but also of modern space, is particularly manifold and—in some sense—remains paradoxical.

Conclusion

Heidegger questioned the topic of home from his early onwards through to his later work. We might claim that the possible layers and contexts of Heidegger's understanding of home are in many ways also the reflections on the dominant topics he was devoted to at the time of writing on home. His early work was defined by time and temporality; it was in many aspects the expression of the general "subordination of space to time in Western thought" (Farrell Krell 1995, 41) within the metaphysics in general from Plato onwards. The key horizon for Being in this context for Heidegger was time until *the turn* in 1935. Home in this context of *Being and Time* is a possibility that is offered to Man. His later work is precisely demarked by the shift towards space and spatiality: within this notion, the contextualization of space in his philosophy changes, including the understanding of Being and the reflection upon home. When Heidegger writes about the "malignancy of homelessness" in connection with the lack of housing, he refers to the impossible spiritual condition for modern man, because he/she was not spiritually able to be at home in Being. Home is a place of intimacy, a significant place, for which we might claim that it stands at the intersection of being and Being, and is prominently outlined by the unhomely, the uncanny as that which is fearsome, powerful, and extraordinary. The uncanny in Heidegger's later work, after *the turn*, structures home as the place of intimacy precisely with the characteristic, which stands as a negation of home as the place of safety and intimacy.

"Architectural phenomenology has drawn from Heidegger" (Sharr 2007, 116), and maybe even more than that: within philosophy of architecture, where architectural phenomenology had a decisive role in the 70s and the 80s of the 20th century with works by Kenneth Frampton, Karsten Harris, and Cristian Norberg-Shultz as well as many others, the work of Heidegger was in many ways crucial. These authors were attracted by the figure of Heidegger, who remained one of the few philosophers who addressed architects directly with the claim of the urge to reconnect dwelling and building with his notorious essay "Building Dwelling Thinking."

After the significant mark Heidegger's work left on the theory and philosophy of architecture, different theories appeared: from such attitudes as "critical regionalism" (a term coined by Frampton) to the importance of human experience for architecture as such (which started with the authors, such as Norberg-Schulz, and continued within the work of Alberto Gomez-Perez, Juhani Pallasmaa, and others). Here, it is important to note that within architectural philosophy, especially within architectural phenomenology, the uncanny as one of the decisive themes in Heidegger in connection with his understanding of home, modern dwelling, as well as space and spatiality is usually poorly or even scarcely present. One of the aims of the present article was to underline the importance of the uncanny in Heidegger's philosophy, in order to foster a new reading within the philosophy of architecture on the topic.

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The Gadamer–Habermas Debate through *Mahabharata*'s Women
Intersectional Feminist Engagements with Tradition and Critique

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Abstract

Despite their affinities in criticizing the Cartesian subject, contextualizing texts, and upholding dialogue as integral to interpretation, there are differences between the hermeneutic projects of Gadamer and Habermas. While Gadamer emphasizes real dialogue and continuity with tradition, Habermas highlights ideal communication and critical distance. With regard to the underexplored feminist intervention in their debate, it can be said that there are greater affinities between feminist thought and

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Gadamer arising from their commitment to historically situated thought. But the vantage position of tradition in Gadamer has generated its set of feminist apprehensions. The paper scrutinizes the consequences of intervening in the Gadamer–Habermas debate on the hermeneutics of tradition from a feminist perspective. Analyzing women characters in the Indian epic *Mahabharata*, it argues that the intersectionality between their gendered identity and varied social locations of class and caste leads to diverse feminist perspectives. In conclusion, the paper ponders over whether they are all equally critical and the extent to which they can be reconciled.

Keywords: hermeneutics, critique, feminism, dialogue, tradition, Gadamer, Habermas, Mahasweta Devi, *Mahabharata*.

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Povzetek

Diskusija med Gadamerjem in Habermasom skoz perspektivo žensk v *Mahabharati*. Intersekcijski feministični spoprijemi s tradicijo in kritiko

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Kljub njuni bližini glede kritike kartezijanskega subjekta, kontekstualizacije besedil in zagovarjanja dialoga kot sestavnega dela interpretacije obstajajo pomembne razlike med hermenevtičnima projektoma Gadamerja in Habermasa. Medtem ko Gadamer poudarja resničen dialog in kontinuiteto s tradicijo, Habermas zastopa idealno komunikacijo in kritično distanco. Če se obrnemo k premalo raziskani feministični intervenciji znotraj njune diskusije, je mogoče ugotoviti, da dejansko obstaja večja bližina med feministično mislijo in Gadamerjem, ki izhaja iz zavezanosti historično situirani misli. Toda prednostni položaj tradicije pri Gadamerju je vendarle priklical določen niz feminističnih zadržkov. Članek iz feministične perspektive obravnava posledice intervencije v diskusijo med Gadamerjem in Habermasom glede hermenevtike tradicije. Na podlagi analize ženskih osebnosti v indijskem epu *Mahabharata* prispevek zagovarja misel, da intersekcionalnost njihovih spolno zaznamovanih identitet in mnogoterih družbenih položajev znotraj razredov in kast vodi k raznovrstnim feminističnim perspektivam. V zaključku skuša članek pretehtati, če so vse enako kritične in če jih je mogoče do določene mere medsebojno spraviti.

Ključne besede: hermenevtika, kritika, feminizem, dialog, tradicija, Gadamer, Habermas, Mahasweta Devi, *Mahabharata*.

> *There would be no hermeneutical task if there were no loss of agreement between the parties to a "conversation" and no need to seek understanding.*
>
> Hans-Georg Gadamer: "Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and the Critique of Ideology"

This paper examines the implications of the hermeneutic debate between Gadamer and Habermas for the possibility of a feminist engagement with tradition.[1] Instead of the isolated thinker, both Gadamer and Habermas, acknowledge the role of history and social practice in the formation of the subject. As a result, they endorse dialogue as integral to interpreting and understanding texts handed down by tradition. Yet, they differ with respect to their understanding of dialogical interpretation and tradition. Gadamer tends to emphasize the symmetry of "I" and "Thou" between dialogue partners, as well as continuity with tradition in interpretation. Habermas distinguishes between real dialogue as fractured by communicative distortions and ideal speech exhibiting the kind of symmetry that Gadamer envisaged. Their relationship with tradition similarly differs with Gadamer emphasizing continuity, and Habermas pointing to the ruptures within traditions.   The dimensions of dialogue and tradition, highlighted in the unsettled Gadamer–

Habermas debate that did not refer to feminist issues even diagonally (Hekman 2003, 183), are integral to feminist engagements with religion, myth, philosophy, and the like. A dialogical critique of taken for granted assumptions and their conceptualizations[2] has been constitutive of feminist interventions in philosophy and religion.

Hence, this paper attempts to explore the implications of the Gadamer–Habermas debate through a gendered lens. Feminist discussions reveal that a critical relation to tradition does not necessarily translate into a disavowal of Gadamer and an affirmation of Habermas. Indeed, Habermas overlooks the ambivalence in Gadamer's account of tradition, while Gadamer's countering of Habermas ignores the possibility of a situated critique without an Archimedean point outside tradition.[3] Yet, there are many points of contact between Gadamerian hermeneutics and feminist philosophical concerns. Their critiques of individualism and abstract rationality, emphasis on receptive thinking and stress on participatory knowledge emerging through interpretation are cases in point. However, there is cause for feminist apprehension with both thinkers. Gadamer's focus on the authority of tradition could endorse women's stereotypes, while the critical moment in Habermas's hermeneutics, notwithstanding its ahistoricity, can obstruct feminist goals.

Clearly, a feminist intervention in the Gadamer–Habermas debate is rather complex, as it belies easy dichotomies of tradition and critique. Yet, the feminist relationship to tradition is at stake in gendering this debate. Some of its key questions are: Can critique reconcile an understanding based on interpretation with social transformation without appealing to an ahistorical individual? If critique is not the same as repudiation of tradition, how do feminists connect with tradition? This paper is an attempt to discuss these questions by gendering the Gadamer–Habermas debate in the intersectional context of women characters, divided by social privilege and its absence, in the Indian epic *Mahabharata*.[4]

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2 Specifically, within the traditions and histories underlying religions, myths, and philosophies.
3 For the debate, see: Habermas 1970, 1980, 1988, and Gadamer 2006. See also: Mendelson 1979–1980, Warnke 1987, and Hekman 2003 for accounts of the debate.
4 All references to this text are from the following editions and translations: Karve

I. Gadamer and Gender

The engagement with text and tradition is an inevitable part of the feminist philosophical project, which attempts to make women who have been erased by the canon visible (Witt 2004). The recovery of women philosophers, such as Gargi, Sulabha, Meerabai,[5] Hypatia, or Anne Conway has been an ongoing task.[6] Besides inclusiveness, such a project also entails a critical exposé of the canonical conception of women, in which male thinkers have written about women's nature. In addition, it attempts to redeem hitherto devalued concepts, such as care. Feminist thinkers have further demonstrated how taken-for-granted philosophical concepts have gendered undertones. Thus, for instance in the Indian context, feminists have deconstructed the casteist masculinist underpinnings of the Indian philosophical tradition (Belsare 2003). Western feminists have similarly exposed the patriarchal assumptions underlying the notion of an impartial disengaged ethical agent (Hekman 1993; Gilligan 1993; Noddings 2013).

Such gendered intervention has not abandoned the philosophical canon, despite the latter's patriarchy; it has, on the contrary, tried to rebuild it to see ways, in which thinkers and concepts with seeming antipathy to women can be integrated with feminist concerns.[7] Feminist philosophers have opened ways of engaging with tradition that are heterogeneous, exploratory, and

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1991, Ganguli 2003, Badrinath 2006, Uberoi 2005, and Pattanaik 2010a. The specific edition of the *Mahabharata* has been cited when episodes have been narrated and analyzed in detail. The paper does not use diacritical marks or italics for Sanskrit words to retain a flow with English language and with Mahasweta Devi's work.

5 Gargi is a woman sage from the Vedic period around 700 B.C. who in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* questioned an established male sage, Yajnavalkya, on metaphysical matters (Mahadevan 2014, 16). Sulabha is an ascetic figure from the *Mahabharata* well-versed in philosophical arguments (Mahadevan 2014, 67–69). Meerabai was a saint poet (ca. 1498–1565) who questioned traditional norms of marriage in her quest for spirituality (Mahadevan 2014, 69–71).

6 See Waithe (1987–1995) for an enumeration of almost two hundred women philosophers in the western tradition.

7 Kanchana Natarajan (2013), for example, reconstructs Vedanta from the point of view of a woman saint Avuddai Akka. Susan Hekman (1993) has rehabilitated Sartre's notion of freedom through her feminist critique.

even indeterminate. In this process, tradition is redefined and reconfigured through critique. The hermeneutics of philosophy and critique—especially that of Gadamer and Habermas—[8] has an obvious relevance to such feminist concerns with tradition.[9]

Gadamer's hermeneutics as philosophy emerged as an alternative to the dominant scientism of the twentieth century and the methodological hermeneutics of the nineteenth. Since Bacon, science was seen as an asocial project, where a thinking individual discovered objective facts equal to knowledge (Gadamer 1975, 312).[10] The latter was discovered through experimental techniques, quantitative methods, and formal vocabulary, whereby interpretation and understanding were erased. As a result, technocratic expertise enjoyed hegemony and discouraged art, culture, and tradition from the scope of knowledge.

The cultural turn effected by modern hermeneutics strived to recover the intentions of the text's author[11] or the historical actors of a by-gone era[12] through methodological rigor. Against this, Gadamer maintained that the human subject is not an isolated thinker, but is formed through historical and social practices. Moreover, epistemological advances become possible only when there is dialogue with the text that involves understanding and interpretation. Gadamer upholds that hermeneutics cannot be reduced to a method specific to literature or social sciences.[13] A method is an individual effort at mastery; as

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8 This paper limits itself to Habermas's hermeneutic period through his response to Gadamer.

9 For several aspects of this relation, see Code 2003b.

10 Gadamer notes that Bacon himself had brought in two levels of meaning in his experimental method. It is, on the one hand, the isolation from vagaries of change for a stable measurement; but it also means a "self-purification of the mind" (Gadamer 1975, 313) by confronting it with the unexpected that has to be excluded so that it proceeds gradually towards axioms. Bacon himself realizes the limits of pure measurement. He puts forth an "enumeratio simplex," in which accidental observations are generalized through numbers, and "interpretatio naturae," in which experts give an account of the inherent properties of nature (cf. Gadamer 1975, 312).

11 This is Friedrich Schleiermacher's position.

12 Wilhelm Dilthey represents this trend.

13 He critiques Schleiermacher and Dilthey for falling into the positivist trap with their emphasis on method.

experts in planning and scientific research attest, it is forgotten once its goal is achieved. It is neither universal nor reflexive (Gadamer 1975, 278–289).[14] As Gadamer himself noted, his approach to hermeneutics has bearing on literary works and epics, on works that have been transmitted and preserved over the years with the capacity to speak to the contemporary and without being determined by a given historical time (1989, 160–164, 288). They have a close relationship with readers who are both free and mobile, whereby "being read belongs to literature by its very nature" (Gadamer 1989, 161). While Gadamer circumscribes readings to written texts, a text, such as the *Mahabharata*, has also been read in the course of being handed down orally. Gadamer rightly notes that readings of texts cannot be confined to the historical genesis or the author's intention. An epic framing cultural life through myths that often narrate stories of moral dilemmas cannot be viewed as historical. Although, given the entanglement of myth and history, one cannot characterize it as being normative as Gadamer does (1989, 288).

Hence, following Gadamer, there is no ready-made meaning either in the text or in the mind of an interpreter. Texts handed down by tradition acquire meaning through the interpretation of stories and historical events that precede and follow them (Habermas 1988, 155). Meaning, therefore, cannot be completed, described, or realized at any given point, but is always incomplete. The methodological focus converts knowledge into a homogeneous body of measurable facts, which do not account for interpolations and multiple sedimentations within texts, such as the *Mahabharata*. With respect to the latter, the colonial orientalist scholar's search for an "original" (Sukhthankar 1957, 31) or "epic nucleus […] of the primitive kshatriya tale of love and war" (ibid.) is a reflection of such homogeneity. Hermeneutics is, as Gadamer highlights, not a method to be used in a specialized discipline, but a sensitivity inextricably linked to the human condition.[15] The interpreter is different from the thinker in being related to others through language. Moreover, meanings that are interpreted and understood differ from facts, as they are not absolutes

14 This critique of method is derived from Gadamer's critique of technical knowledge.
15 This echoes Heidegger who maintains that human beings are beings-in-the-world and cannot escape the existential inevitability of understanding (Dallmayr 2000, 832).

available all at once to a method. Rather, the interpreter is open to a plurality of meanings, methods, points of view, and innovation in the process of trying to understand a text, a culture, a speech act, a monument, an artefact, and so forth. For Gadamer, this also opens the domain of interpretation to art and culture as having cognitive significance.

Gadamer characterizes understanding as an activity encompassing the practical, the intellectual, and the existential (Gadamer 1975, 231). In understanding anything—a machine, a trade, or a text—one sees tacit connections and draws out hidden implications, while knowing one's own way about it. In this disclosure of that which is hidden, there is also a self-disclosure, where one finds one's way and projects possibilities, both in everyday-life situations and while reading texts (225). For Gadamer, therefore, "[…] a person who understands, understands himself [sic!], projecting himself [sic!] according to his [sic!] possibilities" (231).

Given this relationship towards the self, the reference to experience becomes inevitable. For Gadamer, what is transmitted through tradition, becomes available through hermeneutic experience (1975, 321). Tradition is like another person—a friend—with whom the interpreter dialogues; the latter gives birth to meaning, which makes understanding possible. Thus, tradition is accessed through the process of interpretation, collaborative meaning, and understanding—all of which are rooted in the experiential self. The social sciences, according to Gadamer, approach tradition immediately by treating it in a detached way as an object that is made transparent. In this, they follow the methodology of the natural sciences—since Hobbes—applying it to social sciences (Gadamer 1975, 322). But this does not do justice to the plurality in social sciences and also tends to remove the hermeneutic character of experience. Gadamer suggests that the interpreter reflectively, instead of immediately, relates to tradition through "mutual recognition" and a "dialectic of reciprocity" (Gadamer 1975, 323). There are claims and counterclaims— there is an attempt to understand the other better than the other's own understanding of himself or herself. Such an understanding is possible because there is an openness to each other—a "belonging together."

Understanding, according to Gadamer, is linked with tradition and its authority, as a partner in communication. Since the interpreter never

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understands from an absolute point free from presuppositions, understanding becomes possible through the fore-structure of the interpreter being-there in the world (1975, 235–236).[16] The interpreter starts out by projecting a meaning onto the text, inherited from the complex fore-structure of his or her location. Yet, this projection is only tentative; it has to be examined and even revised by listening to the text, which has its own history of interpretations, contexts, and assumptions. According to Gadamer, the interpreter who acquires the text from tradition will have to concede greater authority to it.[17] When the interpreter projects a traditionally given meaning onto the text, it needs to cohere with it—provided that the unity of the text and the principle of charity are taken into consideration. After arriving at meaning, the interpreter projects it back onto the situation. Thus, interpretation and understanding take place within a hermeneutical circle, where the fusion of horizons of the text and the interpreter leads to meaning (158). For Gadamer, "[t]he horizon is a range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point" (1975, 269). In demarcating his/her own situation, the interpreter has to necessarily imagine the other or the text to arrive at an original meaning in the text empathetically or to impose his or her own meaning onto it.

Feminist responses to Gadamer, in comparison to poststructuralist thinkers like Foucault or Derrida, have been rather limited. Indeed, his stress on tradition has led many feminists to criticize him for advocating gender stereotypes.[18] Besides, Gadamer himself did not explicitly engage with themes of feminism. However, an alternative strand of thinking among feminists, since the past two

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16 Heidegger's acknowledged influence on Gadamer is apparent. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger proclaims: "Whenever something is interpreted as something, an interpretation will be founded essentially upon fore-having, fore-sight and fore-conception. An interpretation is never a presuppositionless apprehending of something presented to us." (1962, 32.) Gadamer similarly maintains that prejudices or pre-judgements (*Vorurteile*) enable the interpreter to project appropriate meanings onto texts. They are not personal biases, but inherited through history and practice or the effective historical consciousness; such a consciousness is always sensitive to something outside it (1975, 262–265).

17 This is Gadamer's way of avoiding the idealist impasse by referring to a perspective outside of the interpreter.

18 For overviews, see Code 2003a and b. For criticisms, see Fleming 2003 and Fiumira 2003.

decades or so, argues for taking Gadamer's work as an ally, for many of his concerns resonate with their own (Code 2003b; Hoffman 2003; Warnke 1993, 2003). Contemporary feminists, having diagnosed Cartesian subjectivism as patriarchal,[19] argue that the thinking subject is a covert male figure who is falsely universalized. The notion of detached rationality, as Luce Irigaray argues, where a singular subject wishes to know and identify an object fully, originates in male domination (1985, 243–256).[20] Gadamer's apprehensions of Cartesianism and his rehabilitation of prejudice have been interpreted in a positive sense by feminists who underscore the historical rootedness of thinkers (Hoffman 2003). From an epistemological point of view, feminists have argued that de-linking scientific truths from society produces a technocratic culture of experts that renders women vulnerable (Kelkar 1999). Moreover, they oppose the scientistic separation of fact and method arguing that pure science cannot be segregated from the so-called application or technology. As historical enterprises, each has a reciprocal relation that enables and constrains scientific research (Harding 2001, 298–299). The latter, which includes research in fields, such as military, medical, and health sciences, reveals that scientific research is not entirely determined within the laboratory (297), but requires "the context of discovery" (Harding 1986, 238). Thus, feminists maintain that natural sciences are not outside the sphere of ideology and society. The natural science researcher has an identity constructed through an interface with tradition—in this instance, the scientific one. Tradition, following Gadamer, is a conversational-interpretative process that can acknowledge both patriarchal and feminist possibilities; this is often because of its ambivalence, which is reflected in its being handed down through myths and legends (Alcoff 2003; Freudenberger 2003). Thus, feminist interventions have enriched Gadamer's hermeneutics by extending it to the context of epistemology and even natural science (Gadamer did not intervene in the latter domain).

Turning to social science and culture, feminist readings of Gadamer have acknowledged his insight that tradition is not a given (Code 2003b,

19 See Hoffman (2003) for a feminist epistemological rehabilitation of Gadamer.
20 She claims that Plato's allegory of the cave epitomizes this phenomenon in repressing the bodily dimension to affirm pure thought as the basis of subjective identity and knowledge.

11). Hence, Warnke suggests that feminists adopt his fusion of horizons to comprehend the processes, through which gendered identities can be interpreted.[21] She upholds that Gadamerian hermeneutics is crucial for intervention in the feminist sex/gender controversy, which examines whether gendered identities are naturally given or socially constructed. Gadamer has the resources to move beyond this imbroglio to comprehend gender as "[…] an interpretation, a fusion between wants and needs of developing individuals and the history of interpretations of them, including objections to those interpretations" (Warnke 2003, 72). This fusion is not a permanent, but a fragile act that is open to change. Thus, if the gendered subject is to replace the cogito, thought is replaced by conversations between historical agents and their life-worlds, as Fleming notes (2003, 109, 110). As a result, Gadamer's advocacy of otherness in dialogue can also be relevant to the feminist project (Fleming 2003, 111).[22] A conversation takes place when the speaker's alternative point of view allows the adopting of an unfamiliar perspective within the familiar, and vice versa. Traditional texts can be read, by conversing with their women characters, for instance, from the perspective of contemporary feminist concerns. Gadamer's sensitivity to otherness can enable the reading of traditional texts from the perspective of contemporary feminist concerns. Thus, Gadamer's insight that understanding consists in application—albeit differently—has been adopted by feminists in their endeavors to re-read canonical works in deconstructive and constructive ways.[23] The feminist inquiry of being situated, finite, and dialectical (Code 2003b, 3–4) fits in with his urge to appropriate variable readings of traditional texts as the following discussion of *Mahabharata* will attempt to show.

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21 For a detailed account of this relation, see Warnke 2003.

22 However, Fleming (2003, 111–131) goes on to argue against Gadamer's notion of radical otherness as antagonistic to feminist concerns because it only has an instrumental value.

23 For a qualified feminist appropriation of Gadamer's notion of tradition, see Alcoff 2003.

II. Gendering the *Mahabharata*

The *Mahabharata*, one of the lengthiest, oldest epics and a resource of Indian philosophy, government, history, culture, religion, and psychology, has a long and complex hermeneutical history. It cuts across the boundaries of orality and writing, as well as history[24] and myth, through text, performance, culture, and art, both in the popular and the classical domains. Its multi-layered, expansive repetitive history of interpretations suggests, in a Gadamerian vein, that Vyasa's authorship is only nominal,[25] perhaps as a generic name for the various narrators of the text at different phases.[26] Since the nineteenth century, its written history of translation and criticism includes both non-Indian and Indian scholars, in both the colonial/orientalist and the postcolonial contexts.[27]

Interpretations of *Mahabharata* have focused on the hermeneutic circle of the normative frame of duty (dharma) of its royal protagonists, often from the point of view of its male characters.[28] It has, thus, often been read as a series of illustrations of moral dilemmas (Matilal 2007, 86). Matilal demonstrates how the text embodies different types of moral conflict, such as the struggle against temptation or weakness of will with reference to Yudhishthira who led the five righteous brothers or the Pandavas.[29] Yudhishthira was called the Dharmaraja or the King of Duty, but he had a weakness for gambling. In the first instance of gambling, he lost everything he owned—his kingdom, himself, his brothers and their wife—to his enemy cousins, the Kaurava princes. But when challenged to

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24 Karve (1991) has called it itihasa (history) in contrast to kavya (poem).

25 Narayan (1989, 12–13), in contrast, prefers to see Vyasa as an author who directs the text with his thoughts in keeping with the modern novel form.

26 See, for example, Sukhthankar 1957.

27 For a detailed account, see Sukhthankar 1957, 1–31 and Dhand 2008, 5–13.

28 See also Sutton 2000.

29 The two discussions of the moral dilemma in *Mahabharata* are derived from Matilal. The five Pandava brothers, who are Yudhishthira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula, and Sahadeva, had a common wife Draupadi. All of them belonged to the kshatriya varna or caste that was recognized as having the function of ruling. The *Mahabharata* devotes considerable attention to governance and the duties of a king (Brodbeck and Black 2007, 3). It recognizes a four-tiered caste/varna system and treats forest tribals, such as the nishadas, as outside of civilization. It endeavors to communicate widely across caste and gender lines (Black 2007, 54).

gamble for the second time, he went ahead despite his bankruptcy; justifying his choice on the basis of his position as a prince to cover his temptation or weakness of will. For Matilal, a more "genuine" moral conflict (one where one does not quite struggle with oneself) is also embodied in the *Mahabharata*. He refers to Arjuna caught between his duties as a kshatriya to fight the war and his responsibility as a member of the human race towards pacifism. Arjuna, Matilal argues, resolves his conflict in a pragmatic way by continuing to kill, but with sensitivity towards his victims. After the war, Arjuna paradoxically did not have a sense of genuine victory in a kingdom of war survivors rife with old people, widows, and children (Matilal 2007, 98).

Such interpretations of duty (dharma) and conflict have for most part engaged with its dominant male characters.[30] Contemporary feminist concerns have motivated interpreters to examine its women characters as contending with duty (dharma), its conflict, and even criticizing figures, such as Yudhishthira and the other Pandava princes for failing in their duty.[31] Contrary to R. K. Narayan's (1989) claim, women do not simply occupy ornamental positions in the *Mahabharata*, but play a vital role in its articulation of dharma or duty and examination of the human condition.[32] Women-oriented interpretations of the *Mahabharata* often foreground Kunti and Draupadi (Bhattacharya 2000, 2006), who are among the panchkanya or the five "women of substance" venerated in the Hindu tradition; the others being Ahalya, Tara, and Mandodari from the epic *Ramayana*.[33] None of them are wives in the conventional sense of the term.[34] But they do fulfill their wifely duties (dharma) with utmost sincerity. More significantly, they are instances of independent and critical thinking—

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30 Although in its *Vanasparvan* section, a prominent female character, the royal princess Draupadi, also reflects on dharma, she perhaps does not do it with the same intensity as male characters.

31 See, for example: Karve 1991; Bhattacharya 2000; Brodbeck and Black 2007; Dhand 2004, 2008; Chakravarti 2016; Shah 2012.

32 See Kalyanov 1977–1978.

33 This enumeration of the Panchkanyas is based on Bhattacharya (2000) and Shah (2012); in other readings, Sita replaces Kunti.

34 For instance, although Draupadi is committed to the pativrata ideal of loyally serving her husbands, she never fails to complain about her husbands' failures (Shah 2012, 87).

at times even challenging patriarchy through their choices (Karve 1991; Bhattacharya 2000).[35] Thapar who defends a feminist version of Shakuntala found in the *Mahabharata* observes that the epic's unique quality is its strong women, adding Gandhari to the list (1999).[36] Others have profiled Shakuntala, Savitri, Suvarchala, Madhavi, and Draupadi as strong characters because of their ability for self-control.[37]

Kunti and Draupadi offer grounds for explicitly feminist readings. As the mother of Yudhishthira and the Pandavas, Kunti is related to Draupadi as her daughter-in-law. The *Mahabharata* venerates Kunti as a mother so that the Pandava brothers are consistently referred to as sons of Kunti.[38] Kunti is also portrayed as a fiercely independent woman in her choice of pre-marital and post-marital motherhood, as well as in her compassion towards her step-sons.[39] She gets her son Bhima married to a Rakshasa woman, Hidimba,[40] as Kunti foresaw that their child Ghatotkacha would save her other son Arjuna by giving up his own life. Moreover, Kunti was also responsible for her five Pandava sons marrying one woman, namely Draupadi, so that they remained

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35 Shah (2012) opens the possibility of reading the Panchkanyas in a subversive way.

36 See Mahadevan (2007) for another feminist intervention in the Gadamer–Habermas debate that engages with Thapar's Shakuntala from the perspective of Gadamer's hermeneutics.

37 For feminist-oriented accounts of Draupadi, see: Sundari 1993; Sarabai 2004; Pattanaik 2010b.

38 Bhattacharya quotes Yudhishthira paying tribute to his mother Kunti: "Isn't it said that obedience to gurus is a supreme virtue? What greater guru than one's mother? To me this is the highest *dharma*." (Bhattacharya 2000.)

39 Dhand (2008) narrates how the practice of niyoga, in which a wife bore children with other men when her own husband was impotent, was constantly evoked in the *Mahabharata*. Kunti exercised her autonomy in her choice of number of sons through niyoga. For a detailed discussion, see also Bhattacharya 2000. Kunti uses a magical power to give birth to a child before son. This is Karna, born through her liaison with the Sun-God, Surya. Kunti marries Pandu who could not reproduce. When Pandu asks Kunti to beget children from other spouses, she obliges only after a long resistance. With Dharma (duty), Kunti has Yudhishthira, she has Bhima with Vayu (wind), and Arjuna with Indra (thunder and rain). In addition to these sons, Kunti adopts the sons of Pandu's second wife Madri: Nakula and Sahadeva who become her Pandava sons. Yet, Kunti's past haunts her as her son Karna becomes an opponent of her five Pandava sons.

40 See *Adiparva Hidimba-vadha Parva*, Section CLVII (in Ganguli 2003). Rakshasas were forest dwellers with supernatural powers.

together—albeit unknowingly.[41] In fact, Kunti intervenes to ask Krishna to advise her sons to opt for a righteous war, rather than compromise through peace. Yet, after the war, Kunti returns to the forest with Dhritarashtra and Gandhari (parents of the Kaurava princes with whom Kunti's Pandava sons were in battle) to spend the rest of her life tending to them and subsequently perishes in a forest fire.[42]

Draupadi, the wife of Yudhishthira and the Pandavas, is a strong character with a mind of her own (Bhattacharyya 2000, 38–39). She is depicted as someone who controls her desires and performs her household duties selflessly. She stands up for her rights, when her husbands are not able to protect her from humiliation by their enemy. At the infamous game of dice, her husband Yudhishthira gambles even Draupadi after losing everything.[43] Draupadi is brought to the public assembly by their enemies to be humiliated and disrobed in a menstruating condition (Chakravarti 2016, 128). On being dragged violently into the assembly, Draupadi realizes that there is no one to protect her. In this context, she asks her husband Yudhishthira: "Whom did you lose first, yourself or me?" (Chakravarti 2016, 137.)[44] Her resistance and torment reflect Draupadi to be the epitome of wifely loyalty or pativrata. Thus, she is apandita (intellectual) and pativrata (wife) simultaneously, someone who argues, doubts norms, and yet does her wifely duty (Malinar 2007, 89; Shah 2012, 80–81). She boosts the morale of her spouses and nurtures them during their exile. On regaining his kingdom, when her eldest husband Yudhishthira wavers to take power, Draupadi counsels him on duty (dharma). Yet, despite her devotion to her spouses, Draupadi is often deeply disappointed by their inability to defend her. She is portrayed as "husbanded but not protected" (Bhattacharya 2000,

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41 See *Swayamvara Parva*, Section CLXLIII (in Ganguli 2003).

42 The details pertaining to Kunti and other characters often vary in differing versions of the *Mahabharata*.

43 Yudhishthira was challenged into gambling by his cousins, the Kaurava brothers (hundred in number). He loses his family, wealth, and kingdom after the first game and is forced to go into exile with his family after losing the second. However, when the Kauravas refuse to return their kingdom to the Pandavas, the latter resort to war to regain their kingdom.

44 In the epic, Lord Krishna comes to Draupadi's rescue by expanding her single piece of cloth endlessly, so that the disrobing becomes unsuccessful.

2001; see also Pattnaik 2010).[45] These readings of the *Mahabharata* from the perspective of its royal women, Kunti and Draupadi, reveal the influence and limits of a unitary feminist horizon from the contemporary perspective.

Yet, not all readings of Kunti and Draupadi are feminist. They have a function within the larger cosmic order of keeping their family units assimilated; they do so by performing their duty (dharma)—Kunti as a mother (whose duties as a mother to her family are considered natural)[46] and Draupadi as a wife (who has to perform her duties as a pativrata).[47] They also strive hard to motivate their sons (Kunti's) and husbands (Draupadi's) to perform their duty (dharma) of fighting what they perceive as the righteous kshatriya war. Their keen desire to avenge the wrongs done to the Pandavas makes both women uncompromisingly war-oriented. Their commitment to war in the public political space is linked to their dedication to their families at home. Their self-assertion also reflects the limits of the dharmic patriarchal order, where women's primary task is the preservation of their family ties.

Indeed, there are very few instances of solidarity among the royal women in the *Mahabharata* who are related to dominant male figures whose interests they strive to preserve.[48] It is precisely such femininity that appealed to both Subramanian Bharati (Ramanujan 1999) and Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay (Bhattacharya 2000) who invoked Draupadi in their nationalist agendas.[49]

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45 Draupadi impatiently reproaches Yudhishthira about getting back his kshatriya status, while he responds by preaching the value of patience or kshama (*Aranyaka Parva*, Section XXVIII–XXXII; in Ganguli 2003).
46 *See Sabha Parva*, Book II, *Sisupalavadha Parva*, Section LXXVIII (in Ganguli 2003).
47 "Draupadi is conversant with virtue and economy." (*Sabha Parva*, Book II, *Sisupalavadha Parva*, Section LXXVII; in Ganguli 2003.)
48 "I am always engaged in waiting upon my Lords" (*Vana Parva*, Section CCXXXI-CCXXXIII; in Ganguli 2003), says Draupadi in her conversation (samvada) with Satyabhama on the duties of a wife.
49 Bhattacharya (2000, 45) has compared Draupadi to Demeter and Helen in being subject to utilitarianism and violence. Bhattacharya (2000, 50), citing Naomi Wolf's feminism, observes that Draupadi is punished by a patriarchal culture for her sexual independence. He notes how—being motherless—Draupadi's desire to find a mother in Kunti fails because she (Kunti) uses Draupadi to keep her five sons together (Bhattacharya 2000, 45–46). Draupadi is not portrayed as a nurturing mother to her own sons. Moreover, none of her husbands really stand up for her, each marries again and her husband Yudhishthira uses her in the game of dice. Draupadi's predicament is

Bharati, for instance, compared India under British rule to Draupadi's suffering due to her husband's enemies. For Chattopadhyay, Draupadi exemplified resilient self-control and self-sacrifice. For Bharati and Chattopadhyay, Draupadi is a woman with steadfast determination, chastity, and dedication to duty. Her being subject to violence and exploitation mirrored in the interests of Colonial India provoked nationalists, such as Bharati, to read Draupadi as a trope of resistance to colonization.[50]

These readings of Kunti and Draupadi reveal the possibilities of a feminist hermeneutics of tradition. They also expose its limits, such as that of a patriarchal gate-keeping, which women have resisted. As Georgia Warnke notes, how one "reflectively engages with the tradition with which it is involved, points up the inconsistencies in their ideals and practices […] in the face of their historical experience and historically conditioned experiences of women" (1993, 90). The diverse interpretations of Kunti and Draupadi as feminist or dharmic women who serve their community are not necessarily antithetical to each other. They show the unity and continuity of the themes of the *Mahabharata* through human action (karma) in Gadamer's spirit. Both Kunti and Draupadi have to contend with challenges to their performance of duty (dharma) due to their actions and circumstances. In this respect, they too have to face moral dilemmas of the kind described by Matilal, but these dilemmas result from their position as women in relation to their communities. Against the accepted masculine reading of the destruction of war (from Arjuna's perspective), these readings turn to the royal women and their stakes in the war.

Following Gadamer, gendered readings of the *Mahabharata* suggest that there are varied registers for interpreting a text, which could be conflictual (Warnke 1993, 91–92). However, it is not clear whether these conflicts can be put into a process of mutual interaction, as their gaps could be enormous. The sensibilities of the twenty-first century suggest that the feminist hermeneutics, which engages with the *Mahabharata* from the point of view of its royal kshatriya women, Kunti and Draupadi, is not critical enough. Women are not united by

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reflected in her solitary death (Bhattacharya 2000, 44).
50 However, Indian feminists have also exposed the patriarchal strands in anti-colonial nationalism in India during the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. For a detailed overview, see Chakravarti 1989.

a common dharma, since the kshatriya or royal dharma applies only to women with privileges of caste and class. As Chakravarti (2016) notes, Draupadi's question as to who did Yudhishthira stake first assumes social inequality to be the norm. For instance, by staking himself, Yudhishthira becomes a dasa or a slave, and thereby loses his right over her as her husband, given her royal status.[51] Moreover, it also implies that she cannot be treated like a dasi, given her royal status as a kshatriya woman, suggesting that slave women can be humiliated. Draupadi's question is about being afflicted with slavery, rather than the oppression of women. Her anger with the charioteer who comes with the order to bring her to the assembly, given his class status, reflects as much as Chakravarti notes. Indeed, as Chakravarti observes, "[i]f she had spoken for all women, not just for herself as a *dāsī*, she would have asked a different question […]" (2016, 151). Draupadi would then have questioned why any woman—royal or slave—should be subject to sexual humiliation.[52] However, she does not question on this wider note.

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As Devi enunciates in her short story "Five Women" (2005), such royal dharma also conflicts with that of the masses. She depicts five women, Godhumi, Gomati, Yamuna, Vitasta, and Vipasha,[53] who are from a peasant background, and their relationship with the Pandava royalty, whom they have come to serve after the war.[54] They are unable to understand the passage into widowhood by Kunti, Draupadi, and the other wives of the Pandavas. Their freedom and life spirit are pronounced, against the lamentations of the royal widows in their proclivity towards death and a casteist social order. The five working poor women also experience a greater degree of freedom and

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51 Draupadi's question (*Sabha Parva*, Section LXVI) has received much scholarly attention. See, for instance: Karve 1991; Kulkarni 1989; Chakravarti 2016. Draupadi's humiliation in the *Sabha* (Assembly) is referenced in the critiques of using rape as a tool of political control.

52 Chakravarti (2016, 151) invokes Devi's retelling of the Draupadi episode in a short story "Dopdi." It narrates the resistance of a tribal Santhal woman Dopdi who challenges the police after being raped. Devi notes how Lord Krishna is not there to protect a humble Santhal woman. For the short story, see Devi 1990; for an interpretation, along these lines, see Mahadevan 2002.

53 These are all names of rivers.

54 In the war, the five Pandava brothers win over their Kaurava cousins.

happiness in comparison with Kunti, Draupadi, Subhadra,[55] and Uttara.[56] Devi shows how these proletarian women lost their husbands in the war as their husbands were foot-soldiers without access to even basic self-protection like armors. Besides, their husbands were also outside the frame of salvation, as they were not protagonists in the righteous war. Instead, as poor men, they were instruments in the tussle for kingdom between the two warring kshatriyas, the Pandavas and the Kauravas. Hence, Devi's five women claim that the war was not a righteous one for them, but was instead an avaricious combat, which had a meaningless destructive impact on those not connected through kinship to the warring factions. Devi articulates the dimension of ordinary people's lives that has been rendered as unfamiliar in the *Mahabharata*—the dharmic war was waged by exploiting poor peasants and their wives.

Devi also distinctly brings out the royalty's indifference to peasants and tribals. In a telling moment, Kunti indicts Draupadi for equating justice with revenge for her (Draupadi's) loss of honor, for being lost in self-pity and not heeding the suffering of the Kaurava widows (Devi 2005, 7–8).[57] With this, she shows that the war had a uniformly destructive impact on women in a gesture of feminist solidarity that is missing in the epic. As Chakravarti (2011, 2016) notes, Draupadi's attitude to slave women is revealed in her question about who was staked first after Yudhishthira gambles her away. Although there is no certain answer to Draupadi's question, several nuanced points emerge regarding the validity of an addict (Yudhishthira) who plays the game, the validity of a game where there is cheating, the extent of the authority of a husband over his wife (Kulkarni 1989; Karve 1991). To this, one might add the difference between royal women and slaves. Draupadi believes that a slave (dasa)—though male—has no right over royalty; moreover, as a royal woman she could not be treated as a slave (dasi). She, thus, implies that slave women

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55 She is Arjuna's other wife.

56 Uttara is Draupadi's pregnant daughter-in-law.

57 Kunti counsels Draupadi: "Have you ever looked at the bereft Kaurava women who have lost their husbands and sons? Are they responsible, tell me? […] Try to feel a little compassion, a little pity. A little affection for them. You'll see how it will soften your heart." (Devi 2005, 8.)

can be treated without dignity, while royal women cannot.[58] Her constant affirmation of feminist entitlement as a Pandava wife is premised on her royal privilege.

Devi's short story "Kunti and the Nishadin" (2005, 25–40) portrays Kunti in old-age as introspecting in the forest, lamenting her fate and repenting her failure to follow her dharmic duties to her sons and daughters-in-law. She is confronted by a nishadin, a forest dwelling woman who judges such repentance as limited to royalty or rajavritta. She reminds Kunti of an episode that she had forgotten. Kunti had tricked the Nidshadin's mother-in-law along with her five sons into a situation where they were burnt to death, so that she and her Pandava sons could be saved.[59] Once again, Devi brings out the difference between the queen Kunti and the tribal women: Kunti's dedication to her family cast her in an exploitative relationship with underprivileged woman, whom she never recognized as equal enough to respond with guilt.[60] Kunti's relationship to ordinary people and tribal communities or lokavritta is deeply problematic. She urges her son Bhima to marry the forest dwelling Hidimba only so that it could benefit him. Hence, Kunti's dharma of being a good mother to her sons leads to violence towards those who are socially marginalized. Devi's stories bring out a complex facet about reflective women like Kunti and Draupadi: it is through their privileged relationship with socially vulnerable women that their assertiveness becomes possible. Devi's stories

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58 Draupadi accepts Arjuna's wife Subhadra when she dresses herself as a cowherd woman and says: "I am thy maid." (*Adi Parva, Subhadraharana Parva*, Section CCXXIII; in Ganguli 2003.) When confronted with the specter of Yudhishthira's slavery, Draupadi wishes his redemption from such a state so that her son is not known as a child of a slave (*Sabha Parva*, Book II, *Sisupala Vadha Parva*, Section LXX; in Ganguli 2003).

59 See *Adi Parva*, Book I, *Jatugriha Parva*, Section CXLIII (in Ganguli 2003). Ambedkar (1987, Riddle No. 18) attributes to Manu the view that nishadas are a mixed caste comprising brahmins and shudras. Pattanaik (2010a, 65) defines them as forest-dwellers. The forest-dwellers were outside the castes of the Hindu community. The Ekalavya episode also illustrates the kshatriya-brahmin violence on the nishadas (Pattanaik 2010a, 64–65).

60 For an account of these episodes, see also Karve 1991, 51–52; 53. Karve (52–53) observes that the Critical Edition (Sukhthankar's) does show the innocence of the nishadin, although other narratives try to show the Pandavas in a good light.

reveal that Kunti's and Draupadi's horizons cannot be fused in a Gadamerian way with those of women from the underprivileged sections of society. Thus, there is no unitary and linear narrative of women in the *Mahabharata*.

Some of the issues that arise with reference to the hermeneutics of the *Mahabharata* include: How can one read it (or any other text) in a critical way? How can one have a more inclusive feminist interpretation, which is sensitive to those who serve the royal women as care-takers? How does one work towards a critical hermeneutics that takes the ethics of care, rather than just a pre-ordained caste duty (dharma), as its point of departure?

III. Interpreting critically

In the spirit of Habermas's critique of Gadamer, one could read the above tensions between women in the *Mahabharata* as resulting from a Gadamerian emphasis on the continuity of tradition. Hence, it is tempting to turn to Habermas's critical hermeneutics for resources to read the *Mahabharata* from the point of view of underprivileged women. Habermas (1980, 204) criticizes Gadamer for idealizing language by not distinguishing it from relations of power. He argues that social criticism demands a distance between tradition and interpretation, so that one can reflect on tradition to evaluate epic texts (1980, 168). According to this view, critiques of the *Mahabharata*, such as Devi's, are possible only when there is a distance with tradition. For Habermas, this requires a methodological commitment missing in Gadamer. In criticizing tradition in a retrospective way, one has to transcend tradition without necessarily appropriating it by legitimizing its pre-judgements or prejudices (Habermas 1980, 169–170). Gadamer's model of moral learning through didacticism in epics and classics does not allow for moving beyond the internalism of tradition and its assumptions (Habermas 1980, 169). Yet, Habermas fails to see the affinities between his own position and that of Gadamer. As Gadamer himself responded, Habermas does not acknowledge that he (Gadamer) does not think of the "cultural heritage of a people" as being exclusively linguistic, since he observes: "One would want to admit rather that every linguistic experience of the world is experience of the world, not experience of language." (1975, 495.) Work, power, and modes of domination underlie ways of experiencing

culture and expressing it in language. For Gadamer, the criticism of such domination requires that it be based on reason rooted in language (496). In support of Gadamer, one can also note that a methodological perspective on hermeneutics would make it inaccessible to sections of society suppressed by power as method, and its rigors are often upheld by experts who exercise their power. Hence, only when hermeneutics is ontological, in the sense of being the existential condition of the all-pervasive quest for meaning, can it be redeemed from subservience to experts making it democratic. Gadamer's (1975, 496) plea for orality in transmissions assists such a democratization in the Indian context. For it does not restrict interpretation to written formal documents available in institutions, but enables oral narratives of texts that are informally handed down, such as the *Mahabharata*. Habermas's indictment of Gadamer as being indifferent to critical reflection overlooks his (Habermas's) own appreciation of hermeneutic understanding, where the need for interpretation or translation arises when there is a "disturbed consensus" (Habermas 1988, 148) with respect to a common reference point (1988, 144–148). Gendered interpretations of the *Mahabharata* have taken place in contexts of "disturbed consensus," since women are not outside the tradition they criticize, but are very much a part of it.

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Habermas's feminist critics, such as Butler, Benjamin (Meehan 1995), and Fleming (1995, 130),[61] argue, his notion of critical distance presupposes a subject position that stands outside tradition. Such a disengaged impartial subject transcends embodied cares and concerns of practical relationships, when it has patriarchal privilege, for women typically occupy the material space of connectedness. Moreover, as Susan Hekman reveals, Enlightenment thinkers, such as Kant, disparaged such immersion in concrete relationships as hindering women from disengaged thought (Hekman 2014, 76). Thinkers,

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61 There are important differences between these thinkers, although they do converge on this point. Their criticism is relevant with respect to Habermas's early writings on hermeneutics in his debate with Gadamer. It also has a bearing on his early view of language (1970). However, this criticism cannot be applied wholesale to Habermas's own later account of language as communication; the latter is a reconstruction of linguistics and Kohlbergian psychology, both far removed from the isolated and ahistorical subjectivity (Habermas 1989, 187).

such as Carol Gilligan, have precisely questioned such an unrealistic ideal of rationality that is often available only to men with the privilege of others doing their labor (Gilligan 1993; Hekman 1995). Hence, interpreting the *Mahabharata* in a feminist way, through distance from history and tradition, would only endorse its patriarchal interpretations. But this critique ignores that criticism for Habermas—as for Gadamer—never possesses "a monological claim to self-certainty […] it is always tied to the tradition on which it reflects" (Habermas 1980, 209). Hence, for both Habermas and Gadamer, the language user is a historical agent—not a singular subject of thought—who subscribes to idealizations of freedom and equality while conversing with tradition. Meaning is generated when a discussion ensues between speakers and listeners—or interpreters and texts—who are both free and equal. Habermas himself does not show how a subject who is embedded in history can nevertheless be critical.

Turning to Gadamerian hermeneutics for an account of Habermas's critique, it can be said that Gadamer upholds interpretation as an act of translation, for reading is translation, which in turn is indefinitely repeatable (Gadamer 1975, 497). Acts of translation require bringing the foreign or what is dead "into our own language" (1975, 497). Thus, the unfamiliar or the alien is rendered in ways that are familiar to the self. For Gadamer, hermeneutic consciousness is characterized by the experience of the interpreter. Rather than discovering a given, experience negates false generalizations and stereotypes through sensitivity to human finitude and the unplanned. The term "experience" is used in two senses: as fitting in and confirming that which one has. The latter process is for Gadamer always negative—a "determinate negation" that is "dialectical" (1975, 317); it is a productive process wherein one does not merely discover something that one has not seen earlier. Rather, one improves upon an earlier perspective to acquire a more comprehensive view by rejecting and preserving parts of what one has thought before. There is, thus, a historical aspect to experience, in which there is repetition and confirmation or rejection. On the basis of an experience—once one has one, one can predict what was not expected thus far— there is openness to new experiences. Yet, disappointment is also a possibility in store. According to Gadamer, insight is also a necessary part of experience, which has prospects for fulfilment or deficiency (1975, 319–320), both of which are determined by the interpreter.

The experience of the interpreter also frames the dialectic of question and answer necessary for conversing with the text (Gadamer 1975, 325–341). The text poses questions to the interpreter, who, while answering them, comes up with his or her own questions. Thus, for Gadamer questions govern hermeneutical understanding. Following the Platonic dialectic of dialogue, he attributes the task of directing discussions to questions, which enable the interpreter to apply the text to a situation. Hermeneutical understanding consists in finding answers to questions: both of the text and of the interpreter: "[…] the working out of the hermeneutical situation means the achievement of the right horizon of enquiry for the questions evoked by the encounter with tradition" (1975, 269).[62] Hence, according to Gadamer:

> (i) The question brings something into speech in such a manner that its further determinations are left ambivalent.
> (ii) The question leads the conversation, in which alone a meaningful answer can be given (Gadamer 1975, 326; 330). Thus, it avoids the free-floating mire of opinions (330).[63]
> (iii) The logic of questioning—rooted in the interpreter—determines hermeneutical understanding of meaning in a given text (333).

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Thus, the question gives focus to the hermeneutic act of seeking meaning. For Gadamer, hermeneutics is a process of translating an alien idea into the language and experience of the self (interpreter), through whose questions the text is filtered. For Gadamer, a question, thus, both opens and limits the text; it directs the dialogue between the self and the other without confounding the participants. Gadamer considers meaning or sense to be inherent in the question. Such a focus on the interpreting self tends to leave the other—such as a dialogue partner, text, monument, narrative—in a disadvantaged position. The very notion of approaching a text with a question that frames and orients

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62 Discussions that end in an aporia are ones where the question prevails over the answer.
63 Thus, what Habermas terms as a dialectic or "crucial balance between mute union and mute isolation, between the sacrifice of individuality and the isolation of the solitary individual" (Habermas 1988, 150) is a part of the dialogue with tradition.

its interpretation rules out approaching it from unpredictable points of view (Fiumara 2003, 136). It fails to explore objects that transgress its limits, it predetermines its answers (137). Warnke (1987, 99) cautions against the interpreter's opportunism of imposing his or her own cultural presuppositions onto tradition, as well as against the conservatism of tradition's own assumptions being imposed on the interpreter. Contrary to the standard readings, Gadamer seems to veer towards an opportunistic, rather than a conservative reading of texts.

While interpreting, the text and the interpreter bond through a shared reference point of language, which makes conversation possible (Gadamer 1975, 347). Translations, which mediate between two foreign languages, are not like conversations because of the linguistic gulf that belies the unfamiliar aspect from being understood through familiarization (345–346). Where understanding takes place, one moves from translation to speech; the latter overcomes that which is different and alien by conquest, resulting in homogeneity. Yet, by situating hermeneutic understanding in the familiarity of the self, Gadamer weakens the possibility of interpreting traditional texts in ways that take the unfamiliarity of otherness into account. This becomes clear with respect to the dominant interpretations of the *Mahabharata* from the gendered point of view. If one approaches the text with the question of enumerating its women characters, the danger of highlighting its royal women looms large, given their prominence in the text. Kunti could not, despite being an earnest dutiful mother, protect her son Karna, who was born out of wedlock, and Draupadi could not earn the protection of her husbands, despite fulfilling all her wifely duties (pativrata) to them. Their feminism is limited to the kshatriya caste and royalty; hence, it neither criticizes the woman's condition *per se* nor does it ally itself with women outside of royalty. Fusing the horizons of the interpreter and the text to an extent does cultivate a critical identity by discerning the gendered moments in the *Mahabharata*. As the discussions of Kunti and Draupadi reveal, it also infuses contemporary feminist themes that negotiate the given and the constructed (Warnke 2003, 68–79). But the question as an entry point into the text does not necessarily explore women outside the domain of the familiar. In reading the *Mahabharata* from the stances of familiar figures, such as Kunti and Draupadi, one adopts the vantage

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point of the universe of the privileged interpreter, albeit gendered. This does not quite enable the engagement with other approaches to duty (dharma), such as that of Devi's five peasant women or the nishadins. Both the question and the answer become versions of monologues by privileging the universe of the interpreter. Such a monologue is also palpable in Draupadi's question to her husband as to who did he stake first. The assumptions underlying the notion of the question *per se* show that it is not quite as open-ended. Fiumara remarks: "Adhering to the primacy of the question would thus be the way to participate in the dominant 'forms of life'—even if they turn out to be 'forms of death'." (2003, 136.)

Thus, a hermeneutical questioning of the *Mahabharata* from an abstract women's point of view would repeat the oversights of the abstract disengaged thinker that Gilligan and Hekman have cautioned against. It would focus on royal women, their duty, and conflict, taking what Devi calls the rajadharma into consideration. It brings the other—namely, women—into the domain of the "self" or the mainstream reader from the privileged social communities. It does not read the text from the point of view of those, who are the others of the other, namely women from tribes and underprivileged castes. Reading from the perspective of women who labor doing care work for the queens, what Devi terms as lokadharma requires that the self be surrendered to the other. The latter ruptured reading is a discontinuous one, which does not necessarily fuse the horizons of tradition with contemporary concerns; it goes beyond licensing the question to listen to Kunti's and Draupadi's references to the nishadins and the dasis.

Devi's critical understanding of the text becomes possible by listening to the silences or the speech of characters that the text presents as insignificant. Such an interrupted listening is an action that translates the text's universe, its rhetoric, its seemingly insignificant characters. It does not domesticate the text by making it familiar to the interpreter's universe. And it is also not a process of the interpreter singly engaging with predominant characters in the text. Rather, it entails turning to characters other than *dramatis personae*, such as Kunti or Draupadi in the *Mahabharata*; it entails solidarity with those others, who are outside the range of family, class, and caste, or, in short, the self. The move beyond the self, inherent to interpretation and translation, brings the self

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into contact with the others—whereby otherness is discerned in the self, rather than conversely. In order to move beyond the familiar terrain of one-self, the hermeneutic questioning has to be replaced by listening.

Moreover, against Warnke (2003, 71) one can say that, rather than the fusion of horizons where the familiar assumptions of the interpreter dominate the interpretation via questions, listening is about trying to hear unfamiliar voices through ruptured horizons. Such listening is sensitive to ruptures in tradition, which become apparent in the differences and hierarchies. It becomes possible when the interpreter listens to and cares for those who do not typically own or belong to a tradition—such as the tribals and peasants in the *Mahabharata*, a text that has been transmitted through listening. The ruptured listening to the *Mahabharata*—to the voices of Kunti and Draupadi articulating their attitudes to dasis and nishadas—reveals a dissonance between rajadharma and lokadharma. Drawing upon various scriptures, dharma is undoubtedly a complex term whose meaning ranges from religion to morality.[64] If dharma is used in the broad sense of moral responsibility, it is incongruous with the kshatriya warfare. For it violates moral responsibility in being based on caste membership and injury by not having shared meaning. Moreover, a context-independent use of the term dharma is not permitted when it is closely tied to rajadharma; the latter roots dharma in caste-based activities. As a result, lokadharma or laboring work, which is performed without sanction from caste, stands in an exploited relation to rajadharma. Lokadharma—the work done by the five peasant women for Uttara—comprises household and farm duties for ensuring an orderly life with food and shelter. The peasant women stopped at the royal household only temporarily, as they could not walk through a field of burning funeral pyres for their husbands. They were ready to leave when the earth started cooling. Hence, they were not permanent slaves (Dasis). Responding to the royal Subhadra beseeching them to stay, they argue that they want to leave because "[…] the fields will lie fallow, the cattle will be uncared for […] We need husbands, we need children … We will … create life. That's what Nature teaches us." (Devi 2005, 22.)

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64 For an account of dharma with reference to the *Mahabharata* and other Hindu scriptures, see Badrinath 2006, 77–112; 370–464.

Devi's description of such a morality and life of peasant women—named after rivers—as lokadharma resounds with the ethics of care articulated by thinkers, such as Gilligan (1993), Held (2006), and Tronto (2013). Care—as, following Tronto, a disposition and work—is socially associated with women; it has a potential to transgress the confines of the gendered self, for caring is disinterestedly (for the most part) done for the other. Practices of caring are based on the universal comprehensive experience of being "cared for as a child" (Held 2006, 3). One can follow Tronto's broad definition that caring as a tendency and activity "includes everything that we do to maintain, continue and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible" (Tronto 2013, 19).[65] It takes human vulnerability as its point of departure, whereby care occurs when there is interdependence. Moreover, in responding to human dependency, care work heals. Thus, care is governed neither by the caste hierarchy nor the self-sufficient subjectivity. It does not restrict itself to abstract humanity or particular others.[66] Rather, care puts human beings into processes of being with each other through giving and receiving nurture.[67] Care is not an inherently divisive ruling practice—like rajadharma or the kshatriya dharma; it is, therefore, committed to peace rather than violence. Devi's lokadharma is not restricted to caste membership as rajadharma is; Devi's five women are the names of rivers that have no borders and constriction in kinship. From the perspective of care, the other is discerned in the self, for "the burdens, suffering and tasks" (Honneth 2007, 123) are experienced as collectively shared.[68]

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65 Tronto (2013, 19) acknowledges that this definition has been criticized by Held for being too wide.
66 Although Held focuses on particular others, which makes it difficult to adopt care in the public context, for it is only in the immediate circle of friends and family that one encounters particular others. Thinkers like Tronto and Gilligan have translated care to contexts that go beyond this immediate circle.
67 This is based on Tronto's (2013, 22–24) account of caring-with as a process of caring-about, caring-for, care-giving, and care-receiving.
68 On an alternative and yet analogous note, Dalmiya (2014) unknots several strands of care ethics with a focus on relationships and humility through encounters with marginal figures in the *Mahabharata*. She highlights the normative affective aspects of specific characters, such as a parrot's relationship to a tree and Yudhishthira's relationship to a dog. Dalmiya (2014, 120) also notes how a brahmin sage from a dominant caste,

The mainstream reading of the *Mahabharata* views dharma as a set of preordained duties founded on the intrinsic nature of persons on the basis of their social location. Thus, someone who is born into the warrior (kshatriya) caste, such as Arjuna, has a duty to fight in the war. Women are procreative, which is why they have the dharma of serving their husbands and families to retain caste purity (Belsare 2003, 170–171); both Kunti and Draupadi were fulfilling their preordained duties as mother and wife on this count. Matilal (2007) broadens the notion of dharma as being inevitably linked to moral dilemmas, since duties are not neatly laid out, since moral vulnerability is inevitable. But Matilal's moral dilemmas are still only those of the royal family. They presume caste-kin based order of duty—which is what makes them dilemmas in the first place. Matilal (2007, 100) attempts to broaden dharma into the path of the mahajana, where "mahajana" can mean the path of great persons. However, his interpretation of mahajana as a "proto-utilitarian view" of the good for "a great number of people" is problematic. For in defending the predominant notion of good conduct that is based on a homogeneous conception of the self, it could both encourage patriarchy and resist it.[69] Matilal, Spivak's "enlightened male feminist" (1992, 192), has not even taken the limited perspective of privileged royal women, such as Yudhishthira's wife Draupadi or mother Kunti, into consideration in his outline of moral dilemmas.

With respect to the *Mahabharata*, although its royalty has a moral commitment to their family members and caste groups in ruling their kingdom with rajadharma, it does not consider tribals, peasants, and underprivileged castes as worthy of such commitment. Devi's tale of "Five Women" (2005, 22–23) reveals this loss of privilege as being also a blessing for the peasant women, since they are not chained into domesticity and the rites of widowhood after the war, in which their husbands die. They are free to be together while performing their lokadharma, in contrast to women of the rajadharma, who are primarily related to men. Lokadharma as ethics of care transcends the limits

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Kausika, attains "epistemological maturity" by learning from a butcher who does not have caste privilege. Dalmiya, however, states that the *Mahabharata* does not develop an ethics of care in a systematic way and it, thus, cannot be regarded as a feminist text because of its sporadic engagements with care.

69 Thus, Mill gives a utilitarian defense of women's equality with men.

of community and Matilal's utilitarian mahajana. When Draupadi asks the five peasant women whether they would come to meet Uttara's child, their answer is: "Yes we will. And we'll sit here in the garden and sing songs to the baby." (Devi 2005, 23.) Thus, Devi shows women to bond through care work—the Pandava women with the Kaurava, the nishada women with royalty, women from underprivileged castes and tribes with those from the privileged ones. Devi's five women, Godhumi, Gomati, Yamuna, Vitasta, and Vipasha, have the capacity for kindness transgressing barriers of caste and class. Yet, these bonds are tenuous; in order to be more abiding, they have to acknowledge differences between women: that the war was fought for Draupadi, a kshatriya woman's honor; that Kunti was indifferent to nishadas; and that the labor of the socially vulnerable women has a capacity to heal.

Devi's critical interpretation of the *Mahabharata* from the point of view of lokadharma and its struggle with rajadharma does not emerge from questioning the text. Rather, it is the outcome of being sensitive to the taken-for-granted or neglected characters in the text, to listen to them and get involved in their world (instead of translating them to the familiar world of the interpreter). All these are the features of lokadharma or care.[70] Devi's *Kurukshetra* is predicated upon years of working class, dalit, tribal and women's activism. Her critical engagement with the *Mahabharata* is not a reading by a solitary interpreter, but a collective engagement. Yet, her social criticism is an equally inevitable presupposition of activism. Such a hermeneutics endeavors to create a moral culture or dharma that provides "[…] those harmed by disrespect and ostracization the individual strength to articulate their experiences in the democratic public sphere, rather than living them out in counter-cultures of violence" (Honneth 2007, 78). Critical interpretation and activism form the two sides of a transformative hermeneutics. The latter also comprehends care in consonance with morality or dharma—albeit people's or loka—as "nurturing, cherishing, providing more amply, endowing more richly, prospering, increasing, enhancing, all living beings" (Badrinath 2006, 419).

Feminists have argued that their diverse interpretations and perspectives on canonical philosophy reflect "the contested nature of the 'us' of contemporary

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70 According to Honneth's (2007, 108) account of Stephen White.

feminism" (Witt 2004, 11). Divergent feminist perspectives on philosophical traditions and established canons emerge from differences among women. For instance, Gilligan and Noddings offer an alternate way of thinking about ethics as relational, personal, and rooted in feminine practices of care to address the dominant canonical stress, such as the Kantian-inspired Kohlbergian stress on autonomy and impartiality (Gilligan 1993; Noddings 2013). Yet, feminists, such as Linda Bell, are apprehensive about care, because it is rooted in feminine roles of a patriarchal society and is inadequately political (Bell 1993, 36–40). However, interpretations of care from public, institutional, and nonpersonal perspectives, such as that of Tronto, have addressed this criticism.[71] Moreover, feminists also engage with the philosophical canon itself in ways that differ one from another. Nel Noddings invokes Hume and his notion of sympathy as integral to her narration of care, while Dilek Huseyinzadegan (2018) suggests "constructive complicity" to rehabilitate Kant without patriarchal and racist underpinnings. There exist hermeneutic differences among feminists with regard to what is established as tradition in diverse contexts, be it the *Mahabharata*, the western philosophical canon, including Kant and Hume, or the ethics of care. These differences emanate from diverse philosophical and ideological persuasions among women, which are also related to their diverse social locations. "Different groups of women have different interests […] and different values. […] They are both rich and poor, dependent and non-dependent, white and black, Anglo and non-Anglo, pro-life and pro-choice, anti-pornography and anti-anti-pornography […]." (Warnke 2003, 76.) Hence, women are interpreted in diverse ways that often point to their conflicting perspectives, as is the case with the royal and the peasant women in the *Mahabharata*. The varied interpretations of women in the *Mahabharata* make visible the presence of ordinary women and also open up discussions on care ethics that is not confined to the militarism of royal women.

Diverse contexts and sensibilities impact readings of tradition (both gendered and other)—often through what Brodbeck, with reference to the *Mahabharata*, termed "eavesdropping" (2007). Readings, interpretations, and translations are, indeed, attempts to get past the barriers in communication,

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71 For a detailed account, see Hankivsky 2014.

which are both psychological and social, as Habermas has observed (1970, 1972). The reader is, however, not motivated by a disengagement with the situation in the pursuit of what Habermas terms as emancipatory readings of a text. The engaged reader—a feminist in the instance of this paper—does not criticize from a position of distance, but is rather immersed in what Gadamer has termed as the "forestructure" of the text. Such immersion does not preclude critique as Habermas thinks of Gadamer; indeed, Gadamer's position has prospects for multiple and, therefore, critical readings of texts. Yet, such readings cannot proceed through the one-on-one, "I/Thou," mode of question/answer dialogue, since the question does tend to predict the direction, in which texts are read. Gadamer defines hermeneutic reflection as one that opens a "self-conscious awareness of ourselves and our world" (2006, 288). Thus, approaching the *Mahabharata* with the question, for instance, "Who are the strong women of *Mahabharata*?", can privilege its militaristic women, such as Draupadi or Kunti. To unravel the care-giving work of its five peasant women, Godhumi, Gomati, Yamuna, Vitasta, and Vipasha, or the nishadins, one needs to listen to the *Mahabharata* in receptive ways that heed its conflicting images of women. Such receptiveness might not necessarily be emancipatory, but could be a step in the direction of reconstructing traditions and texts in emancipatory ways. It requires moving beyond the framework of symmetrical dialogue or the question paradigm to hidden implicit dimensions of a text that are often accessible through inadvertent processes of Brodbeck's "eavesdropping" or reading between the lines.

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"Molt greignour senefiance"
The Role of Interpreters in *The Quest of the Holy Grail*

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Abstract

In the 13th-century French romance *The Quest of the Holy Grail* various interpreters appear, who—through Christian hermeneutics—explain to the knights of the quest their dreams, visions, prophecies, etc. The present article discusses the question of the source of authority of the interpreters, and analyzes in the text itself the foundations of such an authority. One of the most important starting points is the presupposition that the procedures of biblical exegesis influenced the romance and the image of the interpreter.

Keywords: hermeneutics, Middle Ages, quest, interpreter, biblical exegesis.

»Molt greignour senefiance«. Vloga interpretov v *Iskanju svetega Grala*

Povzetek

V francoskem viteškem romanu *Iskanje svetega Grala* iz 13. stoletja se pojavljajo različni interpreti, ki s pomočjo krščanske hermenevtike razlagajo potujočim vitezom njihove sanje, vizije, prerokbe itd. Pričujoči članek razpravlja o vprašanju vira avtoritete takšnih interpretov in analizira temelje za tako avtoriteto v samem besedilu. Ena izmed najpomembnejših izhodiščnih predpostavk razpravljanja je, da so postopki biblične eksegeze vplivali na roman in podobo interpreta.

Ključne besede: hermenevtika, srednji vek, iskanje, interpret, biblična eksegeza.

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Za Andreja

The water I taste is warm and salt, like the sea,
And comes from a country far away as health.

Sylvia Plath: "Tulips"

Introduction

The medieval culture is strongly based on the reverence for authority and tradition. At the moment of the creation of medieval romances of the 13th century, the medieval intellectual trusts in thinkers and texts that precede him. One of the key influences upon medieval literature derives from the *Bible*: a medieval writer and reader approach their text in a similar manner as they would approach a biblical text. They need an interpreter or a translator, someone, who can vouch for the meaning of the events (images, prophecies, dreams, visions) encountered by the heroes of the quest. A trustworthy authority is required, upon which they can rely in dealing with a text as submerged in religious tradition as *The Quest of the Holy Grail.*

Since *The Quest of the Holy Grail* (written in the first decades of the 13th century) is a text with a strong religious connotation, the chance of an allegorical reading of the episodes depicted therein is much more important than, for instance, in various other romances of the same period. During their enterprises, the knights of the Round Table chance upon a plethora of consecrated individuals (hermits, nuns, priests, etc.), who disclose the hidden meanings behind the visions and dreams presented to them by erring adventurers. It is the precisely interpreters who assure to the quest a holy nature and to the heroes their place in the economy of Redemption.

The article aims to develop the question of authority bestowed upon different interpreters appearing in the course of the quest. Where does said authority come from, what are its origins? We try to tackle this question with the aid of Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutic philosophy and wonder what are the hermeneutical mechanisms that support the role of interpreters in the process of the quest.

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In the first part of the article, we try to outline the cultural and literary context, in which the romance occurs. We concentrate on the creative power of Chrétien de Troyes, the first author ever to write about the Grail, and subsequently pass onwards to the presentation of cycle *Lancelot-Grail* (*The Quest of the Holy Grail* being a crucial part of the cycle).

In the second part, we discuss the role of the concept of authority in the medieval cultural context and, above all, its role in the romance *The Quest of the Holy Grail*. Here, we refer to the theory of Hans-Georg Gadamer in an attempt to show where the authority of interpreters in the romance derives from.

In the last part of the paper, we aim to show that the authority of an interpreter, since the medieval intellectual is educated in the devoted study of the *Bible*, can be considered as being at least partially rooted in the tradition of biblical exegesis.

The Quest of the Holy Grail: a romance of the 13th century

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When the novel entitled *The Quest of the Holy Grail* (*La Queste del Saint Graal*)[1] was written—approximately 1225–1230 (*Dictionnaire*, 1212)—, the French medieval literary space had already been profusely acquainted with the legend of the Grail. The first writer to thematize this unique symbol was an amazingly talented storyteller Chrétien de Troyes. Sadly, as it happens with many medieval authors, the exact dates of his birth and death escape us. It is fair to say that he lived in the second half of the 12th century, creating at the courts of Marie de Champagne and, later on, Philippe d'Alsace. Today, we acknowledge his status of one of the most esteemed medieval writers, who contributed greatly to the birth of a new literary genre—the novel.

Since the scope of the article does not allow us to delve deeper into this however intriguing subject, suffice it to say that Chrétien de Troyes established a form, dependent on the notion known as *conjointure* (the term itself is practically impossible to translate in any other language, but it could be, for lack

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1 Throughout the entire contribution, we quote the English translation of Pauline M. Matarasso. The French edition of the romance—in a bilingual publication comprising the original of *l'ancien français* and the translation into modern French language—can be found in: *Le Livre*, 809–1177.

of better translation, translated as "composition") and nowadays recognized as medieval romance. He brought the genre to its peak by way of evolution of both style as well as contents (cf. Berthelot 1989, 70).

Although Chrétien de Troyes without question represents medieval creativity at its best, he was far from being the first to thematize the so-called "matière de Bretagne" (the name given to the complex of stories about King Arthur and the knights of the Round Table, which were very popular with the cultivated medieval public). In the literary form, the image of King Arthur namely for the first time occurs in the work entitled *The History of the Kings of Britain* (*Historia Regum Britanniae*), written in 1135 by Geoffrey of Monmouth, a cleric active at the court of Henry II and his sophisticated wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine. The stories about the king of Brits and his valiant knights took the British public by a storm, and twenty years later, a French cleric Wace (ca. 1110–after 1174) wrote the first Arthurian romance in a vernacular language *Roman de Brut* (Wace is widely known to be the first to introduce into literature the motive of the Round Table).

None of the diligent medieval romance writers, however, ever rose to the imaginative heights of Chrétien de Troyes: he swept the public off its feet by his masterful use of language and by the richness of the content he introduced. With his exceptional talent, he scooped the stories, the themes, and the heroes already present in his intellectual environment and created artistically accomplished works of art that even today stun us with their psychological complexity and poignancy. He is the author of such iconic Arthurian romances as *Yvain or the Knight of the Lion* (*Yvain ou le Chevalier au lion*; 1177–1181) and *Lancelot or The Knight of the Cart* (*Lancelot ou le Chevalier de la charrette*; 1177–1181), etc. His romances are coherent and stylistically brilliant far beyond the level usually attained in the writings of his contemporaries (cf. Poirion 1994, XLIII). To offer even the most condense summary of Chrétien's body of work and artistry, we would require an exhaustive digression from our logical path, which is something we will do our best to avoid. We will, therefore, satisfy ourselves by saying that Chrétien de Troyes represents the so-called Renaissance of the 12th century at its best:[2] by remaining a full-blown humanist

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2 Anyone who wants to acquaint themselves with this extraordinary and often still

throughout, he puts at the center of his romances a hero, a young knight, who wants to achieve extraordinary acts of extreme courage being incessantly on the lookout for the so-called *aventure* (adventure), for the opportunity of personal and military growth. Chrétien's heroes are (and this distinguishes them from numerous other heroes in medieval literature) full-blooded people. They each have their own personalities, and, during the adventure, undergo a serious personal development, which usually enables them to become not only strong rulers in their own right, but also sophisticated lovers, who know how to treasure their *amie* and prove to be the beacon of fidelity and chivalry. Each romance by Chrétien de Troyes promotes a problem, a central question highlighted throughout the work of art that, therefore, assures to the tale a thematic, ideological (should we say philosophical?), and purely stylistic unity rarely achieved in Chrétien's contemporaries (cf. Pauphilet 1950, 143–144). Romances authored by him are not merely enumerations of events, of heroic enterprises, and of romantic tales without the central *fil rouge*; through his artistic (and probably also personal) development, they become true precursors of the modern novel. Chrétien's heroes are by no means one-dimensional characters that we often encounter in medieval literature: they possess depth and complexity, they are embryonic prefigurations of the modern individual, they have their own strengths as well as their own faults, and their personal growth is the generator of the events in the story. We could discuss Chrétien's talent at length, but since the topic of this paper does not concern solely his immensely engaging opus, we will limit ourselves to saying that he is one of the greatest contributors to the development of the modern novel as well as to the development of the modern literary hero. One of his indubitably most influential romances is, however, precisely *Perceval or The Story of the Grail* (*Perceval ou le Conte du Graal*).

In *Perceval*, as in every work by Chrétien de Troyes, we meet a hero who is unique and original. Perceval is one of the most intriguing personas in medieval

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overlooked period in the medieval history is kindly invited to read the classical treatise by Charles Homer Haskins entitled *The Renaissance of the 12th Century* (cf. 1971), which by all means remains one of basic readings for a scholar desirous of a profounder understanding of cultural, philosophical, and political tendencies in the period in question.

(possibly even world) literature. At the beginning of the romance, its eponymic hero is a young, inexperienced, somewhat naïve beginner, who, stunned by the image of the knights, wants to become a knight himself. Hidden from the world by his bereaved mother, who wants to spare her son the fate of his older brothers and of his father, all killed in chivalric conflicts, he has no knowledge of chivalry, of proper manners, of love, and of religion. When he enters King Arthur's court, he is met with contempt and ridicule. Later on, chivalry and its ideals are introduced to him by Gornemant de Goor, while courtly love and its finesses are revealed to him through the love relationship with Blanchefleur. However, the most important trial is the visit of the Fisher King. When he witnesses the mysterious procession, in which the Grail appears for the first time in Western literature, he never asks his host the infamous question he should have asked to save the maimed king and the devastated country under his reign. Perceval fails, and the task he was supposed to accomplish remains unfulfilled. Stricken by his ill fortune, he goes on for five years leading a life of a brilliant warrior, oblivious of Christian ideals and love. Only after the meeting with a hermit (who, by chance, is his uncle, and who reveals to him the great mystery of the Grail) he begins to feel the need to become a different kind of knight, a knight of God. What was Chrétien planning to do with his stunning hero, is perhaps one of the greatest enigmas in medieval literature, one that will never stop intriguing scholars, who encounter it on their intellectual path.

Perceval, written probably somewhere between 1180 and 1190, was left unfinished, and the reasons for this elude us (the most widely acknowledged theory is that its author died before being able to complete the ending). However, the story about a mysterious dish, which brings earthly and saintly goods, was met with unprecedented popularity with the medieval audience, and numerous continuations, written in the hope to bring Perceval's quest to its conclusion, attest to that (cf. Walter 2009, 7). *Perceval* truly struck up a chord with the medieval affinity for spirituality, but went far beyond that: the late 12th century was an era of great diversity in religious practice. It was a time, when spiritual yearning and experimenting brought forth various sects (for instance, the Cathars), mystics (for instance, Hildegard of Bingen), and religious leaders. It was a time of the ruthless Crusades, who filled the imagination of medieval society with stories about the war fought in the name

of faith, in the name of the Christian God. It was a time, when the germs of the spiritual and philosophical regeneration of the 13th century already begin to flourish, marked by the birth of new monastic orders (in particular, the so-called mendicant Christian orders) and by the previously unseen development of scholastic thought with Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventura, Albert the Great, etc. To further insist on various cultural aspects that crucially contributed to the spreading and the popularity of Grail literature would unfortunately lead towards a regrettable digression; we will, therefore, refrain from it.

The prose romance *The Quest of the Holy Grail* was probably created during the first decades of the 13th century and was later included in the so-called *Vulgate Cycle* (also known as the *Lancelot-Grail* cycle), an extensive composition of six novels (*Joseph d'Arimathie* [*Joseph of Arimathea*], *Merlin*, *Les premiers faits du roi Arthur* [*The First Actions of King Arthur*], *Lancelot*, *La Queste del Saint Graal*, and *Mort le Roi Artu* [*The Death of King Arthur*]). It can be considered as one of the most influential and far-reaching literary works that the Middle Ages ever contributed to Western culture. In a masterful fashion, it intertwines some of the most prominent stories ever to be born in human history: the eternal love story between Lancelot and Queen Guinevere, the enterprises of the noble King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table, numerous adventures of the sorcerer Merlin, and, last but not least, the narration of the quest of the Holy Grail. This is where the matter of Britain meets a strong religious verve to give birth to an extraordinary tale of love, faith, courage, redemption, and salvation. *The Quest of the Holy Grail* presents the literary public with a new hero—one who does not fight for his king or his beloved, but for God, in an earnest attempt to reach the celestial glory.

Since the essence of the knight's quest in this novel is changed, the itinerary of the knight is also quite different from the one that features in, for instance, Chrétien's romances. The *aventure* of the knights in *The Quest of the Holy Grail* is spiritual and bears a spiritual significance. It leads the chosen one towards a religious experience far beyond the reach of an average knight of the Round Table. Therefore, the warriors who embark upon this quest are in need of guidance, of revelation, of authority.

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The question of authority in *The Quest of the Holy Grail*

The path of the knights, who embark upon the quest of the Holy Grail, is strewn with visions, dreams, and proofs of faith, the intention of which is to select among the magnitude of those, who had decided to depart, a few chosen ones, who actually arrive to the end of the arduous journey. These visions and dreams are not self-explicatory. In much the same manner as the medieval worshiper needs someone to explain and to intercept between the highest power and human being, the knights need helpers to assist them in reassuring the true meaning of the events they encounter. These helpers come predominantly in the form of saintly persons: hermits (cf. Gros 2009, 1559–1560), priests (cf. Gros 2009, 1562),[3] and nuns. They have chosen the life of self-denial in the fulfillment of divine wisdom. From the hermeneutical point of view, they are immensely important, since they are the ones, who explain the enigmatic events, with which the path of the heroes is strewn. At this point, we need to underline the fact that the mental world of the medieval man is a deeply symbolic one: every phenomenon one encounters, every earthly being is filled with symbolic meaning, within all the phenomena there dwells a deeper signification, assured by a higher force (in the Western medieval cultural realm, this higher force can only be in the form of the Christian God). Within the Christian philosophical horizon, there is no room for meaningless phenomena or coincidence. Everything was created by the omnipresent, omnipotent, and also endlessly gracious God, who reveals himself to the human being through elements of his creation (through objects, animals, plants, etc.); therefore, every single thing is a bearer of a deeper symbolic meaning. Every element of creation reminds the one who perceives it of the endless goodness and endless power of the highest being. When discussing the hermeneutical layers of medieval romances, it is important to understand this intriguing and quite specific trait of the medieval intellectual realm.[4]

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3 Some scholars presuppose that the monks encountered by the knights of the Round Table belong to the order of Cistercian monks, since they are all clad in white (cf. Gros 2009, 1562).

4 On the Christian symbolism of the Middle Ages cf. Koželj 2013.

The knights of the Round Table (for the most part) are no theologians: they are warriors and courtly lovers. That is why they require, while meeting with various dreams, visions, and other symbolic phenomena, the help of explanation from the persons, who do possess the necessary knowledge and the spiritual depth. However, to be able to intervene in the way they do, all these saintly personalities need to have a certain authority, an unparalleled wisdom that derives not (solely) from earthly knowledge, but is also guaranteed by the transcendent power far beyond the reach of the hands or reason of man. Let us analyze a typical fragment from *The Quest of The Holy Grail* where a vision is interpreted by a skillful interpreter.

After a long and arduous journey, Perceval (one of the knights, who will partake in the quest to its last episodes) arrives at a desert island, where he sinks into a dream:

> Now a strange adventure befell him while he slept; for it seemed to his sleeping mind that two ladies appeared before him, of whom one was as old as the hills and the other much younger, and beautiful to boot. They did not go on foot but were mounted on two most singular beasts, for the younger rode a lion and the other was seated on a serpent. (*The Quest*, 117.)

After conversing with both of the women in his sleep, Perceval wakes up. Confounded by the vision in his dreams, he turns to God in the hope that he will grant him some explanation of the images he came to see in the dream:

> Next morning when the sky was bright and the sun had risen so high that its fiery rays sone warm upon his head, Perceval opened his eyes and saw that all was light. He sat up then and making the sign of the cross he begged Our Lord to send him some counsel which might profit his soul, for he gave less thought to his body than he used, having given up all expectation of leaving the rock where he found himself. He looked about him, but saw neither the lion that had kept him company nor the serpent he had slain, and he wondered greatly at their disappearance. (*The Quest*, 118.)

According to the passage, the young knight finds himself in considerable distress. Abandoned and astray, he sees no possibility of escape from the island. Furthermore, he is confronted with a powerful and meaningful dream, but lacks the means to interpret it and find a gateway to freedom. In his hour of need, he appeals to God, to the highest authority he can imagine in his very simplistic perception of faith.

> While he was turning this matter over in his mind his gaze strayed out to sea; and there he saw a ship with sail spread taut skimming the waves and making straight for the spot where he waited to learn whether God would send him some good fortune. The ship sped on apace, for she had the wind abaft to chase her on and she flew like an arrow towards him, coming right to the foot of the peak. As he observed this from his lofty perch Perceval knew his fill of joy; convinced there would be many men on board he jumped to his feet and took on his arms. As soon as he was accoutred he made his way down the crag with all the eagerness of a man impatient to know who the occupants might be. On drawing near he saw that the ship was shrouded within and without with white silk, so that nothing met the eye but perfect white. And when he reached the ship's side he bound a man robed like a priest in surplice and alb and crowned with a band of white silk two fingers deep; and this circlet bore a text which glorified Our Lord's most holy names. (*The Quest*, 119.)

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The mysterious ship is bringing not a company of men (as Perceval first believed), but one man dressed in a (meaningful) white silk.[5] Perceval is taken aback by the fact that the wise man knows his name before he reveals it to him. Sensing that the priest must be sent to the island with some particular intent, he asks him (he poses a *question*), expecting to obtain an informed answer. According to Gadamer, "the path of all knowledge leads thorough the question" (Gadamer 2006, 357), and "the significance of questioning consists in revealing the questionability of what is questioned" (Gadamer 2006, 357).

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5 For further information on the symbolics of colors in the Middle Ages see Pastoureau 2004, 128–236 and Ribard 2001, 11–46.

We can, therefore, maybe draw the conclusion and speculate that the answer is already comprised in the question and vice versa.

> The dialectic of question and answer disclosed in the structure of hermeneutical experience now permits us to state more exactly what kind of consciousness historically effected consciousness is. For the dialectic of question and answer that we demonstrated makes understanding appear to be a reciprocal relationship of the same kind as conversation. (Gadamer 2006, 370.)

Asking a question, posing a question in an ever-tender and eternally fragile balance and counter-balance between two sides in the situation of communication is more than just an act of mere utility: it is an act imbued with a profound ethical impulse:

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> Thus it belongs to every true conversation that each person opens himself to the other, truly accepts his point of view as valid and transposes himself into the other to such an extent that he understands not the particular individual but what he says. (Gadamer 2006, 387.)

Perceval and the mysterious priest are drawn together in a dialogue, filled with deep religious, even mystical signification. Because they share a similar religious, theological, and spiritual horizon, their questions and answers play out in the same field and guarantee both the understandability of question as well as, at the same time, the understandability of answer. Perceval's question is in a way (latently, implicitly) pre-answered at the moment of its emergence:

> Then he related in order all that he had heard in his sleep, just as the words had been spoken to him, for nothing had as yet slipped his memory. When he has told his dream he asked the good man to explain it to him, and he said he would do so gladly and began at once:
> "Perceval, the meaning of the two ladies, whom you saw riding on such unwonted beast as are lion and a serpent, is truly marvellous, as you shall learn. The one who sat upon the lion signifies the New

Law, that is set upon a lion which is Christ; it has its footing and its ground in Him and by Him was established and raised up in the sight and view of Christendom to serve as a mirror and true light to all that fix their hearts upon the Trinity. This lady sits upon the lion, Christ, and she is faith and hope, belief and baptism. This lady is the firm and solid rock on which Our Lord announced that he would set fast Holy Church, there where He said: 'Upon this rock I will build my church.' Thus the lady seated on the lion denotes the New Law which Our Lord maintains in strength and vigour, even as a father does his son. Nor it is surprising that she seemed younger to you then the other, since she had her birth in the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, while the other had already reigned on earth through untold generations. The former came to talk to you as to her son, for all good Christian are her sons, and she proved herself your mother by the great solicitude which drove her to forewarn you of what the future held. [...] The lady whom you saw astride the serpent. She is the Synagogue, the first Law, that was put aside as soon as Jesus Christ had introduced the New." (*The Quest*, 121–122.)

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In this paragraph, we can clearly see, how both the questions as well as the answers unfold within the same ideological and religious scheme (that is, the scheme of Christianity), which in the Middle Ages assures the coherence of every single interpretation of phenomena encountered in the world. Gadamer puts it thus:

One of the most fertile insights of modern hermeneutics is that every statement has to be seen as a response to a question, and that the only way to understand a statement is to get hold of a question to which its statement is an answer. (Gadamer 2007, 241.)

In *The Quest of the Holy Grail*, the phenomenal canvas of everything that happens pertains to the nature of the mission revealed at the beginning of the romance by a "venerable man wearing the religious habit" (*The Quest*, 46):

"Hear my words, my lord knights of the Round Table, who have vowed to seek the Holy Grail! Nascien the hermit sends you word by me that none may take maid or lady with him on this Quest without falling into mortal sin; nor shall anyone set out unless he be shriven or seek confession, for no man may enter so high a service until he is cleansed of grievous sin and purged of every wickedness. For this is no search for earthly things but a seeking out of the mysteries and hidden sweets of Our Lord, and the divine secrets which the most high Master will disclose so that blessed knight whom He had chosen for His servant from among the ranks of chivalry: he to whom He will show the marvels of the Holy Grail, and reveal that which the heart of man could not conceive nor tongue relate." (*The Quest*, 47.)

The venerable man was sent forth by Nascien, a Galahad's ancestor (cf. Bruce 1918, 134), who already appears in the romance *Joseph of Arimathea* and somehow admirably glues together the entire prose cycle. He is figure more than appropriate to promulgate the true nature of the mission that lies before the brave members of Arthur's court. His appearance—with the aid of an intermediary, an interpreter of/for an interpreter—is a sure sign (one that not all the knights are capable of deciphering) that what awaits them is a unique experience, something they have never met before, something inexplicably sublime, something, to which not all of them will have the access.

In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer claims that authority is based "on an act of acknowledgement and knowledge" (Gadamer 2006, 281). Gadamer insists on authority as deriving from an act of reason, where we, in the lack of more profound knowledge and insight, rely on someone else's expertise. The attribution of authority to someone else happens at the moment, when we acknowledge the fact that someone's understanding of a certain problem is more reliable than our own (cf. Gadamer 2006, 281). The authority of the bearer of Nascien's message is total and absolute, and is guaranteed by the exceptional nature of the mission ahead. In the Middle Ages, it is only with extreme reluctance that authorities are put into question, once their religious origin has been established. This is no time of an open dialogue or rational critique as, later on, promoted by the Enlightenment (cf. Gadamer 2007, 70).

In the romance, we also stumble upon an episode where a false priest offers to Bors a false interpretation of a dream. The reader (a medieval author always presupposes a reader, who is sufficiently intellectually informed to read the signs and the symbols—the false priest, for instance, sits on a black horse—: the hidden meaning behind words and actions) is in this episode met with two separate interpretations of the same dream (one coming from a false mouth, the other from a reliable source). From this fragment, we can draw the conclusion that the Middle Ages understand and acknowledge the possibility of two opposing interpretations of the same phenomenon, albeit always with hints that are meant to guide the reader to the more credible interpretation. The medieval author hesitates to leave much authority to the reader (it is true that, for instance, Jürgen Habermas also finds Gadamer "too accepting of prejudice and authority"; Palmer 2007, 76). *Auctoritas* plays an important part in the medieval intellectual perception of the world: in art, science, and philosophy, this period relies strongly on its predecessors of Antiquity.

But, as we have seen before, the brave knights do not encounter only wholesome saintly persons on their winding paths: Perceval is confronted with a beautiful young woman, who offers him a pool of earthly delights. She poses to be an authority, yet is, in fact, nothing else but one of the many transformations of the Devil. Her symbol is (again) the black color. Her beauty stuns Perceval, and she seems to have a lot of information about Perceval's past and his quest. Although she proves to be intelligent and even somehow clairvoyant like the good men, who usually explain the dreams and the visions, her message is a false one: she tells Perceval that the "good knight" he is so ardently looking for is dead (which is, of course, not true) (cf. Amiri 2011, 39).

When discussing the interpretation of dreams in the Middle Ages, Imen Amiri emphasizes the fact that Christian theologians and philosophers, having inherited the practice of such interpretation from Antiquity, are somewhat oblivious of how to transpose it into the Christian context (cf. Amiri 2011, 104; Baldon 2017, 37). Yet, it is precisely here that we can observe the point dividing literature (as a manifestation of artistic activity) and biblical exegesis (we will discuss this cleavage in more detail in the continuation of this article).

The problem of the knights in *The Quest of the Holy Grail* is that their usual thirst for adventure, applauded and nurtured in the first four romances of the

cycle, now, after it has given them their real *raison d'être*, suddenly fades and eclipses to the secondary rang of endeavors a knight might undertake. Precisely the authority, invested in a wise interpreter, explains to a knight the error of his ways: without this exceptional aid, the warrior finds himself completely lost and confused. The knights are, however, well aware of the circumstance that they need to find an appropriate interpreter, who will show them the way they need to take. Gawain and Hector have a formidable dream and, as they wake up, they immediately know what to do:

> "In God's name," went on Sir Gawain, "we have seen such things this night, both sleeping and waking, that the best course open to us in my view, is to seek out some hermit or some man of God, who can tell us the meaning of our dreams and interpret what we have heard." (*The Quest*, 165–166.)

Gawain and Hector find a hermit (they must approach him on foot, since he lives on a hill inapproachable with horses). After receiving the interpretation of their dreams, they are confronted with the sad truth: they are spiritually and morally fallen and, therefore, unqualified to approach the greatest mystery and the object of the quest, the Holy Grail:

> "The adventures you are now to seek concern the nature and manifestations of the Holy Grail; these signs will never appear to sinners or men sunk deep in guilt, and never therefore to you, for you are most heinous sinners. Do not imagine moreover that the adventures now afoot consist in the murder of men or the slaying of knights; they are of a spiritual order, higher in every way and much more worth." (*The Quest*, 174.)

Only three knights are chaste enough to arrive to the end of their journey and dwell in the sacred presence of the Holy Grail, of the vessel, passed onwards to them by tradition, as revealed in the first romance of the cycle, in *Joseph of Arimathea*. The question, put forth by the two confused knights, is answered with superior authority. And Gawain and Hector show at least the minimal

amount of awareness by *posing the question*, by merely knowing who and when to ask. Gadamer writes: "The real power of hermeneutical consciousness is our ability to see what is questionable." (Gadamer 1976, 13.)

Asking a question and getting the answer to it is always a step on the way to the Holy Grail or away from it (cf. Baldon 2017, 63). Some thinkers see it as a monotonous and pretentious practice that bores the reader and could not be further from Chrétien de Troyes's brilliance and elegance (cf. Waite 2006, 492). But we must understand *The Quest of the Holy Grail* in the context of the cycle, from which this particular romance gets its full meaning, its full symbolic richness. *The Quest of the Holy Grail* can namely only obtain true relevance, when it is understood in the context of the entire cycle, just like the cycle does not make much sense, if we subtract the romance from it. Understanding this complex relationship between the particle and the whole is one of the most important aesthetic delights that the book can offer to its (contemporary or modern) reader. *The Quest of the Holy Grail*, although perfectly functional when read without the context, is especially suggestive and alluring, if we read it as a part of the meaningful conversation between various romances (for instance, Lancelot in the *The Quest* can be fully understood only when we have already witnessed his love story in the romance *Lancelot*).

By participating in the unveiling of "riddles," of *senefiances* (cf. Pintarič 2005, 133), put forward by the romance, the medieval reader probably gains the same aesthetic pleasure as by admiring paintings and sculptures in a church or a cathedral, thus continuously renewing the greatest story one can know: the story of Redemption.

> Arguably, one of the primary functions of the Grail texts is to stimulate the reader's desire to engage with Christian ideals, and to improve their own understanding of it. The popular Arthurian subject is a medium through which the authors of the Grail narratives from the Didot-*Perceval* onwards can encourage their readership to improve their own Christian understanding. By putting the reader in a position similar to that of the knights on the quest, the Grail narratives stimulate the readers' desire to improve their own relationship with God through inviting them to interpret and reinterpret the *aventures* that they read in accordance with

Christian theology. In each of the Grail narratives the knights and the readers are invited to become interpreters of the Grail quest, and the unique structures of the Grail narratives are designed to direct the reader's attention towards the importance of interpretation. (Baldon 2017, 71–72.)

The most important difference between the modern and the medieval reader, however, lies in their disposition towards authority. The reader of the *The Quest of the Holy Grail* can, naturally, engage in his own interpretation of the *senefiance* before him, but the only *true* interpretation can be obtained from real authorities: monks, hermits, nuns, etc. They have the access to true God's mysteries, they reveal to the knights the true meaning of their quest as well as of the peculiar dreams and visions that plague them on their way.[6]

The role of tradition in the reading of a medieval romance

Within the Christian medieval mentality, every book (to actually see a book is a rare occasion for an average European in the Middle Ages) alludes to The Book, i.e., to the *Bible*. Therefore, it is approached with the greatest of caution and with the presumption that there exists a person wise end learned enough to explain the complicated symbolic of the narrative. The man in the Middle Ages in a way yearns for an authority—unlike the modern reader, who, due to the turn of the realm of understanding from tradition to the individual (cf. Gadamer 2006, 274), claims to possess all the tools that enable one to interpret the given text according to one's own logic and one's own understanding, even according to own prejudice. Here, we encounter one crucial and highly complicated question, the answer to which requires great sophistication— maybe greater than the writer of these words possesses. Nevertheless, we will pose it and try to at least scrape its surface: how does in the Middle Ages the reading of the *Bible* affect the reading of a text (namely, of a book)?

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6 The title of the present paper employing the word *senefiance* is inspired by the episode, in which "a worthy man" interprets Lancelot's dreams by saying in the English translation: "know, too, that the significance of what you saw is more profound than many people think" (*The Quest*, 150). The contribution's title "Molt greignour senefiance" could, thus, be (loosely) translated as: "A Profounder Significance."

It is fair to reiterate that we are referring to a period, in which the *Bible* was the first and, in many cases, the only book that a medieval man came into contact with. To the—for the most part illiterate—audience, it was transferred and interpreted by some sort of ecclesiastic authority. The main manner of confronting the sacred text in the Middle Ages is the exegetic reading, which comprises a very thoughtful search for analogies between the *Old* and the *New Testaments* (cf. Huizinga 2011, 342), the ceaseless search for parallels, for echoes between the two parts of the *Bible*. This exploit was, albeit intellectually challenging and fulfilling, not always an easy one: the world of the medieval man was (as it is—perchance differently—also today) fraught with paradoxes, with sometimes unintelligible harshness, it was full of unanswered questions or at least questions that seemed to go unanswered until the Judgment Day. Biblical exegesis was a common procedure offering a compact vision of the cosmos, fighting its fragmentation, fighting its irrational ways.

In the 12th and the 13th centuries, when the reading culture is yet to become wide-spread, the reading of the *Bible* actually represents the primary example of a meeting with any written text, especially if we take into account the fact that all the writing in the Middle Ages was mostly done by clergymen (cf. Guiette 1954, 107–111), who were naturally deeply imbibed by the exegetic process.

The Christian hermeneutics stems from the firm conviction that a written text *can* be understood as long its reader possess the right intellectual and moral tools (cf. Gadamer 2007, 46). Such tools are provided by tradition: the first thinker to reveal the exegetic potential of the *Bible* was Philo of Alexandria (ca. 20 B.C.–after 40 A.D.), while the stronger theoretic background in the context of the Christian faith was developed by Origen (185–254). We should not overlook the circumstance that the system, in which the exegesis takes place, is safely enclosed by the firm boundaries offered by authorities. Saint Augustine (354–430) introduces the distinction between the *allegoria in factis* and the *allegoria in verbis*, while the great scholastic Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) decides that the *Bible* disposes solely of the *allegoria in factis* (cf. Strubel 2002, 73). *Allegoria in factis* is, as a method of interpreting the Scriptures, a procedure, in which one person or event from the *Old Testament* finds its full meaning in the *New Testament*. Adam, for instance, is therefore the prefiguration of Christ;

the murder of Abel prefigures Christ's sacrifice; Eve prefigures Mary. The so-called typologies play intensively into the medieval vision of the world as a well-ordered, outstandingly organized cosmos, within which each element, no matter how insignificant at first glance, bears a deeply-rooted meaning arising from the fact that everything is a creation of the infinitely benevolent Creator, who, in his endless mercifulness, would not create anything incomprehensible to the feeble human mind. Within the medieval Christian intellectual realm, everything can be explained, there is no chaos, there is nothing but the immense feeling of a humbling gratitude. An event described in the *Old Testament* is not merely a bearer of its inherent meaning, it can also point towards an event in the *New Testament* (cf. Gadamer 2006, 292).

The Middle Ages are (at least that is how it would appear at first glance) a period in the human history, which is deeply imbedded in the mentality that praises tradition. The medieval intellectual achievements rely deeply and firmly on knowledge inherited from the Antiquity. The medieval intellectual feels a wholehearted gratitude towards the great minds of Antiquity: the medieval bestiaries, the works of natural science, and the most eminent philosophical treatises are heirs to the great minds of Antiquity. However, it would certainly be false to presume (as it nonetheless often happens) that medieval knowledge is derivative and without originality. That would be a misconception, similar to the one that pronounces modern science to be nothing else but a dense successor of the Enlightenment or the Renaissance. The Middle Ages have at their disposition many original approaches in philosophy as well as in science. Nevertheless, it would be bold and even misguided to assert that a reading of a book in the Middle Ages does not seem to be an echo of The Reading of The Book. The reading material in the 13th century is scarce, limited to and reserved for the wealthy and the well-educated. For this is the time when the laic population almost does not read (even the richest and the most powerful members of the upper classes have the texts read to them rather than read them by themselves) and encounters books predominantly in the church. And the book one sees most often is The Book of Books, the greatest story ever told.

The medieval intellectual's reading of a text simply cannot escape the premises arising from the reading of the Holy Scriptures. Hans-Georg Gadamer

thus expresses the co-determination of a text and the historical situation, in which it is read:

> Every age has to understand a transmitted text in its own way, for the text belongs to the whole tradition whose content interests the age and in which it seeks to understand itself. The real meaning of a text, as it speaks to the interpreter, does not depend on the contingencies of the author and his original audience. It certainly is not identical with them, for it is always co-determined also by the historical situation of the interpreter and hence by the totality of the objective course of history. (Gadamer 2006, 296.)

The tradition of the allegorical reading of the *Bible* (and, therefore, by analogy, any text, especially one so deeply immersed in religious meanings as *The Quest of the Holy Grail*) is very vivid within the medieval cultural context. Literary works were mostly read and written by people, who were educated in the rich tradition of the medieval biblical exegesis. Since the entire world and every phenomenon within it could be read as a symbol, why not then also every literary element? And the more the work was close to the realm of religious space, the more the symbolic reading proved to be fruitful, natural even. For the medieval intellectual, raised and educated in the singular world of symbols and typological reading of the *Bible*, the leap from reading The Book to reading a book must have come easily, since it was facilitated by the long tradition of allegorical approaches to the Scriptures. Although Patrick Moran warns us against excessively enthusiastic drawing of parallels between the *Bible* and the work of literary art in the Middle Ages (cf. Moran 2017, 44), we think the exegetical theory must have influenced the approach assumed by the medieval intellectual confronted by a text so rich in religious symbolism as *The Quest of The Holy Grail*.

According to numerous experts, the tradition of biblical exegesis must have somehow also contributed to the creation of the role of interpreter as depicted in the medieval fiction.

So much then for the way that leads to perfection, but what of that perfection itself, how to describe the indescribable? Here the author had recourse to the Scriptures, to the wealth of symbolism contained in them, and particularly to the Song of Songs, the book of the Bible that above all others lends itself to mystical interpretation. He was able to draw upon a language hallowed by tradition, supple yet precise, carefully weighted, rich in overtones, a language whose full depths of meaning can only be plumbed by those as familiar as himself with both the biblical and apocryphal traditions. (Matarasso 2005, 21.)

What Pauline Matarasso implies in the quoted passage is, to put it in plain terms, that the writer of a text like *The Quest of the Holy Grail* must have been well acquainted not only with the tradition of the Scriptures, but also with the way they were read: allegorically and symbolically. Paul Ricoeur demonstrates how interpretation makes for one of the key methods in the reading of biblical excerpts: he analyzes a passage from the *Bible*, where the appearance of a vision is followed by its interpretation (cf. LaCoque and Ricoeur 2003, 247). Allegorical reading is, therefore, intrinsic already to the *Bible*, and the Middle Ages were the direct heir to this intriguing and enriching tradition.

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The interpreters in the romance are never in question: we are to trust their interpretation, their unlimited knowledge. Yet, their authority is not unfounded. It derives from the long tradition of the symbolical reading of the *Bible*, from biblical exegesis. They are teachers, they are living authority (cf. Bertucio 2016, 332), they are willing to assume the responsibility for their actions, for their intervention. Their hermeneutical task is to interpret the visions and the dreams that the knights of the Round Table encounter while following the logic of the quest. In the economy of the quest, the interpreters never fail to allude to the deeply Christian nature of the adventure undertaken by the heroes. It is through their interpretations that the knights learn, grow, and are spiritually fortified. They assure to the quest the mystical aura, in which the events take place. Through the meaningful, albeit frugal encounters with interpreters, who decipher the *senefiance* of the images, which the adventure lays upon them and through which the selection is made between the ones, who will be summoned to bask in the presence of the Grail, and the ones, who

will return defeated to king Arthur's court only to witness the devastation of the only meaningful world they know.

However, when the last three knights finally arrive in the vicinity of the Holy Grail, the interpreters become scarce. This is the time, when holy objects, enveloped into the mystical aura of the Grail, begin to speak for themselves. This process of self-explanation can be observed when Bors, Perceval, and Galahad arrive to the Miraculous Ship, where they find a marvelous sword. The inscription on the sword is not ambiguous:

> I am a marvel to behold and apprehend. For none was ever able to grip me, however big his hand, nor ever shall, save one alone; and he shall pass in excellence all who preceded and shall follow him. (*The Quest*, 214.)

Interpreters are, therefore, in the end no longer in demand. Those knights, who were summoned to bask in the direct glory of the holy objects, are capable (and worthy) of interpreting the inscriptions by themselves. They have grown, they have evolved. The economy of the Grail quest is such that they have reached the peak of moral evolution a mortal being can achieve. However, it is only to Galahad that the Holy Grail reveals itself in all its splendor. The young knight seeing that this is the most he could hope for during his terrestrial life asks for his soul to be relinquished to heaven:

> "Blessed Lord Jesus Christ, now have I my heart's desire. I beseech Thee now to come to fetch me in this my present state, for I could not die in any spot so pleasant and delightful as is the one in which I find myself. For this bliss which I have yearned after so long is all composed of lilies and of roses." (*The Quest*, 269.)

Conclusion

The present article aimed to establish the significance of the role of interpreters in the 13th-century romance *The Quest of the Holy Grail*. Our goal was to inspect the origins of authority imparted upon the various interpreters

of dreams and visions that the wandering knights chance upon. We attempted to show that the authority of interpreters is most likely rooted in the tradition of biblical exegesis. Since the writers of medieval romances were indubitably well-acquainted with this tradition, we concluded that it most probably influenced their own literary creations.

The interpreters are without exception deeply devout individuals, whose moral and religious background allows them the access to the transcendent significance behind events that the heroes of the quest encounter. The path of the knights is filled with allegories, which they cannot unravel by themselves. It is full of symbols that cannot be understood (or are even misunderstood) without the help of authority. And the authority of interpreters originates from their unyielding devotion.

On the other hand, the authority of interpreters stems from the sole fact that we are confronted with a kind of a text. A text that alludes (as almost all books in the Middle Ages) to the *Bible*. The way of reading the *Bible* in the Middle Ages is unique: all events of the *Old Testament* somehow resonate in the events of the *New Testament*, a symbol from the *Old Testament* develops its full meaning in the *New Testament*. From this play of doubles, the medieval intellectual draws intellectual, aesthetic, and spiritual delight. The form of interpretation is in both cases the same: the knight is confronted with a vision or a dream that he is uncapable to apprehend. Later, he comes across a figure of authority, who is in position to reveal the hidden meaning behind the mysterious, incomprehensible episode. This procedure resembles in no small measure the interpretation processes connected with biblical exegesis.

In his famous passage, St. Paul states that while living on earth man only sees *per speculum in aenigmate*. He cannot perceive, cannot comprehend the divine truth directly. To obtain a glimpse at transcendence without an intermediary would resemble staring straight into the Sun. The role of interpreters is crucial: God communicates with his Creation in symbols, indirectly. It is the well-educated, pious interpreters, who divulge the meaning of the symbolic image to the feeble human mind. However, there comes a time when an individual (not just any individual—a chaste, an accomplished individual, chosen among many others) is summoned to stare straight into the Sun, straight into the Christian Truth. This can only happen at the end of an arduous, yet fulfilling

journey, at the end of a long spiritual quest, full of trials and labors. Only then the interpreter is no longer needed and the complete revelation can be attained, but it is paid for with the sacrifice of earthly life. This is the end of the quest of the Holy Grail. This is when the Holy Grail and its most valuable seeker, Galahad, abandon life to ascend straight into Heaven. This is the time "of lilies and of roses."

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Hamlet and the Philosophical Interpretation of Literature

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Abstract

The huge tradition of philosophical readings of *Hamlet* is focused here on the theme of *unknowing* as crucial to Shakespeare's epistemology. In contrast with the rising paradigm of experimental science, which Hamlet and fellow student Horatio bring into the play and which informs even the *method* employed for proving the guilt of the king, *Hamlet* dramatizes the advent of a new model of unknowing knowing by faith in "providence." This constitutes a transformation of an older paradigm of prophetic

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knowledge by revelation, which comes to Hamlet in the form of the ghost of his father, a figure arousing doubt rather than certainty, and hesitation rather than action. With Hamlet's blind trust in what he calls "providence," the metaphysical order is no longer an object of knowledge, and yet it can ground belief and can still guide a kind of action that proves finally to be efficacious, even if tragic. Philosophical readings by Cutrofello, Critchley, Pascucci, Lukacher, and others are shown to line up with this non-objective kind of knowing, or more exactly unknowing, which nevertheless renews a kind of prophetic dimension of revelation in poetic language.

Keywords: prophecy, apophasis, modern thought, negative poetics.

Hamlet in filozofska interpretacija literature

Povzetek

Znotraj obsežne tradicije filozofskih branj *Hamleta* se pričujoči članek osredotoči na témo *nevédenja* kot bistveno za Shakespearovo epistemologijo. V nasprotju z razraščajočo se paradigmo eksperimentalne znanosti, kakršno v igro pritegneta Hamlet in njegov študentski prijatelj Horacij in kakršna navdihuje celo *metodo*, uporabljeno za dokaz kraljeve krivde, *Hamlet* dramatizira nastop novega modela nevedočega védenja s pomočjo vere v »previdnost«. To konstituira transformacijo starejše paradigme preroškega védenja s pomočjo razodetja, kakršno se Hamletu prikazuje v obliki duha njegovega očeta, osebe, ki namesto gotovosti spodbuja dvom in namesto delovanja obotavljanje. S Hamletovim slepim zaupanjem v tisto, kar sam imenuje »previdnost«, metafizični red ni več objekt védenja, a vseeno lahko utemeljuje verovanje in vodi nekakšno delovanje, ki se nazadnje izkaže za učinkovito, čeprav tragično. Prispevek ponazarja, da se filozofska branja Cutrofella, Critchleyja, Pascuccija, Lukacherja in drugih ujemajo s takšno ne-objektivno vrsto védenja oziroma, natančneje, z nevédenjem, ki kljub vsemu obnavlja preroško razsežnost razodetja v pesniški govorici.

Ključne besede: prerokba, apofaza, moderna misel, negativna poetika.

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Any volume on philosophy and literature is well advised to take account of the range and depth of the vast assortment of philosophical interpretations of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as an orienting paradigm. This work has stimulated philosophical reflection and like hardly any other has been a crux for philosophers and for critics raising crucial, overarching questions concerning the nature and limits of the philosophical interpretation of literature. Shakespeare's play has proved endlessly provocative throughout the centuries for philosophers, as well as for thinkers in all sorts of related fields of reflection. I have elsewhere touched on this synergism and have proposed my own philosophical interpretation of Hamlet.[1] I have also in another, related essay treated particularly Stanley Cavell's interpretations of Shakespeare as exemplary of what philosophical interpretation of literature is capable of accomplishing.[2]

Here, I wish to broaden my consideration to other thinkers and critics who have developed certain philosophical aspects of Shakespeare interpretation specifically in relation to *Hamlet*. Even more restrictively, I choose those approaches that agree with mine in emphasizing *unknowing* as key to the Shakespearean epistemology that can be discovered so revealingly in its first emergence in *Hamlet*. Starting from Cavell's focus on skepticism in Shakespeare, we can trace the exquisite ways, in which skeptical, early modern philosophy issues in a transformation of traditional, ancient, and medieval knowledge by revelation into a prophetic *un*knowing. Even this delimitation still designates a field within Shakespeare criticism that is so vast as to be susceptible of no more than highly selective treatment of a few outstanding and suggestive cases that happen to have come to my attention—and only in their most general lineaments.

Unknowing in Shakespeare comprises a sprawling and almost unfathomable continent of criticism. This shadowy theme of unknowing can be found almost anywhere in Shakespearean criticism. However, it has been most densely concentrated in and around *Hamlet* as its commonly admitted matrix and emblematic standard bearer. The discussion of *Hamlet* alone on this topic is staggering. My previously published essay "Prophecy Eclipsed: *Hamlet* as a

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1 Franke 2000; expanded and revised: Franke 2016.
2 Franke 2015a.

Tragedy of Knowledge" (in *Secular Scriptures*, Chapter 3) gives the gist of my reading of the play as a tragedy of knowledge. The tragedy is that access to the other world through prophetic vision by the "prophetic soul" based on unquestionable faith in Christian revelation is largely lost for Hamlet from the play's outset. This sublime heritage of immediate revelation through faith belongs to the father and his idealized world that comes back to haunt Hamlet only in the guise of his father's ghost. This traditional knowing by revelation has been challenged by the rising scientific paradigm of knowing that Hamlet and Horatio are assimilating as students at Wittenberg. Yet, there is also a perennial kind of *un*knowing that Hamlet discovers and that turns him toward faith in divine providence ("there is a special providence in the fall of a sparrow," etc.). This new-found type of blind faith in providence issues in active striving and unreserved giving of oneself and one's all.

The previous, just mentioned essay outlines the eclipse of prophetic revelation in *Hamlet* and the emergence of a new, modern, action-oriented episteme. However, ancient and modern epistemological models alike are axised on the pivot point of *unknowing* as sheltering the secret source of true wisdom. This, in fact, has been the key to philosophical interpretations of Hamlet across the last four, and especially the last two, centuries—since Goethe. The last two centuries of criticism have focused on the introverted psychology of the character of Hamlet and have accentuated and interiorized the concentration on a void at the play's center.[3] Prophecy itself, given its at least apparent dependence on a transcendent principle beyond human knowing, can be understood as a particularly potent form of unknowing: the experience of radical unknowing serves as a grounding for belief, and prophecy is a form of belief requiring personal investment through a commitment of faith.[4]

The vast tradition of philosophical readings of Shakespeare, centering especially on *Hamlet*, demonstrates over and over again how the gesture of negation is the key to the peculiar insight that Shakespeare's plays convey and disseminate. Stanley Stewart surveys the engagement of modern philosophers

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3 Cf. Margreta de Grazia 2007.
4 I expound this notion of prophecy in Franke 2015b.

with Shakespeare in this vein.[5] A similar conclusion is borne out by the diverse considerations of a host of philosophical interpreters such as Colin McGinn and Leon Harold Craig.[6]

Striking is that the innumerable philosophically profound readings of *Hamlet* all in one way or another turn on the dynamic power of *un*knowing that he embodies in the play. Cutrofello's *All for Nothing: Hamlet and Negativity* sums up this tendency already in its title and builds on a battery of predecessors. For Cutrofello, Hamlet represents, before all else, the power of negativity (2014, 2): he "personifies negation" (2014, 9). Cutrofello finds his cues especially in Walter Benjamin (Cutrofello 2014, 97–98), for whom this negativity turns revolutionary and even messianic.

For Benjamin, *Hamlet* alone redeems the allegorical time of the German tragic drama, which is otherwise oppressively boring. *Hamlet* manages this feat by tarrying with this negativity and by striking "Christian sparks" of redemption from it:

> In the tragedy, Hamlet alone is a spectator of God's grace; yet not what is represented to him but only his own destiny can satisfy him. His life, as exemplary object of his borrowed mourning, points, before being extinguished, to Christian providence, in whose bosom his mournful images are converted into blessed existence. Only a life such as this princely one redeems melancholy, which confronts itself. The rest is silence. (Benjamin 1974, 335.)[7]

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Cutrofello's encyclopedic and yet pithy survey demonstrates the astonishing extent, to which *Hamlet* has accompanied and even guided modern

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5 Stewart 2010.

6 McGinn 2007 and Craig 2001.

7 The German original reads: "Hamlet allein ist für das Trauerspiel Zuschauer von Gottes Gnaden; aber nicht was sie ihm spielen, sondern einzig und allein sein eigenes Schicksal kann ihm genügen. Sein Leben, als vorbildlich seiner Trauer dargeliehener Gegenstand, weist vor dem Erlöschen auf die christliche Vorsehung, in deren Schoß seine traurigen Bilder sich in seliges Dasein verkehren. Nur in einem Leben von der Art dieses fürstlichen löst Melancholie, indem sie sich begegnet, sich ein. Der Rest ist Schweigen."

philosophical theorizing of negativity. The play has been a constant reference for modern philosophy since Descartes, as is witnessed, for example, by Jaakko Hintikaa's influential "Cogito, Ergo Sum: Inference or Performance?"[8] This unforgettable play has even retrospectively insinuated itself into our understanding of ancient negation and tragedy from Sophocles to Socrates.

Philosopher Simon Critchley and psychoanalyst Jamieson Webster likewise read Hamlet in terms of negation and particularly of desire as a kind of negation as analyzed psychoanalytically.[9] Psychoanalysis since Freud quite generally has been obsessed with Hamlet as an emblematic figure for the Oedipus complex. Lacan offers the perfect means for turning this psychoanalytic approach into a psychology of unknowing based on the linguistic negativity of the signifier.[10] In the context of this essay, it is especially telling that Critchley's philosophy more generally pivots on a systemic negativity of knowing that issues in a strange kind of "faith."[11]

The goal of Critchley and Webster in leveraging philosophical readings by Lacan, as well as by Nietzsche, Carl Schmitt, Benjamin, Freud, and the like, is to open "a compelling engagement with the play itself," one not without a certain rashness—and praised be rashness for it—based on the wisdom of "knowing nothing." Ophelia, of course, says more than once that she knows nothing (II. ii.105). "The point might be that if there is any providence at work, then we know nothing of it." (Critchley and Webster 2013, 23.) The word "nothing" is inventoried by Critchley and Webster as the linchpin for their reading of the play. This is spelled out especially in their internal chapter (2013, 26–38) borrowing for its title the Player Queen's phrase "It Nothing Must" (III.ii.150). For them, *Hamlet*, in a deep sense, is a "play about nothing," in other words, "a nihilist drama" (2013, 26).

"Nothing" is the key word in Hamlet in all sorts of apparently incidental ways—for example, in the talk about the ghost from the first act (I.i.22) and again when it reappears to Hamlet in the scene where he berates his mother

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8 Hintikaa 1962.
9 Critchley and Webster 2013.
10 Cf. Lacan 2013, especially chapter "Sept leçons sur Hamlet." An integrative overview is offered by Hoornaert 2021.
11 Critchley 2012.

who sees "nothing" at all, although she sees "all that is." She also hears "nothing but ourselves" (III.iv.135–137). For Hamlet, Claudius, the king, is a thing "of nothing" (IV.iii.28–30). Again, in conversation with Ophelia, very serious play is made with the "nothing" that Ophelia allegedly thinks and that Hamlet says is a fair thought to lie between maids' legs (III.ii.106–109). Laertes later says of Ophelia's mad, yet piercingly revealing singing that "This nothing's more than matter" (IV.v.171). The word actually infiltrates every part and aspect of the play, as critics have been very keen to point out.[12]

For all their concentration on this word "nothing," these philosophical readings of *Hamlet* in terms of negation finally draw the play away from any focus on language and revelation in the word and relate *Hamlet* to what remains wholly Other and unrepresentable, beyond the reach of language. This "apophatic" nothing, too, teaches us to read for what is *not* being said and perhaps cannot be said. It can be heard aright only when ordinary hearing and communication stop. Ned Lukacher, in the name of Deleuzean immanence, arrives at what I call "apophasis" by an opposite route, stressing not the crisis of prophetic revelation as a loss of transcendence, but rather immanent transcendence.[13] Transcendence and immanence indicate diverging ways, which in the end converge upon the apophatic inability to articulate either condition taken in its absoluteness.[14]

Truly prophetic revelation of the other world reveals that it is unrevealable. This has already been intimated in the ghost's disclosures. Despite some very detailed, graphic descriptions of the other world, the ghost is forbidden to divulge its actual contents (I.v.14–23). In truth, this order of reality is beyond the pale of representation. Such is the drift of Lukacher's quest for the primal scene, from which the play erupts: it, too, above all, proves to be refractory to representation. The other world is revealed only through the subjective reactions it effects. Pouring poison in the ear, which the ghost does describe, is as close as we come. This turns out, Lukacher emphasizes, to be a very apt image for deranging the channels of sensory reception and representation so that a

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12 Prominent among them are: Calderwood 1983 and Jaanus Kurrik 1979.
13 Lukacher 1986, 178–205.
14 For this topic in another context, see Brown and Franke 2016.

prophetic word can no longer be directly conveyed.[15] Hamlet is summoned, above all, to *hear* the word of the ghost ("List, list, O, list," I.v.24; "Now, Hamlet, hear," I.v.34). But precisely hearing is interfered with, indeed poisoned, by the king's crime.

For Lukacher, the play's primal scene lies in words not as *representing* some external, extralinguistic event, but rather as *themselves* poisoning and wounding. The act of pouring poison in the ear of the sleeping king substitutes for the primal scene of his murder, which is unrepresentable. The image purveyed by this scene is a kind of cypher signifying a destruction of representation itself symbolized by its channels or modes—particularly hearing and language.

Hamlet thus breaks through to a post-representational, post-metaphysical statute of language. In Lukacher's reading, the poisoning through the ear, as revealed visually by the ghost's description to Hamlet in Act I, scene v, is echoed by "The Murder of Gonzago" both in the opening dumbshow and in the ensuing dramatic recital, as well as in its effects on its audience. Using, but also relinquishing, language art as their instrument, these are the means by which self-reflection can be realized completely and absolutely by the subject—making it an internal possession, as in Hegelian *Er-innerung*. This type of poisoning, according to Lukacher, does not leave a trace behind.[16]

The original scene of the crime cannot be properly represented, but it can be reconstructed, or rather invented, artificially and theatrically. The silent language of the dumbshow, with which "The Murder of Gonzago" begins, is an archaic stylistic device (Lukacher 1986, 229) that does this concretely, since it is undecidable whether Claudius's crime is itself modeled on the play, which he might have seen beforehand, or the other way around. For Lukacher, "Through 'The Murder of Gonzago' and its dumb show, Shakespeare has poisoned the notion of representation." (1986, 232.) In the play within the play representing playacting, as the Player King says, "our devices still are overthrown" (III.ii.196). Citing Hamlet's baptism of the play within the play as "'The Mouse-trap.' Marry, how? Tropically" (III.ii.220), Lukacher concludes: "Shakespeare's

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15 Lukacher extends this reflection in chapter 3 of *Daemonic Figures: Shakespeare and the Question of Conscience* (cf. 1994, 126–161).

16 This last paragraph makes reference to chapter 6 of *Primal Scenes* entitled "Shakespeare in the Ear of Hegel" (cf. 1986, 226–228).

archaic paratactic style burrows beneath the ground of representation, turning the trope into a trap." (1986, 233.)

In the final scene, Hamlet has a keen presentiment of ill ("how ill all's here about my heart," V.ii.193), a heartfelt misgiving in accepting Laertes's challenge. Yet, he is no longer ruled by his own self-affection or even by his own reflections. He has a higher standard and guide from outside the circuit of self-reflection, to which he submits and commends himself. This higher calling emancipates him from prophecy in the most superficial and debased sense of prediction of the future. He says: "we defy augury." He embraces and submits to a more natural and universal kind of divine purpose revealed in and through whatever actually happens, which he calls "providence" and which he encounters in an accepting spirit by vigorously and trustingly engaging with the challenges thrown in his way by life and circumstance, including the threat of death. This newfound sense of providence enables him to respond nimbly, as occasion offers, "for the interim is mine" (V.ii.73), that is, the moment between the times that we cannot change, whether behind or before us—the past or our future death.

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> There is a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all. Since no man of aught he leaves knows, what is it to leave betimes? Let be. (V.ii.199–203.)

This is a minimalist version of prophetic revelation as *not* revelation, and yet it engenders the same effects of self-abandon and trust in one's own life and destiny. Hamlet has come to recognize that authentic prophecy delivers not a provable truth but rather a kind of unknowing in which one acts in confidence and without any rational assurances. Such trust is inculcated in the *Bible*, for instance, in Jesus's reassurances in the "Sermon on the Mount" counseling confidence in the future based on God's providential care for his creatures:

> Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your father. But even the hairs of your head are numbered. Are you not worth more than a sparrow? Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. (Mt 10: 29–31.)

This word of the *Gospels* counsels humans to free themselves from time, with its incumbent privations and hardships, and above all its crippling uncertainties, by living with confidence that beyond the limits of any present moment they will be compensated in the wholeness of time with abundant life. Our part as human beings is not to know when we must leave or what we must leave behind, but simply to be ready to leave "betimes," that is, in a timely fashion as determined by events themselves taken as providential, no matter what they bring or how they may seem to us, whether prosperous or ominous. Hamlet finds that in all things "was heaven ordinant" (V.ii.48), such as his happening to have his father's seal when it is most necessary for him to forge the letters changing his death for that of his betrayers. On the basis of his experience of escape even when betrayed and held prisoner by his friends and facing death, Hamlet believes now that:

> There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
> Rough-hew them how we will— (V.ii.10–11.)

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Hamlet transmits this edifying discourse urging a life of faith in "a special kind of providence" that cannot be clearly or completely known from within the press of events, but that inexorably takes shape in our lives as a whole— at least if we are able simply to trust in it. Not to be overlooked here is that this insight is expressed by Hamlet in a collective voice and perspective: "*We* defy augury." He has suddenly transcended the limits of the isolated individual who previously spoke in his searingly solitary soliloquys: he now speaks from another height or depth and in a dimension of unlimited relationality to humans and fellow creatures under heaven.

I speak of prophecy still as a relevant category all through the play, even though this mode has turned from prophetic knowing into an unknowing. For prophecy, deeply understood, was always a kind of unknowing: it was based on an acknowledging of a higher power beyond human comprehension. Hamlet finds just such a faith in his orientation to providence in unknowing, which replaces or transforms the prophetic knowledge that is shown to be lost to the modern world from the beginning of the play. Hamlet's last words say it all—"the rest is silence" (V.ii.343). They open the play's perspective to this

unfathomable dimension of the apophatic, from which all within the play and within life is revealed. The play turns our knowing in this direction—toward a disclosure of the great unknowing to which we remain always beholden. In a related key, another of Hamlet's eminently quotable utterances—"Let be" (V.ii.203)—has been read by Cutrofello as echoing powerfully in Heidegger's teaching of *Gelassenheit* (letting be) in response to the Nietzschean will to power. This reference, too, helps to align the play's implicit and incipient philosophy with modern philosophical wisdom of unknowing or apophasis.

The only way to approach this mysterious dimension is through a negative experience of the abyss—in variegated concrete ways, of course, such as death and madness. These are the foyers of revelatory experience in Hamlet. Their uncanniness is signaled also by a certain hysterical levity associated with both. This is patent in the grave-digging scene, as well as in Hamlet's wild wit in feigning madness, or again in Ophelia's mad song. The latter "speaks things in doubt / That carry but half sense" (IV.v.5–7), but by doing so the song rivets attention more than any reasonable discourse possibly could, as the Gentleman reporting to the Queen attests:

> Her speech is nothing
> Yet the unshaped use of it doth move
> The hearers to collection; they aim at it,
> And botch the words up fit to their own thoughts,
> Which, as her winks and nods and gestures yield them,
> Indeed would make one think there might be thought
> Though nothing sure, yet much unhappily. (IV.v.7–13.)

Balancing this tragic instance of speech turned revelatory by its very absurdity and incoherence, in the grave-digging scene, the clowns treat death farcically with the hilariously mock pedantic, hair-splitting discussion of Ophelia's death by drowning and her right to be buried in Christian ground. As one clown wittily (and uproariously) insists, to qualify for this right, she must have drowned herself in self-defense. This underling is sardonically suggesting that her social standing has protected her from a rigorous application of the law.

The satirical treatment of subjects as grave as death, but also as serious as class privilege in a rigidly aristocratic society, reminds us of Hamlet's hysterical

levity in addressing the ghost as "truepenny" and "old mole" in the oath-swearing scene. He is frozen with awe before his father as revenant and yet uses irreverent, insulting terms that cast into doubt whether this can all be taken seriously as "true" value. Hamlet ironizes his own awe and respect. This parodic register of the character's own self-reflection mines below representation and subverts its symbolic order. I take this as opening a space for the prophetic in a negative theological sense. Undermining pretended knowledge is the only way to expose its residual, oblique truth. Prophecy in this sense subverts representation in the sense of holding up the mirror to nature and is rather constructivist in producing deeply felt figures for what cannot as such be represented.

A constitutive element of artifice has been essential to this prophetic type of revelation ever since the opening scene with the ghost (not to mention at its sources in the *Bible*), which ends in Hamlet's calling attention to its theatricality, with his mention of the "fellow in the cellarage" (I.v.150). The ghost marks a threshold to the other world, and inspires all the fear and awe that are appropriate reactions to the borne towards the unknown country, from which no man returns, yet the artifice that is necessary in order to represent the unrepresentable is always taken up self-reflexively into the play by its metaliterary awareness of itself as art. An interpretive dimension is the unelidable mediation of this revelation of immediacy, which is to say of divinity.

Hamlet exposes its own represented other world as artifice, notably at this juncture where the ghost cries "swear" and is referred to by Hamlet as "this fellow in the cellarage." This meta-literary self-reference refers to the theatre as theatre, and breaks the illusion of the reality of what is being played by pointing to its artificial frame. Yet, the implication is not necessarily reductive, as if this were simply deception. Art is also a way of gaining access to a higher world beyond the empirical world of natural things or given objects. This self-reference of artifice can be a critical method interpreting the higher world of prophetic revelation in terms of the human process of poetic making. The undermining of representation is tantamount to an acknowledgement of the indispensability of *un*knowing to any form of knowing, not to mention of revelation. That, I suggest, is what Dante does programmatically in his *Vita*

nuova, whose self-questioning protagonist projects the destiny of the modern self-fashioning—but also self-subverting—subject that Shakespeare in *Hamlet* pursues so relentlessly in all of its ramifications.[17]

One crucial turn of this apophatic negativity of modern prophecy as it comes down to *Hamlet* is that it comes about through knowledge being made material. It is the corporeality of Hamlet's ideas, for example, of the spirit of his father materialized as a ghost seen prowling the night, that makes them capable of turning a powerful edge of negation against the corrupt powers of *Realpolitik* in the world. In a confirmedly modern perspective, Margherita Pascucci writes of "the first element of a material knowledge, which Hamlet calls prophecy, but which we know to be simply the truth" (Pascucci 2012, 32).[18] Above all, Shakespeare's creation is through the negative force of "self-causality" that breaks with the seamless system of things as they are given. Pascucci brings into view the "invisible architecture" of Shakespeare's prose as "an absence that torments" and that creates "unprecedented thought" (2012, 3). She apprehends Shakespeare as "generator of continuous new thought, as a star whose light is born and still burning while it seems already gone, gives us the intensity and productivity of an experience where our own self will, at a certain point, be no longer ours […]" (2012, 4). Thus, her reading, in the wake of Walter Benjamin's reflection on allegory, underlines "the combustion of representation" (2012, 1–28) as the pivotal issue of Shakespeare's writing.

This self-dissolution of representation is the result of the self's abiding with the negativity of all that is as what induces its continual self-metamorphosis into what it is not. Pascucci's contention is that in the baroque, as realized most originally by Shakespeare and as illuminated by Benjamin and Deleuze, knowledge becomes a system of "self-combustion of the image." A new system of "pierced images and disjointed time" arises that gives birth to new knowledge based on the self's feeding or "somersaulting" self-reflexively, or "self-affectively," on itself rather than reading the world around it. These modalities of self-reflexivity are most profoundly understood as revolutionary

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17 I develop this interpretation further in *Dante's* Vita Nuova *and the New Testament: Hermeneutics and the Poetics of Revelation* (cf. Franke 2021b).
18 The quotation is taken from Chapter 2 entitled "This is I, Hamlet the Dane" (cf. Pascucci 2012, 29–50).

transformations and novel modalities of prophetic knowing rather than simply as alternatives to it.[19]

Shakespeare has been an uncommonly and uncannily fecund catalyst of this type of prophetic realization reduced to the terms that remain intelligible in the secularized modern era. In language that similarly resonates with mine, Agnes Heller concludes her book on Shakespeare as a philosopher of history entitled *The Time is Out of Joint* with a theory of "revelatory truth" in Shakespeare.[20] This truth is more of the nature of a religious rite than of a fact that can be checked and confirmed; it belongs to the order of poetic, rather than of historical, truth.

In a more analytic vein, and yet working in an apophatic or at least an aporetic spirit, Graham Priest emphasizes the "dialethic" in *Hamlet* as consisting in things that are both true and not true.[21] Hence, in the words of Hamlet's verses for Ophelia, in the poem which Polonius has confiscated and reads out loud to the court: "Doubt truth to be a liar" (II.ii.117). This equivocal type of revelation runs directly contrary to the Parmenidean dualism of Hamlet's philosophical signature: "To be or not to be" (cf. Cutrofello 2014, 17). It is incarnate, instead, in his response to the ghost: "Speak, I am bound to hear" (I.v.6), which expresses openness and adherence to the prophetic word of revelation as rightly commanding his existence.

Hamlet's opening words in the play deliver his categorical rejection of seeming: "Seems, madam? Nay, it is. I know not seems" (I.ii.75). Nevertheless, the whole revelatory action of the play is directed paradoxically toward ferreting out the truth that depends on "the actions that a man might play" (I.ii.84). Hamlet's inaugural dichotomy breaks down as pretending itself becomes intrinsic to revealing in the sense of the highest type of truth, prophetic truth.

It is crucial from my point of view that this negative aspect of knowledge open the path to a higher kind of knowledge that is figured within the play as "prophetic." It encompasses "thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls"

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19 My broader treatment of this topic, if I may be indulged in self-reference (in keeping with the theme), is found in *Dante's* Paradiso *and the Theological Origins of Modern Thought: Toward a Speculative Philosophy of Self-Reflection* (cf. Franke 2021a, especially 189–193).
20 Heller 2002, 370.
21 Priest 2008.

(I.iv.56). This kind of knowledge poses a challenge to philosophy of the modern sort rooted in self-reflective Cartesian doubt and requires the latter to learn a certain capability of self-negation. The core of self-reflexive certainty that Descartes's exercise in reflective doubt is designed to produce must learn to place its own self-certainty again recursively into doubt.

In responding to current events concerning the theatre, as he learns of them from Guildenstern and Rosencrantz, and citing whims of the people regarding royalty and its iconic images (the king's "picture in little"), Hamlet imagines a philosophy that could reach beyond merely natural knowledge: "'Sblood, there's something in this more than natural if philosophy could find it out." (II.ii.346–347.) This, again, opens a supra-natural perspective that I call "prophetic," but in a negative register defined as something "more than natural," and thus as *undefined* except in relation to the natural knowledge that it exceeds. Hamlet finds something exceedingly strange in ordinary human behavior itself—as mediated by popular images or idols and theatrical playacting.

This uncanniness has been interpreted by critics in a Hegelian spirit on the basis of Hegel's allusions at the end of his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* to the "old mole" breaking through to the sunlight.[22] Marx picked up eagerly on the low vulgar register and materialism of this reference. For Benjamin, following Marx, it is messianic, and Cutrofello follows them both in designating Hamlet as "a model of revolutionary agency" (2014, 99) that knows how to tarry with the negative. This sort of insight into a prophetic shattering of conventional knowledge and a revolution from below realized in poetic language will be picked up again and carried forward by modern poets in Hamlet's wake, notably by Stéphane Mallarmé.[23]

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22 Stallybrass 2001.
23 I pursue this further in "Mallarmé and the Negativity of Prophetic Revelation in Modern Literature" (Franke 2022).

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Tolerance in Utopian Discourse

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Abstract

In this article, the problem of tolerance is discussed with regard to some of the most important utopias in the European tradition, namely by Thomas More, Tommaso Campanella, and Francis Bacon. This allows us to show these works from the point of view of hidden paradoxes. Utopian discource, on the one hand, creates models of static, unchangeable, more or less homogeneous societies that remain separated from the world. On the other hand, tolerance means an attitude of openness towards diversity

and, thus, towards dialogue as well as the possibility of change. Nevertheless, tolerance within utopias appears under certain conditions. The article attempts to show how it is captured in particular utopian works and what additional meanings it reveals. The problem of tolerance can be a criterium for criticizing the utopian projects. This is the case with the twentieth-century concept of an open society by Karl Popper and with critical statements about it made by Leszek Kołakowski and Ryszard Legutko.

Keywords: tolerance, utopian discourse, open society, absolute ethics.

Toleranca v utopičnem diskurzu

Povzetek

V pričujočem članku problem tolerance obravnavamo z ozirom na nekatere izmed najpomembnejših utopij znotraj evropske tradicije, in sicer na spise Thomasa Mora, Tommasa Campanelle in Francisa Bacona. Takšna zastavitev nam omogoča, da tovrstna dela prikažemo z vidika skritih paradoksov. Utopični diskurz, na eni strani, ustvarja modele statične, nespremenljive, bolj ali manj homogene družbe, ki ostaja ločena od sveta. Na drugi strani, toleranca pomeni držo odprtosti za raznolikost in, potemtakem, tudi tako za dialog kot za možnost spremembe. Kljub temu se toleranca znotraj utopij pojavlja pod določenimi pogoji. Članek skuša pokazati, kako jo zajamejo posamezna utopična dela in kakšen dodatne pomene razkriva. Problem tolerance lahko postane kriterij za kritiko utopičnih projektov. Na takšen način je mogoče razumeti koncept odprte družbe Karla Popperja, izhajoč iz izkustva dvajsetega stoletja, in kritične misli o njem, kakršne sta podala Leszek Kołakowski and Ryszard Legutko.

Ključne besede: toleranca, utopični diskurz, odprta družba, absolutna etika.

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Given the rigid model of socio-political relations it embodies, Utopia at first glance seems to be incompatible with tolerance.[1] And yet, in modern visions of the ideal state and society, we can see a kind of interplay between Utopia and the notion of tolerance, whose meaning within this field of play is defined and valued in various ways. It can be argued that, to some extent, the idea of tolerance co-constructs the utopian dimension of the imagined societies. Yet, tolerance in Utopia remains difficult to be expressed unambiguously because it signifies openness to diversity and, thus, to dialogue and the possibility of change. Classical Utopia, in contrast, is a model for a static, more or less homogeneous society that is no longer evolving but rather ahistorical and closed. The sketches of Isaiah Berlin in *The Crooked Timber of Humanity* deconstruct the foundations underlying portrayals of Utopia. Referring to Kant, Berlin writes: "Out of the crooked timber of humanity, no straight thing was ever made." (Berlin 1997, 19.) He indirectly suggests that the inequalities in human nature require our acceptance of that which is imperfect and different. The need for tolerance emerges from such an understanding of humanity and a feeling of solidarity that arises precisely because of these differences. It is not tolerance that creates a community, although it is a needed element, but the recognition of a shared responsibility for the community, a willingness to cooperate, set common goals, and consent to necessary compromises despite differences, and, in many cases, a diversity of experiences.

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On the other hand, Utopia is based on a moral and intellectual universe marked by total compliance, uniformity, and social harmony. Berlin demonstrates the flaws of such a system. He contrasts monistic utopian philosophy with a pluralism of values, cultural horizons, and visions of the world, which inevitably conflict with one another. Hence, the need for tolerance, dialogue, and compromise that have no place in Utopia. And yet, the idea of tolerance can be found even here. What does tolerance mean in Utopia, and under what conditions is it possible? Do the principles, on which tolerance rests, give rise to dangers? Are they always automatically linked with a position

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1 The present essay discusses selected literary utopias. Its limited size does not allow it to address fully the corpus of texts that represent the history of images of the ideal state. It also omits, on principle, anti-utopian texts, since the aim here is to address the possibility of the existence of tolerance in positive projects in the context of utopian discourse.

of interpersonal solidarity? How do tolerance and solidarity contribute to our ideas about a well-organized social life?

Religious tolerance on the island of Utopia

In the European tradition, tolerance, alongside anthropocentrism, economic transformation, the Reformation, rationalism, and the development of liberal thought, has become a well-entrenched principle postulated within society. In Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), a foundational work for modern European Utopia and the idea of solidarity, there is no concept of tolerance. However, we find several remarks devoted to religious tolerance. For the modern reader, these remarks represent a kind of play with the notion of tolerance as a recognized value. In More, the interplay between tolerance and Utopia does not challenge the idea of a monistic worldview as a basic principle for an ideal society:

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> There are several sorts of religions, not only in different parts of the island but even in every town; some worshipping the sun, others the moon or one of the planets. Some worship such men as have been eminent in former times for virtue, or glory, not only as ordinary deities, but as the supreme god. (More 1997, 71.)

However, this vision of the pluralism of beliefs is shattered later in the text, when More writes: "yet the greater and wiser sort of them worship none of these, but adore one eternal, invisible, infinite, and incomprehensible Deity" (ibid.). The above description is reminiscent of the image of a single Christian faith, in which, besides the belief in one God, there are minor cults of the saints. This belief system is so similar to Christianity that the Utopians are very eager to be baptized once Hythloday and his companions begin to preach the gospel to them.

Stephen Greenblatt uses *Utopia* and other writings by More to show the complexity of his personality and his tendency to play with fictitious constructions that are useful for maintaining his high socio-political status in

the royal court of the King of England.[2] Preserved documents and writings show that, for More, political life was essentially an absurdity that required from the ruler the ability to impose his own fictions. Everything could prove to be uncertain, apparent, and ambiguous because it was based on irreconcilable differences in perspectives. This would also include the status of the vision in *Utopia*, the ambiguity of which can be seen in the name itself (*eutopos*— "good place," and *outopos*—"no place"), which also holds true for the notion of tolerance.

More's vision of religious tolerance is based on pluralism limited by the predominant homogeneous vision of the world, intrinsic to the dominant philosophy of the state, understood from a metaphysical perspective as the beautiful, wise, and harmonious work of a Supreme Being. Freedom of choice remains subject to certain conditions: 1.) no religious rites can invoke disregard for other denominations or cause unrest among people; 2.) there is no consent to atheistic beliefs; they will be severely punished. Utopia is, in fact, governed by a deeply religious concept of life that defines the entire system. It assumes the natural origin of (at least) the most important moral norms. These norms are known to every human being regardless of their faith, without God having to reveal them; a human being realizes them by means of reason through the experience of reality, which in itself is the work of the Creator. Hence, for example, advancements in the study of medicine provide the Utopians with a deep spiritual experience. They discover the hidden order in nature as "one of the pleasantest and most profitable parts of philosophy" (More 1997, 56).

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On the one hand, tolerance means a prohibition against violence as an unethical form of action (though atheists are punished). On the other hand, it is also a temporary concession in the name of a future unity of faith, in which rationality is that which is in accord with the essence of creation.

According to Jean Berenger's diagnosis of the problem of religious tolerance in Europe between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries,[3] a new attitude toward heresy appeared in the Catholic Church during the Renaissance, which departed from extreme intolerance and severe punishment that derived from

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2 Cf. S. Greenblatt 1980, 11–73.
3 Cf. Bérenger 2000.

the doctrine of St. Augustine. For him, heresy was a crime against God. Any diversity in beliefs was difficult to accept since faith was linked to the idea of the unity of the Church and state. It required recognition of heresy as a threat to the established social order (i.e., the doctrine of Justus Lipsius of the Netherlands, who proclaimed that religious pluralism leads to anarchy and even ruins the states). Bérenger notes that other Churches, especially the Calvinists and Lutherans, were also intolerant. More's writings reflected the spirit of his times, as tolerance in the sixteenth century was still a matter that was not so much personal and private but social and political. With humanism came the first Renaissance theorists of tolerance, such as Sebastian Castellion, who treated tolerance as a temporary solution, until personal example or persuasion (but without inhuman violence or discrimination), or the decisions of the anticipated Council of Trent, led to the return of the unity of faith. Because of the rise of individualism and the associated pluralism of worldviews in the public sphere, gradual changes taking place in the philosophy of knowledge (in particular, Giambattista Vico's and Pierre Bayle's approaches to history), and the negative effects of religious wars on the stability of the state a number of important works on tolerance appeared in the seventeenth century: John Locke's *A Letter Concerning Tolerance* in 1667 (tolerance is a demand of reason, not merely freedom of conscience), Baruch Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* in 1670, and Pierre Bayle's *Commentaire philosophique sur ces Paroles de Jésus-Christ: contrain-les d'entrer* in 1686, which later provided a model for Voltaire.[4]

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This may explain why More is so inconsistent in writing about tolerance in Utopia[5] or, rather, why he plays with the notion of tolerance. More

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4 Later, a revolution in philosophy was made through the works of Kant, whose categorical imperative treated issues of morality as decidedly individual, entirely dependent on the free choice of the individual acting independently of all natural or socio-cultural factors. Thus, faith in the existence of natural sources of morality, which is so important for More, is rejected. There is no morality without individuality, and, consequently, without pluralism and tolerance.

5 Over time, under pressure from the rise of individualism, various Christian denominations began preaching tolerance at the most basic level, namely, allowing one to hold any faith, other than Catholicism, in the name of freedom of conscience, but without the possibility of public practice. This intermediate level of tolerance allowed

understandable are, thus, also his generally monistic visions of an ideal state, in which there is no need for openness to that which deviates from the general social unity. We can find such utopias in the most famous utopias, including Tommaso Campanella's *The City of the Sun* (written in 1602, published in 1632) and Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* (written in 1624, published in 1627). Campanella's work is known primarily as an example of the total subordination of the individual to the state on the model of religious discipline. Religion in this project remains unified with secular authority (centered in one supreme figure, the Metaphysician), monotheistic, and organized around the worship of the Sun-God, based in many aspects on the doctrines of the Christian faith. However, Christ and the Twelve Apostles are worshiped in the City of the Sun only as superhumans alongside other great heroes and pagan gods, including Moses, Pythagoras, Lycurgus, Caesar, Hannibal, Osiris, Jupiter, and Mercury.[6] In *New Atlantis*, in contrast, Bacon holds out great hope for science and modern means of organization, which become an inherent element of the state's institutions. The sages of the most important institution on the island— Solomon's House—are greatly revered. Religious questions are resolved through faith in an apostolic revelation that occurred centuries earlier and was witnessed by the entire community of New Atlantis and is still accepted by all. The island is a Christian nation. What provides its inhabitants with an inner order and prosperity, is a secular science that cares not for the needs of the soul

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for private religious practices, but not public ones (temples without bells and squares outside of the town centre); however, accepting the privacy of the choice of religion eliminated restrictions on holding office or purchasing land and abolished privileges on the grounds of religion. This was first guaranteed in Europe by the so-called Edict of Toleration of 1781 issued by the Habsburg Emperor Joseph II, which recognized that faith, in accordance with natural law, was a matter of individual conscience and no authority had control over an individual's conscience. Therefore, one should protect the state against false dogmas, support one's own religion, and resolve disputes concerning faith through persuasion, not by means of terror or force. The highest degree of tolerance at the end of the eighteenth century allowed for full freedom in the public sphere as well, and was introduced in the Edict of Tolerance by Leopold II in 1791.

6 This sounds heretical: Campanella seems to see the origins of religious worship in the worship of great legends and heroes. In the writer's time, these concepts were known among the libertines in Italy and France.

but of the body. The Solomon House, a major research center that organizes modern studies and the development of science and technology, constitutes the source of the unity of life on Atlantis. The Monarch and the Senate oversee the organization of life. Still, it is the work of an independent community of scientists working with the ruler that ensures inner harmony and provides an orderly, objective image of the world accepted by all. This knowledge, based on the concept of one truth, expresses unity. Outsiders in these utopias can be tolerated as guests under certain conditions. But if they want to stay, they need to assimilate fully.

The works of More, Campanella, and Bacon offer images of a homogeneous society. They also testify to the diversity in the world that was growing increasingly palpable during the Renaissance, along with an increase in travel and new geographic discoveries, which reinforced the transformations taking place on the European continent. The Reformation and the rise of national languages were disrupting the old order. Moreover, travelers and sailors were discrediting the old—once viewed as exhaustive—catalog of minerals, plants, and animals. They showed that there were still many unknown species and forms. A reflection of this state of things can be seen in Campanella: the City of the Sun is surrounded by many rings of walls, each containing drawings, which are the basic source of information about the order of the world, its nature, structure, flora, and fauna: "On the fifth interior they have all the larger animals of the earth, as many in number as would astonish you. We indeed know not the thousandth part of them." (Campanella 2008, 11.) In Bacon, too, there is a need to constantly advance science, to collect new information, including facts about the world beyond New Atlantis. The experience of a changing image of the world seems to have been a gateway to the city/state of Utopia. The concept of an ideal state was, in part, a response to this situation.[7]

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7 Plato's *The Republic* represents, among other things, the philosopher's individual response to the crisis of Athenian politics, an attempt to counter the dissolution of the traditional sacred image of the world, in which social divisions, patterns of life, and the system of values remained deeply rooted in divine law. In the face of the old order's desecralization, Plato attempts to reconstruct a coherent whole by combining the plane of existence of an ideal society with the life of an ideal individual and the transcendent plane.

Emil Cioran interprets Utopia as a "fall into time"—that is, into history, which is opposed to the beauty of eternity. History separates humanity from the absolute, the original unity; in history, humanity creates an incoherent multiplicity—a source of evil. Utopias are, in this sense, a futile attempt to counter this fall and immerse ourselves in time.[8]

The utopia of tolerance achieved: the concept of the open society

In Poland, during the economic and political transformations that followed the collapse of communism, various democratic models for governing society grew in importance. Particularly inspirational were the ideas of Karl Popper, especially his work of political philosophy written during World War II, *The Open Society and its Enemies* (1945). In a search for a counterbalance to the totalitarianism that was then rampant, especially fascism, the philosopher created a vision of a liberal democratic state. Its society was characterized by an ideal attitude of openness to that which was Other or Alien. Openness became a synonym for tolerance. It was supposed to protect against violence and all social evil, not only between the state and the individual, but also on the level of interpersonal relations, outside of the institutional realm. This would be possible by adapting critical rationalism as a basis for life, as opposed to Utopian rationality, which was tainted by the sin of abstraction in its goals and the error of seeking all-encompassing methods. The genuine rationalist rejects the notion that knowledge and reason have a claim to power in society. He/she is aware of the limitations of his cognitive abilities and, like Socrates, knows very well that knowledge is born only in discourse with others, from which the equality of all people derives. Reason provides the glue that holds this together. In other words, reason stands in opposition to the instruments of power and violence. It is a means by which power and violence are limited. By concentrating on particular, concrete solutions, dialogue shows that tolerance is a fundamental condition for the functioning of an open society.

Popper's *The Open Society and its Enemies* is not a traditional literary utopia; rather, it represents an anti-utopian philosophical discourse, which is

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8 Cf. Cioran 1998.

opposed to various forms of totalitarianism, identified with a particular line of European thought, especially that of Plato, Hegel, and Marx. It is in these thinkers that Popper perceives dangerous threads of utopian thinking. Utopia, viewed in this way, is the cultural source of totalitarianism.

Popper's criticism of the concept of utopianism, however, points first to its simplistic dichotomous division between a closed society (understood as totalitarian) and the open society of liberal democracy—a society of free individuals who embrace the principle of tolerance as fundamental to coexistence, who are capable of dialogue and guided by rationalism (understood by Popper in a strictly defined way) in an effort to reach compromises.

For Leszek Kołakowski, the "open society/closed society" dichotomy is impossible to maintain. It is itself a false and utopian opposition (in the sense of being incompatible with the nature of reality). In his essay "The Self-Poisoning of the Open Society" (originally published in *Czy diabeł może być zbawiony* [*Can the Devil Be Saved*]; 1982), he states that the basic assumptions and values of the Popperian ideal, if implemented consistently, would paradoxically lead to their opposite, that is, to totalitarian forms and solutions. In other words, Kołakowski accuses Popper of not taking into account the "internal enemies" of the open society: internal threats that are inherent to its nature, the potential for the self-poisoning of society, the fact that the consistent realization of liberal principles transforms them into their opposite. The assumed need to defend those who are weaker against a ruthless free market, in which the stronger triumphs, can lead to an over-protective state, which, in the name of concern for social justice, will implement solutions that limit individuals and the free market.

It is equally difficult to maintain the principle of equality; we should speak instead of ensuring equal opportunities because its maximalist conception would require taking children from their families and raising them on equal terms in dormitories, in order to overcome the inequalities in their opportunities resulting from differences in their natural social environment. In terms of the question of tolerance and independence from tradition, an open society, like any other, cannot exist without tradition. The process of upbringing without authority is incompatible with human nature and the needs of living individuals. Kołakowski explains:

>	To educate people to be tolerant and unselfish, to overcome tribal customs in favor of universal moral standards, cannot be done without the strong base of a traditional authority, which up till now has derived from the great universal religions […] the institutions which make the survival of the pluralist society possible—the legal system, the school, the family, the university, the market—are attacked by totalitarian forces using liberal slogans, in the name of freedom […] unlimited freedom for everyone means unlimited rights for the strong or, according to Dostoyevsky, in the end, absolute freedom equals absolute slavery. (Kolakowski 1990, 172.)

Tolerance, however, does not necessarily mean indifference and the disintegration of social bonds. Kołakowski sees how difficult it is to defend the pluralist order without using methods contrary to its essence. But he believes in the existence of a boundary, beyond which we destroy the open model of social life. Pluralism does not mean that there are no defined values; it is not free of valuation. It requires a kind of heroism resulting from being conscious of the values that underlie the pluralist order and from a psychological readiness to defend them.

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Pluralism can lead to the degeneration of the principle of tolerance. Democracy must remain in a precarious balance—constantly revalorized in response to specific social, political, and other situations—, a balance between relativism and absolutism. Kołakowski's text about the self-poisoning of the open society was written in 1979. When Poland began the process of democratization in 1989, it became a common experience to discover the dark side of liberal democracy distorted by the manner, in which it was implemented in post-communist societies. At that time, the utopianism of Popper's concept was rediscovered all the more powerfully.

In his 1994 book *Etyka absolutna i społeczeństwo otwarte* [*Absolute Ethics and an Open Society*], Ryszard Legutko expressly advocates the need to recognize absolute values. He accuses Popper, among others, of focusing exclusively on procedural issues rather than on values. Legutko then describes the ideas of traditional politics formulated by Plato in *The Republic* and Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. These works indicate the chief task of

politics, which is to realize the supreme good that takes precedence over the good and goals of individuals. Even liberal thinkers of the past (such as Adam Smith or Benjamin Franklin) recognized that, beyond the existence of a free market and the principle of unrestricted economic activity (*laissez-faire*), there was a higher capitalist ethics. Ethics was superior to the principles of the free market. The coexistence of diverse groups and attitudes meant that, by necessity, there would be constant conflicts and a need for negotiations or struggles to achieve consensus, which consisted of recognizing one of these attitudes and worldviews as dominant and ruling.

Consequently, tolerance was understood passively—as refraining from violence against the Other, the Alien. This is the concept of negative tolerance derived from the work of Locke and Voltaire. Yet, John Stuart Mill introduced a new, active understanding of tolerance—it was positive, based on engagement and fighting for the freedom to that which deviates from the norm. This concept later co-created, according to Legutko, a utopia that was no longer liberalism but libertarianism. Its vision of society was to be similar to that of a department store, offering different ideas, patterns, and values commercially. From this perspective, we can see how two ideas of tolerance and interpersonal solidarity can be distinguished. Legutko emphasizes that an absolute ethics, an absolute good, was replaced by an individually defined notion of good suited to one's private purposes, which the conservative author claims is attractive to religious and sexual minorities. There should be no conflicts or negotiations; the best solution is an even greater diversity that eliminates tensions and operates according to the principle of absolute freedom of choice (hence, the similarities between libertarianism and anarchism, though one cannot be equated with the other). This leads to a schizophrenic situation: within the group, in which he/she functions, the individual accepts its internal and ideological order, as well as its underlying universality. In social relations outside the group with a wider, diverse, and equal society, they accept moral and ideological relativism, free of any hierarchy. This ultimately destroys the inner bond between the individual and their group and leads to the acceptance of relativism as the only credible solution and nihilism. This will destroy both true diversity and the identity of the individual, leading to the disappearance of culture, which, Legutko emphasizes, must be based on universally recognized values.

Tolerance does not have just one meaning; as one of the basic principles of interpersonal coexistence and politics in an open society, it can paradoxically lead to a "terror of tolerance." This is the case when it ceases to function in connection with the idea of solidarity and with such virtues as understanding, compassion, kindness, responsibility, tact, good manners, justice, generosity, or curiosity about the world.

One can disagree with Kołakowski's critical approach to Legutko's conservatism. Still, their considerations independently lead to the conclusion that, alongside postulates and procedures, in our efforts to achieve tolerance, the importance of solidarity and responsibility must also be emphasized at both the social as well as the economic levels, and, even more broadly, at the existential level. Without this, the principles underlying tolerance will not strengthen our sense of security and social justice, which are essential to us.

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The Interweaving of Life and Text
Authorial Inscription and Readerly Self-Understanding Exemplified in *Les Fleurs du mal*

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Abstract

The present article attempts to make explicit the existential dimension of a canonical literary text: Baudelaire's *The Flowers of Evil*. This work is chosen because it transmits a series of disturbing existential assertions; that is, it is used, in the present context, to investigate Gadamer's thesis of the reader achieving a new self-understanding through the text. By taking both the author's as well as the reader's positions into account in the interpretation, the intention is furthermore to explore the dialogical situation that

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Gadamer highlights in the understanding process. In order to achieve this, focus is put on the notion of subjectivity in the context of Romanticism and Kierkegaard's existential philosophy. The contribution is structured as follows: first, an overview is provided with respect to the development of the notion of subjectivity from Kant to Kierkegaard. After this, the existential aspects of *Les Fleurs du mal* are analyzed.

Keywords: hermeneutics, literature and philosophy, author, Gadamer, Baudelaire.

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Prepletanje življenja in besedila. Avtorska inskripcija in bralsko samo-razumevanje, kakor ju ponazarjajo *Les Fleurs du mal*

Povzetek

Pričujoči članek skuša razgrniti eksistencialno razsežnost kanoničnega literarnega besedila: Baudelairovih *Rož zla*. Delo je bilo izbrano, ker predoča niz vznemirljivih eksistencialnih trditev; tj. v pričujočem kontekstu ga uporabljamo z namenom raziskave Gadamerjeve teze, da bralec s pomočjo besedila lahko doseže novo samo-razumevanje. Pri interpretaciji upoštevamo tako avtorjevo kot bralčevo pozicijo, s čimer želimo raziskati dialoško situacijo, kakor jo znotraj procesa razumevanja osvetljuje Gadamer. Za takšen namen se osredotočimo na pojmovanje subjektivitete v kontekstu romantike in Kierkegaardove eksistencialne filozofije. Prispevek je strukturiran na naslednji način: najprej podamo pregled razvoja pojmovanja subjektivitete od Kanta do Kierkegaarda. Potem analiziramo eksistencialne vidike *Les Fleurs du mal*.

Ključne besede: hermenevtika, literatura in filozofija, avtor, Gadamer, Baudelaire.

Qu'est-ce que l'art pur suivant la conception moderne ? C'est créer une magie suggestive contenant à la fois l'objet et le sujet, le monde extérieur à l'artiste et l'artiste lui-même.

Charles Baudelaire: « L'Art philosophique »

But you're gonna have to serve somebody, yes indeed
You're gonna have to serve somebody
Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord
But you're gonna have to serve somebody

Bob Dylan: "Gotta Serve Somebody"

Textual interpretation allows for a focus on different aspects. It can aim at determining the author's intention, it can aim at analyzing the text as an autonomous linguistic artefact, or it can aim at working out an understanding in a historical perspective. These three aims correspond to the elements of the most basic model of communication: sender—message—receiver. Today, if an interpretation is to claim validity, the reading must include an awareness of the work's historical context. Furthermore, and very much due to Hans-Georg Gadamer's influential work, it is not only necessary to put the text in a historical perspective, the interpreter must also be conscious of the historical situatedness of any reading. The historicity of understanding—the fact that we are embedded in a tradition that forms our prejudices as regards the reading of any given text—is an unavoidable condition for interpretation. Furthermore, Gadamer's emphasis on tradition leads him to understand interpretation as a process that, in a certain way, is like a dialogue:

> In this sense understanding is certainly not concerned with "understanding historically"—i.e., reconstructing the way the text came into being. Rather, one intends to *understand the text itself*. But this means that the interpreter's own thoughts too have gone into re-awakening the text's meaning. In this the interpreter's own horizon is decisive, yet not as a personal standpoint that he maintains or enforces,

but more as an opinion and a possibility that one brings into play and puts at risk, and that helps one truly to make one's own what the text says. I have described this above as a "fusion of horizons." We can now see that this is what takes place in conversation, in which something is expressed that is not only mine or my author's, but common. (Gadamer 2004, 390.)

On the one hand, interpretation takes place as an interaction between the text and the interpreter, but, on the other hand, understanding eventually crystallizes in the receiving I:

> For the interpreting word is the word of the interpreter; it is not the language and the dictionary of the interpreted text. This means that assimilation is no mere reproduction or repetition of the traditionary text; it is a new creation of understanding. If emphasis has been— rightly—placed on the fact that all meaning is related to the I, this means, as far as the hermeneutical experience is concerned, that all the meaning of what is handed down to us finds its concretion (i.e., is understood) in its relation to the understanding I—and not in reconstructing the originally intending I. (Gadamer 2004, 468.)

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Consequently, Gadamer regards interpretation as an encounter that concerns the reader because it, in one way or another, addresses the reader's self-understanding. Interpretation is, as Gadamer asserts, an *occurrence* of meaning that causes a self-questioning and self-understanding activity on the part of the receiver:

> Seen from the point of view of the interpreter, "occurrence" means that he is not a knower seeking an object, "discovering" by methodological means what was really meant and what the situation actually was, though slightly hindered and affected by his own prejudices. This is only an external aspect of the actual hermeneutical occurrence. It motivates the indispensible methodological discipline one has toward oneself. But the actual occurrence is made possible only because the word that

has come down to us as tradition and to which we are to listen really encounters us and does so as if it addressed us and is concerned with us. I have elaborated this aspect of the situation above as the hermeneutical logic of the question and shown how the questioner becomes the one who is questioned and how the hermeneutical occurrence is realized in the dialectic of the question. (Gadamer 2004, 457.)

This self-reflection, however, grows out of another person's utterance, and, for this reason, it can be a necessary part of the interpretation to consider the author's inscription in the text. Even if Gadamer insists on the fact that understanding cannot attempt to recuperate the author's intention, some literary texts include the authorial perspective to such an extent that it must be taken into account as part of what is to be interpreted. In the field of literary studies, however, this is a controversial stance.

As regards literary scholarship, the relation between the author's biography and the interpretation of the text is an old problem. Historically, a considerable change of attitude has taken place with respect to the relevance of biographical information for the understanding of the literary work. If the nineteenth century saw the golden age of biographical studies,[1] most of the theoretical approaches of the twentieth century rejected the use of information about the author for the interpretation of the literary text. The ideal for the most influential twentieth-century literary theories, such as the New Criticism and Structuralism, was the autonomous reading, according to which biography is at best superfluous and at worst misleading for the interpretation. Subsequent theoretical currents continued this methodological principle initiated by the New Criticism. Even if biographical information is used in contemporary race/class/gender studies, the intention there is to clarify the author's position as regards possible stereotyped otherings, not to use the writer's individuality in the readings. None of the wide

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1 On the one hand appears Sainte-Beuve's biographical method; on the other, Dilthey's emphasis on the notion of experience (*Erlebnis*) as the epistemological basis for the human sciences. In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer criticizes the idea that the aim of interpretation is to reach the *Erlebnis* behind the specific work. Also, one of the main theoreticians of the New Criticism, René Wellek, dismissed the notion of *Erlebnis* and its use for literary studies in a famous article (Wellek 1970).

variety of literary theories that have appeared since the New Criticism have made a serious effort to include biographical information about the author into the analysis. This contrasts with the large contemporary literary output which contains explicit autobiographical elements. In the literary genre called *autofiction* (a condensation of the terms "autobiography" and "fiction"), the author appears as a character in the text identified as the actually existing individual, with the same name and biographical features as in reality. In contrast to autobiography, however, there is no "pledge of allegiance" to veracity; that is, what is told in such a text might be true or might be fiction. The appearance of this genre should be taken as a symptom of our departure from a paradigm that understands the literary work as an autonomous entity; that is, the aesthetic sphere is no longer perceived as radically separated from the life-world and its moral, social, and political dilemmas.

250 In a philosophical perspective, the question of the author is related to that of the subject in the tradition from Descartes to Kant and Kierkegaard. During this period, thinking builds upon an epistemologically self-positing and world-generating subjectivity (Habermas). Romanticism produced a hyperbolic image, so to speak, of this powerful subject in the creator genius. As regards the development of the philosophy of the subject, the exhaustion of Idealism entailed that the situatedness and finitude of subjectivity became highlighted. Kierkegaard's philosophy is a clear example of this development. In the following, this development of the notion of subjectivity will be sketched out and afterwards it will be put in relation to Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal.* This historical framework will in turn be related to the hermeneutical possibilities of including the sender's position in the interpretation of the literary text. Establishing the relation back to the inscribed author may be necessary if Gadamer's idea—that the text concerns the reader and compels him/her to a self-understanding at an existential level—is to be consistently followed.[2] If the author is explicitly inscribed in the text, then his/her—possibly

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2 "Since we meet the artwork in the world and encounter a world in the individual artwork, the work of art is not some alien universe into which we are magically transported for a time. Rather, we learn to understand ourselves in and through it, and this means that we sublate (aufheben) the discontinuity and atomism of isolated experiences in the continuity of our own existence." (Gadamer 2004, 83.)

autobiographical, possibly autofictional—I is relevant in order to assess the existential questions that a given text might address to the reader.

Subjectivity from Kant to Kierkegaard

Kant operates with the distinction between empirical and transcendental subject, according to which the empirical subject is the specific, individual I with its physical and psychological characteristics, while the transcendental I—the unifying condition, under which all experience takes place—is empirically and psychologically blank. This latter subjectivity organizes and gives unity to experience, but is empty of any content and cannot be identified with the existing, empirical individual. In other words, the concrete individual is uninteresting for Kant's epistemology. On the other hand, in his *Critique of Judgment*, Kant operates with the notion of the genius, who is characterized by being able to make a work of art appear as if it were a product of nature: "Genius is the inborn predisposition of the mind (ingenium) through which nature gives the rule to art." (KU AA 307.) The genius exhibits the free play of imagination and understanding in an exemplary way because the work of art appears as if determined by a rule, even if this rule is not based on any concept. This is explained when Kant assigns to the genius the capacity to discover aesthetic ideas: "by an aesthetic idea […] I mean that representation of the imagination that occasions much thinking though without it being possible for any determinate thought, i.e., concept, to be adequate to it, which, consequently, no language fully attains or can make intelligible" (KU AA 314). An aesthetic idea is the counterpart of a rational idea, which is a notion, produced by speculative reason, that cannot be verified empirically (God, the soul, or the world as a totality). By means of an aesthetic idea, a rational idea appears to the reader or beholder of the work of art, and, in this way, aesthetic ideas refer obliquely to spiritual and metaphysical notions. Something impossible to experience thus becomes accessible for the mind.

With respect to what is to follow, three points should be highlighted. In the first place, that from Kant onwards, imagination is considered an essentially free faculty of mind. Secondly, that the notion of the artist as a universal voice transmitting profound insights continues throughout the nineteenth and

twentieth centuries. Thirdly, the idea that art is a source of representation that challenges conceptual thinking. A work of art cannot be reduced to a series of notional phrases without losing its essence, but, at the same time, the aesthetic output has an epistemological world-opening function. In Kant's expression, it "occasions much thinking." Charles Taylor has condensed the post-Kantian notion of the artist in the following way:

> Thus a view has come down to us from the Romantics which portrays the artist as one who offers epiphanies where something of great moral or spiritual significance becomes manifest—and what is conveyed by this last disjunction is just the possibility that what is revealed lies beyond and against what we normally understand as morality. The artist is an exceptional being, open to a rare vision; the poet is a person of exceptional sensibility. (Taylor 1989, 423.)

At the same time, these artistic *epiphanies* are not expression of the person as such, because

> we can't understand what it is qua epiphany by pointing to some independently available object described or referent. What the work reveals has to be read in it. Nor can it be adequately explained in terms of the author's intentions, because even if we think of these as definitive of a work's meaning, they themselves are properly revealed only in the work. And that being so, the work must be understood independently of whatever intentions the author has formulated in relation to it. (Taylor 1989, 420.)

That is, with respect to the interpretation of the work of art, a profound ambivalence is the legacy of post-Kantian aesthetics. Even if the understanding of art as epiphany moves the focus away from the author, at the same time the idea of the genius as a privileged—divine—individual is an invitation to indulge in the biographical hermeneutics that characterized nineteenth-

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century literary interpretation.[3] Should the understanding relate to the author's personality and experiences or are these factors irrelevant for the interpretation of the work? This ambivalence led to the polarity in the interpretative practices in literary scholarship, which was very briefly sketched out in the above: either the author becomes the cornerstone of the analysis, or he/she is expelled from what can be regarded as a valid interpretation. In addition, it is logical that metapoetic reflection appeared as a central motif in the literary output from Romanticism onwards. The poetic text is, on the one hand, epiphanic and thus extremely valuable; on the other hand, it is opaque even for its creator. Consequently, this led the poets to reflect upon their work and to write poetry on poetry. The poetic act became a theme in itself.

The notion of subjectivity reached a culmination with Hegel's absolute idealism. Hegel considers that the subject achieves being thanks to a world-spirit that carries out a self-revelation through the course of history. A world-historical system is constructed that, through the dialectical activity of thought itself, mediates and synthesizes the dualities of subjectivity and objectivity, thinking and being, theory and practice, individual and universal, etc. Through this self-conscious reason, Hegel argues, subject and Spirit are unified, and every alienation is overcome. In this way, then, Hegel considers that the subject is able to achieve fullness of being.

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One critique of Hegel's idealism is that it takes place entirely in the domain of thought and leaves reality untouched. Kierkegaard wrote a famous comment on Hegel's system:

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3 Abrams notes the hybrid character of the relation between author and work that appeared with Romanticism: "The total poem, hitherto an image of manners and life, has become 'a dangerous betrayer of its author.' But what was the source of the interesting and important romantic variant of this concept, that poetry is not a direct but an indirect and disguised expression of the author's temperament—and therefore, that the author is at the same time in, and not in his poem? It can be shown, I think, that this critical paradox, in its early appearance, was theological in its origin, and Kantian in the philosophical vocabulary by which it was justified." (Abrams 1971, 236.) The cause of the mentioned ambivalence, with respect to the role of biography in the interpretative practice until today, is to be found in this combination of Kantian notions and the analogy author/God—which is the theological aspect alluded to by Abrams.

A thinker erects a huge building, a system, a system embracing the whole of existence, world history, etc., and if his personal life is considered, to our amazement the appalling and ludicrous discovery is made that he himself does not personally live in this huge, domed palace but in a shed alongside it, or in a doghouse, or at best in the janitor's quarters. (Kierkegaard 1980, 43–44.)

The image of the philosopher who constructs a palace of ideas, but lives in a doghouse means that Hegel has not thought life into his system. Life cannot be dissolved in abstract thinking. On the contrary, existence can only manifest itself from the inner perspective of the individual. One must turn to specific existence and forget the recourse to a pure thinking that in the end means a loss of self.[4] This will be the contribution of Existentialism by means of its insistence on the individual: the affirmation of the existing, concrete person. According to Kierkegaard, the individual must awaken from the slumber of living without an ideal guiding the acts and life-course, and must choose an *existential position* that endows meaning to existence. The function of the well-known Kierkegaardian stages—the aesthetical, the ethical, and the religious stages—is precisely to illustrate the life that each position leads to. The aesthete finds the meaning of existence in beauty and sensual pleasure, the ethical person finds sense in living a rightful life that can be useful for others, while the religious existential position is passionately devoted to the relationship with the infinite, with God.

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4 With reference to Schleiermacher and Humboldt, but concerning also Hegel, Gadamer describes the relation between finite subject and infinite consciousness in these thinkers as follows: "However much they emphasize the individuality, the barrier of alienness, that our understanding has to overcome, understanding ultimately finds its fulfillment only in an infinite consciousness, just as the idea of individuality finds its ground there as well. The fact that all individuality is pantheistically embraced within the absolute is what makes possible the miracle of understanding. Thus here too being and knowledge interpenetrate each other in the absolute. Neither Schleiermacher's nor Humboldt's Kantianism, then, affirms an independent system distinct from the consummation of speculative idealism in the absolute dialectic of Hegel. The critique of reflective philosophy that applies to Hegel applies to them also." (Gadamer 2004, 337.)

A Kierkegaardian type that is relevant in the present context is that of the poet, which can be identified with the aesthete. In his doctoral dissertation, *The Concept of Irony, With Continual Reference to Socrates*, Kierkegaard, prefiguring his mature thinking, examines his own contemporary philosophical and literary tendencies. Among other topics, he discusses what he calls "to live poetically" (Kierkegaard 1989, 280), which is to let the imagination be the primary vital force. From Kierkegaard's viewpoint, this is, however, a mistake because he considers that the Romantics have transferred the Idealist epistemologically self-positing and world-generating I to subjectivity globally and uncritically, thus producing a notion of the subject able to create the world and itself at will.[5] In the following citation—where "ironist" means "Romanticist"—, Kierkegaard represents Romantic subjectivity in a parodical way:[6]

> Our God is in heaven and does whatever he pleases; the ironist is on earth and does whatever he desires. […] But we turn back to the earlier comment that it is one thing to let oneself be poetically composed and another thing to compose oneself poetically. An individual who lets himself be poetically composed does have a definite given context into which he has to fit and thus does not become a word without meaning because it is wrenched out of its associations. But for the ironist, this context, which he would call a demanding appendix, has no validity, and since it is not his concern to form himself in such a way that he fits into his environment, then the environment must be formed to fit him—in other words, he poetically composes not only himself but he poetically composes his environment also. (Kierkegaard 1989, 282–283.)

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Kierkegaard is evidently himself ironical in this representation of the Romantic notion of poetic subjectivity as one that imitates God's being as a self-sufficient creator. This subjectivity was referred to above as a hyperbolic

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5 Scholarship has shown how Kierkegaard in this way follows Hegel's critique of the Romantic assimilation of Fichtean subjectivity (cf. Stewart 2003, 172–173).

6 In a footnote, Kierkegaard explains: "Throughout this whole discussion I use the terms 'irony' and 'ironist'; I could just as well say 'romanticism' and 'romanticist'." (Kierkegaard 1989, 275.)

image of the world-generating consciousness of the philosophy of the subject. At the same time, in this citation, another, more positive understanding of poetic subjectivity appears: that of letting oneself be formed in keeping with one's circumstances. This latter understanding of poetic self-forming is a prefiguration of the demand that Kierkegaard will put forward in his later work. Life is a task to be undertaken, and an authentic existence can only be achieved by accepting this task, which—if accomplished—will elevate the individual from an empty life to a meaningful existence. Only when the individual finds something to live and die for, only by means of such a passionate engagement, does life achieve a density of meaning.

In the work *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, Kierkegaard elaborates on the question of the passionate relation to existence: "Objectively, the question is only about categories of thought; subjectively, about inwardness. At its maximum, this 'how' is the passion of the infinite, and the passion of the infinite is the very truth. But the passion of the infinite is precisely subjectivity, and thus subjectivity is truth." (Kierkegaard 2013, 203.) Since the human being is not a pure thinking consciousness, but a finite subject, the individual's interest is to transcend temporality in order to achieve a relationship with the infinite, that is, with God. Through a passionate inwardness can a momentary synthesis of finite and infinite be experienced, which in turn can support existence. This has to be understood as another Kierkegaardian critique as regards Hegelian thinking; namely, to underscore the philosophical importance of human finitude. By asserting an essential bond between subjectivity and finitude, Kierkegaard takes the step away from the ambition to unify thought and being, and turns instead to the specific individual's search for truth in subjectivity and the leap towards God. Later thinkers such as Nietzsche or Sartre would maintain that the human being should accept an ontological nihilism and engage passionately with life in spite of uncertainty and relativity. The three philosophers agree, however, on regarding subjectivity as a living reality that cannot fit into an exclusively rational system. If a genuine self-understanding is to be achieved, it must take the extra-rational aspects of existence into account.

The relevance of this facet of Kierkegaard's thinking in the present context is that, on the one hand, it shows the development of the philosophy of

the subject towards focusing on the concrete, finite individual, and, on the other, highlights the existential aspects of subjectivity. Existentialism and its emphasis on subjective finitude constitutes one important presupposition of hermeneutic philosophy.[7] In *Truth and Method*, tragedy appears as the literary genre that conveys the insight that finitude is an existential condition:

> The spectator recognizes himself and his own finiteness in the face of the power of fate. What happens to the great ones of the earth has an exemplary significance. Tragic pensiveness does not affirm the tragic course of events as such, or the justice of the fate that overtakes the hero but rather a metaphysical order of being that is true for all. To see that "this is how it is" is a kind of self-knowledge for the spectator, who emerges with new insight from the illusions in which he, like everyone else, lives. The tragic affirmation is an insight that the spectator has by virtue of the continuity of meaning in which he places himself. (Gadamer 2004, 128.)

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Existential self-understanding is to take place through the canon of *Weltliteratur*, wherein a series of exemplary truths have crystallized. The subject can only understand itself through a reinterpretation of tradition, that is, by means of assimilation of the canon. According to Gadamer, then, the dialectic of finite and infinite consciousness is open-ended, because tradition will never crystallize in a closed, absolute knowledge, but is in permanent re-creation. This gives, at the same time, a specific frame for the individual to form itself: that of the historical present understood on the basis of tradition. This question will be explored in the following with Baudelaire's *The Flowers of Evil*.

Charles Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal*

One important thematic strand in *The Flowers of Evil* is metapoetic. The lyrical subject speaking in this work is a poet who often reflects upon

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7 From a historical perspective, it can be asserted that "[e]xistentialism, which is the premise for a philosophy of interpretation, is born out of the radical dissolution of Hegelianism" (Ferraris 1996, 193).

the poetic activity itself. From a methodological perspective, it is certainly reasonable to consider the subject enunciating a poem as a *persona* who should not be identified directly with the historical author. A collection of poems is not under the rule of an *autobiographical pact* (Philippe Lejeune), which unequivocally identifies the author with the voice uttering the text. At the same time, as argued above, if the sender is inscribed in the text, this is part of the semantic totality and should thus be incorporated into the interpretation. With respect to *The Flowers of Evil*, given the references to mid-nineteenth-century Paris, just as to events and persons related to Baudelaire, it seems acceptable to identify the lyrical subject of this work as an autofictional representation of the empirical Baudelaire.[8] Consequently, in the following the lyrical subject of *The Flowers of Evil* will be called Baudelaire, just as this autofictional character will be referred to with the personal pronoun "he."

In his interpretation of this work, Rincé considers the travel a fitting metaphor of the book's structure, that is, *The Flowers of Evil* can be regarded as an itinerary, with a beginning and an end, through a world of poetic visions (Rincé 1984, 29–33). This voyage is organized in six parts. The first section of the book has the title "Spleen and the Ideal," after which appear "Parisian Scenes," "Wine," "Flowers of Evil," "Revolt," and "Death." The itinerary can furthermore be regarded as produced by an initial state of tension between desire for purity and the spleen, caused by the sense of belonging to a fallen reality. At the beginning, the poet hopes to reach the ideal by means of poetry, but as the book progresses the impossibility of this striving becomes clear. Consequently, given the impossibility of achieving purity, in the four central sections the reader encounters the perverse "artificial paradises" that take over the scene. The last part of the book, "Death," closes it in an ambiguous way, both giving in to "Death, old captain," but at the same time representing this

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8 Laura Scarano (Scarano 2014) has applied the term *autofiction* to the poetic genre as a whole, an equation to which I adhere. Similarly, in his book on Baudelaire, Jean-Paul Sartre dwells upon the poet's imposture since Sartre too considers that Baudelaire consciously performed a selfhood that unified his life and his poetry (Sartre 1964, 145–53 and 183–85). This ambivalence between the autobiographical I and its *persona* is encompassed by the term autofiction.

surrender as an opening towards "the Unknown" and "the *new*." This appears in the last lines of the work, which envisage an expedition to the abyss ("au fond du gouffre") and to the unknown in order to reach something new:[9]

Ô Mort, vieux capitaine, il est temps ! levons [l'ancre !	O Death, old captain, time to make our trip!
Ce pays nous ennuie, ô Mort! Appareillons !	This country bores us, Death! Let's get away!
Si le ciel et la mer sont noirs comme de l'encre,	Even if sky and sea are black as pitch
Nos coeurs que tu connais sont remplis de [rayons !	You know our hearts are full of sunny rays!
Verse-nous ton poison pour qu'il nous [reconforte !	Serve us your poison, sir, to treat us well!
Nous voulons, tant ce feu nous brûle le [cerveau,	Minds burning, we know what we have to do,
Plonger au fond du gouffre, Enfer ou Ciel, [qu'importe ?	And plunge to depths of Heaven or of Hell,
Au fond de l'Inconnu pour trouver du [nouveau !	To fathom the Unknown, and find the new!
(Baudelaire 1993, 292.)	(Baudelaire 1993, 293.)

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If the split between spleen and desire for purity triggered the poetic creation, then the work's closure can be understood as an opening towards the infinite continuation of the imaginative activity.[10] This ending is in keeping

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9 *The Flowers of Evil* was first published in 1857. A trial that same year condemned six poems for offending public morals. Most of the first edition was confiscated, and for this reason Baudelaire published a second edition in 1861 without the condemned texts, but with new poems added. In both the 1857 and the 1861 editions, the lines quoted in what follows finish the section "Death" and the entire work. *The Flowers of Evil* that appeared in 1868, one year after Baudelaire's death, was edited by his friends Charles Asselineau and Théodore de Banville. They added two more sections after "Death," one with the title "The Waifs" (which was a book that Baudelaire published in Belgium in 1866), and the section "Additional Poems from the Third Edition of *The Flowers of Evil*." The 1868 edition can, in consequence, not be considered the work that Baudelaire envisaged, but a publication that, with a philological attitude, aims to recuperate as much material as possible. In sum, the work as a finished totality must be considered as ending with the lines quoted in what follows.

10 Jean-Pierre Richard considers the tension between opposites—in a wider sense

with the book's metapoetic thematic strand, given that the poet is unable to free himself from a corrupt reality, and the only solution is to continue creating new imaginary worlds. In keeping with this interpretation, the abyss can be regarded as a metaphor for the depths of the imagination, the only capacity that in a reality devoid of meaning and beauty can provide moments of plenitude.

In this way, a subjectivity very similar to Kierkegaard's aesthete emerges from the pages of *The Flowers of Evil*: a passionate individual who lets the imagination create a poetic world pervaded by his emotional disposition. The poet thus constructs fantastic universes without connection to reality, or, rather, with the aim of escaping the real. The following poem describes the vocation to poetry and underscores the aforementioned understanding of poetic creation:

LA VOIX

Mon berceau s'adossait à la bibliothèque,
Babel sombre, où roman, science, fabliau,
Tout, la cendre latine et la poussière grecque,
Se mêlaient. J'étais haut comme un in-folio.
Deux voix me parlaient. L'une, insidieuse et
    [ferme,
Disait : « La Terre est un gâteau plein de douceur;
Je puis (et ton plaisir serait alors sans terme !)
Te faire un appétit d'une égale grosseur. »
Et l'autre : « Viens ! oh ! viens voyager dans les
    [rêves,
Au-delà du possible, au-delà du connu ! »

THE VOICE

My cradle rocked below the stacks of books—
That Babel of instructions, novels, verse
Where Roman rubbish mixed with Grecian
    [dust.
I was no taller than a folio,
But heard two voices. One, beguiling, bold
Proclaimed, 'The world is just a sweetened cake!
And I, to give you endless joy, offer
You appetite to take it in a bite!'
But then the other: 'Come, dream-voyager,

Beyond the possible, beyond the known!'

than exclusively between spleen and desire for purity—to be the generator of poetry in *The Flowers of Evil*: "Ainsi voit-on l'homme baudelairien lui-même se partager toujours entre désir et nostalgie, espoir et souvenir, tâchant de les rejoindre l'un à l'autre, « aspirant sans cesse à *réchauffer ses espérances*, et à s'élever vers l'infini ». Qu'elle parvienne à faire circuler entre passé et avenir ces courants de chaleur, cette continuité d'existence, qu'elle puisse relier en profondeur l'ombre intérieure à l'obscurité des choses, qu'elle réussisse enfin à faire rejaillir de l'insondable la joie d'une réalité toute neuve, et l'imagination baudelairienne aura pleinement accompli sa tâche : elle aura démontré l'infinie *fécondité* du gouffre." (Richard 1955, 103–104; emphasis in original.)

Et celle-là chantait comme le vent des grèves,
Fantôme vagissant, on ne sait d'où venu,
Qui caresse l'oreille et cependant l'effraie.
Je te répondis : «Oui ! douce voix ! » C'est d'alors

Que date ce qu'on peut, hélas ! nommer ma plaie
Et ma fatalité. Derrière les décors
De l'existence immense, au plus noir de l'abîme,
Je vois distinctement des mondes singuliers,
Et, de ma clairvoyance extatique victime,
Je traîne des serpents qui mordent mes souliers.
Et c'est depuis ce temps que, pareil aux prophètes,
J'aime si tendrement le désert et la mer ;
Que je ris dans les deuils et pleure dans les fêtes,
Et trouve un goût suave au vin le plus amer ;
Que je prends très souvent les faits pour des
[mensonges,
Et que, les yeux au ciel, je tombe dans des trous.
Mais la Voix me console et dit : « Garde tes
[songes ;
Les sages n'en ont pas d'aussi beaux que les
[fous ! »

(Baudelaire 1993, 312.)

And that one chanted like the seaside wind,
A wailing phantom out of God knows where,
Caressing, yet still frightening the ear.
I answered, 'Yes, sweet voice!' And from that
[time,

That date, my wound was named, my fate was
sealed. Behind the scenery of this immense
Existence, through abysmal blackness, I
Distinctly see the wonder of new worlds,
And, fervid victim of my clairvoyance,
I walk with serpents striking at my shoes.
And it is since that time that, prophet-like,
I love so tenderly the desert wastes;
I laugh in pain and cry on holidays
And tempt my palate with the sourest wine;
I take for truth what others call a lie

And, eyes to heaven, trip into a ditch.
But then my voice says, 'Madman, keep your
[dreams;
The wise have nothing beautiful as they!'

(Baudelaire 1993, 313.)

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In this text, the previously mentioned dichotomy between spleen and ideal has been substituted by another one consisting of world and poetry. The poet asserts how he, at a very early age, heard two different seductive voices: one promising him "endless joy," the other offering him to reach "[b]eyond the possible, beyond the known." With the acceptance of the latter voice, Baudelaire sealed his fate and became the "fervid victim of my clairvoyance," that is, this text describes his seduction by the voice of poetry. In addition, the image of the cradle staying next to the library (which in the original is termed a "Babel sombre") indicates that the voice Baudelaire chooses to follow is that of literary tradition. This poem thus describes the initiation into the world of literature, the acceptance of becoming a poet and a seer. A closer examination of what the two voices offer sharpens the opposition between reality and poetry. The first voice promises him "appetite to take

it [the world] in a bite," that is, desire for the world, whereas the voice of poetry entices him to travel in the realm of dreams and "through abysmal blackness" to "[d]istinctly see the wonder of new worlds."[11] It is important to note that this voice is not associated with clarity, insight, or understanding, but is connected to dream and confusion: "I take for truth what others call a lie / And, eyes to heaven, trip into a ditch." In this way, reality is radically opposed to poetic creation, and the poet is for this reason doomed to be at odds, not only with the world as his dwelling place, but also with society. He prefers the loneliness of the sea and the desert; he cries when people enjoy themselves and he laughs when others are in sorrow. In keeping with this, it is even possible to read an element of damnation to being a poet, because of the allusion to Genesis 3:15, in the line: "I walk with serpents striking at my shoes." The only consolation is to be found in the splendor of the poetic visions since their beauty is unattainable for ordinary people. Relief, then, is only available by escaping from reality into the world of dreams.[12]

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As mentioned in the above, this subjectivity fits well with Kierkegaard's aesthete as an individual who creates unsubstantial imaginary worlds. Also, the representation of this character is congenial with Kierkegaard's assessment since it is a desperate and damned individual. Such a character is related to what has been termed the *autonomy of art*; that is, the Kantian and post-Kantian idea that aesthetic production belongs to an entirely self-enclosed sphere because its main feature is freedom: "Where art rules, the laws of beauty are in force and the frontiers of reality are transcended. This 'ideal kingdom' is to be defended against all encroachment, even against the moralistic guardianship of state and society." (Gadamer 2004, 71.) Gadamer criticizes this aestheticism because it empties art of its existential load. The idea of art as exclusively referring to its own self-enclosed sphere necessarily opposes it to reality.[13]

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11 The similarity between the wordings here and in the last verses of the book, quoted above, supports the interpretation that understands the ending of the work as an exit towards infinite imaginative activity.

12 The artist as an outcast of society and as a person doomed to suffer also appears in poems such as "Les Phares" and "Sur *Le Tasse en Prison* d'Eugène Delacroix." The poet is a victim because reality will never be able to match the visions that he is capable of producing. In other words, imagination is superior to reality.

13 "We have shown that it was a methodological abstraction corresponding to a quite

The reader of *The Flowers of Evil* who remains at this interpretive level can enjoy the texts and their imaginative, formal, and linguistic eminence. Such a reader can furthermore reflect upon Baudelaire's contribution to literary history and admire how he develops old *topoi* and establishes new ones. At the same time, it must be asked, how should this reader fulfill Gadamer's idea that a new self-understanding is carried out when interpreting the text? Only a poet would find it possible to identify with the lyrical subject and perhaps reap insights about the creative process. What is thematized at this level, is the self-reflective strand of modern poetry, but no existential lesson is at hand here. If I as reader, as a finite individual immersed in life, should relate the text to myself, it becomes complicated. However, Baudelaire seems to have foreseen this problem because the first poem of *The Flowers of Evil*, "To the Reader," is an explicit address to me. Here, the poet presents the work's perhaps most central thematic strand: our belonging to a morally corrupted world. In this programmatic poem, he asserts everybody's participation in a depraved reality, and he establishes, precisely on this basis, a common ground between author and reader:

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AU LECTEUR	TO THE READER
La sottise, l'erreur, le péché, la lésine,	Folly and error, stinginess and sin
Occupent nos esprits et travaillent nos corps,	Possess our spirits and fatigue our flesh.
Et nous alimentons nos aimables remords,	And like a pet we feed our tame remorse
Comme les mendiants nourrissent leur [vermine.	As beggars take to nourishing their lice.

particular transcendental task of laying foundations which led Kant to relate aesthetic judgment entirely to the condition of the subject. If, however, this aesthetic abstraction was subsequently understood as a content and was changed into the demand that art be understood 'purely aesthetically,' we can now see how this demand for abstraction ran into indissoluble contradiction with the true experience of art." (Gadamer 2004, 84.)

Nos péchés sont têtus, nos repentirs sont
[laches ;

Nous nous faisons payer grassement nos
[aveux,

Et nous rentrons gaiement dans le chemin
[bourbeux,

Croyant par de vils pleurs laver toutes nos
[taches.

Sur l'oreiller du mal c'est Satan Trismégiste
Qui berce longuement notre esprit enchanté,
Et le riche métal de notre volonté
Est tout vaporisé par ce savant chimiste.

C'est le Diable qui tient les fils qui nous
[remuent !

Aux objets répugnants nous trouvons des
[appas ;

Chaque jour vers l'Enfer nous descendons
[d'un pas,

Sans horreur, à travers des ténèbres qui puent.

Ainsi qu'un débauché pauvre qui baise et
[mange

Le sein martyrisé d'une antique catin,
Nous volons au passage un plaisir clandestin
Que nous pressons bien fort comme une
[vieille orange.

Serré, fourmillant, comme un million
[d'helminthes,

Dans nos cerveaux ribote un peuple de
[Démons,

Et, quand nous respirons, la Mort dans nos
[poumons

Descend, fleuve invisible, avec de sourdes
[plaintes.

Our sins are stubborn, our contrition lax;

We offer lavishly our vows of faith

And turn back gladly to the path of filth,

Thinking mean tears will wash away our
[stains.

On evil's pillow lies the alchemist
Satan Thrice-Great, who lulls our captive soul,
And all the richest metal of our will
Is vaporized by his hermetic arts.

Truly the Devil pulls on all our strings!

In most repugnant objects we find charms;

Each day we're one step further into Hell,

Content to move across the stinking pit.

As a poor libertine will suck and kiss

The sad, tormented tit of some old whore,
We steal a furtive pleasure as we pass,
A shrivelled orange that we squeeze and press.

Close, swarming, like a million writhing
[worms,

A demon nation riots in our brains,

And, when we breathe, death flows into our
[lungs,

A secret stream of dull, lamenting cries.

Si le viol, le poison, le poignard, l'incendie,	If slaughter, or if arson, poison, rape
N'ont pas encor brodé de leurs plaisants [dessins	Have not as yet adorned our fine designs,
Le canevas banal de nos piteux destins,	The banal canvas of our woeful fates,
C'est que notre âme, hélas ! n'est pas assez [hardie.	It's only that our spirit lacks the nerve.
Mais parmi les chacals, les panthères, les lices,	But there with all the jackals, panthers, [hounds,
Les singes, les scorpions, les vautours, les [serpents,	The monkeys, scorpions, the vultures, snakes,
Les monstres glapissants, hurlants, grognants, [rampants,	Those howling, yelping, grunting, crawling [brutes,
Dans la ménagerie infâme de nos vices,	The infamous menagerie of vice,
Il en est un plus laid, plus méchant, plus [immonde !	One creature only is most foul and false!
Quoiqu'il ne pousse ni grands gestes ni grands [cris,	Though making no grand gestures, nor great [cries,
Il ferait volontiers de la terre un débris	He willingly would devastate the earth
Et dans un bâillement avalerait le monde ;	And in one yawning swallow all the world;
C'est l'Ennui ! — l'oeil chargé d'un pleur [involontaire,	He is Ennui!—with tear-filled eye he dreams
Il rêve d'échafauds en fumant son houka.	Of scaffolds, as he puffs his water-pipe.
Tu le connais, lecteur, ce monstre délicat,	Reader, you know this dainty monster too;
— Hypocrite lecteur, — mon semblable, — [mon frère !	—Hypocrite reader,—fellowman,—my twin!
(Baudelaire 1993, 4,6.)	(Baudelaire 1993, 5,7.)

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In this poem, Baudelaire asserts humanity's enjoyment of moral depravity, how people find a perverse pleasure in being witness to the misery and pain of others. But the human moral flaws lie not only in *Schadenfreude*: the individual even feels complacency with own sins and perversities. Only appearance conceals this wretched interiority, that is, hypocrisy is also a human feature. It is noteworthy how Baudelaire includes himself in this characterization of humanity and thus explicitly establishes the link with the reader. In other

words, the fusion of horizons that the reader must establish entails—at the existential level—the acknowledgment of one's own profound moral flaws. At first sight, Baudelaire's proposal is completely perverse because the common ground, on which author and reader can meet, is in the pleasure of watching moral corruption. What is more, in fact, he proposes to share self-complacency in sin. Consequently, poem after poem, the reader can indulge in a wide variety of vices and miseries, all exposed with exquisite refinement.

From this existential perspective, the ending of the work appears in a different light than from the metapoetic viewpoint because the apostrophe to Death (quoted above: "O Death, old captain, time to make our trip!") should now be read in a literal way. The last section of *The Flowers of Evil* is entitled "Death," and its last poem "Le Voyage"/"Voyaging" is divided into eight numbered parts. In no. III, the poet addresses some unidentified travelers in order to hear stories from afar, which might serve as a distraction against boredom. The voyagers engage in dialogue and answer the poet in IV and VI. The latter text sums up what the voyagers have seen:

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« Ô cerveaux enfantins !	'O childish dupes!
Pour ne pas oublier la chose capitale,	You want the truth? We'll tell you without [fail—
Nous avons vu partout, et sans l'avoir cherché,	We never thought to search it out, but saw
Du haut jusques en bas de l'échelle fatale,	From heights to depths, through all the mortal [scale
Le spectacle ennuyeux de l'immortel péché :	The numbing spectacle of human flaw.
La femme, esclave vile, orgueilleuse et stupide,	Woman, vile slave, proud in stupidity,
Sans rire s'adorant et s'aimant sans dégoût ;	Tasteless and humourless in self-conceit;
L'homme, tyran goulu, paillard, dur et cupide,	Man, greedy tyrant, lustful, slovenly,
Esclave de l'esclave et ruisseau dans l'égout ;	Slave of the slave, a sewer in the street;
[…]	[…]

L'Humanité bavarde, ivre de son génie, | Drunk on her genius, Humanity,
Et, folle maintenant comme elle était jadis, | Mad now as she has always been, or worse,
Criant à Dieu, dans sa furibonde agonie : | Cries to her God in raging agony:
« Ô mon semblable, ô mon maître, je te | "Master, my image, damn you with this curse!"
    [maudis !

Et les moins sots, hardis amants de la | Not quite so foolish, bold demented ones
    [Démence,
Fuyant le grand troupeau parqué par le Destin, | Flee from the feeding lot that holds the herd;
Et se réfugiant dans l'opium immense ! | Their boundless shelter is in opium.
— Tel est du globe entier l'éternel bulletin. » | —From all the world, such always is the word.'
    (Baudelaire 1993, 288, 290.) | (Baudelaire 1993, 289, 291.)

The poet draws the conclusion from this answer that life is fatally tedious (as was already expressed in the collection's first poem), and addresses Death in no. VIII (cited above: "O Death, old captain") asking it to serve its poison. From an existential perspective, then, the most logical interpretation is that death is a desirable escape from this dreary world.

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However, Baudelaire's text is ambiguous enough to allow both aforementioned interpretations of the work's closure. To understand the final lines of *The Flowers of Evil* as an opening towards the continuous creation of new imaginary worlds is in keeping with the text. But it is also plausible to read the end of the book as a literal embrace of death because of the *taedium vitae* that pervades the poems. What can a reader, however, extract from this book in order to reach a new self-understanding? What can we do with the perverse call to share and enjoy iniquity, not to speak of the invitation to inflict death upon oneself? It is clear that the author describes his existential position as one of perdition. The poet is convinced that evil is the main pervasive force in the world, and that sin and wickedness dominate humanity—including himself. The author does not show a reliable way out of this condition even if—as Sartre saw—Baudelaire in fact was subject to the idea of an absolute Good: "Baudelaire submitted to Good in order to violate it; and if he violated it, it was in order to feel its grip more powerfully; it was in order to be condemned in its name, labelled, transformed into a guilty thing." (Sartre 1964, 95.) *The Flowers of Evil* can only achieve a true perversity if its proposals are made on

the backdrop of a notion of Good, that is, in relation to a radically good Other against whom evil can emerge as such. This explains Baudelaire's Satanism, because the Luciferian revolt precisely takes place against an all-powerful and all-good God. The subjectivity that emerges from the work is thus a condemned I, and the extremely blasé attitude that runs through the poems represents its sarcastic acceptance of damnation.

It is noteworthy that the freedom of the imagination is used to present a condition that belongs to another faculty of mind, that of morality. It is furthermore clear that *The Flowers of Evil* maintains that the aesthetic imagination cannot provide an existential position that might lead beyond the transitory exaltation of fulfilled creativity. Gadamer has actually formulated the same insight with reference to Kierkegaard's thinking:

> By acknowledging the destructive consequences of subjectivism and describing the self-annihilation of aesthetic immediacy, Kierkegaard seems to me to have been the first to show the untenability of this position. […] Hence his criticism of aesthetic consciousness is of fundamental importance because he shows the inner contradictions of aesthetic existence, so that it is forced to go beyond itself. Since the aesthetic stage of existence proves itself untenable, we recognize that even the phenomenon of art imposes an ineluctable task on existence, namely to achieve that continuity of self-understanding which alone can support human existence, despite the demands of the absorbing presence of the momentary aesthetic impression. (Gadamer 2004, 82–83.)

From a Gadamerian perspective, subjectivity is always mediated by tradition. On the one hand, tradition carries the models that have proven to be exemplary of human existence. On the other hand, tradition possesses a potentiality that is to be infinitely actualized through the re-creation of the models in new interpretations. In sum, subjectivity must form itself in keeping with the models handed over by tradition. In this respect, Gadamer is close to Kierkegaard's formulation quoted above, "it is one thing to let oneself be poetically composed and another thing to compose oneself poetically. An individual who lets himself be poetically composed does have a definite given

context into which he has to fit and thus does not become a word without meaning." (Kierkegaard 1989, 283.) For Gadamer, this means that an existential position can only be meaningful if it is part of cultural tradition. Baudelaire's bohemian lifestyle—whether it was a performance or not—refers to the existential position of the aesthete, a person who lives in a "now" without basis on "that continuity of self-understanding which alone can support human existence" (Gadamer 2004, 83). At the same time, it must be acknowledged that the *bohème* has become a literary type, or, in other words, this character has become part of cultural tradition.

A literary historical perspective will clarify this question. It is significant that Baudelaire suffers of *taedium vitae* from beginning to end in *The Flowers of Evil*. He presents himself as guilty, but at the same time also as a victim. He has aspirations towards the ideal and pure, but a deceptive reality drags him again and again back to spleen. In this way, Baudelaire is a victim of worldly corruption while he at the same time also embraces it, because he is unable to—or perhaps lacks the will to—fight against it. This subjectivity thus appears as a burlesque Romantic hero because the defeatism that characterizes Baudelaire is in contrast with the tragic and vigorous subject that is usually identified with individuals such as Lord Byron. In the catalogue of subjective types, then, the bohemian can be regarded as an ironic re-interpretation of the Romantic hero.[14] From this perspective, the invitation to engage in a self-indulgent participation in sin must be understood as a parody of the Romantic self-sufficient individual who rejects God and morality. The hyperbolic Romantic subject able to create itself quasi-divinely is thus exposed to a subtle but corrosive critique. Furthermore, the autonomy of the aesthetic sphere is also subject to irony. Baudelaire shows that this idea leads to an art that cannot endow a positive existential position, precisely because it has cut the tie to life. The autonomy of art considers that freedom is the only acceptable value for aesthetic expression, but when this idea is transposed to life, it is revealed as insufficient. *Les Fleurs du mal* is, thus, the aesthete's epic poem, a mock

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14 This interpretation is in line with a recent re-evaluation of Baudelaire as an ambiguous figure that on the one hand is a heir of the tradition preceding him, and, on the other, refigures it (Compagnon and Vernet 2015).

epopee of the Romantic metaphysical rebellion that elevates the subject to a god. Although the possibility exists that a reader might find his/her own life attitude well represented and thus confirmed in *The Flowers of Evil*, however, Baudelaire's exaltation of moral misery should perhaps rather make one consider whether it is possible to be morally and metaphysically self-sufficient. In this way, the reader is compelled to reflect at an existential level in a more productive way than if the moral and ontological nihilism of Baudelaire's work is taken literally.

Conclusion

In *The Rule of Metaphor*, Paul Ricoeur unfolds an argumentation that is useful in the present context. This work discusses—as the book's subtitle asserts—"the creation of meaning in language." He considers metaphor exemplary of how a novel linguistic expression can make us discover a hitherto unknown aspect of the world. In the book's seventh study, "Metaphor and Reference," he discusses whether a metaphorical expression carries out a reference to reality. This is not an easy question, given that many metaphors can be regarded as completely imaginary constructions, without any possible referentiality (to call a library a "Babel sombre" is apparently just as non-referential as the idea of a unicorn). Ricoeur considers, nonetheless, that an authentic metaphor always entails a reference in the sense that it expresses a "participation in things" that is prior to the "scientific" or "positivistic" subject-object dichotomy:

> The 'joyous ondulation of the waves' in Hölderlin's poem is neither an objective reality in the positivistic sense nor a mood in the emotivist sense. Such a contrast applies to a conception in which reality is first reduced to scientific objectivity. Poetic feeling in its metaphorical expressions bespeaks the lack of distinction between interior and exterior. The 'poetic textures' [Douglas Berggreen] of the world (joyous ondulation) and the 'poetic schemata' [id.] of interior life (lake of ice) mirroring one another, proclaim the reciprocity of the inner and the outer. (Ricoeur 1994, 246.)

A metaphor represents the pre-scientific relation to the world, which links subject and object in a profound cohesion. In this way, Ricoeur continues the phenomenological idea that all human experience of the world takes place on the basis of a subjectivity that is not *a priori* in opposition to external reality, but is co-emergent with the world. The world is always experienced from a subjective perspective just as the subject is essentially part of the world that it experiences. In other words, the phenomenological tradition builds upon the insight that we can never approach the world from an objective point of view, but, on the contrary, that the world always bears the marks of our perspective. We are embedded in reality to such a degree that world and subjectivity are essentially interweaved.

Continuing along this path, it seems not hazardous to extend the same idea to the duality art/life. In the case of Baudelaire, he developed a subjectivity that was both literary and existential. By means of the autobiographical allusions and references in *The Flowers of Evil*, just as by means of his bohemian existence, Baudelaire's life and work converge. The opposition between life and art that became a rule in post-Kantian aesthetics led him to the ambition of making a work of art out of his life. However, the consequence of this desire to let the aesthetic sphere absorb life was that it falsified the idea of the autonomy of art. In this way, Baudelaire appears as exemplary of the interweaving of life and cultural tradition. His self-authoring exhibits in a paradoxical way the existential load that is inherent to art.[15] Rather than giving primacy to either of the two, text and life might turn out to be mutually dependent. Just as Ricoeur considers the poetic refiguration of reality as exemplary of the subjective participation in the world, autofictionalization reveals our profound participation in the meaning-structures of cultural tradition. A surprising consubstantiality of *word* and *flesh* emerges in cases such as the one analyzed above, which calls for more studies in this direction.

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15 In this context, the adequacy of the term *autofiction* is clear because it affirms the literary tradition by means of its reference to the fictional, and, at the same time, it refers to an existential reality. Accordingly, this term may fit into a Gadamerian perspective that regards subjectivity as essentially mediated by tradition.

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Between In-*Vocation* and Pro-*Vocation*
A Hermeneutics of the Poetic Prayer

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Abstract

This article investigates the phenomenon of poetic prayer as one that happens in the liminal space between the in-*vocation* of a close relationship with God and the pro-*vocation* of versatile responses to God's presence. The hermeneutic in-between of an experience of God—intimate, ecstatic, and absolutizing, but also unsettling, doubting, and desperate—engenders a genuine possibility to investigate the less obvious aspects of poetry as prayer, and to delve deeper into its complexities and subtleties. The

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analyzed poems by G. M. Hopkins, T. S. Eliot, and R. M. Rilke disclose the inner world of a human being who yearns for God, but also has the courage to question and listen to an inner voice that torments and tears asunder. A hermeneutic reading of poetry as prayer invites us to acknowledge that an authentic and close relationship with God goes beyond an equivocal and facile response and entails what is sidelined, destabilizing, or even threatening to the safe self. The hermeneutic examination of poetic prayer also inspires us to think of the human body as a legitimate and meaningful site of the encounter between the human and the divine.

Keywords: hermeneutics, poetic prayer, G. M. Hopkins, T. S. Eliot, R. M. Rilke.

Med in-*vokacijo* in pro-*vokacijo*. Hermenevtika poetične molitve

Povzetek

Članek obravnava poetično molitev kot fenomen, ki se dogaja znotraj mejnega prostora med in-*vokacijo* bližnjega razmerja z Bogom in pro-*vokacijo* mnogoterih odgovorov na božjo prisotnost. Hermenevtično vmesje – intimnega, ekstatičnega in absolutizirajočega, a hkrati tudi vznemirjajočega, dvomečega in obupanega – izkustva Boga poraja pristno možnost raziskave manj očitnih vidikov poezije kot molitve in razgrnitve njene kompleksnosti in subtilnosti. Analizirane pesmi G. M. Hopkinsa, T. S. Eliota in R. M. Rilkeja razkrivajo notranji svet človeškega bitja, ki hrepeni po Bogu, a obenem poseduje pogum za spraševanje in prisluhnjenje mučnemu in razklanemu notranjemu glasu. Hermenevtično branje poezije kot molitve nas vabi, da pripoznamo, kako avtentično in bližnje razmerje z Bogom presega dvoumne ter enostavne odgovore in vključuje tisto, kar je obstransko, destabilizirajoče ali celo grozeče za varnost sebstva. Hermenevtična raziskava poetične molitve nas navdihuje tudi k temu, da človeško telo dojamemo kot legitimni in pomenljivi kraj srečanja med človeškim in božjim.

Ključne besede: hermenevtika, poetična molitev, G. M. Hopkins, T. S. Eliot, R. M. Rilke.

> *You are not here to verify,*
> *Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity*
> *Or carry report. You are here to kneel*
> *Where prayer has been valid.*

T. S. Eliot: "Little Gidding" (*Four Quartets*)

Introduction

Every aspect of inner and outer reality is and potentially can become an incentive for prayer for the contemplative mind. Prayerfulness is a thick film that envelops every deed, thought, and stirring of the heart of the one who seeks God and crosses the sacred/profane divide, realizing that the divide is non-existent once one perceives God as the true origin of everything and as dwelling in everything. The poeticality of human existence[1] invites us to see metaphoric meaning as self-created, burgeoning, expanding, seeking, and discovering ever new ways of configuring inherent in human linguistic expressivity. We can gather, following the three giants of contemporary hermeneutics: Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Paul Ricoeur, that metaphoricity is the essential "being" of language; it is how language exists.[2] However, it is in the poetic word that the truth about the metaphorical character of language reaches its pinnacle. Poetry exemplifies the power of language in picturing the impossible, capturing what evades rendition, and visualizing the unimaginable. As a result, it broadens our perspective, encouraging us to pay closer attention to life's complexities and inconsistencies. It expands our awareness of the world as well as our self-understanding.

Poetic prayer combines the intrinsic features of poetry and prayer, mingling the subtlety of these two modes of human expressiveness. Poetry's dense language, capable of evoking "the whole of our experience of the world,"[3] can

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1 I allude here to Heidegger's notion of a human being's poetic dwelling (see Heidegger 1971, 213–229).

2 Cf. Heidegger 2002, 44–46; Gadamer 2013, 449–450; Ricoeur 2004, 38–52.

3 I refer here to Daniel Tate's gloss on Gadamer's poetics (2016, 155–185). Tate contends: "Even today poetry must reaffirm its age-old vocation of invoking *the whole of our experience of the world* within which we encounter ourselves" (2016, 102; my emphasis).

be compared to prayer's powerful language, which attempts to reach out to God, in search of His love, mercy, companionship, and guidance. Poetic prayer is a "breathturn,"[4] a re-*turn* to the primordial reality of being-in-the-world, a profound reappreciation of our existence in its originary form. Poetry as prayer is a sacramental reality, the space of an encounter between the human and the divine, imbued, however, with diverse, often unorthodox, or unexpected meanings. Those versatile meanings nourish a contemplative path of the self's deeper understanding and spiritual transformation. The poetic imagination, capturing the reality of this encounter, discloses its unrepeatable and unique character, even if, on the face of it, it seems to iterate what we already know about ourselves and our being-in-the-world. In the mystical tradition of the Christian faith, the practice of poetic prayer is expressive of the firm belief in the reciprocal nature of the relationship between a human being and God. It is a space, in which the world of a human embodiment becomes a word, predicated on the depth of the truth of Incarnation—Word becoming flesh, and a word becomes "embodied" through the evocations of the richness of the human sensory experiences.[5]

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The need to create poetic prayer highlights both the profound and insatiable desire for oneness with the divine and the necessity of using language—the only, if incomplete and imperfect, way of bridging the barrier between God and ourselves. In the Christian religion, poetic prayer has a long-standing tradition that originates from the Holy Scriptures—*The Book of Psalms* in the

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4 I use this term as an echo of Gadamer's explication of Paul Celan's volume of poetry entitled *Breathturn* (*Atemwende*). Cf. Gadamer 1997, 67, 128, 162. The titled breathturn, as "[…] the sensuous experience of the silent, calm moment between inhaling and exhaling" (Gadamer 1997, 73), expresses Celan's inimitable understanding of poetry and poetic practice. By extension, I indicate that poetic prayer is a breathturn that allows us to imagine and comprehend the uniqueness of an encounter with God in the poetic word—the moment of silence in poet's "inhaling" of God and "exhaling/ sharing" of his/her experience of God.

5 G. M. Hopkins's poetry is one of the fine examples of the creative vitality that springs from a deep understanding of the relationship between the Incarnation, human embodiment, and the poetic word. For more on the significance of Hopkins's focus on the sensory, especially auditory experience and poetry see, e.g., Burrows, Ward, and Grzegorzewska 2017, 203–211.

Old Testament,[6] which is a one-of-a-kind example of the intimate conversation of a human being with God. In psalms, praise is interwoven with joy and thankfulness, repentance is suffused with an unshakeable belief in God's mercy, and the drama of the human existential situation, expressed in words of profound sorrowfulness, is eventually recuperated. The deep-rooted Christian tradition of praying with psalms has given rise to a poetic prayer created by the great mystics (such as John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, and Thomas Merton) and other poets throughout history. The poetic word has become the locus of a fervent conversation with God, in which the question-and-answer paradigm has conveyed the search for an understanding of human fate.

Poetry as prayer involves a patient and vigorous unveiling of the fundamental truths of our being-in-the-world. The hermeneutic reading of poetry entails an attempt to understand the poetic prayer's irreplaceable participation in the process of the gradual disclosure of a human being's inner reality. Hermeneutic interrogation reveals that poetry as prayer acknowledges outer reality as posing a query or destabilizing the self's sense of safety and happiness. Praying with poems expresses a desire to combat the intense sense of incompleteness that is felt to be at the heart of the human predicament. The uniqueness of this form of con-*versing* with God lies in our hope as mortal beings to find ultimate completion *in* God and *through* God. Despite differences in time of publication, tone, and form, the poems of G. M. Hopkins, T. S. Eliot, and R. M. Rilke, analyzed in this study, share a similar need for a passionate conversation with God, an ardent desire to be in intimate contact with the divine, which cannot be quenched by the smallness and limitedness of earthly matters. The three selected poems by these authors exemplify the inner being of a poetic prayer and show its inimitable, religious voice, oriented towards the discovery of God, but also towards self-discovery. They invite us to walk through uncharted territories of spirituality in search of the transcendent, to unravel something important about our embodied existence for ourselves, and, therefore, to be able to fully realize that the transcendent pervades and illuminates our daily experience.

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6 Cf., e.g., Patterson 2008, 1–22.

The prayer of body and soul

Gerald Manley Hopkins (1844–1889) was a Victorian poet and Jesuit priest. Many of his poems are evocative of a deeply entrenched belief that the grandeur of nature expresses God's way of speaking to a human being. Probably the greatest instance of such an attitude can be found in his poem "Windhover."[7] Hopkins believed that nature communicates God's love and providential care, unfolding its messages for those who are eager to listen to them.[8] At the same time, this unfurling entails the most subtle furling; an understanding of what is communicated is never complete. The incompleteness engages the ever-new interpretative possibilities. This is well expressed in Hopkins's term of in-*scape*, which joins in-sight and land-*scape*,[9] and conveys the idea of a hermeneutically illuminative particularity of the world of nature.[10] For him, nature is the genuine locus of a gradual revelation of the mystery of the divine as well as the space of God's intimate relationship with a human being. The core of Hopkins's complexity and uniqueness, as well as his legacy to the Romantics and their fascination with evoking nature, can be well explained by recourse to Iris Murdoch's investigation into the world of nature:

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> A self-directed enjoyment of nature seems to me to be something forced. More naturally, as well as more properly, we take a self-forgetful pleasure in the sheer alien pointless independent existence of animals,

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7 See, e.g., Knox Bugliani and Took 2015, 73–74.

8 Kathrine Bregy's seminal words best render Hopkins's love of nature: "Always the world was fresh to him, as it is fresh to children and to the very mature. […] Few men have loved nature more rapturously than he; fewer still with such a youthful and perennial curiosity. There is a tender excitement in his attitude to natural beauty (whether treated incidentally or as a parable) that is very contagious. […] Nature indeed was his one secular inspiration." (1909, quoted in: Ryan 2004, 15.)

9 For a thorough explication of Hopkins's term of inscape, see, e.g., Waterman Ward 2002, 158–197.

10 For more on Hopkins's understanding of illuminative particularity, see, e.g., Lindley 2019, 87–107. Lindley writes: "At the heart of their [Hopkins's and Woolf's] connection is a common focus on what I shall call the revelatory particular: the unique, numinous charge of meaning within each moment of conscious experience, and its place in human lives." (89). Cf. also Hołda 2021, 157–158.

birds, stones, and trees. Not *how* the world is, but that it *is*, is the mystical. (2013, 83; my emphasis.)

The very *being* of nature, in which the mystical resides, is the wellspring of Hopkins's continuous amazement and creative vitality.

Looking ahead of his time, Hopkins transcends Victorian poetry's worn-down cliches and breaks the rigidity of its techniques.[11] His nature poems are unique among his contemporaries in that they not only praise the goodness of creation but also reflect a belief in the correctness of observation through the senses, and they value physical beauty as a means of religious insight.[12] Interestingly, his influence can be found in the work of many prominent modernists, with T. S. Eliot being the most avid of his devotees.[13] Hopkins defies the hypocritical constraints of Victorian morality by conjuring images that powerfully resonate with the findings of carnal hermeneutics that recognize the centrality of the body as the locus of understanding.[14] His conspicuous references to human bodily experience aim to shatter the superficial boundary between the spiritual and the physical, the sacred and the profane. The poem "Ad Matrem Virginem" (the subject of my analysis in this study)—the moving contemplation of the Nativity as reflected and wondrously enacted anew in the Mystery of the Eucharist—shows the breaking down of this barrier, powerfully epitomizing the human spiritual and corporeal experience of God. This beautiful hymn in Latin departs from the nature theme of Hopkins's mainstream poetry and focuses on the interrelationship between the humble acceptance of the Word of God by Mary and the human reception of the Body of Christ in the Eucharist. It praises Mary as the one who receives the Word and gives It to the world, while also extolling the Eucharist as the place where God is received, and soul life is begotten. The most delicate, intimate, and joyous reception of Jesus in the Holy Communion is compared to Mary's becoming pregnant with God. For Hopkins, the close affinities between these two (comm)*unions*

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11 Cf., e.g., Hewitt 2018.
12 Cf. "Gerard Manley Hopkins" 2019.
13 Cf., e.g., Schneider 2021, 24.
14 Cf. Kearney and Treanor, 2015. See also Kearney 2020, 1–13.

provide an opportunity to think further on their corporeal aspect as the site of the mystical encounter.

Undoubtedly, Hopkins's line of thinking accords with that which is discerned in the recent studies of carnal hermeneutics. Although it is still relatively new, carnal hermeneutics can be seen as relying on the foundations of humankind and biblical imagery. Its roots can be traced back to depictions of human creation in the *Bible*. The book of *Genesis* describes the creation of Eve from Adam's bone as a metaphor for the indissoluble union of the two genders (feminine and masculine), interpreting God's creative act as the divine spark that goes down to human carnal existence. The body is shown in the *Bible* as a source of creativity as well as a location of interpretation and understanding. Hopkins believes that the *body*—here, the Holy Body of Christ and the bodily contact between the Mother of God and Her Son, as well as the corporeal encounter between the speaker and the Body of Christ, received in the Holy Communion—is a source of the mystical understanding of the Incarnation's inconceivable truth and the impossible possibility of God dwelling in the human body through the Eucharist.

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The poem's speaker and the Holy Mother are *pregnant* with God; the spiritual birth is evocative of Mary's physical giving birth to Christ. Contemplating the moment when Mary delivers the Child, the speaker broods on her feelings and is overwhelmed by the Mother's first holding and kissing of the Child:

> Da complecti Illum,
> Mihi da pauxillum
> Tuo ex amore
> Et oscula ab ore.
> Qui pro me vult dari,
> Infans mihi fari,
> Mecum conversari,
> Tu da contemplari […]

Let me hold him,
give me for him
a touch of your love
and for him the touch of your kiss.
Him who wants to give me himself—
this wisp of a babe who would whisper
and have me spend my days with him—
help me keep my gaze on him [...][15]

The intimacy of the bodily contact between the Mother and the Child, worshipped by the speaker, expresses his/her awe of the truth of the Incarnation, whose seminal importance is heightened through the poem's form—a conversation between Mary and the lyrical "I" who seeks to learn about Christ: "Mater Jesu mei, / Mater magni Dei, / Doce me de Eo, / De parvo dulci Deo (Mother of my Jesus, / Mother of God so great, / tell me of him, / of God so small and sweet)," and is, at the same time, deeply aware of his/her predicament and sinfulness:

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Nam tumeo et abundo,
Immundo adhuc mundo;
Sum contristatus Sanctum
Spiritum et planctum
Custodi feci meo
Cum exhiberem Deo.
Laesum atque caesum [...]

For I am gravid and swirling
with worldliness still whirling awry.
I have grieved the Holy Ghost
and made my angel
guardian groan,
presenting to God,
with my sinful flesh [...]

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15 The fragments of the poem by G. M. Hopkins "In Festo Nativitatis Ad Matrem Virginem Hymnus Eucharisticus" ("A Eucharistic Hymn to the Virgin Mother on the Feast of the Nativity") are cited here as translated by Philip C. Fischer (Hopkins 2020).

The intensity and gentleness of the relationship between Mary and the speaker astound us:

> […] "teach me about Him, the small sweet God." This request, which implies the intimacy between Christ and Mary, is countered with the speaker's unworthiness. While she brings Christ to the world in the Visitation, the speaker is the poor sinner that only shows Christ crucified back to the Father. All of these pleas for the grace to change, to "love," to "rejoice," to "embrace," and to "contemplate" are all answered through the shifting attitude of the speaker, culminating in the joyous act of worship of the final line: "Praise to God always!" (Adamson 2016.)

Alongside the increasing intensity of feelings of thankfulness and tenderness, the desire to learn more about the Mystery of Nativity grows. However, understanding does not happen through reasoning; the teaching does not come with words. Rather, understanding is sought after and satisfied on the level of the body; insights come from intuiting love as gestured and expressed in bodily care. The imagery of the Nativity's beauty is suffused with words of adoration relating to the body of Christ. It is the closeness of the corporeal relationship between the Mother and the Child that is the true space of grasping the ungraspable meaning of the Mystery. Furthermore, this exceptional depiction of Jesus's birth is filled with contemplative sections that probe the life of the soul receiving the Holy Communion. The two imaginative realms converge: Nativity is the Eucharist, and the Eucharist is Nativity. Hopkins's stylish and most profound Nativity hymn leads us to recognize a deep feeling of the intermingling spheres of body and soul in a human being's response to God's speaking in the miracle of the Incarnation.

Hopkins's apt foregrounding of the language of the body in his poetic prayer reveals a deep truth about the often-neglected importance of the body as the site of communication between God and us. His verse effectively underlines the inclusive quality of the hermeneutic understanding of our human condition by emphasizing a human being's bodily experience of prayer.

2. Poetic prayer as a pro-*vocation* on the spiritual path. The call to understand differently

Like Hopkins, T. S. Eliot (1888–1965) was a religious convert; the first converted from Anglicanism to Catholicism, the latter from agnosticism to Anglicanism. The conversion marked a watershed moment in their thinking and writing. Ordained to the priesthood, Hopkins directed his creative capabilities to the articulation of faith on two levels. His private self revealed itself in the tenderness and fullness of the poetic word, giving rise to his most famous poems, but also to his homilies for the church community, which were known as prayers.[16] T. S. Eliot's conversion resulted in a resurgence of spirituality and an exploration of Christian motifs. The first major example of a poem that expressed his *metanoia* was "Ash-Wednesday" (1930).[17] The two differing but overlapping religious perspectives of a devout follower of God and a layman seeking the divine inspire us to hermeneutically probe the vast regions of meaning of poetry as prayer.

Eliot's literary output, imbued with religious elements, displays a hermeneutic tension between spiritual death caused by sin and repentance interpreted as a rebirth—the gradual embrace of a new existence.[18] His "The Journey of the Magi," selected for analysis here, is an Epiphany-centered piece of poetry, which, however, subverts the conventional expectation that epiphany connotes a life-changing event. Its meaning rests on the disparity/closeness between the utter significance of revelation and the possibility of remaining completely indifferent in the face of it. The liminal space between devoted faith and apathetic negligence seems to be the crux of Eliot's hermeneutic understanding of the human condition. The image of a dreary reality, already signaled in the poem's opening stanza: "A cold coming we had of it, / Just the worst time of the year. / For a journey, and such a long journey," undermines, from the start, the value of the epiphanic moment as well as invokes doubt and hesitation as for reaching the point of destination. The imagery of bleakness and uneasiness disparages the sensation of promised fulfillment because the

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16 Cf., e.g., Dubois 2017, 50–82.
17 See, e.g., Poetry Foundation 2021.
18 See, for example, Schneider 2021, 108–128.

destination does not appear to be a true point of arrival but rather subtly suggests an everlasting journey and an experience of something always dis-*orienting* and re-*orienting*. Eliot's attitude toward human searching/journeying in "The Journey of the Magi" resonates with the one in "Little Gidding," the final part of his *Four Quartets* (1943), a philosophically and theologically rich reflection on temporality and the history of humankind:

> We shall not cease from exploration
> And the end of all our exploring
> Will be to arrive where we started
> And know the place for the first time. (Eliot 2021.)

The first section of "The Journey of the Magi" contrasts our belief in the Magi's seeming zeal, perseverance, and maybe emotional endurance in setting out on a journey to pay tribute to the New-Born King with misgivings, exhaustion, and a sense of burden that feature in the poem. Uncertainty, which engulfs this most extraordinary endeavor—traveling is precarious and may turn out to be futile—creates an exorbitant tension that undercuts its purposefulness. The speaker's open confession of the facts, even if disquieting, about the expedition ("the worst time of the year") establishes the tone of reluctance and trepidation that runs throughout the poem.

Like many other poems by Eliot (the most renowned being "The Waste Land," "Ash- Wednesday," or "Gerontion"), "The Journey of the Magi" alludes to the spiritual crisis of modernism.[19] The evocation of the Magi's perilous journey, more broadly, carries the universal meaning of a human life journey, which is beset with obstacles, suffering, hardships, the loss of hope, and despair. Eliot supplants the formulaic fabulousness of the Magi's journey with the realism of the lived experience of being on the road to seek God in its unsettling and demanding nature. Resonating with the tradition of Christian mysticism and the theology of the dark night of the soul, this poem speaks of the effort a human being must take to reach God.[20] The speaker enters its

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19 See, for example, Menand 2007, 5–6.
20 Cf. John of the Cross 2012 (see especially: Book 1, 1.1). See also John of the Cross, as cited in Matthew 1995, 1, 51, 55–56.

non-vivacious aspects, defying the myth of the apparent nicety and ease in the human search for God. Accordingly, highlighting the humbling effects of the quest, the poem employs suspicion and hesitancy as genuine prerequisites for a deeper understanding of a human being's existential situation and his/her relationship with God. Speaking hermeneutically, Eliot's poetic prayer is an in-*vocation*, but also a telling pro-*vocation*[21]—an appeal to think more, to think-the-difference,[22] to not succumb to self-complacency in responding to God. It summons us to a deeper and more involved attitude towards God revealing himself to us, which helps us acknowledge that the disturbing pro-*vocation* is our true *vocation*—we are continually called to a greater apprehension of our rapport with God.

The poem shifts the lived experience of oppression and hesitation from the periphery to a legitimate position, and this stance seems to truly express a human way of being with God. Eliot's pro-*vocation* encourages us to hermeneutically configure and reconfigure the life/death paradigm, and thus to dismantle the univocal messages of death and life:

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> […] were we led all that way for
> Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly
> We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
> But had thought they were different; this Birth was
> Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death. (Eliot 2020.)

Birth, understood as bitter agony, is connotative of the death to one's former lifestyle, not concurring with God's ways—one that instantly reminds us of St. Paul's or St. Augustine's conversion as powerful examples.[23] The demise of the former life is not easily achievable when accompanied by "people clutching their gods." Crucially, although anticipated in the title, the name of the Christian God does not appear in the poem. Instead, there is a reference to

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21 The word "vocation" comes from Latin: vocationem—"a calling, a being called" (cf. *Online Etymology Dictionary*, "vocation").
22 For a thorough explication of the Incarnation as a space of thinking-the-difference see Wierciński 2019, 91–126.
23 Cf. Augustine 2007, especially books VII and IX.

gods (pagan deities), which seems to heighten the significance of the confusing and toilsome search for God. The enigmatic line: "Birth […] like Death, our death," most probably indicates the state of a meaningful holding in contempt one's sinful existence and struggle, which pertains to the new way of being-with-God—epitomized in the birth of the Child.

Oddly enough, in Eliot's narrative poem of the Nativity, the Incarnated God is neither visible nor tangible. It is the God, almost unrecognized, whose epiphany poses more queries than it provides ready or univocal answers. Eliot's evocation of Epiphany is a hermeneutic challenge for a perceptive reader rather than a faithful representation of a religious dogma, which would induce an uncomplicated response to the undeniable power of God revealing Himself in His Son. The astuteness of the poet's pro-*vocation* lies in prompting us to think more, to think-the-difference, to ponder the way that does not easily comply with the abiding mode of thinking. Eliot's prophet-like call on us, the readers, disassembles the former to create the new, following the trajectory of a belief through disbelief to a renewed belief. The belief/disbelief/belief scheme discloses the poet's hermeneutic sensibility and looms large as a captivating invitation to reconsider the already understood, precipitating a more profound understanding. His use of this paradigm resonates strongly with Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutic insight into mimetic representation, particularly his notion of the three-fold *mimesis*: prefigurement/configurement/reconfigurement, which accounts for a deeper understanding of the complexities of representing reality and inspires us to reorient our thinking to notice the necessity of the reconfigurement stage.[24] The reconfigured reality is the reality of our learning anew about that which is. However, thanks to it, we do not see things in their complete and radical newness, but rather we recognize the very core of reality as it is—its originary shape. The reconfigured thinking about reality incites a new way of describing it and, thus, begets a redescribed reality that informs us about more than one possibility of understanding.

"The Journey of the Magi" is an implicit hermeneutic conversation with God whose presence is shadowed by the details of the materiality of being:

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24 Cf. Ricoeur 2012, 52–90.

The ways deep and the weather sharp,

The very dead of winter.

And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory,

Lying down in the melting snow […]

And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,

And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly

And the villages dirty and charging high prices:

A hard time we had of it.

At the end we preferred to travel all night,

Sleeping in snatches […] (Eliot 2020.)

The journey of the Three Kings in the poem, like the biblical narrative that features this expedition, leads to a discovery of God's being *there*: "There was a Birth, certainly. We had evidence and no doubt." However, the sober, unenthusiastic, and almost scientific rather than an intimately tender approach to God revealing Himself encourages us to delve deeper into the delicate nature of the divine presence as embodied in the poem. God's presence is shown as a possible and meaningful inner *absence* since the Magi remain almost unaffected by the Birth of the Child.[25] The speaker's conversation with God takes the form of a silent prayer, fraught with troublesome thoughts that convey the precariousness of human fate.

Significantly, the poem's structure, which includes a distinct division visible in the choice of lexical items in the stanzas depicting respectively the voyage to Bethlehem and the return journey, serves to conjure a forward and backward movement. The poem's composition potently indicates Eliot's hermeneutic sensibility and, more specifically, his implicit recognition of the importance of the hermeneutic arc in reaching out for understanding. Only in retrospect can one appreciate the significance of journeying more fully. His lyrical narrative captures the details of the physical voyage, which leads to more involved thinking about the spiritual journey; the forward and backward movement indicates the very nature of a human being's spiritual journeying—progressing and regressing. The progress and regress paradigm of a soul life resonates

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25 One may call here upon Heidegger's understanding of absence as a mode of presence. See, e.g., Backman 2015.

here with another one—the interplay of concealment and unconcealment in the revelation of truth that is discernible in language (especially in the poetic word).[26]

In Eliot's narrative poem, what is veiled for the travelers is soon unveiled, only to be veiled anew. The provisionality and contingency of human existence (the Magi's perilous journey) obscure a complete grasp of the Nativity's revelatory occurrence. As a result, the truth of Epiphany is depicted in the poem not as a momentous, far-reaching, and life-changing reality, but as an incident, with which the Magi should wrestle, approaching it patiently and not passing quick judgments: "no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation." Importantly, in the poem's closing line, the speaker's voice shifts from the plural "we" to the singularity of "I": "I should be glad of another death." This most enigmatic *gladness* and its polyvalent meaning prompt a hermeneutic interrogation. Certainly, the sentiment of being glad about death subverts a natural, instinctual impulse to avoid it at all costs, to defy its murky grip. Moreover, the speaker disjoins his/her approach from that represented by the community. Does this assertive stance express a sense of superiority over other mortals, or a different, non-conventional understanding of death? Defying the readers' expectations, the poem does not provide an obvious and unequivocal answer to this query, but rather heightens the level of ambiguity and magnifies its opaque meaning.

The pervasively skeptical tone of "The Journey of the Magi," which continues till its very end, inspires us to seek the reasons for human confusion and apprehension. Undeniably, the sharp contrast between the illuminative truth of Revelation—the event of Epiphany—and the dark reality of doubting prompts a deeper dive into the nature of human understanding, which, as the poem reveals, is volatile due to the inevitability of the conditional, provisional, and finite character of our being-in-the-world. Skepticism and suspicion are not held in contempt, but rather they are seen here as legitimate, even if discomfiting, forms of *belief* inherent in non-*belief*. The poem thematizes the

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26 The interplay of concealment and unconcealment (*Verbergung/ Entbergung*) of Being in poetic language was thoroughly explored by Martin Heidegger. Cf., e.g., Heidegger 2002, 34–36.

human search for truth, which, if genuine, is not disentangled from doubt, misgivings, and second thoughts. The patient hermeneutic reading of "The Journey of the Magi," which is sensitive to the poem's opacity and complexity, allows one to fully appreciate it as a prayer of a soul seeking enlightenment while simultaneously acknowledging its limitations on the path to understanding.

3. Poetic prayer, meditative gaze, and the aporia of seeking the holy

Rilke's "Pieta," the last poem selected for analysis in the present study, is a potent example of a hermeneutic insight into human faith and prayer, disclosing not only the less apparent but also the disturbing aspects of the search for God and our being-with-God. This literary masterpiece exemplifies Rainer Maria Rilke's (1875–1926) spiritually profound poetry, riven with tension and doubt. It also evokes the aura of modern skepticism and a problematic quest for the holy.[27] Unlike Hopkins's "Ad Matrem Virginem" and Eliot's "The Journey of the Magi," which are concerned with the birth of Jesus, Rilke's poem thematizes Christ's death. The choice of "Pieta," expressing a shift in the religious theme, encourages us to view the poetic prayer as encompassing a wider range of meanings and attitudes than is apparent at first sight.

The poem is an unusual and disquieting portrayal of the first-person speaker's cordial rapport with the Beloved Body of Christ after his death on the cross. Instead of the expected, tender, and grief-stricken holding of Jesus's Body on the knees, the lyrical "I" addresses the Beloved with affectionate words, embracing the Body with his/her vehement, meditative gaze, which highlights the poet's keen interest in the power of looking.[28] Images of reverence and devotion to the Holy Body are intertwined with those that show the physical and rather astonishing aspect of love; timidity coexists with the robust expression of bodily contact.[29] The washing of Christ's feet, full of

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27 Cf., e.g., Guardini 2019.
28 On the significance of *schauen* ("looking") in Rilke's poetry, see, for instance, Louth 2020, 9–10; cf. also: eNotes Editorial 2015.
29 Commentators indicate the erotic nature of the bodily encounter featured in the poem. In Leo Steinberg's *Michelangelo's Sculpture: Selected Essays*, we read: "The erotic tenor of Rilke's poem is so intense that the poem was first published under the bowd-

veneration and mournfulness, as well as their drying in the speaker's hair, suggestive of loving care, are also unsettlingly connotative of the biblical scene of an adulterous woman washing Jesus's feet with her tears and drying them with her hair (Luke 7: 36–50):

> And so I see your feet again, Jesus,
> which then were the feet of a young man
> when shyly I undressed them and washed them;
> how they were entangled in my hair,
> like white deer in the thornbush.[30]

Rilke magnifies the effect of closeness between the speaker and Christ using a potent simile: the hair is compared to a thornbush in whose thickness the feet, like white deer, get entangled. Moreover, the image echoes the *Old Testament* story of Abraham who finds a lamb in the bush to sacrifice it when God saves his son, Isaac.[31] Both the white deer and the lamb are evocative of Christ's innocence.

"The watching over and adoring" of "this night of love" opens the way for a one-of-a-kind encounter between the first person lyrical "I" and Christ. The ambiguity of the thus described loving relationship, as well as the poem's uncommon point of view, undoubtedly necessitate a hermeneutic interrogation. We are astounded by the poem's ambiguous implications; the speaker's intense desire for an arcane relationship with Christ continues in a completely unorthodox, even anomalous, or blasphemous manner:

> But look, your hands are torn—:
> beloved, not from me, not from any bites of mine.
> Your heart is open and anyone can enter:
> It should have been the way in for me alone.

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lerizing title 'The Magdalene.'" (2018, 187.)
30 The English translation of "Pieta" is cited here after: Rilke 2021.
31 See Genesis 22: 1–12.

Even if it appears to be so bizarre at first glance, one can perceive that the tremendous yearning for the Beloved must have some rationale behind it. Readers are probably bewildered and upset when the pious attitude toward God's passion ("your hands are torn") mingles with the distressing evocation of an animalistic, if not carnivorous, behavior ("bites of mine"). As unbearable as it is, the blatant and provocative embodiment of the iconoclastic entwinement of the spiritual and the corporeal startles while giving rise to more queries. What is the hour that the speaker mentions, and why do the loving parties perish?

> Now you are tired, and your tired mouth
> has no desire for my aching mouth—.
> O Jesus, Jesus, when was our hour?
> Now we both wondrously perish.

The speaker disassembles the reader's expectations of the image of affectionate and pristine contact with the Body of Christ as the strong, carnal underpinnings of the pietistic, spiritual love for Christ deconstruct the obviousness of devotion. Dwelling in the liminal space between the God-fearing and the profane, the poem's description of the close contact with Christ, satiated with language that displaces the established form of adoration, creates subversive meanings of this congenial encounter:

> And I see your never-loved limbs
> for the first time, in this night of love.
> We never lay down together
> and now we have only adoring and watching over.

In a similar vein to Eliot, Rilke questions the evident character of the message standing behind the Christian motifs, and, through a series of unexpected estrangements, calls the reader to think more and to intuit the polysemic nature of passion, (mis)comprehension, and distortion. "Pieta" is a prayer uttered in an experience of being lost. The desperate clinging to Christ is an inner, loud cry, which finds expression in the exigency of bodily contact; exaggeration or even perversion arises from some deeply felt and unfulfilled need. Possibly, the poem is the shocking epitome of possessive love.

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"Pieta" refers to the *Old Testament* narrative of Jacob wrestling with the Angel ("I will not let thee go, except thou bless me") (Genesis 32: 26) and its deep symbolic meaning by evoking an intense "night of love."[32] The poem's final verse powerfully alludes to Jacob's fight and the wound that he is afflicted with—a limp hip—by invoking God's exhaustion and the speaker's pain ("aching mouth"):

> Now you are tired, and your tired mouth
> has no desire for my aching mouth—.
> O Jesus, Jesus, when was our hour?
> Now we both wondrously perish.

Importantly, the encounter between the speaker and Christ occurs at night, which can imply a soul's massive struggle in its inner darkness but also the best time for an intimate conversation, as it does in biblical narratives that often embody a human being's earnestness and persistent prayer. It is worth recalling the episode of Nicodemus's coming to Jesus at night, which exemplifies a human yearning for an important conversation to be enveloped by silence and darkness (John 3: 1).

"Pieta" is a biblical intertext, inspiring us to investigate the intricate aspects of prayer, which is portrayed as an excruciating struggle rather than a complacent soliloquy. Rilke captures the inner conversation with God in its drama and irresistible force. The exclamatory and questioning tones of the poem's last but one line amplify the aura of the necessity to find a solution to some query. Like the *Old Testament* narrative, this poem reveals a human being's urge to understand, which takes the form of an intense striving. The concluding line of "Pieta," "Now we both wondrously perish," is a conundrum rather than a clear denouement. Why does the struggle to understand, perhaps to self-integrate, end with the perishing of the two parties? Can this weird "perishing" connote the fusion of their horizons and the end of the fight that results in some form of fulfillment? The question of whether the mysterious act of perishing represents a longed-for completion remains unresolved. Without a shadow of a doubt,

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32 All citations from the *Bible* are taken from *King James Bible Online.*

the poem is a cogent invitation to hermeneutically ponder the importance of prayer as the "face-to-face" encounter that is both terrifying and consoling as it engenders the possibility of having one's life saved in its course. Jacob's life is spared, despite his seeing God. Rilke's choice of "gaze" as an important form of communication generates powerful resonances with the biblical story of Jacob's "facing" God. Instead of offering an unambiguous ending, the poem's resolution—the experience of a miraculous and enigmatic oneness: "[…] we both," which might be suggestive of some curious contentment—inspires us to reconsider the nature of the speaker's inner cry and to investigate its polysemic meaning. The polyvalence of senses engages a meticulous re-thinking of the poem's prevalent idea.

In its vivid representation of a bodily sensation as interwoven with the life of a soul, Rilke's poem meaningfully dismantles the duality of spirit and body. Demystifying this dichotomy, well-established in Western thought, this poetic prayer indicates that the body is both the site of interpretation and the interpreter. From the start, evoking the spiritual experience—an adoration of Christ—, "Pieta" concentrates entirely on the sensations felt *in* and interpreted *through* the body, and, thus, it can be read as a "corporeal inscription" of the passionate reaction to the object of love. This distinct approach accords with the findings of carnal hermeneutics, which not only avows the unity of body and soul but credits bodily experience as the legitimate space of an interpretation of human existence.[33]

The body in Rilke's poem plays the roles of both the interpreted and the interpreter as the first-person lyrical "I" speaks through the body, recording minute details of his/her "bodily conversation" with Christ. Significantly, "Pieta" upholds the somewhat neglected or denigrated aspect of prayer—bodily expression and posture. This inclusive attitude encourages us to appreciate Rilke's hermeneutic sensibility, which exemplifies the capacity of hermeneutics to embrace more—its propensity to recognize and approve of the existence of that which is marginalized or confusing (possibly, even embarrassing). The poem alludes to the tender and fascinating intimacy between a human being and God, which is the outcome of God's initiative—

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33 See Kearney and Treanor 2015, 10–27.

the event of the Incarnation. Predicated on the truth of the Incarnated God who enters the history of mankind, the hermeneutics of embodiment inspires us to fully acknowledge the significance of the body in interpreting our being-in-the-world. Understood in the light of the Incarnation, the body is no longer a territory that is threatening or deserving of contempt, but rather a space of conversation with God, and even the locus of the sanctity of being.[34]

Conclusion

Poetic prayer involves an important expansion of our understanding of being-in-the-world. Not knowing, carrying tension as the light, which is not easily accepted but powerfully beckons down our intellectual pathways, having the courage to seek new answers, is what precipitates the hermeneutic unfolding of understanding in poetic prayer. Its creative realm is stranded between veneration and skepticism; admiration coexists with befuddlement. Revisiting Christian themes, the non-conventional poems of Hopkins, Eliot, and Rilke shed light on the inseparability of divinity and humanity and address some fundamental aspects of the human condition. Nurturing the less expected or the wholly unexpected, poetic prayer allows for the ineffable to gain a new voice and vitality. Poetry as prayer reveals the inner, mystical, dialogic, and transformational character of that which happens in a human heart. It discloses something essential about our spirituality: the pattern of belief and disbelief—a human being's capability of a desperate yet hopeful seeking of God but also of an iniquitous abandoning of Him. Praying with poetry is the space of interaction of the many voices that a human being discovers to be dwelling in the innermost depths of his/her soul. In its non-univocal texture, this kind of poetry is the outcome of the urge to in-*voke* the loving presence of God and of encountering the many, also contradictory, and pro-*vocative*, responses that this presence occasions. In its versatile and complex character, poetic prayer can be a response that fails to concord with the intrinsic call to live in God's presence; it can be, and often is, a prayer of loss, lamentation, and despair.

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34 See St. Paul's explication of the sanctity of the human body: "[…] for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." (1 Cor 3:17.)

Since God's reality is different from ours, we are continuously searching for Him and trying to understand His ways. In this search, we gradually come to an understanding that the hermeneutic *in-between* is the very space of the impossible possibility of an encounter with God. The unquenchable longing for being-with-God is the subtle tissue of poetic prayer. Hopkins's devotional poetry, Eliot's verse calling us to understand more and in a different way, God's thinking, which is painfully not ours, and Rilke's almost blasphemous, subversive evocation of a relationship with God inspire us to delve deeper into the gentleness and magnanimity of God's seeking a human being and the versatility of a human being's response.

Poetry as prayer is not always a place of long-awaited reconciliation and peacefulness but is rather the site of a massive struggle and disquiet. The various tones adopted by the poets analyzed in this study invite us to re-think poetic prayer's exceptional role in expressing human anxiety and longing for God. Hopkins, Eliot, and Rilke demonstrate that the constructive unrest that ensues from a hermeneutic belief/disbelief/belief paradigm and pertains to poetic prayer is not about a solidified and univocal response to what God invites us to see and understand, but rather it implies that the encounter between God and a human being is potentially always varying and unpredictable. The beauty of the poetic prayer's ambiguity—its often-unforeseeable message—encourages us to seek and follow all possible paths to encountering God, and perhaps not only encountering, but of being in love with Him.

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Quests and Questioning or Again and Again

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Abstract

This piece makes a claim for the transformative power of hermeneutics by seeing in the tradition places of undischarged Utopian potential, which are often found in a close hermeneutic engagement with poetry. All such readings, it is argued, ought to meet the four watchwords of any contemporary interpretation *viz.*, that such readings be non-orthodox, non-nostalgic, non-rejectionist, and non-apocalyptic. Such a reading is attempted of Langston Hughes's poem "Let America Be America Again" against the

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backdrop of an interpretation of insights from Gianni Vattimo. All this is meant to be evidence as well of the dire necessity of the Humanities.

Keywords: tradition, poetry, non-orthodox, non-nostalgic, non-rejectionist, non-apocalyptic, Utopian, hermeneutics, transformation, the Humanities.

Iskanja in spraševanja ali spet in spet

Povzetek

Prispevek zagovarja transformativno moč hermenevtike, tako da skuša znotraj tradicije zaslediti kraje nerazgrnjenega utopičnega potenciala, kakršne pogostokrat najdevamo s pomočjo natančnega hermenevtičnega spoprijema s poezijo. Vsako tovrstno branje bi se moralo, tako trdimo, skladati s štirimi gesli sleherne sodobne interpretacije, in sicer: takšna branja bi morala biti neortodoksna, nenostalgična, neodklonilna in neapokaliptična. Tako tudi skušamo, na ozadju interpretacije spoznanj Giannija Vattima, brati pesem Langstona Hughesa z naslovom »Let America Be America Again [Naj bo Amerika spet Amerika]«. Namen pričujočega razmišljanja je obenem pokazati neobhodno nujo humanistike.

Ključne besede: tradicija, poezija, neortodoksnost, nenostalgičnost, neodklonilnost, neapokaliptičnost, utopičnost, hermenevtika, transformacija, humanistika.

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And now don't shut your eyes, and don't desert
But learn to learn and try to learn for what.

Bertolt Brecht: "To the Students of the Workers' and
Peasants' Faculties"

I. The way things are. Preparing to engage tradition

"[…] the classics, the things that have held out, weren't perhaps necessarily classics right from the outset, things destined to hold out, but the fact that they did become classics involves me, what I am is largely the fruit of their endurance …"

Gianni Vattimo: *The Responsibility of the Philosopher*

To wish things not to be as they are, it helps to see hints and allusions of something other in nearly, if not in everything we already love in the texts and traditions of the Humanities.[1] We might say the Humanities give us hope as an archive of living possibilities. If, as I believe, the Humanities are at their heart a hermeneutic enterprise, because human being is a hermeneutic task, then by way of a radical hermeneutic education we are able to cultivate the

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1 This paper was originally delivered as an invited talk on June 5, 2019, in Ljubljana, Slovenia, sponsored by the Forum for the Humanities (FORhUM) and the Institute Nova Revija for the Humanities, under the title: "Enduring the Humanities Again and Again." I keep here some of the remarks of that day as they set up my engagement with the poet France Prešeren, and poetry more generally, in a manner I wish both to keep watching over and supporting from below in the manuscript. That talk began: "I could not be more grateful for your invitation and this wonderful chance to say something about the Humanities and how I believe protecting them will require a care for words. I am also thankful for your hard-won ability, in this city of bridges, that allows us to span the linguistic divide by permitting me to deliver these words in English. To thank you, I shall try to bring a few things that are allowed in English, playing with a few words to open my paper and then share a hermeneutic reading of a poem (written in English) as a way to demonstrate some reasons why we need to defend the Humanities and how we might do so with poets whose work is a radical challenge to official words and practices."

prejudices fitting to our time. Were we to embrace the claim that every reading is a re-reading, then learning to read in sophisticated ways seems essential to imagining more fully the first comings of this something other. To achieve what—in a dialogue with Richard Kearney on the creativity of language—Paul Ricoeur calls "a redefining of what is already defined" (Kearney 2017, 133), learning to re-read in this hermeneutic sense allows us to embrace the pre-arrival of something better in the passages we come across in classic texts.

Consequently, in light of our shared work in the FORhUM and other such institutions, I understand this return to the Humanities as a radical defense of tradition or perhaps better so as not to confuse: a defense of the tradition by radicals. In Gadamerian fashion, I remain close to the power of questions and close to the point on which Gadamer insists *viz.*, that all our responses are answers to questions even if they are themselves formed as interrogatives. In English there is a playfulness in the word "question" as it includes the word "quest." The word "question" holds, thus, a sketch of how we ought to proceed. Hermeneutic questions send us, not looking for definitive answers that can be proven, rather they send us on a quest of responding where close reading, interpretation, and persuasion are required. This going forth is a quest resembling more a sojourn of looking deep and reading carefully than a slavish following of a map; it is the former because we do not know exactly where we are going to end up when we embrace a hermeneutic comportment toward texts.

The impossibility of final answers ought to enliven the search for multiple responses and never neither discourage from nor force us to abort the never-ending search. It remains vital to stay on the quest, of which an enduring defense of the Humanities is a central part. Either settling once and for all on an answer or lamenting that there cannot be a single timeless one, would abandon the task all together.

As my title and epigraph to this section are meant to suggest, this quest of hermeneutic questioning is both something we endure and it is also an endeavor that remains never-ending. Doubtlessly, there are many dangers waiting on the horizons of such quests, and yet without our undertaking them with a sense of determination we shall cede the entire terrain of the tradition to a banal repetition or something worse. Consequently, I share with you a few

thoughts on how we might, or at least how I have, oriented myself on the quest of an enduring defense of the Humanities.

To end this opening section, let me use an example that is fitting to these Ljubljana surroundings. I agree with Ralph Waldo Emerson that we live in truth, but it needs poetic saying to matter to our lives. We are able to see poetry's profundity in the square not far from here. I had heard of this lovely example before seeing it here for myself. My host, Dr. Božič, made a beautiful discourse about it while he was with Barrett honors students in the USA recently. It has to do with the poem by France Prešeren that resides in and beneath the street.

Are Prešeren's words, which are trod upon each day, to be seen as being trampled into silence by such traffic? Or are we to see them there below the street as the most apt metaphor for how the Humanities might hear poetry's call? The words of poets—standing for the promise of the Humanities—remind us daily, even there on the well-worn crowed street, that our being is grounded in poetry. Poetry is under us—reminding us that words are our ground, words, well placed, are the buoying uplift that keeps us from falling too deeply into *Gestell*. From beneath our feet, they seem to ask: Might it be poetry that points to a way out even in these trying times? My desire today is to stay nearer the hope suggested by the latter of these two choices, while lamenting the ways we no doubt undertake the trampling of words all too often.

II. Coordinates for radical hermeneutic resistance

> "Hermeneutical experience is concerned with *tradition*. This is what is to be experienced. But tradition is not simply a process that experience teaches us to know and govern; it is *language* […]"

> Hans-Georg Gadamer: *Truth and Method*

If, as Gadamer maintains above, language and tradition are inextricable, and if we cannot help but be thrown in relation to an already ongoing meaningfulness, then we shall, as we develop ways to understand this relationship, benefit from an orientation that provides some keen sense of the abounding dangers. The possibility of debilitating prejudices embedding

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themselves in our understanding is one of these ever-present dangers. This is a problem, indeed, for philosophers of radical hermeneutics, a problem for teachers, and writers. A brief example from somewhere near philosophy's beginning: It is for very good reasons that Plato has the prisoners in his Cave Allegory chained there *since birth*. Few images are as powerful in showing us that that, with which we are contending, has been with us and our students for quite some time. This situation keeps us from delivering a wholly inviting message to those whose dispositions have been shaped forever by the calculative thinking of the type of world disclosure Heidegger calls *Gestell*.

It is difficult, is it not, to rally enthusiasm around the desire for more ambiguity, more uncertainty, more vulnerability in those whose calculative expectations of the world are for definitive answers, which come with ease and speed, and announce themselves with kitschy fanfare. Who rallies to the banner of the difficult and painstaking task of interpretation—except those who have somehow already grown fond of and enamored with the pleasure? Yet, we must find a way to attract, to get ourselves and others to embrace and endure a life of hermeneutic struggle against incapacitating literalisms, to an embrace of the Gadamerian insight that ambiguity is not a weakness of words.[2]

A group of thinkers who are gathered under the name Retort Collective, I believe, give us coordinates, by which to proceed and to face these dangers without succumbing to our own literalist folly. In their still masterful decades-old book *Afflicted Powers*, these coordinates, they claim, must be attended to by any theory embracing a call to transformation, a call I believe is central to the most sophisticated understanding of the Humanities. I share with them the commitment that this opposition leading to transformation needs to be:

> A *non-orthodox*, *non-nostalgic*, *non-rejectionist*, *non-apocalyptic* critique of the modern: that ought now to be the task of Left politics. Otherwise the ground of opposition to the present will be permanently ceded to one or another fundamentalism. (Retort 2005, 177; my emphasis.)

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2 Cf. Gadamer 1975, 482. For a critique of *Gestell* with respect to ethics and the public sphere along these same lines, see also Weiner and Ramsey 2011.

This focus on achieving a position that meets the demands of these four watchwords is in line with the tasks and projects of radical hermeneutics, because hermeneutics, too, is at its best when it seeks to contest all forms of religious, free-market, or scientistic fundamentalism and literalism without itself succumbing to orthodoxy. Guided by the other coordinates, hermeneutics preserves a utopian hope for the future in being non-apocalyptic. Furthermore, it must resist the wholesale rejection of modernity and tradition. Lastly, a hermeneutics of education will resist the temptation, as well as being on guard against, the inadvertent embrace of nostalgia that engaging the traditions bears within it as a constant threat. Despite our detour through traditional texts, we shall not pretend there are pre-modern solutions to our so-called post-modern problems.

As all who follow the hermeneutic legacy initiated by Heidegger and Gadamer, we suffer the weight and trajectory of the tradition of received interpretations. Understanding that this fate cannot be overcome by any full break from it (*Überwindung*), I wish to extend and make use of Gianni Vattimo's understanding of a concept, borrowed from Heidegger, of *Verwindung* as a metaphor for the type of reading heeding the warnings of the four watchwords. Translating it sometimes as "twisting away" and at others as "distortion," Vattimo offers *Verwindung* as a strategy of engaging tradition so as not to be determined to the end by it, while simultaneously acknowledging we shall never be finished with it. Nor ought we wish to be free of tradition—"to be situated within a tradition," Gadamer tells us, "does not limit the freedom of knowledge but makes it possible" (1975, 354). As we are unable once and for all to overcome traditions, because without tradition we are not, we shall have to come to terms with it. Put another way: to be our best at critiquing the banal conservatism, we shall have to be vigilant conservators of the traditions in the Humanities.

Vattimo, likening these twists and detours of *Verwindung* to a chess game, in which all the pieces are knights, says such interpretations make nothing but "horse moves" (1992, 37), and consequently prohibit unrestricted and purely linear progress. Although he does not elaborate this metaphor further, I find it wonderfully suggestive and will attempt a few moves here. The way back to traditional texts is not a straight line. We are able, however, in this

twisting and distorting movement of interpretation—even restrained as we are by the tradition—to move forward or back bit by bit, moving both to the heart of our reading while also moving by directions forced upon us. Given the restrictions on moving a knight, there are only certain places we are able to go. This movement is always partial as we are always having to succumb to the force of things, and this force and inertia requires that we level off our moves at the end of every interpretive turn we undertake. Finitude, embodied and embedded in the very real situations, in which we find ourselves acting, says to us: you may move here, but you cannot move there, or at least not yet. It takes a number of turns to get to a new place in the tradition whether we mean in one's current reading of a text, one's lifetime, or an entire generation of thinking. This necessity sets into relief both the concept of enduring and of never-ending in my title. We undertake a number of moves through our works in the Humanities and we leave the results of our moves behind to be taken up by others and those who follow.

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In addition to these images of how interpretation both proceeds and is curtailed, I would add the idea that knights are able—without denying their limited scope—to jump over some things. If we understand how to distort, twist free of, and jump over certain aspects of tradition, we shall negotiate and create our way of being a part of the texts of the tradition, rather than being simply conservative reproducers of it.

Twisting away from the tradition, distorting, and re-orienting ourselves to it will take a fair amount of refusal, some committed resistance, and at times jumping over moments and aspects of received interpretations. This also allows the jumping over of those "troubling" moments in texts that have no place in the progress, which we mean to bring about or which has already come about through political and social struggle, and which we thus wish to conserve. This sifting and evaluating is undertaken with a view of what remains to be reclaimed, repurposed, and reintegrated from the tradition toward liberatory ends. In a real sense, the means for transformation are also there in the past, and already here in the present, as much as they are yet to come.

Another way to conceive what such distortions are able to achieve today by returning to the tradition—in my playful rendering derived from *Verwindung*—is to understand it, as we say in English, as "getting the better

of things." "Getting the better of things" means something like making a more persuasive, a more life-inducing, a more vital interpretation after a struggle with contesting forces. A twisting interpretation moves the reading of a text so that it ends up in an unexpected place. These interpretations allow a seeing ahead from the past—from an orientation that understands we shall have to invoke the past to make a move toward the future, and that what rhetoricians call the burden of proof will most often fall to us. I do not harbor any illusions; this practice will neither be easy nor will it be any easier in the days to come. The weight of the world is substantial.

Notwithstanding this weight, more liberatory and fitting prejudices guided by the four coordinates and our twisting knight maneuvers with their distorting, jumping over, and getting the better of things shall put us in a position of being able to agree with the contemporary radical romantic philosophers Löwy and Sayre that going back into tradition consequently:

> […] does not mean a return to the past but a detour via the past, toward a new future, a detour that allows the human spirit to become aware of all the cultural richness and all the vitality that have been sacrificed by the historical process launched by the Industrial Revolution, and to seek ways of bringing them back to life. (Löwy and Sayre 2001, 253–254.)

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Thus, part of the enduring quest of the Humanities is the never-ending challenge of making something out of tradition so as to (re)make the world.

III. Poetry as a calvary of horse moves

> I saw the goose-flesh on my skin. I did not know what made it. I was cold. Had a ghost passed over? No, it was the poetry.

> Sylvia Plath: "Ocean 1212-W"

For as easy and habitual as it is to use words, it is extremely difficult to use them well. As Walt Whitman says in his poem "Vocalism," the question concerning language is to wonder if we shall be able, perhaps "from vigorous

practice," to come "duly to the divine power to speak words" (Whitman 2004, 404). Words are everywhere; however, the fitting way to deploy them takes a special effort. Put another way: words are ubiquitous, and their poor use is as much our problem as their being all around is our hope.

The vital possibilities language carries with it *qua* language is the opportunity of struggle because, as the Situationists (precursors to the Retort Collective)—in a text entitled "All the King's Men"—put it succinctly:

> The problem of language is at the heart of all the struggles between the forces striving to abolish the present alienation and those striving to maintain it. It is inseparable from the very terrain of those struggles. We live within language as in polluted air. (Knabb 2006, 149.)

This pollution does its damage every day on the largest and smallest of stages. The common place clichés and misuse of words by mass media broadcasts that devastate language are as frequent as they are unnoticed. However, even if words in their debased use are tantamount to the prejudices we seek to overcome and make up the fouled atmosphere of our struggle, then it is still the case that words in the end are our allies:

> Words *work*—on behalf of the dominant organization of life. Yet are completely automated: unfortunately for the theoreticians of information, words are not themselves "informationist"; they contain forces that can upset the most careful calculations. (Ibid.)

We get the better of the worst use of words, then, with words employed more excellently, which is another name for poetry.

I offer the following reading as but a single example of how the words of poetry might respond to words disastrously used whose power might leave a lasting mark on our thinking. Forgive me a U.S. example, which I am afraid has its all too global consequences. "Make America Great" is not the worst thing a radical North American hermeneut could say; indeed, as I have argued elsewhere, actualizing our better potential belongs to the struggle to win over

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the dissatisfaction of all of us who suffer.[3] As each of us will have noted already, this is not the slogan uttered today by red-cap-wearing throngs. We know too well it is the addition of the tag word "again" in the slogan that moves things toward a particular troubling nationalism. And yet, against this crass and dangerous use of language we are able to respond with poetic eloquence deploying these *same words* put to work in a superior way.

The words, to which I turn to respond to the slogan, come from renowned Harlem Renaissance poet Langston Hughes in his 1935 poem "Let America Be America Again" (Hughes 1995, 189–191). From the beginning of this roughly 90-line poem, we read in its initial stanza a place opened for our contemporary thinking:

> Let America be America again […]
> Let America be the dream the dreamers dreamed—
> Let it be that great strong land of love
> Where never kings connive nor tyrants scheme
> That any man be crushed by one above.
>
> (It never was America to me).

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Embracing the insight from the Situationists that "[…] the *insubordination of words*, their desertion or open resistance […] [is] a symptom of the general revolutionary crisis of this society" (Knabb 2006, 149), we are able to reclaim the word "again" by reading this poem. Of course, the word "again" rings here in a more excellent way to mean "over" as in "make over," which is to say, to start over again, to start anew, to try again, but better this time. From the beginning, the word "again" is filled here with futurity and challenges the dangerous, dishonest, and disgraceful use in the right-wing populist slogan. In addition, we note in our spirit of tradition that Hughes's "again" means to call us to undertake a makeover with the only material left to us: the remains of what has been, the potential the past still holds as can be fashioned anew by the quality of our imaginations for the future.

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3 See Ramsey 1995.

The poem takes to task the avowed claims of the documents and ideals, which are said to be at work for all, by asking for whom they are not working. In the italicized lines that follow the poem's opening, a voice comes to the verse sounding as if it embodies a surprise, as if its understanding is being brought up short by the claim that, for some, America has never yet been the America of its self-proclamation. Calling these ideals the stars (certainly no innocent symbol in America), the voice asks with a dash of accusation:

> *Say, who are you that mumbles in the dark?*
> *And who are you that draws your veil across the stars?*

Hughes, in Whitmanian fashion, responds by way of cataloguing those who dream for the attempt to try and make America again otherwise, who dream of a future fitting the excellence of decent people, which they have so far been denied. This rollcall of those who draw the veil includes "the poor white fooled and pushed apart" and the "Negro bearing slavery's scars"; its catalogue also includes "the red man driven from the land" and the "immigrant clutching […] hope." Taken together, these folks and more besides (the bondsman, the worker, the Negro servant, people humble and hungry are also here) are the ones who find, like those today, that the succor offered them by neo-liberalism, as Hughes puts it so brilliantly, is: "only the same old stupid plan / Of dog eat dog, of mighty crush the weak"—only this, then, in exchange for their yearning.

This veil, therefore, functions in the poem not to cover over and hide the faces and muffle the voices of those left out; rather, it is a veil that acts in such a way that more is now seen and heard; like shading one's eyes from the too bright sun to see more clearly what is at hand. The veil sets into relief what here must be seen, and quiets for a moment the din of the oft repeated claims of an America that will not gauge itself against the measure of its own declarations. Through the veil, the cry is raised demanding the stars shine on everyone. It asks we let noble words, represented here by stars, be allowed to mean what they say.

This demand, coming through the poem, is called from the beginning the dream. There is something resounding in the line "Let America be the dream the dreamers dreamed" that is future-oriented in the creative sense already

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suggested by Hughes' use of "again."[4] The flowing repetition of the words related to "dream" using it again, and again, and again brings to our vision three aspects of the dream: those who dream, the act of dreaming, and the product of the practice of dreaming. This marks a dream as something real, but not yet fully realized just as the notion of America is considered throughout the poem—*viz.*, a promise not yet kept. Keenly articulated, but nowhere near fully concretized in practice, yet America and the dream both exist. Although still looking to the future, the dream's contents come in part from the having been, from what has not been, yet remains efficacious in it.

Nonetheless, these contents remain a part of our present as they voice a desire for a trajectory toward another future, and are in keeping with Ernst Bloch's claim that reality means: "reality plus the future within it" (Bloch 1987, 162). If Bloch is onto something in this definition, then the Humanities, whatever many other things they might in fact be, are dedicated—as is poetry itself in Heidegger's understating—to being the measure and the way, by which we measure the distance between the universal promise and the particular state of affairs, between the ideal and the current practice. Poetry shines a light on what is and discloses for our understanding what could and ought to be. In this sense, then—far from being an abstraction—nothing is more real than poetry.

Throughout "Let America Be America Again," Hughes provides us with the insight that "again" and "over" mean that something was missed, yet vaguely sighted, and that something finds itself left undone. Yet, if we understand how to read, it shows itself as being at our fingertips and near the tips of our tongues. Indeed, this poem discloses with no little clarity that some excellence that ought to have been made real has not yet been actualized. Our befriending of the tradition needs this enduring reminder: the past is also what stood as possible, but went unactualized, and what has been itself asks, if something of these past possibilities is still open to us. "There is more in the past," Ricoeur tells us, "than what happened." (Kearney 2004, 153.) We engage the past, thus,

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4 There is, of course, another dream poem by Hughes: "Harlem": "What happens to a dream deferred? // Does it dry up / like a raisin in the sun? / Or fester like a sore— / And then run? / Does it stink like rotten meat? / Or crust and sugar over— / like a syrupy sweet? // Maybe it just sags / like a heavy load. // *Or does it explode?*" (Hughes 1995, 426.)

for the sake of the future as opposed to the mean-spirited conceit that our future become an impossible reversion to the past that missed what was best about it.

Let us linger a bit longer here with the image of the dream now linked with what has been left undone in the past, which nevertheless shows itself to our present understanding. In the middle stanza, just past the poem's half-way mark, the dream and desire for transformation that motivates all these words calls the dream at its heart: "almost dead." The radical space opened by the poem's use of "almost" is occupied by the poet himself who goes immediately on to proclaim again by repeating the poem's opening:

> O, let America be America again—
> The land that never has been yet—
> And yet must be—the land where *every* man is free.

This use of "yet" comes again to us in its various senses and in each a wider sense of disclosure is achieved within the poem's profound grace.

In the first instance, "yet" means to say a still scandalous present, which includes, nonetheless, a hint of a promised and better future. The second use of "yet" occurs with the word "never" meaning here something, such as "not yet," and the echo of the promised future within this "never" says simultaneously, "but ought be." Another sense of "yet" is at play here as well, this time saying "despite"; despite all that might signal defeat, the resistance endures. One more sense awaits the keen reader as the fourth use of "yet" announces an ethical claim; "yet" here means one *must*—if we are to live up to what our collective selves are capable—be willing to try again and make something other than the continuation of what stands before us.

Following this multivalent "yet" is the italicized word "every" echoing something akin to a humanist and universalist claim.[5] Hughes shows this to be a cosmopolitan claim also, and not simply an American one, when he links this dream with dreams that began east across the Atlantic from Harlem.

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5 One power of too-narrowly invoked universal claims is they promote more than they ask for.

Here, Hughes invokes what he calls the "basic dream," the dream of liberation that is the well-spring of all such dreaming. He lists the Old-World dream of overcoming, "so strong, so brave, so true," that it animates dreams centuries hence. This is the claim that the last line of the stanza says issues forth as a rallying cry making a demand that we: "Must bring back our mighty dream again."[6] Now, the dream is "our" dream shared across time and continents. Here, two seemingly simple words, "yet" and "again," conspire to disclose this cosmopolitan claim for a more just future. Radical work in both thinking and action shall be required on our part to make good in this nuanced understanding of the basic dream and what it has inspired world-wide—intimations of which we find in the classic texts of the Humanities.

Coming back then to America, and coming without a hint of sentimentality, in the poem's final stanza we are provided a more noble vision of how to proceed. It is offered by Hughes by way of a stunning alliteration and an appeal to redemption that awaits our engagement:

> Out of the rack and ruin of our gangster death,
> The rape and rot of graft, and stealth, and lies,
> We, the people, must redeem
> […]
> And make America again!

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Evaluating this poem and my reading in light of my modest theoretical contribution, we are able to say by way of detouring words and traditional meanings that the poem performs its own twisting away from the tradition even as now, more than 80 years later, it becomes part of the Humanist literary tradition, of which we can make use in our efforts to transform the world. The poem enacts as series of beautiful horse moves to twist away from the current political slogan, as well, and confounding the cruel and indecent moves of the vile sloganeers and their mendacious pawns.

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6 I am not unaware that many have argued that the *demos* is dead. This might well be. However, any possible resurrection of the *demos* in any qualified sense, it seems to me, will come from a thinking indebted in some measure and degree to a text or texts that make up what we call with some trepidation the Humanities.

In keeping with the four watchwords with which I began, Hughes' poem is *non-rejectionist* by appealing to America's as yet unrealized potential. With its various and creative moves, the poem puts into play questions about what "great" should mean, and asks what anyone might mean by coupling "great" with "again" in an uncritical manner. In the wake of the final stanza's list of crimes as ethical trespass ("the rack and ruin of our gangster death, / The rape and rot of graft, and stealth, and lies"), "great" and "again" are kept from coming together in any simple slogan. To the contrary, it serves rather as a battle cry for radical transformation. Moreover, the poem is *non-nostalgic*, because it sees the past as something to be bettered, even as the past itself provides some of the resources to make this possible. It escapes the charge of nostalgia as its use of "again" looks forward through what has been left undone in the past and yet remains in our present as a herald of the future.

Rounding out the four watchwords, "Let America Be America" is a *non-apocalyptic* calling for an ongoing creative struggle to keep the better alive even in the face of atrocities; it's not over yet, the poem says—yet, only if we the people dream of and demand redemption. Consequently, it declares: we are not at the end, yet. Finally, as poetry, it remains *non-orthodox* by caring thoughtfully for the ever-needed interpretation of words. As poems are, by their form and content, at odds with the habituated prejudices of a language meant only to exchange information, they open a philosophical space for interpretation. "What is poetry if not the revolutionary moment of language […]" (Knabb 2006, 149), the Situationists ask. In a word: the poem Hughes writes gets the better of—and not by a little bit—the "stupid plan" embodied in the crass political slogan.

All excellent poems, and they share this with all great art, come not to decorate a world already firmly in place and finished; rather, the most eminent poems come as insurrections that remind us of our grounding in language, that remind us language upholds us, that words keep us upright like Prešeren's beneath our feet. They come lending a hand in re-making the world. I would say to bring ourselves face-to-face with questions of language, which is the task of the Humanities and hermeneutically inspired education, is to bring us before the questions of living together and the questions shaping our resistance. I want to have faith that despite what every philosopher is by profession forced

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to acknowledge as an "age-old quarrel," both philosophy and poetry are time-honored names for looking after words, which is also, to say: how we look after one another.

IV. A never-ending quest

… preparing the shape of things to come.

Friedrich Schiller (on the power of art)

… if not, winter.

Sappho (in Anne Carson's translation)

One last word, then. If language permeates everything that gets to us by way of tradition (which is to say *everything*), then the Humanities belong, at least as much, to the transformation as they do to conservation. We must resist, it seems to me, the imprimatur of corporations: let us not embrace their saying how well those trained in the Humanities are as workers, how much money they make, how well they are ready to learn and carry out the corporate operation. Let us not encourage the study of *Hamlet* and *As You Like It* because some so-called free market-driven corporation promises to reward reading Shakespeare with a promotion and a raise. They make this promise of wealth and advancement with this damning caveat: study the classics as long as you do not learn from them what would keep you from the corporation in the first place. There is something alive and transformative in the texts of the Humanities, if we but bring them to the fore in vital interpretations. We shall only recognize what readings are worth pursuing in the process of making and sharing them, which will itself be an ongoing defense of the Humanities.

Who would be foolish enough to try and hide the fact that the task is overwhelming and no small number of defeats await us (tradition is also the record of our many failures and defeats)? Nonetheless, let us take heart from Walt Whitman who, in his poem "To a Foil'd European Revolutionaire," bids us:

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Courage yet my brother or my sister!

Keep on – Liberty is to be subserv'd whatever occurs;

That is nothing that is quell'd by one or two failures, or any

number of failures […] (Whitman 2004, 392.)

Possessing what I have imagined Ernst Bloch calls undischarged Utopian potential, tradition calls not for its mere repetition, but for a twisting toward its redemption, which will mean also the bringing of the new; as Whitman says: "(Who knows? the best yet unexpress'd and lacking.)" (Whitman 2004, 567.) But this expression will come from out of our careful use of words, from poetry or at least something drawing from the poetic. Meanwhile, as philosophy and poetry teach, words wait for us to be in solidarity with them, because things do not have to be this way.

The never-ending quest is only the promise of what might be, and brings no guarantees with it that things will go well; however, it also says things will not go well, unless we endure by both learning how to suffer the weight of tradition and how simultaneously to twist and detour within it. It is where we cannot help but begin, this hermeneutics teaches us. The Humanities, understood as radical hermeneutics, is the way to attempt this learning as the practice of writing, of teaching, of lecturing, of keeping alive institutes such as the FORhUM as sites of the invitation to question, as the sites where all of these practices make up our shared pursuit that has as its heart the desire to endure a never-ending quest.

Hence, to the tradition, yet again.

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Mood as Interpretive Category
Experience as a Form of Understanding

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Abstract

The article discusses the functioning of the notion of mood in various fields (philosophy, psychology, architecture, literary studies). In this context, the mood becomes a way of experiencing oneself in the world (referring primarily to Martin Heidegger's concept). To be in a mood means—to be in the world, to experience the world, to try to understand it. To be in a mood is to feel your body and your mind in the world. The mood captured in this way allows a different reading of selected

poems by Halina Poświatowska—the sensuality of this poetry can be understood as a phenomenological record of experiencing oneself in the world.

Keywords: mood, understanding, world, Martin Heidegger, Halina Poświatowska.

Razpoloženje kot interpretativna kategorija. Izkustvo kot oblika razumevanja

Povzetek

Članek obravnava delovanje koncepta razpoloženja na različnih področjih (v filozofiji, psihologiji, arhitekturi, literarni vedi). V takšnem kontekstu razpoloženja postane način izkustva sebe znotraj sveta (zlasti v skladu z interpretacijo Martina Heideggra). Biti razpoložen pomeni—biti v svetu, izkušati svet, poskušati ga razumeti. Razpoloženje je občutenje lastnega telesa in lastnega uma znotraj sveta. Če razpoloženje razumemo na takšen način, se lahko drugače spoprimemo z izbranimi pesmimi Haline Poświatowske: čutnost njene poezije lahko razumemo kot fenomenološko zabeležbo izkustva sebstva v svetu.

Ključne besede: razpoloženje, razumevanje, svet, Martin Heidegger, Halina Poświatowska.

By enabling us to integrate philosophical, psychological, architectural, and aesthetic analyses, the category of mood constitutes itself as one of the "traveling concepts" of contemporary humanities. Drawing on Mieke Bal's theoretical framework, I adopt her interpretive lens as inspiration:[1] it permits me to bring together different references to mood, both discursive and experiential, enabling mutual illumination. While mood has been, particularly recently, a key concept in affective studies, the specific contexts of its exercise transcend the field. By attempting to "read mood" as an interpretive category, I also seek to draw attention to its specific literary entanglements that broaden available modes of reading. This, consequently, would render theoretical reflections a point of departure for analyses aiming to revise specific readings. Literary diagnoses, meanwhile, could prompt further reflection.

The problem with conceptualizing mood also stems from its particular imperceptibility. Here, I understand this imperceptibility as confirmation of the intuitive use of the word, which remains "unseen," until it has to be defined.[2] Dictionary definitions typically point to a mental state (persisting for a period of time) and "experiences and sensations" produced by being in a certain place and time, but also mention the process of tuning an instrument or adjusting voice pitch, and getting someone into the mood (or adopting a certain stance toward someone or something).[3] The term, therefore, usually connotes an emotional state or the ambience or aura of a given place or time, implies a certain atmosphere present within a setting ("summer morning mood"), or indicates a process of attunement or readjustment ("getting oneself into a festive mood"). The commonness of the term echoes in academic idioms,

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1 Bal writes: "Concepts, often precisely those words outsiders consider jargon, can be tremendously productive. If explicit, clear, and defined, they can help to articulate an understanding, check an imagination-run-wild, or enable a discussion, on the basis of common in terms and in the awareness of absences and exclusions. […] Concepts play a crucial part in the traffic between disciplines because of two consequences of their power to propagate, found, and define an object domain: they capture, in a conflation of epistemology and scientific practice, the scientificity of the methodology they ground; and, moving in the opposite direction, they 'harden' the science in question by determining and restricting what counts as scientific." (Bal 2002, 23–34.)

2 "Intuitively, we know full well what it is we're speaking of, but when it comes time to define mood, the situation quickly turns hopeless." (Łukaszewski 2008, 208.)

3 Cf. *Słownik* ("nastrój").

which seek to formulate research practices based on empirical diagnoses they themselves are rooted in.

With this brief overview of the myriad ways of conceptualizing mood in modern humanities, I seek to define a common analytical space, which will allow me to identify a trajectory that would connect discourses while pointing out places warranting closer inquiry and ones that could potentially open new investigative avenues. Preparing this space is, to me, akin to sketching a map that requires both a broader scope and richer detail. Philosophically, the beginning resembles a cartographical grid.

Commenting on Heidegger's assertion that mood is a "fundamental existential mode of being of the equiprimordial disclosedness of the world, being-there-with, and existence" (Heidegger 2010, 137), Stanisław Łojek argued:

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> A human being-in-the-world (and, given their nature, humans are always in-the-world) remains necessarily open to all. And because this opening ensues through mood, the act of being(-in-the-world) always leaves us attuned this or that way. Only through attuned opening can things seem to us this or that and may apply to us, enabling us to encounter, experience, and comprehend them (encountering things is a precondition for all cognition, including its seemingly unattuned, "pure" form). This is because no thing can be this-or-that in and of itself, but can only be perceived in the context of a greater whole. (Łojek 2015, 39.)

Thus conceived, mood becomes something of an intermediary between the self and the world, negotiating the availability of the latter and revealing its incessant elusion. Focusing on the concept of angst defined as a fundamental mood allowing us to glimpse the "mystery of being," Łojek emphasizes:

> As a basic mood, angst opens us to a different experience of the being's existence—different from our everyday, academic, and metaphysical experience. Heidegger, however, aims for something more significant than just identifying new spheres and opportunities for "experience." […] The importance of basic moods lies in their ability to shift us to

places where "existence appears as is." By its nature fleeting and rare, mood—like a flash—illuminates existence as it is, pulling down the everyday veil of the obvious. (Łojek 2015, 50–51.)

Angst, pushing us out of the everyday rut, is endowed with the aura of a primordial philosophical stance, and is thus bound with fundamental modes of existence:

Genuine investigation requires proper attunement. (Basic) moods have the capacity to subvert and undermine fixed and established concepts, the stiff frameworks of which bind and truncate reality. Mood may transport us, if only for a brief moment, near those places where existence appears as is. Places which, according to Plato, are sought out and interrogated by philosophy, itself rooted in the deepest of human needs. The same philosophy, which Aristoteles believed began with and realized itself in the mood of wonder. (Łojek 2015, 51.)

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It is attunement that enables perception, or—to put it differently—it *is* perception. Attunement is, at its core, a sort of openness to the world that is perceived and examined. Mood, therefore, connotes experience and definition, and traces space around the self, in which the self is always situated in relation to something (in-the-). And it is this particular positioning, interpreted as the pursuit of command over the (continuously elusive) world, that brings up the image of a sphere around each and every one of us.

Heideggerian attunement can be compared to Hermann Schmitz's concept of *Stimmungsatmosphäre* or mood atmosphere. Outlining his new phenomenology, Schmitz points out the existence of an invisible sphere, not only omnipresent, but one characterized by persistent disclosedness. After introducing the category of the living body,[4] Schmitz construes emotion as

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4 "Here, I define living body as all that which he [man] feels in the immediate surroundings of his physical body, without basing himself on the testimony of his five senses […] and the perceptual body schema […]. The living body is populated with bodily stirrings, such as fear, pain, hunger, thirst, breathing, pleasure, affective involvement on the part of feelings." (Schmitz 2001, 12.)

"placelessly flowing atmospheres that engulf the living body" (Schmitz 2001, 61), and contends that they comprise another layer of the "emotional sphere" (ibid., 62), alongside moods and stirrings. Schmitz sees moods, the key subject of my investigations, as a sort of basis for all emotion:

> There are only two pure moods: pure fulfillment (pleasure) and pure emptiness (despair). Here, I do not mean either fulfilled or failed hopes or wishes, or a lack of perspective in the face of impending doom, but rather that the breadth of an atmospheric feeling presents itself as either a fulfilled or empty. (Schmitz 2001, 62.)

Conceived spatially, mood resembles a sphere that can be entered, an envelopment—broadening or narrowing that perspective, which enables us to perceive and sense all that exists within reach of our bodies. Writing about being affected by, among other things, a mood, Schmitz asserts:

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> This communication is based around the living body, which registers what the ambiguous sensation seeks to express. The incorporation of others into the living body, consequently, allows us to understand perceptually—prior to any and all interpretation or empathy— whenever something appears within the sphere of the living body that does not belong there (as it belongs, in this case, to others) or whenever something emanates from that sphere by way of said communication; we sense it as we do the weather, the weight dragging us down when we fall or stumble, a gust of wind or an electrical shock, which we also experience within our living body (or even exclusively within it, rendering impossible any attempt to detach or isolate from it), but never as something that belongs there, but rather as something that comes over, permeates, or envelops it. (Schmitz 2001, 38.)

The exactness of the description stems from a meticulous breakdown of individual experiences (and their variations), which most see as familiar states expressed using metaphorical terms, such as "being touched by something" (whether it is situations, particular pronunciations, unexpected sights) or

"feeling the atmosphere" (of a home, a town, a personal encounter). These concepts allow us to mark the fact of experiencing states materializing between individuals in a given setting: often enough, they are emotional states we perceive somatically.

The attempt to capture the common experience, revealing all the possible meanings it may have with regard to our perception of reality, remains a key aspect of the above description. The "invisibility" of the atmosphere enveloping the living body stands in sharp contrast to the power it wields over individuals. Here, Schmitz puts particular emphasis on the clash of atmospheres carrying opposite emotional loads—when a person in a good mood enters a room with a solemn, downcast aura, the positive disposition is usually toned down to match the dignified atmosphere. To describe similar situations, the philosopher developed the concept of "authority" of a feeling.[5]

As they are rooted in communication based around the living body, mood atmospheres constitute a constant, enveloping presence that enables a range of human faculties, from moving efficiently through a crowd, through making conversation and tuning instruments, up to attuning oneself to/empathizing with the emotional experience of another person.[6] Schmitz asserts that, perceived through the living body, emotions need not be distilled down into discrete essences:

> Situations may unfold without feelings, which suffuse them in the form of atmospheres. One example […]: an ambiguous sensation, which, in order to avoid a collision, the driver facing an immediate threat must react to nearly instantaneously, without any relevant input, or following limited analysis, by either swerving, braking, or accelerating to avoid it. In crises like these, feelings remain muted: only terror may break the silence, manifested in the utter constriction of the living body. (Schmitz 2001, 91–92.)

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5 "What subdues the cheerful person, is the dignity of the atmosphere, the authority of sorrow. […] In the aforementioned case, the cheer withdraws in the face of the more solemn and compelling desolation." (Schmitz 2001, 26.)
6 Cf. Schmitz 2001, 37–47.

The enveloping, suffusing, shrouding, covering, and touching of the living body by the mood atmosphere determines the specific domain of the relationship between a person and the space, in which they function. A relationship that is incredibly tender, caring, susceptible to minute changes in the environment, as indicated by the aforementioned words suggesting a certain gentleness of reaction (indeed, its particularly high sensitivity). The living body is especially vulnerable to changes in the stimuli, reflecting the effect of the broadly defined environment on the individual's ability to function. The Polish title of Schmitz's book, which roughly translates as *Bodysphere, space, and emotion*, centers the influence wielded by this portion of our immediate surroundings that always accompanies us: directly affecting our choices and our ways of conceptualizing reality.

The distinctly spatial character of the above interpretation invites a closer look at the ways, in which we conceive mood in architecture. The issue has been explored at length by Gabriela Świtek, who emphasized the importance of phenomenology for a description of the atmosphere of particular buildings. Following the findings of fellow scholars, Świtek points to the question of externalizing, relaying, and sharing of mood,[7] and further emphasizes that:

> Experienced within architecture, the moods emanating therefrom are not our exclusive, private preserve, neither are they "intersubjectively incommunicable." Rather, they make up constellations of expectations that we harbor toward professionals responsible for the architectural and urban landscape of the environment we live in. (Świtek 2020, 94.)

Analyzing the specific ambience of buildings, Świtek illustrates the transition from psychologizing attempts to empathize with space (as theorized by Wölfflin) to Heideggerian phenomenological descriptions, which see "attunement" "as 'primarily, and above all psychology of mood,' as the placement of Dasein" (Świtek 2020, 100; 101–102). Acknowledging

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7 Cf. Świtek 2020, 65; 77–79. Drawing on the findings of Hubert L. Dreyfus, Świątek points to the difference between the mood of a room and the mood inside it. The former is constant, determined by architectural choices, whereas the latter is in constant flux (78). Both, however, may spread and may be shared.

Schmitz's perspective, meanwhile, Świtek focuses on his assertion about the indispensability of examining the "resonance between our mood or character and the atmosphere within a given architectural space" (ibid., 116). Being in spaces, co-generated by others, could potentially corroborate the significance of the moods experienced within the vicinity of our bodies, which are essential to architectural and urban planning due to how our immediate surroundings tend to affect our frame of mind. Drawing on how the German *Stimmung* denotes both architectural atmosphere and the act of tuning an instrument, and writing about the "attunement of architectural space," Świtek asserts that it ought to be understood as "the pursuit of harmony with the world within a formless space that our experiences suffuse" (ibid., 117).

Tying into attunement/tuning, this harmony with the would might suggest that internally conceived moods ought also to be taken into account. Interpreted through a psychological lens, it brings up exactly this aspect of its analysis and introduces a clear distinction between mood and feeling: while mood lasts longer and is less intense than feeling, it applies to situations that do not lend themselves to emotional definition.[8] Ewa Goryńska notes:

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> Emotions are, generally speaking, highly intense states that require high energy expenditures and high levels of stimulation, whereas mood also applies to states that entail inactivity and low energy. Emotions are elicited by specific stimuli and are a reaction to important events or circumstances, while moods are shaped not only by external actions and experiences, but also by internally complex processes. (Goryńska 2011, 12.)

Poring over the highly diverse body of psychological research into mood (areas of which include its intensity, cognitive aspects, and relationship to psychological disorders), we ought to focus on interrogations of how music can be used to shape and affect mood, an area particularly important due to the special relationship between melodies and the listeners: the aural sphere envelops the listeners and, research indicates, affects both their physiological

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8 Cf. Goryńska 2011, 12.

and emotional reactions[9] through a process that involves "finding synchrony with the acoustic structure [of music—author's note]. It is important to note that the reactions elicited by music are both physical and psychological: musical attunement modulates cardiac rhythms and thus regulates emotional experiences."[10] The research-backed correlation between disposition (mood) and music has contributed to the development of music therapy, which allows practitioners to regulate the condition of patients participating in the sessions:

> The effectiveness of music therapy seems to derive primarily from its impact on feelings and their attendant thought patterns. The stimulatory and affective response to music typically produces a cognitive reaction, which assesses the quality and meaning of the emotions. Consequently, music may elicit certain moods, intensify current emotional states or channel them in desired directions […]. (Kudlik and Czerniawska 2011, 263.)

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This synchronization of emotional stimulation ostensibly corroborates the correlation between mood and broadly conceived background (in this case, its auditory portion). The therapy protocol, however, addresses the original, primary mood experienced by another person, and does so in a way that allows attempts at tuning/retuning it.[11] Cases like these, therefore, would necessarily include deliberate confrontation between different moods pursued

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9 Cf. Kudlik and Czerniawska 2011, 250–260.

10 "The best-researched physiological impacts of stimulation include its effects on the respiratory and circulatory systems, both of which are strongly linked with our emotional response. On the one hand, emotional states are directly linked to breath and heart rates; on the other, changes in these two parameters may, in turn, elicit a specific emotional response. […] We should point out, however, that while breathing patterns are rather consistent regardless of experienced emotion, the heart rate profiles paint a different picture." (Kudlik and Czerniawska 2011, 250–251.)

11 "A similar aspect was pointed out by the authors of the so-called 'attunement music therapy,' in which mood is changed by first selecting a musical track that matches the patient's initial mental state, and then using a progression of different tracks designed to produce the desired emotional effect. For a depressive patient, for example, the progression would begin with a sad piece of music, while the following tracks would be chosen for their ability to lift the mood and activate the subject, all the way toward the end goal, in this case tension relief, relaxation, tranquility." (Kudlik and Czerniawska 2011, 264.)

for the purpose of finding a configuration that would produce one most useful (supportive) to the given person.

The psychological interpretation of the relationship between attunement of the self and the mood enveloping/touching the self lends further definition to Heideggerian being in a mood and Schmitz's ambient effect on the self, as well as offers a different perspective on the architectural projects of influencing and generating moods. The possible interpretations also include attempts at formulating literary-studies-inflected concepts, inspired primarily by the ideas first put forward by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht.

Drawing on Friedrich Schiller, Hölderlin, Nietzsche, Riegl, Heidegger, Spitzer, Benn, and Toni Morrison,[12] and working off a framework that conceived mood as a sort of atmosphere, Gumbrecht formulated his concept as follows:

> I am most interested in the component of meaning that connects *Stimmung* with music and the hearing of sounds. As is well known, we do not hear with our inner and outer ear alone. Hearing is a complex form of behavior that involves the entire body. Skin and haptic modalities of perception play an important role. Every tone we perceive is, of course, a form of physical reality […] that "happens" to our body and, at the same time, "surrounds" it. (Gumbrecht 2012, 4.)

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The physical aspect of mood, the experience of it (here, Gumbrecht cites Morrison describing this phenomenon as "being touched as if from the inside"; ibid.), becomes an essential element of investigating the effect that literature has on readers. To that end, Gumbrecht adopts the term *Stimmung*—here conceived as a literary device capable of eliciting a particular reaction in the readers:

> It might appear, at first glance, as if music and weather merely provided metaphors for what we call the "tone," "atmosphere," or,

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12 Gumbrecht emphasizes the findings of Heidegger's concept of mood, Riegl's correct intuitions about how nostalgia would come to enjoy great fortunes in the future, as well as Spitzer and Benn's conclusion that mood cannot be reduced to just performing the role of harmony. Cf. Gumbrecht 2012, 8–10.

indeed, the *Stimmung* of a text. My point, however, is the fact that such tones, atmospheres, and *Stimmungen* never exist wholly independent of the material components of works—above all, their prosody. Therefore, texts affect the "inner feelings" of readers in the way that weather and music do. (Gumbrecht 2012, 5.)

The literary text generates mood by organizing tone: the rhythm, intonation, as well as selection and clustering of specific speech sounds work to produce certain phonic effects, the "voice" of which affects the experience of the listeners. The immediate physicality of the tone of the work, however, does not impose any specific limits on the relationships between literature and mood—Gumbrecht also brings up the impact of certain forms ("forms of narration") on mood, as well as the meaning carried by the sensual elements of the work and its specific themes (and cites Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* as one spectacular example).[13] This, in turn, leads to associating mood with experience (which it evokes) and a certain form of presence: "Yearning for atmosphere and mood is a yearning for presence—perhaps a variant that presupposes a pleasure in dealing with the cultural past." (Gumbrecht 2012, 20.)[14]

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13 Cf. Gumbrecht 2012, 6. Commenting on Gumbrecht's theories, Gerard Ronge notes that while generating mood is, on the one hand, a constituent element of the process of reception (while emphasizing its similarity to Ingardenian concretization), he, on the other, distinguishes this "moment of reception" from hermeneutical interpretations that "in the most obvious way can exist thanks to the chronological distance separating the moment of reading from the moment of the work's appearance. Elements of the reality surrounding the artist during her creation process which are completely neutral for her at that moment (i.e. they do not evoke any moods for her) are revealed with the passage of time to be important parts of that network mentioned by Goethe that connects everything to everything. Gumbrecht clarifies here that components of the work 'absorb' a mood already at the moment of its emergence, but reveal it only later on, during the process of reading." (Ronge 2016, 73.)

14 The concept of presence was also interrogated by Tomasz Mizerkiewicz in his interpretations of the writings of Zygmunt Haupt, which he situated within the scope of Gumbrecht's framework of "reading for *Stimmung*": "In Haupt's work, *Stimmung* is typically linked with the modern aesthetics of literary noise […]. Literary forms of presence constitute themselves and disintegrate to the rhythm of new 'atmospheres' or 'moods,' into which past reality transforms in the course of its description. […] Hence,

Anna Łebkowska sees Gumbrechtian inspirations primarily in the association between touch and affect, and, building on Gumbrecht's reference to Toni Morrison, asserts that the way researchers conceptualize psychological experience is far from any precise articulation and hews closer to Kristeva's concept of "semiotic […] primal contact with the world […], *Mitsein* in the face of this primal communion":

> […] for Gumbrecht, the road led from signs to presence, and the immediacy of presence links back to mood. At the same time—and once again suggesting some semantic community and offering a strong rationale for his decision to draw on Morrison—the effort centers the epistemological, identity, aesthetic, and affective aspects. […] Hence, this interpretation of touch consistently views it through the lens of action, activity, and intensity of experience. (Łebkowska 2019, 79.)

Mitsein, or being-with, implies a certain tangibility: while an affect might unfold within the body (be experienced somatically), it does not necessarily have to be associated with touch conceived physically. In this particular case, a more suitable framework would be provided by haptics, that is, somatosensory stimuli eliciting a sensation of touching/being touched. Marta Smolińska describes the attributes of haptic art as follows:

> Haptic artworks, therefore, "address" and interrogate the sense of touch without necessarily involving a physical "event." As a result, I consider touch to be a modality of vision or its fellow senses, a sensation of "being in contact with something." (Smolińska 2021, 21.)

The scholar indicates that haptics may extend to other senses as well, reframing the whole body as a source of haptic input. As it looks, listens, and tastes, the body registers (within itself) the experiences "as if touched," grazed by them.

Haupt's stories could indeed be viewed as accounts of the dynamics or production of presence." (Mizerkiewicz 2013, 190.)

A body capable of registering external inputs as a whole, sensual, receptive—a body that "attunes itself" within its surroundings, whether in closeness or in solitude: my interrogation of the many different ways that mood can be conceptualized in continues only, until I can lay bare the common embrace of the relationship between the body and all that touches, surrounds, and envelops it, but does not force, smother, or overwhelm it. The body's "attunement" illustrates its relationship to reality and the way it functions in space—it is also a framework that allows it to understand itself and the world/feel itself and the world (which does not always lend itself to precise definition). It might be a good idea to juxtapose this thinking with images looking for an idiom that could best explain this "attunement."

It might to be an interesting exercise to see how the thinking about the sensuality of a poet like Halina Poświatowska changes once we abandon the notion of reducing her metaphors to mere romantic staffage, when the potential of the *Stimmung* of this poetry is laid bare.

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> Here I bask in the sunshine of your hands. Oh, what lovely
> weather you wrapped around my body. The water pressed
> the smoothed hair against the rough grain of sand in breath.
> Your fingers sing of me to the skies. Your fingers
> draw the skies into my hands. They rest against my eyes.
> In hasty touches, they circle my mouth and pull back my hair
> Like an unwelcome, stinging bee, they sink into my neck.
> I shudder.[15]

Poświatowska is widely considered a sensual poet—and I am interested primarily in the relationship between the body and the world, in the body "touched by the world," the experiencing body that is, simultaneously, gripped by its own experiences and seeking to define itself within the world, name itself, rewrite its experience of the world.

The passage above exemplifies the essence of (and being in) the mood— the weather enveloping the body is an attempt to examine a romantic

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15 The poem "*** (Wygrzewam się w słońcu…)" from the collection *Hymn bałwochwalczy* is cited according to: Poświatowska 1989, 62.

relationship that reframes the body's sensory input (and makes the body itself feel embraced, chosen, appreciated) and much of the body's surroundings. As such, the amorous mood also affects cognition and broadens the field of sensory experience: breath finds itself in synchrony with the pulse of the water, and the fingers of the protagonist's lover stretch high enough to touch the sky—the exposed, receptive body resonates with the horizon, unexpectedly reachable, all the while the horizon closes over the protagonist, circumscribing the realm of the visible ("draw the skies into my hands"). Her lover's touch opens both her body and the space around it: the "lovely weather" is a lens, through which one can see a body whose (romantically) reframed perception allows it to sense a much broader range of stimulations. The closing line of "I shudder" implies not only a sexual thrill, but also the ability to perceive flurries of excitement around the body, signals its receptiveness to the rhythms of the atmosphere.

Mood is generated, experienced, and relayed—corroborating the ceaseless change sweeping the world, it illustrates the inevitability of exchange, of mutual impact. Poświatowska's world is forever "in motion," continuously remaking itself, pulsating, mutating:

> doing my eyebrows is my primary occupation
> I do them with the focus
> of a woman damned
> piercing the skin of the mirror with a careful eye
>
> the corner of a townhouse I pass each morning
> the curve of the street I cross
> frail tendrils of mold close around grains of sand
> cracks in the walls grow larger, cracks in the floor larger still
>
> the streets crumble
> and scatter to the four winds
> the gale playing hide-and-seek with them

scooping my hair over my cheeks
I watch the grass grow over the stones[16]

The sensitive eye seems wary of recognizing manifest symptoms of change, looser skin, less pronounced features—the process of observing inevitability touches everything in sight. This "attunement" enables the perception of similarly "sounding"/"visualizing" spheres of fragility, alongside spilling, fracturing, and parting elements. Weakness, drift, dissolving bonds: the breakdown of matter is experienced, while the somatically perceived "sense of terror" sharpens not just the gaze, but perception itself. The "tendrils of flesh" are more than just a graphic manifestation of decay, they also expose the horrified shudder of a body that feels touched by decomposition. The gesture of "scooping the hair" preserves that fear: sensitizing to the reflex to conceal—it senses, within itself and with its entire self, the creeping overgrowth; it senses the viscosity of corroded matter. What surrounds it and what is inside it—the mood of decomposition, is no mere facile gesture of projection, but rather resembles a certain predisposition, a sort of high-sensitivity filter that captures moments of fragility that we tend to ignore. By registering traces of decay, the filter amplifies the sensation, becoming a lens, through which one can experience reality, and confirming the power of immersing, sharing existence—of resonating.

In Halina Poświatowska's poetry, the sensuality of experience is linked with "attunement": the panoply of sensations reveals the prospects of bodily immersion in the world and traces the limits of its perception. It deepens its understanding and illustrates how what once was conceived as material obstacle could actually allow us to feel (experience) everything around us. This perception is always localized, remarkably intense, and lends significance to being-in-the-world. The poet captured that particular experience in a simple, yet very vivid way, by bringing up the image of struggling against life for life itself: significantly, this time

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16 The poem "*** (moim głównym zajęciem…)" is from the collection *Oda do rąk* (cf. Poświatowska 1989, 139).

the sensations suffuse each other and fear of losing life coalesces with
the ecstasy of living it—:

> whenever I yearn for life I scream
> when life leaves me
> I cling to it
> I say—life, dear
> leave not yet
>
> its warm hand in mine
> my lips by its ear
> I whisper
>
> life
> —as if it's a lover
> about to leave
>
> I hang myself around its neck
> and cry
>
> I'll die if you go[17]

More than just a game of paradoxes (rooted in Baroque concepts), this is a
keen attempt to flesh out the tangled knot of profound desire and enormous
fear. Taking in life with the whole body, as if carried by a wave of ardor, but
undercut with the sense of its sudden end—a bodily experience, in which
openness is wounded, evoking simultaneous longing for being-in-life and
fear of its inevitable elusion. This entanglement—this struggle with the lover
and for the lover—renders the perception of life as a bodily experience of
being immersed in the world: the fear of its loss is the fear of the somatically
experienced removal, severance from life.

The sensitivity to even the slightest tremor in the body and the world,
manifest in Poświatowska's writing, and her sensual entanglement with the

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17 The poem "*** (zawsze kiedy chcę żyć…)" is from the collection *Oda do rąk* (cf.
Poświatowska 1989, 166).

world suggest viewing "attunement" as existential openness: perceiving (experiencing) oneself is perceiving the world, as the two are always intertwined, always linked, always "in-between."

<div align="center">*</div>

Conceived in this manner, mood appears to be a category combining affect with phenomenological inquiry into perceiving oneself, which enables us to probe and express the depth our entanglement with that which touches us (regardless of whether it touches us directly or not).

Interpreting mood, we seek to give ourselves a closer look at our own selves—as we sense something that slips our grasp belonging to us, elusive although right beside us. Like air.

But also—interpreting mood, we seek to give ourselves a closer look at what is around us—and how we affect that which we encounter and which, in turn, encounters us.

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Power, Authority, and the Future of Mankind
Rereading William Golding's Lord of the Flies

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Abstract

This paper aims to consider a series of politico-symbolic aspects in a specific politicized dystopia of the twentieth century: *Lord of the Flies* (1954) by William Golding (1911–1993). This analysis is paired with a brief overview of the relationship between utopian fictions and politics.

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Keywords: political theory, English literature, state of nature, political symbolism, Hobbes.

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Moč, avtoriteta in prihodnost človeštva. Ponovno branje *Gospodarja muh* Williama Goldinga

Povzetek

Pričujoči prispevek želi premisliti niz politično-simbolnih vidikov znotraj specifične politično obarvane distopije dvajsetega stoletja: romana *Gospodar muh* (1954) Williama Goldinga (1911–1993). Analizo spremlja kratek pregled razmerja med utopično fikcijo in politiko.

Ključne besede: politična teorija, angleška književnost, naravno stanje, politični simbolizem, Hobbes.

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1. Politics and dystopian literature

Certain literary genres have a peculiar relationship with politics (and political theory). Although dystopian fictions developed their most recent form at the beginning of the twentieth century (Sargent 2010), the early use of the term "dystopian" was reported in the political field long before the outburst of dystopian fiction. The English philosopher John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) coined the term in a Commons debate on Irish Land Tithes in 1868 (Mill 1868). Despite the fact that the reference was to a series of impracticable government plans—a response to the nineteenth-century Great Famine in Ireland—, Mill (rhetorically) introduced this word as playing the role of antonym of a specific (idyllic) conception, namely, *utopia*. Utopian visions and dimensions corresponded to a specific type of narrative fiction (More 1516). Although Thomas More's classic presented itself as socio-political satire (Sargent 2010), *Utopia* peculiarly defined a relationship between literature and politics, and a special form of narrative pertaining to such. More precisely, Mill rhetorically adopted the term "dystopian," since he could rely on the common understanding—within the British cultural environment—of its opposite conception, that is "utopian" (Stock 2019). The latter implied at once political and narrative perspectives: the political use of a term—which belongs to the fictional/rhetorical realm—implies the endowment of a specific dynamic. Therefore, the political connotation of a word is granted once the *realpolitik* allows for it. Thus, it is possible to notice a dynamic that rules the relationship between the political life of a kingdom (i.e., Mill's speech) and its representation—even though here offered in its distorted version. By means of a rhetorical expedient, the opposite conception of utopia is herein introduced.

Although a relationship between the political sphere and its representation is stressed, it is not entirely possible to neatly separate one from the other. Storytelling is a crucial component in certain political processes (Bellini 2011; Bonvecchio 2014; Wunenburger 2020). For instance, the notions of "consensus" (Arendt 2005) and "imaginary" (Wunenburger 2016) peculiarly characterize the interaction between politics and storytelling. If, on the one hand, political narratives are crucial in the establishment of a (total or partial) consensus, then, on the other hand, some narrative forms relate much more than other to

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the mere community's consensus. Speech, stories, *images*—which also entail political implications—convey and deal with rational and irrational aspects of the whole community and its members (including the single individual). Significant images, pictures, and symbols constitute a crucial part of the collective imaginary of any society. According to the French anthropologist Gilbert Durand, the imaginary of a social system is conceived through the meeting "of the faculty of imagination and the heritage of cultural symbols" (Durand 1960). This implies two further considerations: the way ideas and symbols are ordered and mutually integrated is not entirely designed by man himself, rather, it is—according to Durand—linked to the interaction between the psychophysical dimension of the individual and the "social cosmic environment" around him; moreover, there is a strict connection between the members of the community and the sphere of their "cultural and intellectual meanings" (Wunenburger 2016). Therefore, cultural representations are an integral part of the collective imaginary and an expression of a specific community. The "world of representations" reflects—and embodies—both rational and irrational aspects of the community members (i.e., their feelings, expectations, concepts, values, ideas). The way these latter are represented, symbolized—or even manipulated or influenced—is a substantial part of political processes (like power legitimization, on which see: Chiodi 2011; Bonvecchio and Bellini 2017) of a social system (Wunenburger 2020). In addition, the use of symbols and images which root the "cultural codes" of the modern state heavily influences perceptions of reality (Bellini 2011). Thus, this collective dimension of the imaginary shows a strict, solid interrelation between literature and politics.

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It is in light of this digression that it is worth approaching the political narratives that interest the focus of this article. The rise—and affirmation—of the dystopian genre in the twentieth century is hugely indebted to the previous form of utopian literacy (Stock 2019). The developments of the dystopian genre imply a peculiar form of relationship between *fiction* and politics. More specifically, both terms, utopia and dystopia, entail political features. Dystopian narratives are literally grown in the same ground of *fin-de-siècle* utopias (Stock 2019). Thus, the political use of the dichotomy utopia/dystopia is not limited to rhetorical assists to the *realpolitik* (for the sake of accuracy,

the "dystopian" counterpart in this case, see Mill 1868). In order to properly consider the relationship between utopian literary forms—which represent the conceptual field where dystopian fictions are embedded—and politics, it is necessary to stress one specific factor: despite their (possible) didactic message, utopian fictions do not have *textual resolution* (Widdicombe 1990). This implies that utopian works (and fictional ones, in general) do not lead to an ultimate meaning (or *truth*) that every person agrees upon.[1] More specifically, utopian fictions offer potential, imaginable futures, whose realization is not imminent, nor practicable in the here and now.[2] Although it is possible to reckon that this kind of fictional works might have a didactic purpose—or a political one—, such is not linked to any univocal interpretation. The fact of being open to interpretation does not imply that a certain novel—and/or its storytelling—is particularly promiscuous or obscure (or easily to manipulate). This issue is strictly connected to the nature of specific narratives: the form of certain cultural representations seems to deal with a physical/material/rational component and an ideological ("*irrational*") one. Political themes and narratives—with utopian and dystopian characters—show how these two parts can be conjugated. According to a peculiar interpretation of history, some *cultural artifacts* express an "active form of political desire" (Stock 2019), which also includes the utopian urge to wish for a better world (or society, see Bloch 1988). Thus, the rational/physical component (the artifact itself) is matched with the ideal/irrational one (the utopian *impulse*, see Bloch 1988). This tension between these two parts prevents conceiving of literary works as static representations of history (whether this latter is fictional or not), where a definitive ending or interpretation is given. Utopian literary forms become an active manifestation of socio-political tensions through their storytelling. Given their hybrid nature—where *reality* meets halfway with *virtuality*—, it is possible to consider utopian fictions as a peculiar expression of the collective imaginary of a community.

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1 This is equally valid for the political consensus.
2 Although it is possible to notice here some favorable conditions for the outset of the so-called "utopianism" (or Rawlsian ideal theory), there is not enough room to treat the subject properly. Therefore, the description of "utopian fictions" offered herein is mainly borrowed from Corin Braga's analysis (see Braga 2006).

Thus, utopian fictions become an open field for the single individual as well as whole communities to project themself into. However, this *virtuality* of utopia does not imply a single interpretation. Politically speaking, the purpose of the narrative form might be addressed. Just as the utopian impulse manifests itself through fictions, this implies that the converse is also possible. If it is possible to conceive these narratives as a reflection of the political life of the community, then Mill's speech actually introduced a new, crucial element to our politico-symbolic analysis: the English philosopher rhetorically coined—and adopted—the opposite conception of *Utopia*. In addition, scholars of political narratives have considered different literary forms—and deviations—other than the utopian ones. This is the case of anti-utopian and dystopian novels. Although today it is still difficult to find a generally accepted definition of both, the conceptual evolution of these narratives is quite enlightening. According to the British sociologist Krishan Kumar, anti-utopia is the "malevolent and grimacing doppelgänger" of utopia (Kumar 1987). However, these two forms of political narratives are connected to each other and—like dystopia—share the same historic-conceptual ground. Kumar affirmed that utopia and anti-utopia, which are conceived as peculiar declinations of a main storytelling process, are influenced by the idea of progress. In other words, optimistic and pessimistic representations of possible worlds and societies are shaped according to a peculiar, cultural(-symbolic) *forma mentis*. This feature—despite the reference to colonialism or particular socio-historical phenomena that might have had an influence on the way storytelling was developed throughout the course of history—defines and interconnects these two types of narratives. In Kumar's words: "Anti-utopia shares in the fate of utopia. As utopia loses its vitality, so too does anti-utopia. The power and imagery of utopia have always been the driving force and indispensable material of anti-utopia." (Kumar 1987.)

Although different definitions and interpretations have been offered in recent years, one thing is certain: utopia and anti-utopia (and dystopia as it will be shown) are interconnected. No matter whether anti-utopia was concealed within its counterpart since the publication of Thomas More's masterpiece (Braga 2006) or anti-utopia authors already existed since late antiquity (Sargent 2010), the point is that these two narratives share a mutual existence throughout modernity.

Some scholars have also argued that anti-utopia is the total denial—of the political premises and/or of intentions—of utopia (Braga 2006). Unfortunately, it is beyond the focus of this article to consider this specific aspect of political narratives. Yet, it is indeed crucial to stress how this opposition establishes a sort of dialogue between these two types of fictional works. More precisely, the openness to interpretation of utopian literacy leads to a singular or collective identification of the community (i.e., collective imaginary), as well as the projection of a series of irrational/ideal aspects. Now, the most important fact about the impossibility of textual resolution is not the unfeasibility of the (anti-utopian, utopian, or dystopian) project, but rather that this impossibility of the work (along with its virtual status as cultural representation within the collective imaginary) turns storytelling into an *in fieri* process. Because of its impossibility, this story has yet to be told. On a politico-symbolic level, this virtual (un-ended) status of utopian projects and narratives harbors peculiar implications. This dialogue between utopia and anti-utopia implies two different political features: how fiction storytelling might or not result in being convincing—and then create partial or total consensus (i.e., how the positivistic or pessimistic nature of the fictional novel might address collective expectations, hopes, fears—or even nightmares). The first aspect implies a strict relationship with the domain of *realpolitik*, and, in the worst-case scenario, this factor also leads to the manipulation of the fictional work (or media, see Riker 1986). The other aspect still concerns the consensus, but, as mentioned above, it also involves power legitimization. Thus, the creation of consensus is not linked to the most convincing truth cultural representations might offer, but rather how the conception of politics itself is therein represented and conveyed. Once again, the cultural codes of a society are the main way for dealing with *kratophanic* dynamics and the political sphere.

At this point, it may be said that utopian fictions do not lead to an ultimate truth or meaning. Moreover, the openness of this literary form allows (on the politico-symbolic level) the single individual—and/or the whole community—to identify with-in the virtual projections/representation of the imaginary. It has been shown that not only utopian fictions make up a part of political processes (i.e., power legitimization), but their own nature is politically connoted. However, the direction of these series of "possible political and/

or societal representations" is not univocal. In other words, utopia—and its related cultural artifacts—differs from anti-utopia. If utopia is often associated with the portrayal of an unachievable society, whose characters are entirely positive, then anti-utopia is its opposite. Normally, anti-utopian novels envision inhumane societies, where the individuals suffer unspeakable treatments, experience shameful events, or are simply doomed to a hellish fate. To name two examples, which are strictly related to the individual and collective deprivation of human character: *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1897) and *Limbo* (1952) perfectly represent this complete opposition to the utopian pole. Although it shares the same conceptual nest, anti-utopia denies the general characterization and purpose of utopia. On the politico-symbolic level, this dialogue-contrast has some serious implications. The Irish-American scholar Tom Moylan conceives anti-utopia as "the textual form that critiques and rejects not only Utopia but also the political thought and practice that is produced and motivated by Utopia as a force of societal transformation" (Moylan 2000). This means that, just as utopian literacy manifests a (positive) political desire, so do anti-utopian fictions also channel socio-historical expectations, albeit in critical form.

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It is well attested by now how the opposition/dialogue between utopia and anti-utopia has various important politico-symbolic implications. Utopian and anti-utopian novels fight their ground to defend (and represent) social, historical, ideological positions. Cultural representations are imbued with a political characteristic as well: they belong to a collective dimension, their hybrid nature, and their purpose, are politically relevant to definite extents. However, these two narratives represent to another extent an extreme of some aspects of this storytelling. Therefore, it is necessary to find "the golden mean" among different forms of political narratives. According to Moylan, the kind of fictional work that belongs to the same cultural foreground (utopia) and offers a critical position and perspective at once is the dystopian:

> Dystopias negotiate the social terrain of Utopia and Anti-Utopia in a less stable and more contentious fashion than many of their eutopian and antiutopian counterparts. As a literary form that works between these historical antinomies and draws on the textual qualities of both

subgenres to do so, the typical dystopian text is an exercise in a politically charged form of hybrid textuality. (Moylan 2000.)

Although such is not a generally accepted position (and definition, see Vieira 2013), dystopia is an ideal medium for considering some socio-historical implications of the collective imaginary. Besides this, it is crucial to verify a substantial character to the end of this analysis, its political component. If, on the one hand, it is self-intuitive how fictions might contribute to the collective imaginary, then, on the other hand, the influence of utopian/dystopian novels over the political domain is not entirely clear. It is necessary to focus on this fictional genre, namely, dystopia. According to the English literature scholar Adam Stock, "dystopian narratives are a form of political and politicized writing":

> I argue that dystopian narratives are a form of political and politicized writing. As rhetorical structures they can help readers to think about political questions of their day through a generic narrative framework, and because of their obvious political engagement they can and have been appealed to in wider arguments both in everyday life and in the media. (Stock 2019.)

The crucial point of the argument introduced by Stock, who gets along with other scholars on the same point, is that "story telling is itself not a politically neutral act" (Stock 2019). In this case, the way, by which thoughts, symbols, and ideas are represented, can have a political value. This implies not only the influence that narrative frameworks—and media, in general—might exert on individuals, but the mutual, reciprocal exchange between politics and literature. Fictions—more exactly, dystopian ones—are not mere "appendices" to *realpolitik*. The way some topics and themes are treated is crucial to envision imaginary—dramatic or not—scenarios, as well as to specific conceptions of politics. In the introductory part of his book, Stock stresses once more this point:

> I trace a history of modern dystopian fiction to learn more about the political upheavals, social crises and cultural anxieties which provide the context in which such literature is produced, and how they in turn perceive past experiences and possible futures alike. I contend that such texts provide an opportunity for us to enrich our understanding of the competing ideas at play during these historical moments. (Stock 2019.)

This mutual exchange between dystopias and the socio-political environment implies two further considerations: political topics and themes are fitting for this kind of narrative framework; personal and collective projection (i.e., expectations, feelings, etc.) concur to create the approach both to political topics and the political realm at large. In other words, dystopias are the perfect means to treat political topics and dynamics, since storytelling involves the political dimension. The openness of dystopian fictions deals with the same political existence of the individual, who finds themself involved in the construction of the story. This means that not only "cultural representations are active participants in the production of political discourses," but some representations are—per se—*politicized* expressions of a collective self. Thus, dystopias are the eligible mean to conduct this analysis, because its narrativity locates itself "one step from reality."

2. Between the state of nature and the exercise of power: *Lord of the Flies*

In the preceding, we have considered the connection between literature and politics. Besides the instrumental (and political) use of dystopian fictions, the nature of these cultural representations is politicized. It has been argued that there are two main factors that make this type of novels politicized: the involvement of part or the totality of the audience—through the dimension of the collective imaginary (Bellini 2011); and the way dystopias deal with political topics and dynamics (Stock 2019). Therefore, dystopian narratives are an ideal medium to

experiment with some possible (i.e., virtual),[3] extreme, unachievable (at least, at the moment) scenarios. This field of experimentation might highly contribute both to political theory and political sciences (Mayborn 2019). For instance, a specific politicized dystopia can deal with political themes while avoiding any direct references to specific politico-historical situations. This is the case of the *Lord of the Flies* (1954) by William Golding (1911–1993).

This work literally consecrated the British novelist to fame. The success of the novel consolidated the identity of Golding in the intellectual field to the point that his later works never altered this situation (Baker 2000). Golding remained during his lifetime first and foremost the author of the *Lord of the Flies*. There are two factors to consider before plunging into the plot of this volume. The first factor concerns the purpose of his work, which Golding described in a statement to the American publisher as consisting of:

> an attempt to trace the defects of society back to the defects of human nature. The moral is that the shape of a society must depend on the ethical nature of the individual and not on any political system however apparently logical or respectable. (Golding 1964.)

This statement self-evidently refers to a classic theme of political theory, namely, the "state of nature." Although this negative attitude towards "human nature" would immediately hint at some resemblance with the philosophical considerations of Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), Golding's conception is somewhat more "complex." According to Hobbes, the state of nature in its pure form was characterized by "continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (Hobbes 1960). More exactly, this is what characterizes a state of nature without any societal form or government—in other words, an authentic state of anarchy. However, the main point of Golding's statement concerns another aspect of this "anarchic" state: "What does this descent towards this state of nature entail?" and "When does

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3 This refers to the conception of virtuality, which is connected to the hybrid nature of political narratives and collective imaginary, and has been introduced in the previous paragraph.

it start?" This is where the moral issue begins to morph into a properly political one. In a lecture delivered to a class of American students in December 1961 (Carey 2009), Golding said:

Before the Second World War I believed in the perfectibility of social man; that a correct structure of society would produce goodwill; and that therefore you could remove all social ills by a reorganization of society. It is possible that today I believe something of the same again; but after the war I did not because I was unable to. I had discovered what one man could do to another. I am not talking of one man killing another with a gun, or dropping a bomb on him or blowing him up or torpedoing him. I am thinking of the vileness beyond all words that went on, year after year, in the totalitarian states. It is bad enough to say that so many Jews were exterminated in this way and that, so many people liquidated—lovely, elegant word—but there were things done during that period from which I still have to avert my mind lest I should be physically sick. They were not done by the head-hunters of New Guinea, or by some primitive tribe in the Amazon. They were done, skillfully, coldly, by educated men, doctors, lawyers, by men with a tradition of civilization behind them, to beings of their own kind. […] I must say that anyone who moved through those years without understanding that man produces evil as a bee produces honey, must have been blind or wrong in the head. […] I believed then, that man was sick—not exceptional man, but average man. I believed that the condition of man was to be a morally diseased creation and that the best job I could do at the time was to trace the connection between his diseased nature and the international mess he gets himself into. (Golding 2013.)

This passage defines even more the conception of state of nature offered by Golding. One of the main features of dystopian novels that emerges here is the idea of progress. The way Golding remarks on the difference between the so-called primitive men and "educated" ones is quite indicative of the relationship with modernity. On the basis of his conception of the intrinsic, corrupted morality of men, Golding focuses on this lurking evil component in mankind.

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This implies a further aspect: the purpose is to "trace a connection" between an individual dimension and the "international mess" (i.e., the global geopolitical situation at the time). The experience of the Second World War and totalitarian regimes not only strengthened Golding's conception of inner evil, but also represented the point of reference of his masterpiece. Such a noteworthy fact played an inspirational role for the genesis of the *Lord of the Flies* (see: Baker 2000; Carey 2009), as well as provided the British author with a unique chance to consider the individual in extreme socio-political conditions. To understand this deviant nature of the man, it is necessary to reproduce and observe his relationship with a "primordial state of nature."

In order to do so, Golding established some literary conditions. First of all, he selected a group of people with certain features to be introduced in the story: namely a class of British schoolboys in their adolescence. Golding voluntarily attributed them this feature, in order to exclude overtly sexual situations (Spitz 1970). Then, he located them on a desert island with an abundance of water, food, and material for sheltering themselves from weather alterations. This led to the avoidance of any peculiar survival issue or accident. Last but not least, he wanted all the boys to be "equal," meaning no classes or status inequalities. In sum, Golding wanted to recreate the circumstances of an ideal society—in David Spitz's words, "a veritable utopia" (Spitz 1970). Besides the purpose of investigating the programmatic emergence of evil within mankind, the British author intended to show such within the socio-political context. More exactly, the whole plot of the book revolves around a specific political question: the legitimacy of power (Spitz 1970).

However, before taking any further steps in the politico-symbolic analysis of the *Lord of the Flies*, a brief summary of the book is necessary. The story opens with a plane, which—flying away from the part of the world where a global war seems to have broken out—crashes on a remote, isolated island in the Pacific Ocean. Apparently, it seems that the only survivors are two of the schoolboys, the first characters to appear in the novel, Ralph and Piggy. They are both stranded on a tropical beach. Ralph regains consciousness and almost immediately finds a conch. He blows it and, suddenly, several other children gather on the beach, having followed the sound of the conch. After regrouping a little, an assembly of all the survivors is summoned. A group

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of children (namely the choirboys) join the assembly. The leader of this latter group, Jack, would like to become the head of the whole community of survivors. A vote is requested, and Ralph is elected leader of the whole group of schoolboys. One of the "littluns" (i.e., the younger children of the group) makes reference to a "beastie," which nightly roams the island. However, no one seems to pay too much attention to this fact. Then, the first decision Ralph makes is to start a fire and keep it constantly alight, in order to signal their presence on the island to any passing vessel. Notwithstanding Ralph's order, the boys neglect to keep the fire lit. This event causes a plane not to detect them. Ralph and Piggy are upset, whereas the rest of the children seem to enjoy the meat Jack and his fellow hunters gathered. Ralph tries to summon another assembly, in order to regroup all the children, but this attempt miserably fails when Jack neglects the assembly—and their rules. The hot issue to deal with is the "beast," for which the majority of the children intend to organize a search. Jack and Ralph go to a remote part of the island where, notwithstanding nightfall, they keep searching for the "beastie" and climb up a mountain. Reaching the top, they come across a waving dark figure that scares them to death. They believe they have seen the "beast," and run back to the beach. Jack and his fellow hunters form their own group, leaving Ralph and Piggy aside. After a successful hunt, the group returns to their "rocky place at the end of the island" and mounts a pig head on a sharpened stick. This is an offering to the "beast," the "Lord of the Flies," named after a swarm of flies starts to constantly fly around the head. While wandering around the island, Simon reaches the top of the mountain and comes across a "parachute-borne" figure, whom he discovers to be a dead fighter pilot, hanged by his parachute on a tree, whose waving is due to the wind. That night, some celebrations are arranged by the hunters. When Simon returns to the hunters' feast from his trip, he first comes across the pig's head and has a visionary conversation with the "Lord of the Flies." Then, the group of hunters, inebriated by the feast, mistakes him for the "beast" and kills him. In the meanwhile, Jack's group becomes more and more estranged, and Ralph's group keeps its distance. Then, it happens that Jack steals Piggy's spectacles. Ralph and the blind Piggy go to the "rocky place" to confront Jack: they want Piggy's spectacles back. Jack assaults Ralph, and they start

to fight. One of Ralph's hunters, who lurks above the two, pushes a boulder down the mountain and kills Piggy. Scared to death, Ralph is hunted down by Jack and his hunters. At dawn, Ralph makes it to the beach, the rest of the children chasing him. Ralph is about to be killed as well, when suddenly a naval officer comes to his rescue. When the officer asks the children what happened to them, Ralph and all the other children burst out in tears.

Lord of the Flies presents itself as a parodied version of a nineteenth-century classic, namely *The Coral Island* (1857) by Robert Michael Ballantyne (1825–1894). Besides the fact that in Golding's novel the main three characters carry the same name of those in Ballantyne's, *Lord of the Flies* is an evident distortion of the latter. When the naval officer sees the other children, who look like "savages," he asks Ralph whether the situation on the island was like in Ballantyne's novel. He then exclaims "I know. Jolly good show. Like the Coral Island." (Golding 1964.) However, the reality is far different from that. Besides the nightmarish descent into a primitive state of nature, where—per the Hobbesian conception—"*Homo homini lupus est*" is thoroughly applied to the social context, this dystopian novel offers a realistic insight into the legitimacy of power. According to Hobbes, what confers power to an individual is authority (Hobbes 1960). Thus, the quest for authority is the core of the *Lord of the Flies*. More exactly, the dystopia poses a specific question (according to Spitz's vision as well, see Spitz 1970): "What confers authority to an individual?" Therefore, the evolution of the story implies a series of politico-symbolic steps that grapple with this issue.

According to certain historic-political circumstances, such authority is derived directly from God (Chiodi 2011). Thus, a prophet anoints and proclaims a king by the power he receives from the divine sphere. Over time, literary critics have offered several interpretations of Golding's masterpiece, nonetheless all agreeing on one point: Simon is the Christ-figure of the *Lord of the Flies* (see: Spitz 1970; Baker 2000; Carey 2009). Probably epileptic, Simon is the one who talks to the apparition of the "Lord of the Flies" who reveals to the boy that the "beast" is inside them and not lurking somewhere else in the forest. He is the one who discovers that the dead pilot hanging on the tree is not the "beast," but just a corpse: he is not deceived by a "false god." According to Spitz's interpretation, he is killed by men/children who do not recognize him.

If authority does not come from God himself, then it should definitely be associated with reason. Piggy, portrayed as a chubby schoolboy, is the philosopher-figure of the novel (a "Socrates," as Spitz puts it). He is the one who advises Ralph to use the conch to gather the assembly of children and start a democratic process. He is the one who wears spectacles, which are also used to light the fire at the children's camp on the beach. He "calls for order and justice," he is the one who understands the symbolic value of the conch in its connection with power legitimacy. He is also the one who recognizes, by way of theoretical reasoning, that there is no "beast" on the island. Piggy is the incarnation of reason in the social context with a "fragile structure," where reason is soon overthrown by the insurgence of other *necessities*. When Piggy is deprived of his spectacles, he cannot see a thing and is completely useless to Ralph's cause.

At this point, what confers the individual authority, should definitely be consent. Ralph symbolizes this democratic/political virtue. He is a born leader, and he is the one who uses the conch to gather the assembly. He is charismatic and has "the directness of genuine leadership." He chooses Piggy as his advisor and wins the election against Jack. He is the advocate of the democratic process on the island. However, Ralph is rejected as well. In addition, he resorts to physical violence when he confronts Jack—to give Piggy back his spectacles.

This is when the main feature of the Hobbesian (anarchic) state of nature triumphs and identifies completely with the authority of might, force. Jack is the manifestation of brutal force. He is the one who uses the knife, which is the symbol of illegitimate force and might. He is the leader of the hunters and rejects Ralph and his rule. For instance, he leaves the assembly and founds his own community, of which the resemblance to Canetti's *Jagdmeute* (Canetti 1960) is quite indicative. Although he founds his own community at the "rocky place at the end of the island," he craves for the only two things he does not have: Piggy's spectacles and Ralph's conch. He is the representation of brutal force which arises against any form of reason. Jack's authority is the incarnation of the irrational forces that populate the obscure part of humankind (Golding 1964).

At the end of the novel, when the naval officer saves Ralph's life, Jack and the other children look like savages. According to the British author, their

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appearance is related to this degeneration in the power governance. Might and violence is the only form of authority they know, and Golding depicts Jack as follows: "Power lay in the brown swell of his forearms: authority sat on his shoulder and chattered in his ear like an ape." Jack himself has morphed into the *beast*. According to a specific interpretation of the novel, it can be said that the descent into this state of nature—which in Golding's work features as brutal because of the inner, corrupted dimension of the individual—is a remarkable insight into the political extremization of contemporary society.

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Personambiguity in Kobo Abe's *The Face of Another* and the Abyssal Surface of Responsibility

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Abstract

Numerous studies across disciplines discuss the complex relationship between human facial features and personal identity in psychosocial dynamics. Most of these researches follow the common definition of the face as the forepart of the head. Kobo Abe's *The Face of Another* (*Tanin no kao*) is a Japanese novel that explores the face's complexity in great depth and contests this common notion of the face. First, this novel shows that the search for meaning behind the face's physical properties

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is lacerated by discords of individuality/abstraction and identity/pretense. These straining pairs (which I call *personambiguity*) exemplify Lévinas's point that the face's meaning outweighs its phenomenality. Second, this novel presents that the constraint and primacy of responsibility transcend the face's sensible qualities. My reading holds that the face is an abyssal surface, in which the other manifests itself against our appropriative idea of otherness and summons us to irrecusable responsibility.

Keywords: Abe, ethics, face, Lévinas, phenomenology.

Dvoumnost osebe v romanu *Obraz drugega* Koba Abeja in brezdanja površina odgovornosti

Povzetek

Številne študije s področij različnih disciplin obravnavajo kompleksno razmerje med človekovimi obraznimi potezami in osebno identiteto znotraj psihosocialne dinamike. Večina tovrstnih raziskav sledi splošni definiciji obraza oz. obličja kot sprednjega dela glave. Roman Koba Abeja *Obraz drugega* (*Tanin no kao*) je japonsko delo, ki zelo poglobljeno razgrinja kompleksnost obraza in spodbija takšno splošno predstavo obraza. Najprej, roman kaže, da iskanje pomena za fizičnimi značilnostmi obraza trgata razpora med individualnostjo in abstrakcijo ter med identiteto in pretvarjanjem. Razpetost med takšnimi pari (ki jo imenujem *dvoumnost osebe*) pojasnjuje Levinasovo mišljenje, da pomen obličja presega njegovo fenomenalnost. Nadalje, roman ponazarja, da je zadrega in predhodnost odgovornosti transcendirata občutne kvalitete obraza. Moje branje zastopa mnenje, da je obličje brezdanja površina, na kateri se drugi sam manifestira zoper našo prisvojitveno idejo drugosti in nas kliče k neogibni odgovornosti.

Ključne besede: Abe, etika, obličje, Levinas, fenomenologija.

All around me are familiar faces
Worn out places, worn out faces

Roland Orzabal: "Mad World"

The face is our darling conundrum. Human beings highly esteem the face and see it as the first enactment of beauty. The global market value of the beauty industry has been steadily growing over the last decades, with the total head-and-face procedures exceeding other procedures—breast, body, and extremities. Even the current pandemic does not seem enough to halt this business. Quite the opposite, thanks to mandatory face covering and stay-at-home orders, the demands for cosmetic and reconstructive facial surgery are soaring highly. These recent phenomena accentuate psychosocial findings that facial features affect our self-image and life satisfaction.[*]

The exact value of the face, however, remains obscure. The following cases suggest that the value of the face is conditional, if not entirely arbitrary. Studies on facial disfiguration and facial prosthesis/transplant find multifaceted relationships between the face and personal identity. Head-and-face procedures only bring minimal improvement to the self-esteem of people with body dysmorphic disorder.[*] These discoveries imply that aesthetic appraisal and embodied identity are dictated more by subjective body image than objective facial figures.

Still, saying that the human face is totally vacuous would be a hardly sustainable conclusion to live with. Our brains are hardwired for faces. Human beings are attracted to face and gaze since birth, and atypical faces usually cause disruptive observability as well as social impairments. Immediate judgments in daily social life employ some degrees of spontaneous association to initiate facial reading. Facial reading is a salient function that we inherit since time immemorial and preserve as a heuristic mechanism, because knowing people is important for our survival.[*] It is not surprising that physiognomists since Polemon of Laodicea have been inventing many scales, in order to map meanings onto the face's contours and proportions.

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[*] Due to proportional consideration, nearly all references to psychosocial studies—as marked by superscript asterisks throughout the article—are omitted from the publication. Further inquiries are most welcome.

From Lavater and Galton to Ekman, Kosinski/Wang, and Wu/Zhang, facial analysts claim to master the meanings behind human facial features, such as personality traits, moral character, emotion, intelligence, even sexual orientation. Although our facial configurations might not be completely arbitrary, physiognomic meanings encrypted into the face's physical properties lack serious warrants, because any appearance-based mental inferences and algorithms are liable to countless biases. Building any generalized essentialistic judgment over some resting face samples might not only amount to the glad game of gullibility, but also lead to gruesome injustices.[*]

Since aesthetic assessment is not an exact science and facial reading is far from accurate, what is, then, in a face?

I shall address this question by reading Kōbō Abe's novel *The Face of Another* (1964) from the lens of Lévinasian ethics. This work is a profound meditation on the ambiguity of the face. The novel consists of three notebooks with an exclusive postscript[1] that an anonymous man wrote for his anonymous wife. In reply, she left a short note that ended in "about two and a half lines of erasures, obliterated to the point of illegibility" (Abe 1980, 224). At last, in a post-event comment, the protagonist closes their correspondence with contemplations on suicide and her murder. I will review the novel's *personambiguity*[2] issues as instantiations of Lévinas's thoughts on the face and responsibility. Like his wife's "lines of erasures,"[3] this reading argues that the phenomenality of the face is liminal relative to its appeal for responsibility.

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1 Although the postscript might contribute little to the plot progression, it was meant as a reading instruction and should be read prior to reading the notebooks (Abe 1980, 213, 220).

2 This portmanteau is meant to convey the polysemy of *persōna* and preserve its ambiguity. In Latin, *persōna* may refer to: (1) a mask; (2) a dramatic role; (3) a personal role; (4) an individual personality (in actual context); (5) a particular individual (in legal contexts); or (6) individuality in general (as an abstract notion) (*Oxford Latin Dictionary*, s.v. "persona").

3 Allow me to cite Schnellbächer in full length: "'Writing with an eraser' is a declaration for realism. Within this realism, the principle of deletion is an acknowledgement of the ultimate reality of existence, but on the other hand, there must be phenomena to be deleted in the first place." (Schnellbächer 2004, 461.)

1. Personambiguity

The Face of Another is a compilation of relentless psychomachia.[4] The main character suffered from severe facial deformation after his first experiment with liquid oxygen had exploded. The accident caused keloid scars over his face, leaving only his eyes and lips intact. So, to hide his nightmarish face, he wore bandages behind a pair of dark myopic eyeglasses. At first, he presumed that he would not feel like "a pimply adolescent who lives in vision," because he was a financially-secured doctor who supervised a respectable high-molecular research institute (Abe 1980, 13). Whenever that skin-thin issue disturbed his peace, he would recompose himself from any "baseless, irrational" feeling and simply accept his "repulsive" face (Abe 1980, 13). So, he treated his leech-like mass of scar with a "conscious provocation," that is, by publicly comparing himself to a horrendous monster (Abe 1980, 15).

Nevertheless, his coping strategy was proven effective only for a brief period of time. As the "leech-like corrosion" was "spreading like webs" (Abe 1980, 14) all over his face, identity crisis was creeping inside him. One day, when a young female subordinate showed a print of Klee's *False Face* to tease him, "an indescribable feeling of humiliation" dawned on him (Abe 1980, 14). From that moment on, his irritating confusion was becoming more and more difficult to contain. He felt that his mere existence was an abomination, not only to society, but also to his wife, "who had rejected me so positively, who had rebelled against my face" (Abe 1980, 195). Her refusal of his sexual stimulation made him realize that face was not "a mere screen, an illusion of no importance" (Abe 1980, 18).

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4 Currie's dissertation is one of the earliest studies that terms the protagonist's issue as a divided self or self-alienation (Currie 1974; cf. Schnellbächer 2004, 458: note 226). As Calichman highlights on the basis of battlefield reflections and racism, war imagery is also ubiquitous in this novel (Calichman 2012). This imagery is further incorporated many times in the novel's tragic heroism and morbid associations (Abe 1980, 22–24, 26, 119–120, 135–136, 149, 166, 170–171, 181, 218, 226, 229–234). Interestingly, like the (fictional) opinion of Doctor K, war is historically pertinent to our problem regarding the face. Studies found that "plastic surgery was initiated as the community's way of covering over the sites of trauma left by war on human bodies" (Andreescu 2017, 2).

The urge to reconnect to his wife and society made him fancy a life-like mask, and he finally built one for himself. First, he sought a mask with the "ability to act," in order to counteract her "transparent nonexpression" (Abe 1980, 92). After six months of technical preparations, he developed the facial implant technology and came up with sixty-eight face models—all were based on his own face, but somehow none was similar to his real face.[5] To obtain a skin sample, he offered a hundred-dollar deal to the billowing faces at a station. Afterward, he spent more than twenty days constructing the mask and another twenty days crafting the beard. Ultimately, he wore the mask to seduce his wife to betray her lawful husband, him himself.

As I shall expose, the endless agitation of Abe's protagonist demonstrates the overlapping facets of personambiguity between individuality/abstraction and identity/pretense. The first pair is closely related to his search for meaning in facial features. His attempt to build a life-like mask required a sort of principle to incorporate meaning into the mask. If the face is meaningful in itself, where and how does it store meaning? Since no precise answer could be given to this question, another issue consequently follows: if the meaning is not encoded in the physical face, how to distinguish one's true identity from mere pretense? If no difference exists between one's real face and a mask, what makes a real face meaningful?

1.1. Individuality/abstraction

Against his reluctance to acknowledge the indispensability of face, the protagonist conceded: "there is metaphysical significance to the face […] that facial features had considerable relationship to the psyche and the personality" (Abe 1980, 57). He also admitted that, like adolescents who copied their idols to disguise their individualities, his bandages were a dandy disguise that "suppresses the heart by wiping out the face" and "cutting off the connection

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5 Despite his intention to make "an imitation completely indistinguishable from the real thing," "the real thing" here does not mean his individual, original face (Abe 1980, 29). On the contrary, he reasons: "wouldn't the meaning of the mask be completely negated, no matter how skilfully it was constructed, if I wore one identical to myself?" (Abe 1980, 36). So, I interpret "the real thing" as "the natural face."

between face and heart by concealing the expression" (Abe 1980, 19, 76). At a certain point, he went even further by stating that the face was "*the essence of human relations that are composed of the transitory elements*" (Abe 1980, 106).[6]

But accepting these facts cornered him to a dead-end, because all that remained of his face was nothing but a "cast-off skin" (Abe 1980, 15). The accident had pillaged every expression from his face so that he thought: "my original real face too was a kind of disguise" (Abe 1980, 90). Ripping the bandages would not help his situation, because his face was "an incomplete mask" in itself (Abe 1980, 214). Therefore, the only option left for him was making a life-like mask, one that "should not appear to be a mask" (Abe 1980, 85).

The tension between individuality and abstraction started here. In order to suit his personality, the protagonist synthesized Jungian analysis and Boulan's classification to create some facial types. But contrary to expectation, the abstract values that guided him up to this stage sabotaged the production process. Choosing the face turned out to be the most difficult step. Uncertainties clouded his mind from seeing which type could clearly and faithfully reflect himself as an individual.

To overcome his indecision, he formulated two classification rules. The first rule prescribed an objective standard of value: a facial model should be chosen regardless of his own feelings. As concluded in the "Black Notebook"'s first "Excursus": "*Undervaluation and overvaluation of the face are equally artificial*." (Abe 1980, 32.) Ironically, the so-called *objective standard* was as naïve as the face's metaphysical magnitude. If the universality of facial expression ever existed, he wagered one's face and psyche would truly "stand in a fixed relation to each other" (Abe 1980, 45). Standard shifting should have never occurred in the first place, if there was any governing principle that appointed a certain meaning to a face.

Although his indecision in choosing the face also suggested that every face was somehow meaningful, that intuition did not inform him of its precise meaning. Since the objective standard did not seem to exist, his second rule bluntly canceled the first, and he made that major decision based on coin

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6 All italics are original.

tossing. In his defense, he said: "No matter what a man's personality, one and one are always two." (Abe 1980, 58.) The universal objectivity of the face lingered as a vague abstraction relative to individuality. It was coldly irrelevant, both to his real face and to the mask. So, to him, the conventions of both the face and the mask were equally empty; such abstractions were fit only to replace the concrete human relationship. Abstraction was a substitute where people might actualize their impossible wish: "to escape from themselves, to be invisible beings" (Abe 1980, 227).

1.2. Identity/pretense

The second pair of personambiguity is articulated in two cases. First, the protagonist's case illustrates an oscillating tension between himself and the masks (the bandages and the life-like mask). The bandages offered anonymity, so he could roam free during his three-month stay in Osaka without concealing his true identity. This anonymity, however, came at a high price: he became a prison for himself. As the solitary bubble kept him at a safe distance from everyone, he wished to "become a monster, indifferent to my appearance, and break with a crash all the bonds which bind me to this world" (Abe 1980, 61).

Unlike the bandages, the life-like mask played a more active role. Instead of driving people away, it "furnished an evasion of reality" by taking over his identity (Abe 1980, 178). He reckoned: "with no resistance I slipped into his face. At once we fused, and I became him. […] I had apparently begun to feel and to think with it." (Abe 1980, 104.) The mask's "double aspect" (Abe 1980, 93) had negated his face and subsequently became his new face. This new face, which should subject to his choice, "suddenly […] had been forcibly shifted from what I myself would choose to what would be chosen for me" (Abe 1980, 92). Once it became his face, the mask "was growing thicker and thicker. It had grown at last into a concrete fortress that enveloped me." (Abe 1908, 152.) While the mask "thought itself in fact real" (Abe 1980, 211), he found his own existence "shallow and illusory" (Abe 1980, 205) without it.

Interestingly, he was never transmuted into two agents. He was still "one actor playing two parts. […] 'the mask, that is, the other me'" (Abe 1980, 192). His wife's note pinned it down most explicitly:

> At first you were apparently trying to get your own self back by means of the mask, but before you knew it you had come to think of it only as your magician's cloak for escaping from yourself. So it was not a mask, but somewhat the same as another face, wasn't it? […] It was not the mask, but you yourself. […] It was all the same to you whether you burned your face or didn't, whether you put on a mask or didn't. (Abe 1980, 222–223.)

All faces, his wife's included, are the second example of personambiguity. Everyone's face was "*a mask of flesh*" that protected their "*scar webs inside*" (Abe 1980, 107). To hide their true selves, people adorned themselves with tattoos, cosmetics, and artificial expressions ("making a face"; Abe 1980, 216). To perform well in society, people should put on certain facial expressions and tailor their inner scar webs. They should wear and animate their faces as a masquerade to comply with the unwritten convention of social drama. Thus, he imagined a nation as "*an enormous mask intolerant of the rivalry of individual masks*" (Abe 1980, 167).

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The protagonist believed that somehow everyone shared his confinement, because there was no exit from one's real face. The difference between them was simply that no one had experienced the breakthrough of his mask experiment. In this instance, he even claimed that he enjoyed a kind of anomalous freedom that other people had not possessed, because his real face "was merely an incomplete copy of the mask" (Abe 1980, 215).

The personambiguity of identity and pretense created a mutual misperception that finally ruined the protagonist's marriage. To him, his wife had become an unknown, "profileless shape" (Abe 1980, 91) with "transparent nonexpression" (Abe 1980, 92). There was no more trace of personality behind her caring withdrawal; she only performed domestic duties out of "excessive impersonality" (Abe 1980, 85). The woman he was married to for eight years then turned into "a complete stranger"; her identity denied every color and form that his memory could ever recall of her (Abe 1980, 137).

He saw her cold equanimity as an indication of a double personality: "If I was another person wearing a stranger's mask, you were another person wearing the mask of yourself." (Abe 1980, 188.) By pretending to be deceived

and condoning the seduction, she had become his partner in crime and the masks' accomplice. Yet, after more than ten affairs, she looked just as calm as her usual self, showing neither guilt nor shame. So, he wrote: "among you and the mask and me, you alone had escaped intact" (Abe 1980, 209). She played a masquerade and kept her true self shrouded in cold and bitter silence. Her perfect pretense baffled him:

> What kind of a person were you, for God's sake?
> What kind of a person were you, you who had gone through the barrier of taboos unopposed and unabashed, who had seduced the seducer, plunged him into self-contempt, you who had never been violated? (Abe 1980, 206–207.)

His wife, on the other hand, also failed to recognize his true self. Although she could see past the mask and knew who the real seducer was, her unmasking light somehow blinded her from seeing the psychomachia that was buried deep beneath his absent face. To her, the mask only made him appear "so full of self-confidence"; so, she filtered everything as an epitome of his vanity (Abe 1980, 222). She was fully convinced that his new face only served as a stage entry to flaunt his ego. The mask was never meant to be a roadway for the others, because all he craved for was a mirror to admire himself.

His masquerade concealed his self-reproach so flawlessly that she failed to notice his deeply-ingrained frustration and how he felt like "a meaningless entity" (Abe 1980, 204) due to her frigid gestures. She was totally oblivious to the ambivalence[7] that swayed him like a chaotic pendulum—from the desire to build a relationship into a desire to avenge[8] "the arrogance of faces," and wavered back again to "reestablishing relations with others" (Abe 1980, 189).

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7 He confessed: "I wanted to get close to you, and at the same time to stay away from you. I wanted to know you, and at the same time I resisted that knowing. I wanted to look at you and at the same time felt ashamed to look. […] both the desire to restore the roadway between us and vengeful craving to destroy you fiercely contended within me." (Abe 1980, 93; cf. Hardin and Abe 1974, 442.)

8 This vengeful motif appears a couple more times; once against "the authority of the face" (Abe 1980, 30) and another time against "the convention of faces" (Abe 1980, 76).

Both her awareness of his true identity as well as ignorance of his inner brokenness proved one thing: his role-playing provided a better camouflage that the mask could not give. After the second affair, he confirmed that the mask had become nothing more than a furtive surveillance instrument. It had betrayed its primary purpose: to reclaim himself and to win her back. Ironically, this also means that, since then, he was able to simulate confidence. The post-event note testified that he was simply "too wretched and embarrassed to justify" the worthlessness of his mask experiment that early (Abe 1980, 228–229).

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The dual pairs of personambiguity—individuality/abstraction and identity/pretense—seem to be inseparable. These ambiguities are closely interrelated because each pair presupposes the common conception of face, i.e., the visible front part of one's head. The face is an aporetic surface, because its essentiality is attributed to its peripherality (Sakaki 2005, 369–370). The monstrosity of the protagonist's face became a problem, because it was mounted (Lat. *monstrāre*) in the first place as an extraordinary visible object instead of as a mere sign of warning (Lat. *monēre*).[9] The abstraction issue ensued, because abstraction could only extract the meaning that it had first assigned to particular contours and facial features. In his case, abstraction processed every facial model as a composite of fragments, so sixty-eight face models meant sixty-eight different facial compositions.

Likewise, pretense (making-face) requires visible facial expressions. If people could perceive beneath what appears on the surface, false impressions would mislead nobody. The protagonist believed that such an ability was the kind of "intuition" that people needed if they "sincerely wanted to face others" (Abe 1980, 208). Under this light, we can understand why he longed for a reconciliation "*with neither face nor mask*" (Abe 1980, 150). Thus, the

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9 Historical inquiry upon Latin etymology suggests that *monstrum* is probably derived from *monēre*, and only later merged with *monstrāre* (Benveniste 1969, 256–257; cf. Demeule 2017, 52–53).

following section replaces the common conception of the face with the paradox of abyssal surface. I will examine after Lévinas how the abyssal surface works in Abe's novel to summon (Lat. *summonēre*) responsibility.

2. The abyssal surface

Unlike the common conception of face, I see Lévinas's notion of the face as an abyssal surface. As a surface, the face expresses visual and tactile information, and yet, it is abyssal in terms of phenomenal meaning. The face's meaning does not lie on the front surface of one's head. Here, the face refers to the direct (*face à face*) ethical relationship with an individual, whose identity is irreducible to its sensible facial properties. For Lévinas, the relationship with the other is an abstract element that transcends optic and haptic presentations, and, at the same time, it refuses totalitarian abstraction that defines otherness in terms of essence as the ground of being.

In different terms than personambiguity, the face is also ambiguous. It is infinitely ambiguous, because, as a surface, it transcends phenomenal experience and comprehension. Its sensible givenness only serves as a frozen caricature of its breathing character, which is always altered (*le visage altéré*) and unrepresentable. Once seen and/or touched, the face would have fallen into the unretrievable past as a plastic image. The face is abyssal, because it signifies how every other (*tout autre*) expresses (*s'exprime*) itself against our abstract horizon of otherness. Its signification works like an abyss (*abîme*), because it stands alone (*sens à lui seul*) and signifies itself different (*signifie autrement*) from the abstract formulation of our thought. The face is, therefore, called the uncontainable (*l'incontenable*) that resists every objective appropriation (Lévinas 1951, 97; 2000, 44, 101, 168, 204–205, 216; 2004, 121, 143, 149; 1982, 91). Lévinas describes it as a paradox:

> The face has no form added to it, but does not present itself as formless [*l'informe*], as matter that lacks or calls for form. Things have a form, are seen [*se voient*] in the light—silhouettes or profiles; the face signifies itself [*se signifie*]. (Lévinas 1979b, 140; cf. 2000, 148–149.)

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The face stirs incalculable unrest, because it escapes from psychological categories and the registry of physiognomy (Lévinas 2000, 193–194, 215–217; 2004, 47, 148–149; 1979a, 75). Unlike Sartre's idea of the acquisitive threat of *le regard d'autrui* (Sartre 1943, 296–308)[10] or the anxious/aroused awareness of being looked at,* this kind of unrest is not particularly related to the other's gaze *per se*, but to its radical alterity (exteriority), which transcends phenomenality and eye-contact. Our relationship with the other is a face-to-face relationship with the utterly other (*tout autre*) whose otherness defines itself. The other does not conform to our subsuming conception as our alter ego, because every other is utterly other due to its own alterity (*son altérité même*) (Lévinas 2000, 25, 43, 126, 338; 1967, 199; 2004, 121, 125; 1979a, 8, 75; cf. Perpich 2019).

For Lévinas, the relationship with the utterly other is "a relation with a certain depth [*une profondeur*] rather than with a horizon" (Lévinas 1996, 10; cf. 1951, 97). Like an abyss, the other's face is laid bare and naked as a trace of itself that signifies itself. The face is an unrepresentable trace (*trace irreprésentable*) of the irreversibility (*illeité*) between one and the other. Following this trace will not lead us back to ourselves. The other's face is an ambiguous trace of the abandonment (*trace d'un abandon*) of our subjectivity and commitment; it forces a detour against our conception of the other as our alter ego (Lévinas 1951, 97; 2004, 27, 150, 158, 174, 234). Therefore, in a discourse on *The Face of Another*, Abe wrote: "we must attempt to communicate directly with the other by effacing the idea of the neighbor that exists within us. […] everyone is an other." (Abe 2013, 97.)[11]

By the same token, in a dialogue with Minkowski, Lévinas recommends "to avoid the word *neighbor*," because the other is more unlike us than similar to us (Lévinas 1996, 27). To resist the totalizing appropriation of the same, he does

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10 The protagonist seemed to echo Sartre when he said: "It was as if I were putting on a play in which I was the only actor, thinking I was invisible […] completely oblivous to the fact that I had been seen by a spectator." (Abe 1980, 225). However, this statement only appears on this occasion and is elaborated upon nowhere else in the novel.

11 Abe criticizes the neighborly appropriation as a violent objectivation against the other. Against Lévinas's thought on *illeité*, appropriation requires reversibility and a need to see that "the other was *always already* the self in its pre-reflective exteriority" (Calichman 2016, 104). Note: *Beyond Nation* is a rich phenomenological analysis of Abe's works, but interestingly, Calichman leaves not a single reference to Lévinas.

not hesitate to call the face as an abstract visit and describe the relationship with the other as an element of abstraction. It is important to bear in mind that the sense of abstract here refers to the relationship with the other, not to the essence of being (*l'etant*) as naturally conceived from the face. It is hardly natural to render substantial abstraction out of the face's volatile, multiplex properties (cf. Black 2011).[12] The element of abstraction here calls for the ineffaceable distance (*proximité*)[13] to the exterior other, to whom none can get close enough (Lévinas 1967, 197; 2004, 89, 104, 134–135; cf. Hollander 2010).

The role of the visible face is liminal in the relationship; it reveals the other (Lévinas 2000, 161). The face's value will be reduced to nothing, if one seeks to exhaust its meaning within the boundary of purely perceptive and performative roles. As Abe illustrates, the protagonist's attempt to contain the meaning of the uncontainable only led to transient abstraction that wildly fluctuated based on the other's fickle expression (pretense) and one's transient impression as a subjective beholder. So, unlike physiognomic conceptions of the face, Lévinas argues that the face "is the pure trace of a 'wandering cause [*cause errante*],' inscribed in me" and which summons our responsibility (Lévinas 1991, 150; cf. 2004, 235).

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The other's face is inscribed as a trace in us, not as an authorization to determine its meaning, but as an irrecusable call to obligation. Unlike its common notion, the face signifies the incommensurable exteriority that shatters our obsession with the identity of being (*l'essence de l'être*). This trace's

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12 Based on his observation when serving the war-injured soldiers, Doctor K believed that the subtlest alteration on the face entailed a special signification, because "man's soul is in his skin" (Abe 1980, 26). The protagonist, however, was skeptical. For him, "[f]aceless battalions would be ideal groups of soldiers," since death was already closer to them than anyone (Abe 1980, 218). Faceless soldiers would charge most fearlessly into combat, because they could not care less about their place in other people's fading memory. Although his fatalistic perspective shows an acute concern for the physical face, as Lévinas contends, the abstract association between one's soul and face might be anything but natural.

13 Minkowski reads proximity as "an immediate given, that we find in the 'neighbor,'" but Lévinas holds the contrary (Lévinas 1996, 27). The immediacy of proximity— as well as of face—is given as an unrest (*inquiétude*) that conserves the distance of absolute exteriority, not erases it (cf. Lévinas 2000, 22; 2010, 437; 1967, 230–231; 2004, 32, 47, 80, 82, 92, 94, 130–31, 158, 184, 193, note 1; 1979a, 89).

inscription does not elevate us as powerful subjects; instead, we become hostages of accountability. As a powerless authority, the face of the other addresses us as the accusative of infinite responsibility. It charges us with the imploring command, to which we can only respond: "Here I am [*Me voici*]." (Lévinas 2000, 195; 2004, 26, 31, 98, 177–182; Wright et al. 1988, 169).

The call of responsibility ceaselessly resonates in *The Face of Another*. The protagonist knew that his expressionless face was a "false face, seen but unable to look back" (Abe 1980, 15), and rationalized that condition as "the advantages of seeing-without-being-seen" (Abe 1980, 13). Nevertheless, invisibility did not grant him moral impunity nor obliterate his guilt. In fact, he was troubled if being seen should be "the cost of the right to see," and if thus far he had lived like a "disguised spy" (Abe 1980, 61, 77). As in the myth of Gyges (Lévinas 2000, 90),[14] his most "reprehensible" masquerade could not exonerate his guilt and spare him from the others' outcry (Abe 1980, 158).[15]

Ineluctable responsibility is more intricately woven into the seduction dynamics. From the first time wearing the mask, the protagonist was convinced that he had become unrecognizable. The mask disguised him as a "complete stranger" so that he could seduce his wife—whom he saw as "the symbol of the stranger" (Abe 1980, 125). Although he wanted to make her "*fall in love with the mask*" (Abe 1980, 136), to his surprise, the mask came alive and transformed his plan into a triangular relationship.[16] Like "the shameful face

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14 Beside the problem of phenomenality, just as Gyges salvaged the golden magic ring from a cadaver (Plato, *The Republic*, 2.359d), Abe's protagonist also wrote of an abandoned child corpse that he saw twenty years before: "*It reminded me that, outside of plastics, there was a world that could be touched with one's hands. The dead body would go on living with me forever as a symbol of another world.*" (Abe 1980, 181.) I find it noteworthy that K's silicon as the origin of his artificial invisibility emitted the "stench of dead flesh" and left a weird sensation of deadly infection (Abe 1980, 22).

15 Beside his wife's protest, the workers of the Institute were outraged at his economic plot. "Instead of constrained smiles directed at a cripple, I was now being treated on an equal footing," he wrote (Abe 1980, 82).

16 This triangular relationship—between him, the mask, and his wife—introduced additional distress that tore him apart. On the one hand, his plan succeeded, because he used the mask to enchant her; on the other hand, he needed to kill it, if he wished to redeem himself. Initially, he thought of ending this conflict by killing her as well, so he could save her for himself. Yet, doing so would mean that he played into the mask's hand, who went rogue and planned to kill her in the first place.

of a hidden parasite" (Abe 1980, 182), the mask began to take over the leading role in seducing her:

> The mask, as the name implied, would forever be my false face; and although my true nature could never be controlled by such a thing, once it had seen you it would fly off somewhere far beyond my control, and I could only watch it go in helpless, blank amazement. (Abe 1980, 142.)

Nonetheless, as mentioned above, the mask did not constrain him whatsoever. Like Lévinas's term about the starving other (Lévinas 2000, 73), the mask was a "famished fugitive" (Abe 1980, 167). It was nourished by the same jealousy that consumed the protagonist with anguish. Later, he stated that the mask's "tedious persuasions" actually advanced out of his own "conscious provocation" (Abe 1980, 172). His masquerade was not effective in evading responsibility.

Since the early episode, when he consulted Doctor K, the protagonist had already admitted that no facial transformation could ever alter his identity. And he never recanted that conviction. Although there was a gap that "could not be filled in" between the mask and his face (Abe 1980, 175), he wrote that such a "vertiginous abyss" was "only a few inches of facial surface, and for the rest we were the same" (Abe 1980, 188). He confirmed that he had "unrestricted freedom [...] of flawlessly transparent glass" (Abe 1980, 152, 229), and that he should "acquire command of the mask by adroitly keeping my equilibrium" (Abe 1980, 200). No wonder the mask accused him of pretending "to have been defeated" (Abe 1980, 128).

Right from the outset of the mask play, the protagonist's wife could also see through his conniving scheme. Not only did she recognize his identity beyond the mask, but she also claimed: "Even you knew very well that I had seen through you. You knew and yet demanded that we go on with the play in silence." (Abe 1980, 222.) She added:

> You write that I rejected you, but that's not true. Didn't you reject yourself all by yourself? I felt that I could understand your wanting to. [...] love strips the mask from each of us, and we must endeavor for

those we love to put the mask on so that it can be taken off again. For if there is no mask to start with, there is no pleasure in removing it, is there? Do you understand what I mean?

I think you do. After all, don't even you have your doubts? Is what you think to be the mask in reality your real face, or is what you think to be your real face really a mask? Yes, you do understand. Anyone who is seduced is seduced realizing this. (Abe 1980, 222–223.)

Against his precaution that the "Notebooks" might pain her, she begged him to re-read the diaries and listen to her own "cries of pain" through it all (Abe 1980, 224). Her plea stood on top of his testimony as a call for sympathy.[17] Her entreaty echoed in his "Notebooks" like the trace of a wandering cause so that he relented in the closing comment and acknowledged that his entire confession was truly full of self-defeating alibis, like a terrible ouroboros.[18] In the aftermath of his decaying masquerade, he wrote: "the passions of the mask, my hatred for the scars, began to seem unbearably hollow, and the triangle with its roaring spin began gradually to lose momentum" (Abe 1980, 208).

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The triangular relationship faltered, because the mask and his wife summoned him to take responsibility regardless of the face's phenomenality. Relative to this call of responsibility, the meaning of the sensible face is merely liminal in introducing the other. Under common conception, its meaning only invokes responsibility on the capricious bases of abstract construction of ego identity and socio-political convention. Although regulating facial display/dissimulation is instrumental in panoptic stratagem, either for promoting prosociality or suppressing anarchic impulse,* its call of duty is economically and geopolitically driven.[19] The same findings also reflect that

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17 Elaborating upon Cavell with Lévinas, Morgan distinguishes the expressions of pain in testimony from those in sympathy. While the first is an auto-exhibition, the latter is a response made to acknowledge the other's suffering (Morgan 2007, 77).

18 She compared his confession to "a snake with its tail in its mouth" (Abe 1980, 223).

19 Take, for example, the conflicting policies of public facial display. On the one hand, the government of France bans the use of veil as a part of religious attire (Assemblée Nationale 2010), and the government of Hong Kong prohibits the use of masks in public protests (GovHKSAR 2019). Both policies categorize facial dissimulation as

both the principle and the outcome of such regulatory functions are sinuous and conditional.*

For Lévinas, the role of the face's phenomenality is liminal in revealing the absent presence (*présent s'absentant*). This infinite ambiguity reveals that the face's meaning does not lie in its sensible properties. Irrespective of its sensible properties, the face is a signal for an incalculable direct encounter with the utterly other and our unyielding responsibility. Its sonorous appeal holds us accountable, even prior to our recognition of freedom, moral conscience, and commitment. The other's face and gaze are incomparably unknown to our comprehension, because the other is the coming one (*le prochain*; *venir*) who unravels our horizon of perception and anticipation. (Lévinas 2000, 56, 74, 79, 86, 101, 193–194; 2004, 141, 173, 234; Wright et al. 1988, 171). Therefore, albeit harshly and reluctantly, the protagonist admitted:

> *I needed to feel no responsibility for strangers. For what they were looking at was the truth. What was visible was only the mask, and those strangers had perceived a truth more profound than eyes could see directly.* (Abe 1980, 180.)

3. Conclusion

Kobo Abe's *The Face of Another* portrays the notion that the face's meaning is not harbored in its sensible properties. Contrariwise, personambiguity erupts, because these peripheral properties reveal an unpassable abyss between the individual face and its essential signification. The protagonist's existential crisis shows the inadequacy of the face's phenomenality to carry the weight of its meaning. Simply put, the face is not a trustworthy witness for one's true self. As a forepart of one's head, it is a multilayered masquerade of opaque plasticity, upon which we ascribe meanings without any sufficient warrant.

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a potential threat to surveillance and national security. And yet, on the other hand, alongside many governments worldwide, France and Hong Kong mandate the wearing of face masks, in order to reduce the widespread transmission of the COVID-19 (GovHKSAR 2020; JORF 2020).

Therefore, Lévinas proposes to see the face, not in terms of its peripheral character, but in its inexorable ethical command. Notwithstanding its sensible features as a surface, the other's face is an ambiguous abyss that obliges us to respond. The face is an abyssal surface that calls for our responsibility to every other (*tout autre*), not as our alter ego, but as utterly other (*tout autre*). The face of another is ascribed in us as a wandering trace of ineluctable responsibility that surpasses our appropriative reasoning and anticipation.

My reading finds that *The Face of Another* accommodates this idea of irrecusable responsibility without reserve. The personambiguity puzzle does not stop at challenging physiognomic claims over facial meaning, but it also affirms that nobody is exempt from this responsibility. The face's ambiguity does not absolve anyone from culpability, because the (contested) meaning behind its physical features neither establishes nor measures responsibility. Responsibility always already awaits us, because the other's command is anterior to our self-same agency and transcends the logical dialectic between identity and otherness. Therefore, on the last page of the novel, the protagonist concludes:

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> I do know that the responsibility is not the mask's alone, and that the problem lies rather within me. Yet it is not only in me, but in everybody; I am not alone in this problem. True, indeed, but let's not shift the blame. I still hate people. I shall never admit the necessity of justifying myself to anyone! (Abe 1980, 237).

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Hermeneutics within the Temporal Horizon
The Problem of Time in Narrative Fiction

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Abstract

The paper discusses the problem of time as one of the most fundamental aspects of narrative fiction. If a narrative is defined as a series of events moving in a sequential relation, then time is a matter of linearity. The chronological progression becomes the standard pattern for time and narrative alike. But if a narrative is defined instead according to the relationship between the sequence of events in a story and the representation of those events to be told—between story and discourse—, then time

becomes a more complex hermeneutic and phenomenological framework. Within this framework, I take a brief glance at the accounts of the relationship between time and narrative by attempting to elucidate the complex dimension of narrative temporality. My thesis assumes that if narrative time is meaningful to the extent that it becomes a condition of temporal experience (Ricoeur), then this synthesizing activity is a temporal process, which reveals the paradox of human time.

Keywords: narrative temporality, human time, hermeneutics, phenomenology, structuralism.

Hermenevtika znotraj temporalnega horizonta. Problem časa v narativni fikciji

Povzetek

Članek obravnava problem časa kot enega izmed najbolj temeljnih vidikov narativne fikcije. Če narativ ali pripoved definiramo kot niz dogodkov, ki se gibljejo znotraj zaporednega razmerja, potem je čas zadeva linearnosti. Kronološko napredovanje postane standardni vzorec tako za čas kot za pripoved. Toda: če pripoved ali narativ definiramo glede na odnos med sekvenco dogodkov znotraj zgodbe in re-prezentacijo takšnih dogodkov, ki jih je potrebno upovedati – med zgodbo in diskurzom –, potem čas postane kompleksnejši hermenevtični in fenomenološki okvir. Znotraj tega okvira se na kratko ozrem po obravnavah odnosa med časom in pripovedjo in skušam tako razgrniti kompleksno razsežnost narativne temporalnosti. Moja teza predpostavlja, da je, če je pripovedni čas tako pomenljiv, da postane pogoj temporalnega izkustva (Ricoeur), tovrstna sintetizirajoča aktivnost temporalni proces, ki razkriva paradoks človeškega časa.

Ključne besede: narativna temporalnost, človeški čas, hermenevtika, fenomenologija, strukturalizem.

In recent years, the systematic study of the function of time in and by the narrative has developed into one of the most exciting new models in narrative theory. A new generation of established theorists who have become increasingly interested in developing Artificial Intelligence (AI) frameworks (Mani 2011; Meister 2011), as well as theoretical conceptualizations of *unnatural* temporalities in the narrative (Richardson 2002; Alber 2012; Mäkelä 2013), provide even more complex and sophisticated concepts of the narrative in examining how the narrative *plays* with the brain. Yet, while these new approaches have produced numerous important insights, my fear is that, in many cases, these insights, despite the distance they have traversed from what had been set out in the past, may risk losing sight of the basic characteristics of narratives: that they function according to a different logic, as in fiction, for instance, in which case the literary text depends on the intimate, yet indefinable experience of the reader. In this instance, *unnatural narratology* fails to do justice to the reader's right to fill in the blanks of the text, while AI frameworks reduce the reader's aesthetic experience to a brain-computer interface by overlooking his experiential world.

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I begin with the analysis of narrative temporality as one of the key aspects of the narrative by applying an interdisciplinary approach including structuralism (Genette), hermeneutics (Ricoeur; Jauss) and phenomenology (Husserl; Heidegger). Furthermore, I point out the main concepts, identify the most prominent constructions of time and temporality found in their texts, and use the concepts derived from this analysis to elucidate the relationship between time and narrative noting how imaginative variations on life in fact become fused into the way, in which readers come to experience fictional time. The time of reading and the time of life share the same structure: meaning in both domains has a *temporal character*. In my view, this synthesizing activity is a temporal process, which reveals the paradox of human time. My guiding hypothesis is that the character of narrative temporality and human time become fused into a correlate of consciousness, which is fictive and which corresponds to the current of life-world. Finally, I conclude by pointing out the relevance of hermeneutics and phenomenology in elucidating aspects of narrative temporalities that are in need of theoretical reconceptualization.

The classic account of the formal dynamics of narrative temporality—still dominant today—has been investigated by the structuralist theorist Gérard Genette. His work *Narrative Discourse* (1980 [1972]) gives a full scope of diverse temporalities generated by the difference between story and discourse. Genette's influential work is not merely a discourse on the narrative and a detailed study of the narrative theory, but it is also a complex analysis of Marcel Proust's novel cycle *In Search of Lost Time* (1913–1927) and the ways it exemplifies and transforms narrative categories. Genette identifies three relevant components of narrative discourse: tense (temporal relations between story and discourse); mood ("forms and degrees of narrative 'representation'"); and voice (the way in which narrating is involved in the narrative). For Genette, the "narrative exists in space and as space, and the time needed for 'consuming' it, is the time needed for crossing or traversing it, like a road or a field" (Genette 1980, 34). In narrative theory, space is to be understood as a kind of "description" that interrupts the flow of temporality or as the "setting" that functions as the "scene," in which narrative events unfold in time.

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If story is represented by discourse in such a way as to bring the narrative to its linear sequence, this transformation occurs in three dimensions of temporality in narration: order, duration, and frequency. *Order* deals with the relation between the chronological events in a story and their actual arrangement in the narrative; *duration* or "speed" is related to the pace of events in a narrative, that is, the relationship between the duration of events in a story and the length of text designated to narrating these events; *frequency* pertains to the verbal aspects or the relationship between the number of times an event occurs in a story and the number of times this event is narrated in the text. Genette claims:

> To study the temporal order of a narrative is to compare the order in which events or temporal sections are arranged in the narrative discourse with the order of succession these same events or temporal segments have in the story, to the extent that story order is explicitly indicated by the narrative itself or inferable from one or another indirect clue. (Ibid., 35.)

To reinforce this definition, an example is given, according to which the events in a story and the narration of these events can always be ordered in a temporal continuum. In Genette's account, the linearity of time is undone when sequence gives way to different ordering arrangements. Story moves chronologically, but discourse has its anachronies. For example, if the order of narration deviates from the temporal order of events, the next step, once anachrony is defined, is to distinguish the two opposite directions: forward or backward. The forward and backward deviations, which in Genette's terms are called *prolepsis* and *analepsis*, designate a leap (backward or forward) in the temporal order of events. *Analepsis* is the narration of an event at a point in a story after recent events have already been recounted; *prolepsis* leaps forward, that is, at a point in the text prior to the narration of earlier events. Variations determine the way, in which forward and backward discourse moves, and the duration of its new time frame. Flashbacks add further complexity, by means of which narrative discourse becomes anything but linear progress, and frequency reverses the linearity of events in a story, which may occur more than once—and which can be narrated many times.

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Given the focus on the Proustian narrative, Genette's account questions all levels of the normative structure, becoming thus a proponent for the nonlinearity model of narrative temporality. Proust's narrative, indeed, breaks all temporal dynamics, and Genette uses these exceptions to prove his method of analysis. Genette, in fact, emphasizes in the "Preface" of his study that in analyzing Proust's novel, he uses an analytic method, through which one could proceed "not from the general to the particular, but indeed from the particular to the general: from that incomparable being that is the *Recherche* to those extremely ordinary elements, figures, and techniques of general use" (ibid., 23). One of the difficulties of Proust's text, in Genette's estimation, comes from the way the author eliminates temporal indicators ("once," "now"), so that the reader must provide them himself, in order to know where he is. In Genette's analysis, Proust's narrative demonstrates that discourse can lose the sense of temporal indicators necessary to determine the points of departure, becoming thus an example of *achrony* "deprived of every temporal connection" (ibid., 84).

To see how and why Genette's method stands, it is necessary that we turn now to the hermeneutic theorist Paul Ricoeur, whose illuminating study on

time and narrative may help us answer the question about the way, in which linear and subversive time share a relation of mutual presupposition. Ricoeur's monumental work *Time and Narrative* (*1984–1988 [1983–1985])* does offer a hermeneutic sense of how narrative temporality is at once a linear sequence and a diverse structure. Ricoeur sets out to combine Aristotle's concept of plot with Augustine's conception of time, suggesting that "time becomes human time to the extent that it is organized after the manner of a narrative; narrative, in turn, is meaningful to the extent that it portrays the features of temporal experience" (Ricoeur 1984, 3). Ricoeur's narrative theory holds that linear configuration is part of a larger process, through which time and narrative build a dialectic relationship.

Works of literature, according to Ricoeur, allow us to project "fictive" experiences of time—an important element in understanding human temporality. Fiction explores the internal limits of the narrative in different ways. The range of the limit-experiences, the imaginary variations, is made possible by the fact that every work constructs a world of its own. That is to say, the lived experience of the characters in a book of fiction provides a number of imaginative variations on the aporias of time, which resolve the lived experience of "discordance" within a "concordant" verbal construction, and through which the reader refigures his ordinary temporal experience. Hence, every narrative is related to time, and at the center of every work of fiction there is human existence. Moreover, a narrative is meaningful to the extent that it becomes a condition of temporal experience.

By the same token, Ricoeur explores the distinction between the imaginative variations of fiction and its relation to historical time. Fictive time relates in its own way the lived time perceived as a dimension of the world. Augustine's dialectic of intention and distention and Heidegger's notion of repetition (which to a certain degree is comparable to Augustine's) served as a guideline for Ricoeur's interpretation of the distinction between historical time and fictional narrative: by fusing the making-present, having-been, and coming-towards, repetition joins together the level of authentic temporality and the level of within-time-ness (*Innerzeitigkeit*). Repetition brings the character of having-been into the present-at-hand, and the completed character of the past opens the possible nature of the future (coming-towards). This structure of

time has already been applicable, in many different ways, by the imaginative variations of fiction.[1]

History and fiction create a common space for exchange in a relationship that is circular: history resembles the fictive by placing the presence of events *before the eyes of the reader* through its character of the past, and fiction resembles the historical to the extent that the irreal events presented in a work of fiction are past *facts* for the narrator who addresses those *facts* to the reader. Further, this common space for exchange between history and fiction in the *refiguration* of time lies precisely in this exchanging of places originating in human time, where, to speak with Ricoeur, "the standing-for the past in history is united with the imaginative variations of fiction, against the backdrop of the aporias of the phenomenology of time" (Ricoeur 1988, 192). This suggests that through its quasi-historical character fiction is sometimes able to fill out the gaps that were not actualized in the *real* historical past. In this sense, the function of fictional narrative time is to reveal both the possibilities of the *real* historical past and the *irreal* possibilities of fiction.[2]

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1 David Carr, for instance, defends narration both ontologically and methodologically by arguing that history is itself narrative. Since the object of history and historical reflection has the structure of a narrative, it is, therefore, appropriate, according to Carr, that the effects of such reflection should be narrative in character. Carr holds that our everyday actions have an intrinsic, temporal structure: action being not merely a disorganized sequence of phases, but an organized model of activity. However, it is evident that Carr only uses a different vocabulary to make the same point as Heidegger did. Cf. Carr 1986.

2 In his analysis of free (imaginative) variation, Husserl makes a clear distinction between the "phenomena of consciousness" (inner-time consciousness) and the phenomena that constitute "objects in immanent time": "[…] immanent objects are themselves appearances, and yet appearances in an entirely different sense—in some cases, for example, they are appearances of external objects. The best we could do would be to say '*running-off phenomena*' and, with respect to the *immanent* objects themselves, to speak of their "running-off characters" (e.g., now, past). We know that the running-off phenomenon is a continuity of continuous changes. This continuity forms an inseparable unity, indivisible into concrete parts that could exist by themselves and indivisible into phases that could exist by themselves, into points of the continuity. The parts that we single out by abstraction can exist only in the whole running-off, and this is equally true of the phases (the points belonging to the running-off continuity).

The mediation between time and narrative, according to Ricoeur's thesis, is accomplished through three moments of a process of mimesis. *Mimesis I* refers to the "prefiguration" or to the pre-understanding of the temporal character of the everyday. In other words, the narrative representation of our experience of time is a preunderstanding built into the world as we know it, because our life is already modelled according to some narrative time, and it exists as "a semantics of action." This moment is followed by a configurational dimension, through which the plot transforms the events into a story. The configurational act "grasps together" the detailed actions, or "the story's incidents," and draws from them the unity of one temporal whole (Ricoeur 1984, 66). Nevertheless, this act does not end with the actual narrative figuration (the making of a plot), for it still has to be concretized by readers. The concretization of the narrative by readers, however, is part of *mimesis III*, the "refiguration" moment, in which a narrative truly takes shape, but which also reshapes the world. Thus, the time of action is refigured by the configurational act as long as the world of action changes with narrative engagement.

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Mimesis II refers to the "configuration" or "emplotment" of literary and historical narratives. "Emplotment" operates between our everyday interpretation of actions and the configured understanding of a re-ordered temporality, which is realized in our reading of the literary work. "Emplotment" has a threefold function: it mediates between plot and story taken as a whole; it incorporates various elements such as situations, actions, interactions, ends, means; and it resolves, in its temporal structure, the problem of temporality by combining the chronological order of elements with a totality, whereby the natural flow of time is reversed, and which results, in retrospect, in an ordered relation of those events and episodes.

Mimesis III or the process of "refiguration" is the moment, in which the world of the text and the world of the reader meet. It is the level, in which readers, in the act of reading, reinterpret their own experiences of time and reality. Literature becomes practical life through our engagement with it. Ricoeur maintains that the subsequent reconfigured moment becomes part

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We can also say of this continuity, with evidence, that in a certain sense it is immutable; that is, with regard to its form." (Husserl 1991, 375.)

of our figuration of time, part of the "semantics of action" that guides the temporal horizon and its activity. Reading of narrative texts—both literary and historical—is a hermeneutic operation, in which the text and the reader coexist in a dialectic relation. But Ricoeur does not provide any new explanations as to how, for instance, this refiguration of time would be applied to our implicit sense of time, in order to accomplish the potential for the meaning that is embedded in a work?

Such an explanation can perhaps be elucidated, if we go back to Heidegger's formulation of the temporalization of Dasein, which may also hold true for the relationship between reader and reading as a temporalizing act. In *Being and Time* (section 304), Heidegger writes: "Temporality has different possibilities and different ways of temporalizing itself. The basic possibilities of existence, the authenticity and inauthenticity of Dasein, are grounded ontologically on possible temporalizations of temporality." (Heidegger 1962, 351–352.) In this formulation, Heidegger provides the differences related to the past, present, and future, and to the ways of connecting the existential to the existentiell. What does this mean? Dasein is hidden in the process of projection. This projection is an *ek-stasis* (i.e., a being-out-of-self); thus, in order to be able to project itself into something that can be standing-out-of-itself (since it is not yet there), it must not confine itself to a realm of factual realizations. Rather, such a projection is possible only if Dasein temporalizes itself in the future. Yet, this anticipation of itself towards the future, according to Heidegger, does not happen in an empty space. More precisely, Dasein can do this because of its having-been character. Through its having-been character Dasein will also be possible to understand how the temporality of authentic and inauthentic being differs. The characteristic *ek-stasis* of inauthentic being is only present. The past for the inauthentic Dasein is forgetting or making-present the gone actual presents, and future only waiting of not-yet-now-presents. Authentic Dasein, on the other hand, is *ek-static* and temporal in a genuine way, past and future for Dasein being full of possibilities; thus, this not-fallenness to constant now-present and the fallenness to having present as the chief modes of being constitute different temporalities.

What has all of this to do with reading as a temporalizing act? On first glance, nothing much, but in reality, it does pertain to it. The first utterance

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of a text constructs a horizon of the running-ahead-of-itself, of anticipations that also include a horizon of the past. Whatever comes up from the future is made possible only through our knowledge of the thing narrated. Walter Biemel notes: "Without the interplay of the future and events gone by, there cannot be any horizon of acquaintance. But the latter is always surrounded by what is known or familiar and, therefore, by what can dissolve and always threatens it." (Biemel 1991, 36.)

For Husserl, on the other hand, any moment is characterized by a horizon "with two differently structured sides, known in intentional language as a continuum of retentions and protentions" (Husserl 1970, 168). Like a horizon, the present provides a perspective pointing beyond its boundaries (though limited in its view) towards the past of what has been (the retentional horizon) and towards what is expected in the future (the protentional horizon). The world appears to us incompletely in a series of profiles that vary as our experience unfolds. If we follow Bergson's theory of the *tensions of consciousness* adopted by Schutz, according to which "our conscious life shows an indefinite number of different planes, ranging from the plane of action on one extreme to the plane of dream at the other" (Schutz 1962, 212), where "each of these planes is characterized by a specific tension consciousness," that is, it consists of systems of relevance— for instance, thematic/topical—, then, by relevancy, the text imposes itself upon the reader (to whom the text becomes a guide). The open field of the text, however, is structured by the reader's retentions and protentions, and the field of the text changes in its texture as the relevancy and knowledge of the reader changes through reading.

The act of reading occurs within an intersection of world time and inner time, and it is in this intersection of the two times that a unity of meaning can be accomplished. This unity is a temporal unity. World time is the immutable form of time, within which a text has its own existence. The temporal structure or reading time consists of a time that can be controlled by the reader. Depending on the reader's relevance, this time can be skimmed, halted, repeated, or slowed down. In inner time, however, what matters is not the individuated existence of the text, but its meaning. Inner time serves as a condition for the possibility of the accomplishment of meaning. As Schutz asserts, "it is in the inner time of durée within which

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our actual experiences are connected with the past by recollections and retentions and with the future by protentions and anticipations" (ibid., 215–216).

The problem of relevance is also an important problem for the accomplishment of meaning. Worthy of mentioning is here the crucial implication of the relationship between inner time and relevance. Since any text presents itself to us through different temporal perspectives, a re-reading of the same text will have a different effect upon us each time we read it. No one can *step* twice into the same book, just as no one can step twice into the same river. We may feel surprised to discover a stock of new meanings and knowledge in the re-reading of the same text, especially if we read that text for the first time early in our youth, or we may feel frustrated that a second reading of the text may not leave any impression upon us or does not even challenge or *provoke* our imagination. In real life, as in reading, we experience each present moment differently, although we can remember it, yet the present moment that we remember alters each time we try to recollect it.

To place the reader's impact within the temporal horizon, we may do well to explore the reception theory of H. R. Jauss. Jauss combines both *hermeneutical theory* and *literary poetics* by drawing both upon Gadamerian historical hermeneutics and upon literary theory of Viktor Shklovsky, Yuri Lotman, and Wolfgang Iser, in order to develop his own position. Yet, unlike Iser's reader-response theory, which is based on the activity of reading as an intrinsic part of the aesthetic process, Jauss applies such an aesthetics within the framework of numerous literary works, that is, on the level of its collective expectations, and, thus, tends towards an engagement with historicity. And, like Gadamer, Jauss renders literary *history* as a *story* and its effects *in succession*. These successive effects or impressions present provocations, challenges, differences, disturbances that "hit" readers between successive generations in such a way that the history of the impact of texts transcends any insipid collection of growing continuities of reading. For Jauss, as for Gadamer, this tension between past and present, or between successive re-actualizations, is essential for the process of text's understanding. Each new actualization of understanding and interpretation within the horizon of the history of receptions of a text produces, in turn, new effects.

For Jauss, each work of art constitutes and leaves behind a "solution," producing an effect as a kind of horizon. If Iser emphasizes the intersubjective character of the horizon of expectations that founds the act of reading, Jauss, on the other hand, stresses that such a horizon of expectation can be reconstituted objectively. Jauss argues that the history of the reception of a literary text is a misreading, behind which, however, there lies a true meaning that can be constituted by the individual consciousness by way of concrete readings. In his important work *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* (1982 [1978]), Jauss distinguishes at least three various horizons of reading: "a first, aesthetically perceptual reading [as] distinguished from that of a second, retrospectively interpretive reading […] [and] a third, historical reading that begins with the reconstruction of the horizon of expectations […]" (Jauss 1982, 139).

Taking his cue from Gadamer's theory of the hermeneutic process conceived as a unity of the three moments: understanding (*intelligere*), interpretation (*interpretare*), and application (*applicare*), Jauss contends that each further reading is an overcoming of what the previous reading had missed, but which can lead to a proper reading, through a process of repeated readings. The first condition of a text's aesthetic effect, according to Jauss, is its reception by *understanding* its narration, verses, or its dramatic unfolding. With regard to the act of interpretation, Jauss writes:

> The explicit interpretation in the second and in each further reading also remains related to the horizon of expectations of the first, i.e., perceptual reading—as long as the interpreter claims to make concrete a specific coherence of significance from out of the horizon of meaning of this text, and would not, for example, exercise the license of allegoresis to translate the meaning of the text into a foreign context, that is, to give it a significance transcending the horizon of meaning and thereby the intentionality of the text. (Ibid., 142.)

Interpretation as the concretization of a particular significance among other possible significances previously interpreted always remains bound to the horizon of the first reading, aesthetically perceived and understood; next, it has the task of elucidating the verbal and poetic conditions, which orient

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the primary act of *understanding*. *Application* includes both *understanding* and *interpretation* acts as it transports the text out of its past and into the interpreter's present. In this respect, if the interpretation of a text becomes the foundation for an application, "not only in reference to its primary context," but also "to disclose a possible significance for the contemporary situation," then the unity of the three moments (understanding, interpretation, and application), "corresponds to the three horizons of relevance—thematic, interpretive, and motivational—the mutual relation of which […] determines the constitution of the subjective experience of the life-world [*Lebenswelt*]" (ibid., 143).

Jauss emphasizes the active role of readers in changing their horizons within formative processes of historical tradition. Thus, he puts greater emphasis on the constraints of an intersubjective world. He suggests an excess of meaning that may exceed previous interpretations in a "new production." For Jauss, it would be a mistake to think that each new interpretation begins at the point of departure of an earlier interpretation. Instead, the *first* effect is combined with the work in "co-producing" a *second* effect interactively.

Jauss's key thesis is that:

> […] the meaning of a literary work lies on the dialogical [*dialogisch*] relationship of the present to the past, according to which the past work can answer and "say something" to us only when the present observer has posed the question that draws it back out of its seclusion. (Ibid., 32.)

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This approach was explored previously by Gadamer, as we have observed, except that Jauss sees "innovation" and "recognition" of the text as complementary, and uses the reader as the one "who performs the 'score' of the text" in the course of reception, and who is led towards the ending "in a perceptual act of anticipation," from the particular towards the possible whole of form and meaning.

The meaning of a literary text is not indeterminate, unless we speak of a clearly "open" genre or code of "productive" fiction (in the sense expounded by Eco and Lotman). Jauss's thesis on the meaning of a work and its reception fits ideally with Ricoeur's analysis of the phenomenon of reading. As we have noticed, the reading of a literary text modifies the reader's horizon of expectations. But

what does this horizon of expectations consist of, if not a system of references already established by earlier traditions, which the new work puts back into question? As Ricoeur notes, it is precisely the task of hermeneutics to discern changes of horizons that produce changes of reader effects: "The critical factor for establishing a literary history is the identification of successive aesthetic distances between the preexisting horizon of expectation and the new work, distances that mark out the work's reception." (Ricoeur 1988, 172.) Each work has a history, because it is made of a series of events, by means of which its meaning changes along with the context of its interpretation. This runs very close to our argument on time and temporality. Jauss rejects the abstraction of a classic text from temporal processes: the text's meaning consists in its performance of the temporal action of opening up a new horizon. A literary text has an effect: it invites new questions by reshaping the reader's horizon of expectations, sometimes within the larger horizon of life experience and sometimes within a narrower horizon of *literary expectations*.

However, in the case of modern or contemporary fiction, for instance, present-day readers are burdened to put much more *effort* in configuring the text than readers of classic texts. "What develops in the great novels of the twentieth century," as Italo Calvino observes, "is the idea of an *open encyclopedia* […] which derives etymologically from the presumption that all the world's knowledge could be gathered and enclosed in a circle." (Calvino 2016, 142.) Unlike the classic novel, which "tended toward works that assimilated human knowledge into stable, compact, ordered forms" (ibid.), the modern novel, by contrast, tends towards *the multiplicity of possibilities*. In the case of systematic encyclopedic works, such as Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, the reader cannot read the text all at once, but interrupts his reading constantly, not merely to take a break from reading, but also to suspend belief in ordinary contexts as they emerge in the course of reading. Through recollecting what he has already read he is able (i.e., as soon as he starts to read the book again) to respond to it, and thus constitutes not only the temporal and the aesthetic objectivity, but, most importantly, rediscovers the *irreality* of fiction as the essence of the world (the world *as meant*). The peculiar temporality of *In Search of Lost Time*, for instance, is not time in the sense of chronology, but the temporality of the experience of ordinary time

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in its essential strangeness. The reader, then, serves as a mediator between the *fictive* world and the *real* world.

The time of reading is repeatedly interrupted by the time of life. The thing-as-read has placed the thing-in-the-world between transcendental brackets. In the act of reading, the temporal horizon of the reader's consciousness is not linear, but it *travels* through past and future times constantly, turning the possibility of strangeness into ordinary time, and vice-versa. The *fictive* world does not deny the reality of the *real* world, nor does it escape the world; instead, it *irrealizes* the world. For Husserl, an intentional object is neither *real* nor *unreal*, it is *irreal* or *ideal*. In this regard, as Maurice Natanson observes, "the *irreal* signifies a turn away from the given fact or event in a situation of any kind to, instead, the possibility of that fact or event" (Natanson 1998, 45). Temporal *irrealization*, according to Natanson, means that "the noetic roots of the dimensions of time are altered in such a way that the intentional 'rays' of consciousness fall short of their correlates" (ibid., 67). The fictive world and the life-world are *instants* in the stream of intentionality. Temporality as the *texture* of intentionality, therefore, "is not only the negation of chronology but inherently similar to the result of irrealization: the creation of a 'correlate' of consciousness which is fictive and which corresponds to the current of existence" (ibid., 39). In the act of reading, the reader's memory fills in indeterminacies based on past experiences with literature and life. The durational time of the temporal horizon of the reader's consciousness is made up of a series of acts, which characterize both the time of reading and the time of life. If, to speak with Iser, reading and experience share the same structure, namely that meaning in both domains "has a temporal character" (Iser 1978, 148), then this synthesizing activity, which Iser calls *consistency-building*, is a temporal process, which reveals the paradox of human time.

By way of conclusion, it should be emphasized that any further account of the relationship between time and narrative should be focused on the way this reciprocity constantly changes the character of narrative temporality. Such inquiries will guide us towards projects different from those of theorists of narratology who seek to explore any *unnatural* temporalities in the relationship between time and narrative. Instead of trying to apply a Newtonian concept of time to the study of all narrative texts, the alternative option for narratological

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research would be to explore further: a.) the concepts of time beyond linear and homogeneous narrated time, which can be applied to contemporary and/ or postmodern fictional narratives; b.) the phenomenological theories of time and temporality; c.) the comparative approaches exploring transhistorical and transcultural similarities and differences in the representation of time. In this respect, hermeneutics and phenomenology as special disciplines will no doubt be instrumental in elucidating temporalities not yet explored by narrative theory. Within the framework of hermeneutics and phenomenology, narrative theorists and scholars of literature may seek to unfold innovative temporalities that confront narrative coherence. But these inquiries should include non-linear concepts of time, by means of which a narrative becomes the ground for the refiguration of human time.

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Genuine Hermeneutics in the Canon of Literature

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Abstract

Within this article, we discuss the author's influential relationship with the literary text and the role of literary critic in the tendencies to replace the first. By dealing, first, with the romantic spirit, then with the progressive concept of modernity, and, finally, with the denying concepts of post-modernity, we argue for the idea that the literary discourse includes the author as a normative and intentional principle to preserve the memory and knowledge, which literature offers to us. The tendency of

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the author's denial has resulted in a tendency to deny the tradition, literary canon, and has caused the absurdity of an excess in the necessary methodological apparatus, an excess, which has led to the diminishing of the reading of literature, fading of its social status, and harming the utilitarian recognition of authors who form the dignity and identity of Western culture. We attempt to explain that canonical literary texts should be recognized through posterior criticism, their placing in historical time, and their reflections on our own time, in which they obtain new meanings, while preserving the stabilized meanings of iconic authors.

Keywords: philosophy of literature, hermeneutics, tradition, timeless present, canon, utilitarian ethics.

Pristna hermenevtika znotraj kanona literature

Povzetek

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V članku obravnavamo avtorjev vplivni odnos do literarnega besedila in vlogo literarnega kritika z njegovo tendenco, da bi zamenjal avtorja. S tem da se spoprimemo, najprej, z romantičnim duhom, nato s progresivnim pojmom modernosti in, slednjič, z zanikovalnim konceptom postmoderne, zagovarjamo idejo, da literarni diskurz vključuje avtorja kot normativen in intencionalen princip, ki ohranja spomin in vednost, kakršna nam ponuja literatura. Rezultat tendence po zanikanju avtorja je tendenca, da bi zanikali tradicijo, literarni kanon, in absurdni razmah nujnega metodološkega aparata, razmah, kakršen je pripeljal do zmanjšanja branja literature, zatona njenega družbenega statusa in zmaličenja utilitarnega pripoznanja avtorjev, ki oblikujejo dostojanstvo in identiteto zahodne kulture. Skušamo pojasniti, da bi kanonična literarna besedila morala biti pripoznana s pomočjo kasnejšega kriticizma, njihove umestitve v zgodovinski čas in njihove refleksije našega lastnega časa, znotraj katerega pridobijo nove pomene, medtem ko obenem ohranjajo utrjene pomene ikoničnih avtorjev.

Ključne besede: filozofija literature, hermenevtika, tradicija, brezčasna prisotnost, kanon, utilitarna etika.

Introduction

At the end of his study and academic cycle, the well-known structuralist and post-structuralist thinker Tzvetan Todorov, published—so to speak, as a testamentary *mea culpa*—two works regarding the field of literature studies, where he foresaw the risk that threatens the study of literature. This risk, according to Todorov, comes from the "theorizing" (Todorov 2007, 25) excess and the insisting on "formalistic techniques," (Todorov 2010, 60–90) which have isolated the literary text from communication and from the basic concept of providing the reader some satisfaction. If in the 1960s, upon the principles of freedom of the reader—the freedom, which reached to his (reader's) definition as the producer of the text—, the literary author, legacy, and literary morality was attacked, extreme theorization and formalization—looking at the historical course—placed literary art, its ethics, to the "Procrustean bed." The testamentary lament of Tzvetan Todorov seems to be grounded, although it comes from the fear of "the death of literature." We will argue that, in the historical line, this crisis is based on the tendency of changing and replacing the roles of the author, the work, and the reader, that is to say, their traditional order, the substitution of which has caused an ethical issue ending up in a philosophical and ideological problem. The author's presence in literary discourse has never been missing, even if the author "lives" (only) in the implicit or explicit world of text, whether published or unpublished in the publishing world. Therefore, we speak of the "author as a recreator," since we know that the author of literature does not have the power to create *ex nihilo* and thus does not intend to be the image of God. Nevertheless, the writing process itself implies an ethical icon, which is related to a human agency that we call "author," which in its essence does not have to do with the authorship. The latter concept rather implies the assuming of responsibility, and it is connected to the means of dissemination.

1. Philosophy of recreation

Despite the perpetual presence of the author as a philosophical concept, in the Western culture especially Romanticism strengthened the author as the sole normative and ethical principle of literary discourse, it even gave him

the role of the bearer and canonizing figure of tradition, as well as the role of the researcher in the theater of human memory and imagination. Thus, Romanticism, despite the desire for the autonomy of the literary text, did not repress the author's presence as an influence on the reader. Moreover, as within the "Abrams triangle," the communication form of the work is subjected to the circulation between the "work in the center and the actants within it" in the complex relation between the "artist," "the audience," and "the universe" (Abrams 1971, 6) as the ethics of mimetics and creative poetics. In addition, Abrams, when discussing the acting forces within Romanticism, such as the concepts of the traditional and the revolutionary, emphasizes that the latter one emerges only as a secularized form of artistic imagination based on the power of religiousness (Abrams 1973). This means that the philosophical tendency of opening up to secularization, demanded by the scientific and genre fragmentation of identity, has not managed to philosophically separate the literal verb from its mythical, philosophical, religious, and historical provenience, hence, from the role of the author as the carrier of this "heteroglossia" (Bakhtin 2006, 263).

The phenomenon of author's relationship with the tradition, of exiting from the anonymity in the light of author as being responsible for the new literary form, strengthens the concept of "author as a recreator." For Northrop Frye, the notion of "recreation" is suitable, since as such it joins—in the writing process—"the vision of the tradition of art in the past, and the vision of an idealized society projected on the future. Both these visions, I suggested, arise from a partial release of repression, a qualified escape from the encumbrances of ordinary experience." (Frye 1980, 47–48.) As it turns out, based on this finding, the author as a recreator in his writing escapes from the ordinary experience, which necessarily implies a status of his particular dignity and identity, furthermore, a transfer of a historical consciousness, both of identity or of general consciousness. Correspondingly, this type of author preserves the balance between tradition and novelty, keeping the literary recreation process in a permanent crisis.

The phenomenological concept of Ricoeur known as "refiguration" approaches the concept of "recreation," through which the French researcher builds the scheme of what the narrative text offers us:

Three moments need to be considered then, to which correspond three neighboring, yet distinct, disciplines: (1) the strategy as concocted by the author and directed toward the reader; (2) the inscription of this strategy within a literary configuration; and (3) the response of the reader considered either as a reading subject or as the receiving public. (Ricoeur 1988, 160.)

If the author offers a strategy, which he realizes in the literary composition (configuration), it is the reader, as a reading subject, who, respecting the first two categories, i.e., the author, lives in the world of a hermeneutic "refiguration" of the text.

However, let us look at some models of rejection of this type of author, which turned into strong references for the literary interpretation itself, as well as for its classroom teaching.

Philosophies of modernity—in their different variations—have as an objective of aesthetic interest strengthened the denial of the "author's intentionality" in the literary text, the denial of the "author's role" in the literary critic's literary analysis, the denial of biography, history, and literary sociology as a rejection of positivism, but have guaranteed enormous freedom to the reader, where the latter was always designated as a literary interpreter and researcher. This poetics and aesthetics intended a kind of utilitarian autonomy of creativity for the investigation and study of the literary phenomena as a self-sufficient art.

In his famous essay *Tradition and the Individual Talent*, T. S. Eliot maintains the author's concept as a recreator, but introduces the concept of impersonality when he offers a philosophical opinion that

[…] the emotion of art is impersonal. And the poet cannot reach this impersonality without surrendering himself wholly to the work to be done. And he is not likely to know what is to be done unless he lives in what is not merely the present, but the present moment of the past, unless he is conscious, not of what is dead, but of what is already living. (Eliot 1948, p. 22.)

Eliot's impersonality implies a creative maturity, which means fleeing from a poetic lamentation, as well as the maturity of a literary critic who should not be influenced by author's biography, but should analyze the aesthetics of the text from an *a posteriori* side. This connection with the text does not forget tradition, since Eliot considered the writer's and critic's activity, from a philosophical viewpoint, as "a present moment of the past," as an awareness that the classical authors also recreate us as readers of the Western literary canon, and consequently enable the continuation of authorial recreation. Eliot's viewpoint regarding the presence of tradition in the literary present and the care of criticism as *phronesis*, and not just as a "theory," follows F. R. Leavis, who in the essays collected in his work *Revaluation*, published in 1936, states that "in dealing with individual poets the critic, whether explicitly or not, is dealing with tradition, for they live in it" (Leavis 1998, 3).

Apparently, T. S. Eliot and Leavis demonstrate that the social role of literature, in addition to aesthetic pleasure, has to do with the preservation of a high form of literary morality as a sign of care and respect of the living towards the deceased, transformed into symbols of Western culture. Therefore, we do not relate the morality of literature with religious morality, doctrine, or teleological teachings. However, on the basis of the literary phenomenon as a *differentia specifica* and on the basis of literary heritage, we believe in a specific ontological morality of the literary culture itself. Literary morality is related more to the ancient notion of *phronesis* (prudence), which, viewed in life and art, implies denying the dominance of pleasure and pain as a care for morality. Since, as Aristotle says:

> if someone is corrupted because of pleasure or pain, no [appropriate] principle can appear to him, and it cannot appear that this is the right goal and cause of all his choice and action; for vice corrupts the principle. And so, prudence must be a state grasping the truth, involving the reason, and concerned with action about human goods. (Aristotle 1999, 90.)

Besides, we think that literature, and the literary canon, possesses a permanent demand for a specific form of truth. It should be emphasized that

T. S. Eliot likewise expressed this morality as prudence in his implicit request for the preservation of Christian religious heritage as being an authentic part of European culture, in order to protect it from the dominance of political doctrines in culture. Such a protection of heritage took place at the time when two great ideological doctrines were escalating in the Western culture, namely Nazism and Communism, which replaced the religious cult with a cult of man, and when in the name of democracy there was pressure for various line-ups, aiming to change the evolutionary order in the European society. According to Eliot, a culture should include the God's icon, because

> […] the term "democracy," as I have said again and again, does not contain enough positive content to stand alone against the forces that you dislike—it can easily be transformed by them. If you will not have God (and He is a jealous God) you should pay your respects to Hitler or Stalin." (Eliot 1960, 50.)

The fear of the politicization of culture, consequently of the literary art, was not unfounded in modernism, because its philosophical intent was experimentation and play with tradition to the extent of a requirement that art would not entertain any reference points to the past, in order to achieve a specific autonomy of the new literary form. However, this escape from tradition led, at the time of ideological hegemony, to the phenomenon where art, and thus also literature, failed to stand with regard to politics. The British scholar of modernity Pericles Lewis says that "in the Western democracies the sense of impending crisis resulting from the rise of communism and then of fascism and Nazism led intellectuals to feel that the time had come to take sides in the struggle" (Lewis 2007, 224). This phenomenon, apparently, happens because ideologies, viewed in the philosophical and literary development, always ruin the balance between the permanent communication of the old with the new, and vice versa. This lack of equilibrium touched the literary morality and, hence, also the inherited ethics of the author as a recreator. However, traditional literary thought preserved the biological concept of the phenomenon of literary criticism, namely that a posterior literary interpretation should, as ethics, pay attention to the author and that criticism with a utilitarian goal

should serve the joy of reading. The author's authority, even when it aimed at aesthetical or stylistic interpretation of the text, was protected by the literary critic, who was aware that the literary text is not a critic's product, but the author's product, and that literary criticism, as paralleling the literary work, is a "special knowledge," which, besides the author's voice, carries onwards the voices of the dead, inherited religiousness and morality.

2. Philosophy of indecision

However, a conceptual change in relation to the literary tradition and the role of the critic occurred in the 60s of the previous century as a result of the phenomenon of structuralism. We call it a phenomenon, because, as the French historian François Dosse teaches, structuralism was an unprecedented development within the French intelligentsia from the 1950s–60s. This unprecedented movement can be explained as a willingness to advance the progressive concept, the development, and the merging of social sciences with the goal of relativizing classical human studies. Dosse says that structuralism "expressed a certain degree of self-hatred, of the rejection of traditional Western culture, and of a desire for modernism in search of new models" (Dosse 1997, xx). Moreover, the force of progression became even more powerful, when this phenomenon was disseminated on the Trans-Atlantic level and became "part of the human undergraduate departments" (Windschutle 1997, 7–39), where the philosophical demand of a "search of the new models" overshadowed philological, historical, and identity knowledge, and where the researchers alias literary critics were left a space of authority, of a nihilistic and ironic re-dimensioning of tradition. Moreover, this kind of authorship was "legitimated" with the role of the reader as a literary critic. An example of this philosophy of denial of the author, and consequently of tradition, is the conceptuality of the French thinkers Roland Barthes, who proclaimed "the author's death as an ethical intent," as well as Michel Foucault, who, upon the concept of "historical fictionality," invented the notion of the "author function" within the human discourse as a tendency for the implementation of the neo-myth philosophy, as a utopian return into the discourse world of anonymity. Roland Barthes's conclusion is well-known, when he writes "we know that to give writing its

future, it is necessary to overthrow the myth: the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author" (Barthes 1977, 148), whereas Michel Foucault's conclusion that "he [the author] must assume the role of the dead man in the game of writing" (Foucault 1999, 175) includes the denial of the traditional concept of history, that is, of documenting the tradition, by insisting: "I am well aware that I have never written anything but fictions." (Foucault 1980, 193.)

In fact, the tendency towards textual-structural analysis with the aesthetic and philosophical insistence, that is, through an extraordinary game of theorization and relativization, became a model of the denial of the complex relationship of the literary text with the world beyond it, and saw the reader as a manufacturer of the meanings of text and not as lovers of meanings derived from the literary text.

We emphasize the author's denial, for it is exactly the author who, as an authority, as a human agency, recreates identity, dignity, and continuity of the tradition. The denial of the subject(ivity) of the author implies the denial of ethics and tradition, which consequently shifted from the traditional (Horatian) aesthetics to a type of extreme ideology of theorizing.

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This ideology of theorizing was further reinforced by the re-authentication of Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophies, predominantly of the criticisms of the values of traditional Christian morality as well as of the reinforcing of individual's freedom and philosophy of the *Overman* (Nietzsche 1966, 286), re-established by Jacques Derrida, maneuvering the notions of "deconstruction" and "difference," which in relation to religion, and consequently to tradition, exert the pressure of denial, its unbounding, by proclaiming the instability of every stabilized signifier. Concentrating on the dissolution and destabilization of the canon, Derrida's deconstruction of tradition only reaffirms the "Nietzschean nihilism" by adapting it to the demands of post-modernity for the "bricolage" philosophy and the irony of the memory of symbols.

We are already aware of the expansion of this spirit in the teaching of philosophy, and of literature, on the Trans-Atlantic level, and of the influence of this philosophical game in the tendency to deny and un-braid the canonical tradition. What was the influence of this "ideology of despair" (Melichar 1988, 366) on the social status of literature and its reading?

The ideology of theorizing influenced the circumstance that "along with the instructional methods of several generations the critical approaches dominant in academic literary study in recent decades seem to have little connection to the value many experience in reading literary texts" (Bruns 2011, 7). As a consequence of this detachment from respecting the value and morality of the literary text, the "appreciation of reading" of literary texts has somehow been compromised. On this basis, Cristina Vischer Bruns defends literary reading as a fundamental value, for literary "reading is valuable for individuals and for society because it functions as an especially effective occasion for re-working our conceptions of ourselves and others" (Bruns 2011, 37).

Concepts with scientific claims of formalism, structuralism, post-structuralism, etc., applied to the poetic nominations of literature, romanticism, modernism, late modernism, post-modernism, and post-postmodernism, applied in the school and converted into a library in itself, have almost influenced that the overwhelming adventure of pretentious scientific proveniences were turned into a veritable mania and, in certain cases, became self-sufficient. The literary text was often turned into a tool or a starting point to prove theoretical knowledge without appreciating its morality, which was based on its author, his tradition, and ethics. The intention to realize scientific theorizing has, in a sense, almost punished art and culture, due to the judgement that art and culture are not science and man should be inclined towards science. However, the English philosopher Roger Scruton says that

> […] although culture isn't science, it is nevertheless a conscious activity of the critical mind. Culture—both the high culture of art and music and the wider culture embodied in a moral and religious tradition—sorts ideas by their intrinsic qualities, helps us to feel at home in the world and to resonate to its personal significance. (Scruton 2017, 13.)

Moral and religious tradition is the force of inheritance, which, despite the tendency to replace literary humanity with the adventure of scientific notions, has managed to preserve the concept of author-figure as an obligatory ethics. Although the philosophies of the *post*-s, like post-author, post-intentionality,

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post-literature, post-oeuvre, etc., experienced expansion and became fashionable (mainly until the 1990s), it is precisely the authority of the author, based on the cultural, traditional, and religious morality that challenges this period of indecision and calls forth the obligation of the European-Western cultural heritage to avoid falling from the theater of memory into the theater of forgetfulness. Thus, as human beings, as Scruton says, "we recognize obligations to those who depend on us and on whom we depend, and we exist at the center of a sphere of accountability, which stretches out from us with dwindling force across the world of other people" (Scruton 2017, 98).

3. The timeless present

We are born and grown in the sphere of accountability, and this force, when related to the love of reading and to the well-known concept of systematic reading of literature as a way of life, anyhow, despite scientific demands, requires morality and responsibility over the works and authors who, forming Western culture, have formed both us as well as our own time. Here, we are talking about the canon of the authors or the canonical works, which, living as classics, necessarily live zero time. The zero time of literary canon implies their permanence, and consequently their classroom teaching should preserve the author's ethics, morality, and religiosity of this legacy. We believe that the teaching of classics cannot be done with the nihilistic or deconstructionist tendency of its use just to produce interesting notions and games that seek only a sort of media popularity. The teaching of the classics requires philology, the utilitarian form of reading, which in the concept of Ernst Robert Curtius unites Western culture. Western culture from Homer to today, according to Curtius, lives on "common topics." As such, for its understanding the historical observation is essential, it therefore requires the assistance of classical philology, which does not use the text to produce notions, but reads the text, in order to enter the world of utilitarian hermeneutics, from which only emerge authorial ethics and poetics. Because

> […] we have a truly ontological relationship and real participation in an intellectual entity. But a book, apart from everything else, is a "text."

One understands it or one does not understand it. Perhaps it contains "difficult" passages. One needs a technique to unravel them. Its name is philology. (Curtius 2013, 36.)

Thus, philology is not that "method," which, in the Derridean sense, deconstructs the text, but it is the knowledge that aims at systematic reading of literary forms, from which derive the meanings of literary permanence. This form of reading is enabled by the phenomenon of literary tradition itself or what Curtius calls "timeless present." He states: "The 'timeless present,' which is an essential characteristic of literature means that the literature of the past can always be active in that of the present." Thus, it would seem that Curtius, being aware of the role of the literary tradition, even for the preservation of human morality and religiousness, stipulates that "a community of great authors throughout the centuries must be maintained if a kingdom of the mind is to exist at all" (Curtius 2013, 397).

Accordingly, the reading of a literary canon must be effectuated, in order to keep alive the kingdom of mind of the force, which gives meaning to human life and not to a certain number of teachers who think that literature is self-sufficient (and, if it teaches anything at all, teaches us only suffering).

On the basis of an awareness that literature, after all, is not a self-sufficient phenomenon, but retains the ethics of human agency and is a special form of recognition, the British scholar Harold Bloom, as being closely acquainted with "the stars of the assassination of the subject," in 1994 published the utilitarian work *The Western Canon*, which almost restores the tradition of Curtius, Eliot, and Leavis's studies; moreover, it connects the cultural links with the romantic poetry to the antique and classical traditions of Western literature and culture. Through a utilitarian study and criticism, Harold Bloom returns to his concept of the "anxiety of influence" and, on the foundation of personal experience, re-establishes an awareness of Western literary canon as a request for the defeating of loneliness, for a living in the theater of memory and witnessing the lifetime of the author.

The death of the author, proclaimed by Foucault, Barthes, and many clones after them, is another anticanonical myth […] [T]he Canon

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is indeed a gauge of vitality, a measurement that attempts to map the incommensurate […] Without the Canon we cease to think. (Bloom 1994, 40–41.)

Based on this logic, it turns out that our traditional and cultural thinking, as a continuum of the cult of aesthetics, and of the pleasure of reading, arises from the canon, from the authors of the Western civilization, from Homer to Franz Kafka, for instance, and much less from sociologists and psychologists who deal with literature and build over it the theories for human condition.

Additionally, since we live in the continuous expansion of information technology, which has given rise to discussions of the threat to our memory due to such transformations in the world of human media communication, we hereby recall the observations of Umberto Eco, who, in a lecture held during the reopening of the Library of Alexandria, through a dosage of humor, said:

> In the course of many interviews I have been obliged to answer questions of this sort: "Will the new electronic media make books obsolete? Will the Web make literature obsolete?" […] "No, keep cool, everything is OK" […] If you tell such people that books, literature, authorship will not disappear, they look desperate. Where, then, is the scoop? To publish the news that a given Nobel Prize winner has died is a piece of news; to say that he is alive and well does not interest anybody— except him, I presume. (Eco 2003.)

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This remark by Umberto Eco has nothing to do with the "conservative nostalgia," but with the immanence of the phenomenon of our complex relationship with tradition. The author and the work, literary morality and religiosity, that specific religiosity, which requires the reader's faith, and then the reader as a constant seeker of beauty, through which he ennobles his life, are the basic elements that keep alive dignity and identity of literary discourse. Human agency, by nature, possesses a demand for recognition (*thymos*), a requirement, which in the literary work of art comes out as experience, either as a mythical one or as a legacy of religion, either as morality or as a human requirement for the protection of identity causes. Consequently, classical

works, within the phenomenon of timeless present, always call for re-readings and reassessment in various times and spaces. This presence, this essence, is not relativized by new forms of communication, which cannot touch the essences of human categories.

This is what Umberto Eco repeats, who, although in his creative and study zenith, was a powerful admirer of postmodernism, moreover, of theories of communication and hyperrealism, just before his passing, proves that this ideology has exerted influence on the European society causing it to end up in an inexplicable form of cultural confusion. In his work *Chronicles of a Liquid Society*, he blames for this "decadence" in particular the insistence of protection of the inheritance of postmodernism, when he says:

> The liquid society begins to take shape with the movement known as postmodernism, an umbrella term that brings together a great variety of phenomena, from architecture to the philosophy of literature, not always in a coherent fashion. Postmodernism signalled the crisis of "grand narratives," each of which had claimed that one model of order could be superimposed on the world; it devoted itself to a playful or ironic reconsideration of the past and was woven in various ways with nihilistic tendencies. (Eco 2017, 2–3.)

The tendency of denial, of the play and relativization of values, set forth in the icon of Western culture, realized through the apparatus of the notions of human knowledge, where literary art was used as a medium for maneuvering theoretical knowledge, has influenced a crisis the utilitarian goal of literature itself. This crisis, caused by often tendentious over-interpretation, has, however, incited famous scholars, defenders of their doctrines against author, authority, great narrations, etc., in the end to reshape their attitudes by accepting the author's presence, the ethics of the text through an appeal to the pleasure of reading.

One can find a kind of *mea culpa* present in the later stances of Roland Barthes, Jacques Derridas and Tzvetan Todorov, who seem to have contributed to the situation of the "liquid society." Roland Barthes, later onward, says: "It is my joy to encounter in this place the memory or presence of authors dear to me

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and who have taught me at the Collège de France" (Barthes 2007, 458), while Jacques Derrida accepts "the gradual death of deconstruction" (Mitchell 2007, 224) and Umberto Eco openly explains the philosophy of postmodernism by saying: "the postmodern reply to the modern consists of recognising that the past, since it cannot really be destroyed, because its destruction leads to silence, must be revisited: but with irony, not innocently" (Eco 1994, 67). Yet, the most emphatic *mea culpa* comes from Tzvetan Todorov, who writes:

> It is a good bet that Rousseau, Stendhal, and Proust will be well-known to readers long after the names of today's theorists and their conceptual constructs will be forgotten, and we reveal a certain lack of humility when we teach our own theories about works rather than the works themselves. We—specialists, critics, professors—are most of the time only dwarfs perched on the shoulders of giants. (Todorov 2007, 21.)

On this occasion, as an exit from the reading crisis and lack of knowledge of the literary tradition, Todorov proposes that the theoretical structural apparatus should change its position. Rather than being a primary tool, it needs to accept the role of a secondary tool, therefore, to take its place only as help, when necessary, for the interpretation of the text, while always favoring the pleasure of reading.

We are already a century of historical distance away from the writing of the well-known essay of T. S Eliot, *Tradition and Individual Talent* (1919), and this memory necessarily urges us to think of the possibility or need of a re-dimensioning of the role of the critic, consequently of our approach to the tradition of literature, of our relationship with the canon and literature in general. The key question arising here is related to the correct understanding of Eliot's observations on the constant care for tradition, yet without damaging the aesthetic concept of literary autonomy, which is based on the permanent power of "the present moment of the past," but also of his musings on taking care that literary creation as well as literary criticism are not "personal," but "impersonal." Many can understand and misunderstand Eliot's impersonal concept as a loss of personality, but Eliot clearly said: "the poet cannot reach

this impersonality without surrendering himself wholly to the work to be done" (Eliot 1948, 22).

Therefore, the high degree of impersonality in art can only be achieved by those who have personality. As far as the role of critic, alias literature researcher, we have to take into account the statement of Christoph Bode who claims: "To put it in more general terms: Without a sense of purpose and without an idea of ourselves as critics there can be no genuine evaluation." (Bode 1989, 324.) This philosophy of preferring the reading of canon as well as of respecting the symbols of tradition, the author as its creator, the ethics of the text, and the authentic *a posteriori* evaluation of the literary text, enables normal communication with memory, which means, enables normal communication with our values. Additionally, an escape from theoretical over-interpretation, from the absurdity of the plurality of notions, would perhaps help literature not to lie onto the "Procrustean bed."

Conclusion

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Within this paper on the principles of the philosophy of literature, we discussed the author's influential relationship with the literary text as well as the role of the literary critic in the latter's tendencies to replace the first. By dealing, first, with the romantic spirit, then with the progressive concept of modernity, and, finally, with the denying concepts of post-modernity, we developed the idea that the literary discourse includes the author as a normative and intentional principle to preserve the memory and knowledge, which literature offers to us. The tendency of the author's denial has resulted in a tendency to deny the tradition, literary canon, and has caused the absurdity of an excess in the necessary methodological apparatus, an excess, which has led to the diminishing of the pleasure of literature and to harming the utilitarian recognition of authors to form the dignity and identity of Western culture. Based on the philosophical principles of cognition, we advocated the idea that canonical literary texts should be recognized through an *a posteriori* criticism, their placing in historical time, and their reflections on our own time, in which they obtain new meanings, while preserving the pertinent meanings of the authors. Their revisiting with the historical, deconstructive, and ironic

tendencies does not seem to be of literary utility, but only a "retrospective illusion" and the attribution of an aprioristic criticism.

If human categories have remained unchanged thus far, literary knowledge must also respect the permanent sensitivity offered by literary aesthetics, because the same human categories, proven and traditionally tested, carry the same sensitivity over even into our time. The universality of the symbols of canon, tradition, and Western culture must be subject to the philosophical process "save and add" and not "change by destroying." The philosophical concept "save and add" is protected and cultivated by the author.

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Poetry and the Challenge of Understanding
Towards a Deconstructive Hermeneutics

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Abstract

The first part of the paper is the author's contribution to the hermeneutics–deconstruction debate on the status of the literary work and the role of the reader. The author's considerations head towards a conception of "deconstructive hermeneutics of poetry," stating that the literary text both requires understanding and guards itself against the violence of its uniformization. The second part of the paper involves deconstructive-hermeneutic interpretations of the works of three Polish poets:

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Aleksander Wat, Tadeusz Różewicz, and Krystyna Miłobędzka. The author notices their "touching acuteness," i.e., their refusal of an all-encompassing reading. More important, however, is the way all the poets cultivate their own "deconstructive hermeneutics" of existence. In Wat's case, it is a hermeneutics of the suffering body. Różewicz is approached from the side of the problem of "the death of poetry." Miłobędzka turns out to be a poetess who delivers her idea of "releasement."

Keywords: hermeneutics, deconstruction, poetry, Aleksander Wat, Tadeusz Różewicz, Krystyna Miłobędzka.

Poezija in izziv razumevanja. Na poti k dekonstrukcijski hermenevtiki

Povzetek

Prvi del članka predstavlja avtorjev prispevek k hermenevtično-dekonstrukcijski diskusiji o statusu literarnega dela in vlogi bralca. Avtorjevi razmisleki se usmerjajo k zasnutku »dekonstrukcijske hermenevtike poezije«, kolikor literarno besedilo obenem terja razumevanje in sámo sebe varuje pred nasiljem njegovega uniformiranja. Drugi del članka vključuje dekonstrukcijsko-hermenevtične interpretacije del treh poljskih pesnikov: Aleksandra Wata, Tadeusza Różewicza in Krystyne Miłobędzke. Avtor razgrinja njihovo »dotikajočo silnost«, se pravi, njihovo odklanjanje vseobsegajočega branja. Toda pomembnejši je predvsem način, na katerega vsi pesniki gojijo svojo lastno »dekonstrukcijsko hermenevtiko« eksistence. V Watovem primeru gre za hermenevtiko trpečega telesa. Różewiczu se članek približa z vidika problema »smrti poezije«. Miłobędzka se izkaže za pesnico, ki podaja svojo idejo »sproščenosti«.

Ključne besede: hermenevtika, dekonstrukcija, poezija, Aleksander Wat, Tadeusz Różewicz, Krystyna Miłobędzka.

I would like to propose a deconstructive hermeneutics of poetry. This rather strange formula (are hermeneutics and deconstruction not contradictory theories? Well, they are not, as a handful of well-established scholars had tried to show many times before me)[1] may turn out to be even stranger if we realize that the very term "hermeneutics of poetry" is ambiguous enough to call it an amphibology. Though it can be understood as a hermeneutic work of understanding what poetry is (in terms of ontology) and how it functions in reader's reception (in terms of epistemology), it is possible—and even more interesting—to comprehend it as a hermeneutics that is cultivated by poetry itself. I intend to elaborate on this structural ambiguity to show how contemporary Polish poetry can be seen as a deconstructive hermeneutics dealing with the challenge of understanding.

On understanding, once again

Let me start with some general remarks on a rather well-acquired issue. The basic hermeneutic concept of understanding is both well-known and constantly … misunderstood. It is surprisingly easy to find—in 20th-century humanities as well as in the latest thought—strange comments distorting its meaning. It was common, for instance, for (post-)structuralists to formulate critical thoughts on hermeneutic "naivety," as if hermeneutics were about finding a "secret," profound ("abysmal," one would be tempted to say) meaning of a literary text or any kind of phenomenon indeed. Roland Barthes, for example, wrote about two possible modes of the signification of signified (*signifié*), upon which the literary text closes:

> either it is claimed to be apparent, and the work is then the object of a science of the letter, which is philology; or else this signified is said to be secret and final, and must be sought for, and then the work depends upon a hermeneutics, an interpretation (Marxist, psychoanalytic, thematic, etc.); in short, the work itself functions as a general sign, and it is natural that it should represent an institutional category of

1 See: Caputo 1987; 2000; 2018; Gasché 2000; Güney and Güney 2008; Hoy 1985; Leitch 1983; Palmer 1979; Silverman 1994; Silverman and Ihde 1985, as well as many others.

the civilization of the Sign. (Barthes 1986, 58–59; see also: Dybel 2012, 66–67.)

In this view, it is obvious that the hermeneutic desire of "delving deeper" (Barthes 1986, 59) into the work should be replaced by the joyful, infinite play of the perpetual signifier. But the assumption is also that this tracing (hunting connotations intended) is somehow dangerous for the text itself, because it transcends the text to find its external meaning. One of the most important Polish structuralists Janusz Sławiński even stated sarcastically that:

> The service, which [the hermeneut] enjoys, is reduced to trusting submission to the initiative of the work, to listening to the pulsation of its semantics without prejudice and anticipation, to patiently capturing the impulses flowing from there. In order not to hurt the work, he tries hard to disarm himself […]. He is a tolerant being, full of good will, and kindly open to otherness (Otherness). He will be rewarded: the work will entrust him with its secrets and make its essential meaning accessible. This kind of hypocrisy has been perpetuated by virtually all hermeneutic thought. (Sławiński 2000, 70; see also: Januszkiewicz 2007, 11.)

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In short: underneath hermeneutic good will to understand lies the "good will to power," as Jacques Derrida dared to say to Hans-Georg Gadamer during their infamous encounter in 1981 in Paris (see: Derrida 1989b).[2]

Today, that (post-)structuralist popular belief is often re-stated by the so-called new humanities (new materialism, actor-network theory, affect theory, etc.), and by many literary scholars who turn "against interpretation," as Susan Sontag had done 55 years ago (Sontag 1966; see: Gumbrecht 2003). Moreover, in the field of environmental humanities, it is often believed that hermeneutics

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2 The editors of the volume *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter* decided—as far as I am concerned, inequitably—to change the original French title and the title of the German translation of Derrida's intervention. What an example of a good will … to power! It is worth mentioning, however (even though it is quite a known story), that Derrida, as the years passed, changed his mind (see: Derrida 2002).

remains an anthropocentric, traditional, and anachronistic discourse, which is not true, as some authors, myself included, tried to prove (see: Caputo 2018; Clingerman et al. 2013; Romele 2019; Szaj 2021).

The most common mistake of those who remain skeptical towards hermeneutics is that they address it as a kind of a method. But hermeneutics is not a method—far from it. It is a theory and practice of understanding, which is quite obvious to the readers of Heidegger and Gadamer. As we know, Heidegger grasped understanding as a pre-ontology of human being, "a fundamental *existentiale*," "a basic mode of Dasein's *Being*," which situates itself at the core of one's existence: "The kind of Being which Dasein has, as potentiality-for-Being, lies existentially in understanding." (Heidegger 2001, 182–83.) Contrary to most of the common-sense usages of the concept, understanding is not equal to "understandability" (or intelligibility) of the world. It is not a positive phenomenon, rather a negative one:

> in so far as understanding is accompanied by state-of-mind and as such is existentially surrendered to thrownness, Dasein has in every case already gone astray and failed to recognize itself. In its potentiality-for-Being it is therefore delivered over to the possibility of first finding itself again in its possibilities. (Heidegger 2001, 184.)

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This notion of understanding was re-established by Gadamer who linked it with the concepts of the horizon and the history of effect (*Wirkungsgeschichte*). According to the author of *Truth and Method*, "[t]he historical movement of human life consists in the fact that it is never absolutely bound to any one standpoint, and hence can never have a truly closed horizon. The horizon is rather something into which we move and that moves with us." (Gadamer 2004, 303.) From this, I would like to draw two conclusions. First, understanding is a fundamentally open (and incessant) movement of thought, as opposed to being a closed method. Second, one cannot be "against hermeneutics"—if anything, one can be against a particular version or concretization of hermeneutic theory. So, where is the rub?

Well, one is often tempted not to be faithful to the "original difficulty of life" (Caputo 1987, 1) stemming from an honest consideration of this hermeneutic

logic. The condition of the thrownness (*Geworfenheit*) means that a human being is fundamentally lost and needs some anchorages. These anchorages, however, often are metaphysical lies, as Friedrich Nietzsche taught us. That is why I agree with John D. Caputo that hermeneutics needs some kind of a deconstructive "twist" (see: Caputo 1987; 2000). To be more precise, I believe that hermeneutics is always susceptible to deconstruction, such as deconstruction is not something applicable to hermeneutics from outside, but something that always already works in hermeneutics: understanding never comes to rest, the hermeneutic circle never closes, horizons always move, and we move with them. In this view, hermeneutics and deconstruction are not as much opposite, as interlinked discourses, bound in a Derridean "double bind."

Figuratively speaking, we can find in such radicalized hermeneutics a particular trope, which is *contradictio in adiecto*. In contrast to the traditional expositions of hermeneutics as "displaying," "explaining," or "transferring," it emphasizes specifically conceived "undisplayability," "inexplainability," and "intransferability," and its "radicalism" means, contrary to Latin etymology (*radicitus*—rooted), that it lacks access to origins, foundations, or principles. Even though it might seem to be at odds with what we normally associate hermeneutics with, nothing supports this more than Gadamer's and Derrida's dialogue on the status of the literary text. And while, it seems, Derrida is constantly on fire, and Gadamer often comes under fire, mingling their theories might be fruitful.

Deconstructive hermeneutics of poetry

Against all appearances, Gadamer and Derrida share a common (though slightly shaky) ground when it comes to the literary text. What is the purpose of hermeneutic reading, according to Gadamer? Of course, it is to grasp its sense. However, it is rather a regulative idea than an actual experience:

> it does not mean that the indeterminate anticipation of sense that makes a work significant for us can ever be fulfilled so completely that we could appropriate it for knowledge and understanding in all its meaning. […] To expect that we can recuperate within the concept the

meaningful content that addresses us in art is already to have overtaken art in a very dangerous manner. (Gadamer 1987, 33.)

What to do, in order not to overtake art? Well, one should abandon every method given in advance and "let something be said" (Gadamer 2007a, 129). Moreover, what the text says, does not confirm our identity and our worldview, on the contrary: "It is not only the impact of a 'This means you!' that is disclosed in a joyous and frightening shock; it also says to us: 'You must change your life!'" (Gadamer 2007a, 131).

Are we not strangely close to Derrida here? For sure, he rejected every longing for a "transcendental signified" (see: Derrida 1997b), but does hermeneutics really look for it? On the one hand, yes, it does, because it takes the form of "transcendent reading," and in such approach, as Derrida claimed, "reading and writing, the production or interpretation of signs, the text in general as a fabric of signs, allow themselves to be confined within secondariness. They are preceded by a truth, or a meaning already constituted by and within the element of the logos." (Derrida 1997a, 14.) On the other hand, and this is crucial for my reading of the Gadamer–Derrida (hermeneutics–deconstruction) controversy, it is not so that the author of *Of Grammatology* was totally against the "transcendent" approach. Even more so, he insisted on the indispensability of it: "a text cannot by itself avoid lending itself to a 'transcendent' reading. […] The moment of 'transcendence' is irrepressible, but it can be complicated or folded […]" (Derrida and Attridge 1992, 45). So, it is all about this complication or "frouncing" of hermeneutic reading, not about abandoning hermeneutics. Let me quote one more excerpt, this time from the book on Paul Celan's poetry (is it not interesting how Derrida and Gadamer shared their interests in the same authors, the same topics?), and let it be a conclusive (though *inclusive*) argument for deconstructive hermeneutics:

> Within the bounds of this generality or this universality, insofar as its meaning is repeatable in this way, a poem acquires the value of a philosopheme. It may offer itself, and it must do so, to the work of a hermeneutics that does not require, for its "internal" reading, access to the singular secret once partaken of by a finite number of witnesses or

participants. The poem itself is already such a hermeneutic event, its writing is a matter of *hermeneuein*, it proceeds from it. (Derrida 2005, 48.)

So, what we need here is a repetition of the Gadamer–Derrida debate—repetition, however, conceived in a deconstructive manner: repetition with a displacement, an iteration. Firstly, we could repeat after Gadamer that both hermeneutics and deconstruction are descended from romanticism and intend to derive profound implications of its legacy (Gadamer 2003). So, is not the Derridean notion of the "signature" of author and text and the reader's "countersignature," which amends it, something along the lines of the Gadamerian "dialogue" between the text and its reader? In both cases, it seems, we are dealing with a similar ontology of the literary work, which only exists (that means: becomes actualized) in the process of interpretation. And even though this actualization takes place in various ways (more as an "ecumenical" process for Gadamer, more as an "agonistic" exchange for Derrida), we might risk positing the thesis that next to the hermeneutic circle it would be possible to speak of a specific (deprived of its "wholesome" wholeness) deconstructive fractured circle, where the point is likewise an answer to the challenge of the text: "I almost always write in response to solicitations or provocations," but "my response to such expectations is not always docile" (Derrida and Attridge 1992, 41). In this "provocation" we must hear a *pro-vocatio*, a challenge directed to none other than ourselves, calling to impart a creative answer, to amend the idiom of the text with our idiomatic signature. As is known, Derrida speaks in such cases of invention, but do we not catch him here in the middle of the hermeneutical act? Are we not very close to Gadamer, for whom "understanding is not merely a reproductive but always a productive activity as well. […] It is enough to say that we understand *in a different way, if we understand at all*." (Gadamer 2004, 296.) And, last but not least, could we not think of *différance* as the radicalization of hermeneutic *atopon* (see: Cesare 2004; 2006)?

To be sure, Gadamer's "fragment" is not the same as Derrida's "trace." Caputo compellingly noted:

The Gadamerian fragment is a *symbolon* which is to be fitted together with its missing half, which is a perfect match for it, a token by which we can recognize infinity, the whole, the holy. The remain(s) in deconstruction are the […] *symbolon* which was shattered too badly ever to be fitted together, indeed which never was a whole. (Caputo 2000, 50.)

Well, it takes one (deconstructionist) to know one (hermeneutist). In other words, I believe that this slight disuniting should not be a deterrent for us. Since "[t]here is no hermeneutic recovery without deconstruction and no deconstruction not aimed at recovery" (Caputo 1987, 65), one is tempted to say that the hermeneutic experience understood as the "primordial" situation of being thrown into the world (even if the world of the text) and desiring to find (recover) oneself in that world inheres *at the center* of the deconstructive experience of being shorn of all metaphysical precautions. Subsequently, what the literary work tells us, is not only "This means you!" (though "You must change your life!"), its performative power is even stronger, so that what we can learn from it is that "there is no you—this means you!" (Caputo 2000, 55). "You" is only constituted as an effect of reading, it is *performatively stated*, called into existence by the text. In short: the reader's identity is relational.

So, if we agree with Gadamer that the hermeneutic approach to the literary text is based on an assumption of its meaning, we also must see along with him that every kind of hermeneutic experience is quite rugged: "experience in this sense inevitably involves many disappointments of one's expectations and only thus is experience acquired," moreover, it is chiefly "painful and disagreeable" (Gadamer 2004, 350). The same goes for the experience of the literary text that Gadamer grasps as "being struck by the meaning of what is said" (Gadamer 2007a, 129). What is important for me, is that in the original German version this "being struck" is set out as *Betroffenheit*—a noun that implies some affectation, some corporeality of the very process of interpretation. An analogical image has been invoked by Gadamer during his encounter with Derrida. He spoke there about the "thrust that the text delivers" (Gadamer 1989, 57), so that one loses oneself in it and needs to restate one's status. Once again, the corporeal aspect of that "thrust" (an aspect confirmed also by the German original where

we read about *Stoß*) is very clear. Do we not catch Gadamer here in the middle of the deconstructive act?

It comes as no surprise that Derrida himself underscored the bodily status of interpretation, as well. In conversation with Derek Attridge, for instance, he related to the experience of reading as an "ordeal" (but also, importantly, bodily "desire") (Derrida and Attridge 1992, 50). The ordeal is painful because, as we read elsewhere, there is "no poem that does not open itself like a wound, but no poem that is not also just as wounding" (Derrida 1991, 233), which thus would not, on the one hand, expose itself to interference by the reader, and, on the other, interfere painfully with the reader's world.

Again, a strange agreement amid the dispute. From this, I would like to derive a conception of deconstructive hermeneutics of poetry, which can be characterized figuratively as a concept of a "touching acuteness." This category seems to have several important assets. First of all, it indicates that understanding is not—regardless of appearances to the contrary—a purely intellectual activity, but also has a bodily dimension, and involves the participation of affects, mood, a certain "orientation" on the reader's part. Secondly, in such a perspective "staying close to the text" would mean being sensitive to its painful sensations. And, in addition to that, to remain faithful to the text would mean to creatively betray it. Or, in Gadamer's words on Derrida, it would be a hermeneutics tracking the trace(s) (Gadamer 2007b). Thirdly and finally, "touching acuteness" appears to present itself as an "undecidable" category: on the one hand, it underscores the painful aspect of being struck by the text, while, on the other, it also points towards a certain intimacy, or even eroticism, a tenderness (in both senses of that adjective) in the relationship with the text. On the one hand, it says that the text painfully marks me, on the other, that I intervene in the text, adding to it my countersignature. Everything happens at this intersection, at this point of encounter, in this *inter-esse*, *chiasmus*, "relationship between two experiences, two occurrences or two languages involv[ing] double invagination" (Derrida, after: Markowski 1997, 368). And that figure of the chiasmus can be seen as the radicalized (here meaning: weakened) figure of the fusion of horizons.

The challenge of understanding in contemporary Polish poetry

On the one hand, poetry requires from the reader some kind of deconstructive hermeneutics. On the other hand, however, the poetry itself cultivates radical hermeneutic work. By saying so, I hint at Derrida's notion of poetry as the language of the impossible, that is to say, the language of *the* impossible, but also an *impossible* language being able to express the most inconceivable ideas. Nevertheless, as we also know from Derrida (reading Paul Celan), this comes at a price. The lesson is well-known: "to the keeping of each poem, of every poem, the inscription of a date, of this date […] is entrusted," *but* "*despite* the date, in spite of its memory rooted in the singularity of an event, the poem speaks: to all and in general, and first of all to the other" (Derrida 2005, 6, 7). Or, in the words of Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe: the uniqueness of the idiom is inevitably forfeited in the very act of writing, in the very act of using language aimed at its salvation (Lacoue-Labarthe 1999). And *this* is "touching acuteness" on the text's end.

So, what interests me, in this part of my paper, is the philosophical awareness of this "writing of the disaster" (see: Blanchot 2015) one can find in contemporary (Polish) poetry. For, if along with Caputo we hear a Latin etymology in the disaster—*dis-astrum* meaning the lack of the lodestar (Caputo 1993, 6)—, we begin to understand that the poetry itself expresses its understanding that understanding is impossible … and indispensable at the same time. I would like to examine this awareness on the examples of Aleksander Wat, Tadeusz Różewicz, and Krystyna Miłobędzka.

Aleksander Wat: Expiring

Wat was a Polish author of Jewish origin (let me remind at this point that "all poetic language is, like all poets […], Jewish in essence"; Derrida 2005, 62) born in 1900 who is best known in the world for his "spoken diary" *My Century: The Odyssey of a Polish Intellectual*. His poetry, however, though intellectual and erudite, enforces to me the notion of touching acuteness. In the second part of his life, Wat suffered from a burdensome, detrimental illness called lateral medullary syndrome. In spite of incredible pain (or, rather, thanks to it), he managed to write some radical hermeneutic, and at the same time somatic,

poems. The somatic side has been reaffirmed by the title of his selected poems in English: *With the Skin* (see also: Barańczak 1989). The radical hermeneutic side can be found in the undecidable status of "expiring."

"Expiring," I would argue, is the proper name of *différance* structuring Wat's postwar poetry. Wat himself indicated its aporetic status in his *Diary without Vowels*, referring to it as "everyday—progressing once slowly, gradually, continuously, then in leaps—disintegration," of which it is impossible to say something disambiguating: it is "neither war nor peace," "neither life nor death," nor "a narrow pass or shaky footbridge between life and death," nor "outliving death, life in death, Heideggerian *Sein zum Tode*, dying in life" (Wat 1990, 39–40). What is of great importance, for Wat, "expiring" is something non-terminating, an expiring without expiration. Even though it is a process of becoming-dead, death itself is constantly deferred. And there is more to it. Sometimes expiring frequents inspiring: it brings the breath of fresh air (like in Latin origin: *in-spirare*, to breath in).

Undecidable "expiring" is both a topic and a lining of Wat's acute poems, of which the most famous is the one under the incipit "The Four Walls of My Pain" (Wat 2007):

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> The four walls of my pain
> have no window no door.
> I only hear – the guard
> pacing out there and back.
>
> His heavy faceless steps
> mark empty survival.
> Is it night still or now dawn?
> Darkness has become my four walls.
>
> Why does he pace there and back?
> How can death's shadow find me,
> when my cell of pain
> has no window no door?
>
> Out there life no doubt is a blur
> from the blazing bush.

> Here the guard paces, there
> and back – a shadow without face.

The translation does not do justice to the poem. In the Polish original, it is a steady metrical text, with each line consisting of four trochaic feet. Four walls of pain, four verses, four lines in each verse, four feet in each line. There are (at least) two interpretative possibilities of this construction. First, one can underscore homology between the monotony of the pain and the monotony of the poem, implying the steps of a prisoner walking around the cell. This is Barańczak's path (Barańczak 1989).[3] Second, one can see the antinomy between the pain and its record: the poem itself would be an attempt to intellectually control suffering. This ambiguity goes even deeper. Once we begin to ask questions about the formal side of the poem, we begin to consider its influence on the content. Does the poem really confirm absolute confinement? Or maybe there are some gaps, allowing to get through the "four walls"? And, if so, is not what we experience here the contamination of the inside and the outside? *And if so*, is it not a hold taken by the work of *différance*?

What arrests my attention is the guard. Who or what is he? Is he even *present* in the poem? His status seems to be problematic, to say the least: he controls the prisoner from outside the cell, but he cannot be identified with the figure of the outside. His faceless steps mark empty survival (in Polish original, rather: measure bland continuance) inside the four walls of pain, not the passage of time in the "ordinary" world. Literally (physically?), he is outside the cell, but structurally (spiritually?), he belongs to the closed world of the prisoner. And, there is more: if the pain contained the prisoner in the nonporous prison, then the guard would turn out to be a redundant, hyperbolic, tautological figure. Why is he guarding the prisoner at all, when it is impossible to escape? Indeed, is it impossible?

My answer to these questions would be that the guard is a metaphor for the undecidable "expiring." It may evoke death, but it is not identical with it. It may anticipate death, but death is deferred since its shadow does not have access to

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3 See also other works that had dealt with this poem: Dziadek 1999; Pietrych 2009; Śliwiński 2011.

the four walls of pain. It deconstructs binary opposition of the inside and the outside. And, most importantly, it has the ability to break into the prison, as we read in the last verse. Hitherto, it (the guard) was only heard, the prisoner did not command a view of it. Now, something has changed: "*Here* the guard paces, there / and back," meaning: it is being seen. And if so, the containment is not absolute. The poem is touching, because it moves us, affectively and intellectually, and appears as a call for a "responsible response," for the compassionate understanding awakened up against someone's suffering.

Tadeusz Różewicz: Hauntology

No one in Polish poetry acknowledged Derrida's already cited statement "no poem that does not open itself like a wound, but no poem that is not also just as wounding" (Derrida 1991, 233) better than Różewicz who even used almost identical phrase in one of his poems: "poetry / like an open wound" (Różewicz 2006b, 326). There are many beguiling reasons to consider Różewicz's work as a poetic incorporation of deconstructive hermeneutics (see: Szaj 2019), but I will focus my attention on the post-avant-garde, as well as postwar, issue, namely "the death of poetry."

The problem itself comes from Theodor W. Adorno (Adorno 1983), but Różewicz dealt with it more like it was a question of the Derridean hauntology (Derrida 2006). Why? In terms of classical two-valued logic, we experience a performative contradiction here. It is impossible to write poems after the death of poetry. The thing is that for Różewicz the death of poetry cannot be separated from the diagnosis of the collapse of the metaphysical interpretation of the world, which requires rebuilding poetry from scratch, thoroughly rethinking the situation of a contemporary poet, who not only no longer has his place on earth, but is out of place (or, as Hamlet would say, out of joint). Tomasz Kunz rightly stated:

> Różewicz "comes after the end" and that is why he asks with such determination about the sanction of the existence of poetry and the reason for being a poet, and looks for answers; he looks at the world through the eyes of someone "who should have died in principle but

accidentally escaped" and who has faced the actual absence of God. (Kunz 1996, 328; see also: Skrendo 2012; Bogalecki 2014.)

Poetry is dead, but it—almost literally—comes back from the spirit world. So, it is rather *undead*. Is it not so that the death of poetry—like the death itself in Wat's expiring—is permanently postponed? "Dead" poetry haunts those who outlived its death, returns, again and again, refuses to be forgotten. And, as we read in Derrida's *Specters of Marx*, "a specter is always a *revenant*. One cannot control its comings and goings because it *begins by coming back*." (Derrida 2006, 11.) In Różewicz's poetry, the same movement takes place as in the spectral haunting—an anachronistic movement that calls into question the contemporaneity of what is present, indicating the inalienable nature of heritage ("you have to walk / with all the years / […] / with all faces of the dead / with the faces of the living"; Różewicz 2006a, 364), but also making us aware that "there is no inheritance without a call to responsibility. An inheritance is always the reaffirmation of a debt, but a critical, selective, and filtering reaffirmation." (Derrida 2006, 114.)

What comes from the past, needs to be re-established by virtue of the future. Or, to be more precise, we do not know where the specter precisely comes from: "It is a proper characteristic of the specter, if there is any, that no one can be sure if by returning it testifies to a living past or to a living future […]" (Derrida 2006, 123). Among Różewicz's poems, one is particularly noteworthy due to this disjointing—"The Larva":[4]

> I am dead
> and I have never been
> so attached to life
> […]

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4 Since I do not have access to the English translation of the poem (see: Różewicz 1976, 95–99), I present it in my translation.

I am dead
and I have never talked so much
about the past
and about the future to come
about the future without which life is
supposedly impossible
[…]
I dead cold
fell for the movement
I am eager for the movement I move
from place to place
[…]
I live life to the full
I am so alive
that I cannot imagine
the second death
Me dead busy

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I still write
yet I know that you keep leaving
always
with a fragment
with a fragment of the whole
of the whole
of what
am I the larva of the new?

It comes from Linnaeus that we associate larva with immature forms of animals. However, the original Latin meaning remained: a ghost, a specter, a disembodied spirit. So, "The Larva" is a poem about specters, a spectral poem, a poem-specter. It deconstructs binary oppositions between life and death, between presence and absence, and at the same time, it introduces some structural anachronism, denying a bond relationship between presence and present. What is more, if understanding, so to speak, runs in a circle, it is a dislocated, fractured one, in which we can only track traces, without any hope for the totality. And yet, it is the very (fluxional) foundation of life, the impossible condition for the possibility of the impossible—the future to come:

"The time that is out of joint is a messianic time, a time that does not close in upon itself, that is structurally ex-posed to an out-side that prevents closure." (Caputo 1997, 123.) *No apocalypse, not now*, we could repeat after Derrida. Saint John's "second death" is not an option for us if we understand that what dies immediately becomes the larva of the new, even if this is a painful process of fracturing (meaning: turning into fragments), dislocating, cracking down. You have to distort the old form, in order for the new one to be born. Poetry has to die in order to circle back … from the future.

Krystyna Miłobędzka: Poetic dwelling

Krystyna Miłobędzka, born in 1932, is usually associated with Polish linguistic poetry and the tradition of concrete poetry. She adds Zen Buddhism to this list of inspirations. All together, combined in an original way, result in a poetic project close to John D. Caputo's radical hermeneutics and, at the same time, Martin Heidegger's idea of "releasement" (*Gelassenheit*).

As for radical hermeneutics, Miłobędzka seems to remain faithful to its basic rule: keeping one's eyes peeled to the flux, restoring life to its original difficulty. Movement (often conceived as a run with no cause or purpose) is of frequent appearance in her poems, sometimes it is also their formal organizing principle (as in liberature-like "Shifting Rhyme"). The one thing we can take for granted is the groundlessness of this constant transition. The world we live in is ever-changing, never ready, permanently becoming. Flux, however, does not provoke the Nietzschean *amor fati*. On the contrary, it is awe-inspiring— every epiphany comes directly from it:

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> I am. Co-living, co-active, complicit. Co-green, co-ligneous. I coexist. You do not know what it means yet. Endowed with permeation. I disappear I am. I co-stand (with you) in this vitreous day (with this vitreous day I disappear) that disappears with me so lightly. I do not know what it means. Co-opened with window, co-flowing with the river. I am to know I disappear? I disappear to know I am? Complete but complete is nowhere to be found. Co-flying, co-heavenly. Half a century have I lived for that! (Miłobędzka 2010, 187.)

What we can see here is a human subject dissolving in the world, more than marveling at the world from the human "outside." And this is another distinctive feature of Miłobędzka's poetry. Not only a human being is simply a part of a more-than-human world. All the actors of this universe—both human and non-human—wonder at the miracle of existence, or rather, of *the existing*, because nothing in it solidifies in some kind of petrification.

Despite Heidegger's quite well-known anthropocentrism (see: Derrida 1989a; Garrard 2010), it is very tempting to attribute Miłobędzka to his late idea of "releasement." The latter, taken mainly from Meister Eckhart, but having something to do with Zen as well, is described in *Country Path Conversations* as an engagement in "non-willing," resembling "something like rest," being "capable of letting something be in that in which it rests," "letting go of things" (Heidegger 2010, 77, 149, 103). Now, what is of great importance, this ability has nothing to do with the subject's power, it comes from outside the subject who is rather bestowed by it.

In Miłobędzka's poetry, we experience the same movement of releasement, of withdrawing from human mastery over the world, expressed often in the wish of doing nothing more than living (more in a biological, than an anthropological sense), of non-intervening in world-affairs. Precisely here, the metaphor of purposeless running occurs:

> I would just like to run
> run for nothing
> run to nothing
> only run itself
>
> run
> (Miłobędzka 2010, 333.)

The releasement goes to the point of no agency, of running without the one who runs: "(without the one who struggles to be me)" (Miłobędzka 2010, 337). "Poetically man dwells," suffice it to say. But in Miłobędzka's writing dwelling comes down to earth, indeed, so the coda should rather sound: "poetically earthlings dwell."

That dangerous supplement: To-come

Miłobędzka's case brings us to a close, both literally and figuratively. The paper itself comes to a halt, but the deconstructive hermeneutics of poetry remains open-ended. There are compelling and urgent reasons to take up Miłobędzka's (though, of course, not only) teaching and open hermeneutics to the field of environmental humanities, as has already been proposed (see: Clingerman et al. 2013). And what is more likely to help us with this task than poetry—the (impossible) language of the impossible, of the future-to-come, of (unimaginable) imagination? Imagination, it seems, is what we need in a destitute time of environmental and climate catastrophe. And poets—in Poland, for example, Julia Fiedorczuk, Małgorzata Lebda, Szczepan Kopyt, Marcin Ostrychacz, Tomasz Bąk, and Anna Adamowicz—yield it over to us. Let us not negate their labor.

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Passages and the *episteme* of Crossing a Threshold

About the Reading of What Was Never Written Down, but the Body Inscribed in the Text

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Abstract

This text is an attempt to collect traces of readings on the hermeneutics of the city as a space dense with meanings that require discernment in a completely unusual phenomenology, and not just the topography of the city. The modern humanities have greatly contributed to an understanding of and searching for discourse of such places/non-places, passages, alleys, and labyrinths, in which the body each time feels different and forces a different description than a neutral one or an indifferent one. It

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is not without significance that we have long known that sometimes the "genius loci," as well as our fear, alienation, or, on the contrary, domestication, and captivation truly reign. This article is a survey of my readings and fascinations that arose thanks to them. Walter Benjamin's reflections on passages are the basis of my discourse. I also use the accomplishments of outstanding Polish humanists, creatively fitting into this perspective.

Keywords: reading, passages, *flâneur*, labyrinth, city, body, text, *episteme*.

Pasaže in *episteme* prehajanja praga. O branju tistega, kar nikdar ni bilo zapisano, a je telo vpisalo v tekst

Povzetek

Besedilo je poskus razbiranja sledi branj hermenevtike mesta kot prostora, polnega pomenov, ki zahtevajo razločevanje s popolnoma neobičajno fenomenologijo in ne samo s topografijo mesta. Moderna humanistika je veliko prispevala k razumevanju in iskanju diskurza takšnih krajev/ne-krajev, pasaž, uličic in labirintov, pri katerih se telo vsakokrat počuti drugače in vsiljuje od nevtralnega ali indiferentnega drugačen opis. Nikakor ni brez pomena, da občasno resnično zavladajo tako »genius loci« kakor tudi naš strah in odtujitev ali, nasprotno, udomačitev in očaranost. Pričujoči članek je raziskava mojih branj in fascinacij, ki so nastale zahvaljujoč njim samim. Refleksije Walterja Benjamina o pasažah so osnova mojega diskurza. Sklicujem se tudi na dosežke izjemnih poljskih humanistov, ki se kreativno umeščajo znotraj tovrstne perspektive.

Ključne besede: branje, pasaže, *flâneur*, labirint, mesto, telo, besedilo, *episteme*.

"Life seemed worthwhile only where the threshold between sleep and wakefulness was *trampled* as if after the *march* of an endless series of *images*, where language was only itself and nothing more, where sound and image, image and sound with the precision of the automaton overlapped …" (Benjamin 1996, 57.)[1]

"Reading is a space created by experiencing a place that is a system of signs—something that has been written down." (Benjamin 1996, 117,)

"Thus, a *new visual epistemology* developed, by definition combining seeing and believing and seeing and speaking." (Buczyńska-Garewicz 2006, 28.)

"… a place, like a human being, has a name, in which the whole of her individuality resides." (Buczyńska-Garewicz 2006, 28.)

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Introduction. Let us learn to read people like a city, and let the city read the living body of the subject

Drawing on Benjamin's highly influential *Passages*, I include the category of *walking* as vital in the publications on the text, "afterimages," the reading of places, and reading itself. At the same time, I regard as vitally important the analyses of the city, which claim "that [it] fulfills itself in the 'passage,' 'exit,' and 'departure'" (Sławek 2010, 52). The studies of the relationship between subjectivity, space, and the crossing of the threshold "between dreaming and wakefulness" have revealed the area of the problem, both in the broadest dimension of inspiration stemming from "geo-poetics" and in a narrower dimension. The latter concerns the parallels between walking and speaking in the construction of identity or in the appropriation and actualization of city places, as well as their linguistic elaboration and visualization.

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1 All English-language citations that appear in this article are my own translations from Polish.

The reading of cultural texts, including the city as a network of transitions, flows, and pulsations, corresponds to the subjective experience of meanings, space, and places in various cognitive representations and in various types of individual epistemologies. "The reading of the city" and "the reading of people" is, therefore, a specific, comparative strategy of being in (their) culture and experiencing the combined symbolic memory of both subjects. It is a reading strategy both in terms of the acts of texts' selection (cities) and the interpretation of what happens in personal reading. It provides a perspective on personalized experiences and encounters. The reading of the city as a specific type of bond is a combination of images—mental figures—enabling the practice of subjectivity, that is, an attempt to understand oneself, to examine the places of the appearance of clearances and flows of identity, language (and/of) the body and relationships, and to adopt the position of subjective evaluation of such reading. Urban semiosis, this "cauldron of texts and codes" (Sławek 2010, 22), urban eventfulness and contingency, iconic hypertrophy, and flickering excess, can therefore be viewed as a cultural text, built on "links and joints" (ibid.).

Full of spatial codes and palimpsest records, containing translucent meanings, the city is also a *faerie* of disturbed discursive orders. In addition, it occurs as an unfinished space, flashing, and implies the co-creation of this cognitive, emotional, and existential mixture.

In addition to the sense-forming fabric of entangled, internal meanings, built by the reading of the urban space along with overwritten imaginings, the text of the city also has a superstructure and a substructure, giving the city a cultural function. The urban text, as an interpenetration of perspectives and cultural cross-sections, is:

> […] a kind of super-narrative, the sum of stories grown "around" the city, feeding on the city, to take it to a higher level, to supplement the code composed of various types of sensory signs, inscriptions, voices, events, with a myth, urban legend, sometimes gossip or anecdote. (Szalewska 2012, 124.)

The text-city is thus treated as *a metaphor for the visible body*, together with the sphere of an invisible system of iconic connections and flows of life-giving

forces. Furthermore, it is full of layers of meanings (history), phenomena from the mythical, phantasmatic, and spiritual order, with places/non-places, heterotopias, and time-space layers. They relate to the work of memory and imagination, which penetrates the peculiarities and local phenomena because "every city […] is characterized by the specificity of space, not to be repeated, not to be counterfeited in other circumstances" (Bieńkowska 1999, 96).

Imagination and discourse, focused on the city or on the mental image of the city, neither homogeneous nor unambiguous, read as a text, are the philosophy of perception—the philosophy of *looking*, *watching, and seeing*. The uniqueness and transience of the observer's mindfulness can be used to build a parallel *episteme* referring to the process of perceiving and the ways of looking at a person. Let us learn to look at people as if they were cities—a hermeneutically sound and cognitively promising call—also by transferring some observational plans and valuable methodological rules (processuality, mindfulness, the focus on uniqueness, unprejudiced vision, an eye unarmed with interpretative clichés).

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A passerby's notebook and the new *episteme* of the "moving vantage point"

> "The ontology of flâneur is summed up in a gaze, in *a moving vantage point*, of a variable perspective." (Szalewska 2012, 90.)

> "The greatest gift turned out to be the lack of haste, the freedom to choose the route, and the possibility of returning. Sometimes the most important things were suggested by *chance*." (Zagańczyk 2005, 13–14.)

A textual passage is a formula of expression, referring simultaneously to the place, transition, language, and the record of individual experience (experimenting and wandering). In this "textual trope <I>" (Nycz 2000, 2012), the act of walking corresponds to the act of speaking (Certeau 2008, 99);[2] the

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2 Certeau writes: "The act [of walking] actually has a threefold function of 'speaking': it is the process of appropriation of the topographic system by the pedestrian (just as the speaker appropriates and adopts the language); it is the *spatial* realization of

realization of spatial insights is uttered and recorded in the notes of a passer-by ("walking texts"). This means that itinerant figures (turn, return, retreat, stop, doubt, choice, twist, going astray, wandering) have their counterparts in linguistic figures; at the same time, the spatial realization of places, determining the route of walking, wandering, and traveling are close to the montage of statements, while the topography of space is close to a narrative labyrinth. This is a unique epistemology because, as J. Urry writes in *Sociology of Mobility*, "walking is privileged, motivated by the multitude of desires and goals that have their source in the interrelationship between the movement of bodies, fantasy, memory, and the fabric of urban life" (2009, 81).

In the history of culture, *flâneur* is, at the same time, a figure of identity in movement, a metaphor for reading, an image of literary individuality, a textual traveling subject, a methodological abbreviation, an analytical category, and a figure of memory and mirror of cultural transformations. *Flâneur* unhurriedly, aimlessly, and solitarily traverses passages, streets, and spaces, indulging in the sensations of the moment, the feeling of (her) being a stranger in the crowd, giving herself the opportunity to reflect on the impressions and their memory constellations, which will form a palimpsest. *Flâneur* is an artist who verbalizes the experienced reality and constructs the subjectivity of a human being on the move, in the promise of adventure, in the fulfillment felt in the solitude of viewing, and not being seen. The passage becomes a medium for crystallizing nomadic identity, a metaphor for the *universum* of thinking possibilities. Wandering is also an "expansion of home." It is "taking into possession of new content and quality of places" (Buczyńska-Garewicz 2006, 41).

The text passage, the work of a *flâneur*, who "tests the contingency of meaning" (Szalewska 2012, 94), is a trace of the movement of subjectivity, which writes from itself a textual individual experience. It verbalizes the figures of thought, which are triggered by the explored space and are reflexively projected onto it in the form of phantasms. In the practical perspective, the text passage refers

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a place (just as the act of speech is the sound realization of language); and finally, it presupposes relations between different systems, that is, pragmatic 'agreements' in the form of movements […]."

to "an essayistic passion" of a special kind, to translating one's own experience into other languages of culture. It is a circumstance of unhurried reflection on the perception of occurrences, adventures, fleeting experiences, and everyday events. *Flâneur*, as a subject traveling through urban ontology, is a man without a place, a metaphor for the existential situation of being on the road. This model of traveling subjectivity, of aimless wandering, implies another epistemological effort: the strategy of creative energy between the contingency of existential positions and the artistic attitude towards the spaces of meanings that occur in the reading process. *Flâneur* verbalizes the experience of perception and cognition, looking and recalling, by textualizing subjectivity based on the experiences of modernity, everydayness, colloquiality, transience, and possibility, as well as the privilege of looking and seeing. Not without significance for forging the territory of textual-spatial imagination are, therefore, "textual strategies committed to achieving the impression of constant balancing between unique and common qualities" (Sendyka 2006, 47).

The strategy of recording events that comprise the subjectivity of a passerby assumes, thus, a different type of textual practice: essay writing, collecting, noting, commenting, diary writing, reporting, column writing, and requires collage, mosaic, palimpsest aesthetics, which combines space and time. "Walking" texts are a subjective experiment and a record of this experiment concerning the influence of spatial categories on the textual constitution of the subject locating itself in the text. They are a personal, dual *sensorium*, a metaphor for writing (from) oneself, recording from seeing and understanding, appropriating, and marking the anthropology of space with private meanings, creating a topographic image of the space of life in the melancholic imagination.

"*Flâneur*'s city is an *imaginary space*, a series of staged scenes whose scenography shows inspiration taken from real topography; it is *a spectacle set in the imagination*" (Szalewska 2012, 100). It is, therefore, a specific type of discourse *of* space, filtered by subjectivity, a mode of "essayistic writing" on the aesthetics of events. It is a kind of text passage, a text map of meanings, and, at the same time, an ethical and epistemological challenge. Referring to the postulate of the integration of subjective, identity sensations and their naming, *flâneuring*, in the poetics of perception and rhetoric of the gaze, reaches the ephemerality of everydayness, the split moments of time, the impressions

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of flashes, the variability of meanings, forgotten meanings, marginalized, underestimated, and excluded values.

The seemingly pointless search for real and symbolic worlds in the walking, unhurried reflection of the *flâneur* reaches and touches hidden, otherwise imperceptible things, sometimes intentionally concealed, invisible in the procedural *episteme*. At the same time, *flâneur* reaches things that are arbitrarily destined to and prepared for manipulated reception and want to pretend to be something different than what they are. *Flâneurism*, through the interference of subjectivity and space, and their pictorial-textual movements, does not allow for an easy closing of perception to things potentially useful in reflective and critical thinking, problem-solving, as well as the prudent and contemplative organization of existence. Thus, the anthropology of walking and its epistemic accomplishments resists the disappearance of places and impermanent forms of being. This is not only the slowness of gaze and the epistemology of mindfulness, but also the discoursivization of marginalized and secondary places; it is "a constant *going astray* from the main route towards motifs/topics less recognized, less illuminated," it is "a distance from the thoughts of the crowd" (Szalewska 2012, 113).

Wandering is here an attempt to theoretically bring out private, intimate issues that are located between texts. *Flâneur*'s text passage is not only a specific essay, but every existentially relevant utterance.

Entrances, slips into passages and labyrinth tests. *Flâneur* and her passion for alleys, gates, and windows

"[…] in all these situations, *the figure of the labyrinth* appears—either as a real path leading to *a place of transformation* or a metaphorical idea of reaching the center of the (sub)conscious." (Czapiga 2013, 49.)

"Each of the gates suggests movement, the movement of one gate refers to the movement of the other.

The space here is a repository of restless mobility, a storehouse of aspirations, a labyrinth, in which each passage says: go-enter-exit-come to-go through-come closer-go away-go around-come nearer." (Symotiuk 1997, 17.)

The text passage as the form and content of individual experience and the record of "moving" imagination is a narrative recovered in afterimages as sediments of perception, awakened in flashes, clearances of reminiscent, penetrating thought. It is a narrative obtained from hybrid memories, reconstructed from reading the space-palimpsest.

In the context of the above outline concerning the key category of the passage here, it seems to be most significant to recognize narrative figures in the forms of peregrination, written and inscribed in the body, real or imaginary. One of them is the figure of the narrative labyrinth, with different types of the mystery of places, sublime horror, borderline, and various variants of transitions, from the ritual understanding of this concept as an initial journey and transformation in the (labyrinth)[3] of existence to symbolic interfaces of *possible worlds* and imaginary places that reveal *slips* into other ontological or epistemological orders (Caroll 2004a, 2004b).

We must put forward the thesis that the idea of the city as a passage is a metaphor, form, or position of the subject's consciousness. T. Sławek (2010, 54) names this a network consciousness, because it "brings together a dozen, or so, very distant points." The network consciousness, generated on the plane of the city, is also the participation of the subject in the experience of the labyrinth. The very capacious, semantic potential of the figure of the labyrinth reveals the possibilities of its textual and pictorial realizations, and this was interestingly and multifacetedly shown by M. Czapiga (2013). Applied to the theme of passages, it gives an idea of special *places of transformation*. The experience of reading the city is about those places and moments of *passage*, in which a human being transcends her identity and existence. It is, therefore, a symbol of a gate that leads symbolically to *the other side*. Being a passage, the gate has a "going-through and flowing" character (Sławek 2010, 32). Mental structures will be the place of the actualization of our thinking about this heuristic connection. In such structures, the text passage will be an uttered realization of the initial *passage* through the labyrinth test; the latter is a place "perfectly

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3 An insightful study on the labyrinth, concerning its history, metaphor, catalog, and historical fate of imaginations, is presented by M. Czapiga (2013); cf. also the logic of the tree and the labyrinth, ordering semantic relations, and semiotic richness in: Eco 2009.

embodying all choices" (J. Barth). The labyrinth is a space of *wandering*, but also a place of *resolution*, *reflection*, *decision*, *obsession*, *hesitation*, and *a symbol* of the fight against the "monster," which is to lead to the experience of *coincidentia oppositorum* and the balancing of the conflicting structures of two places and experiences.

Transition can be associated, not only with an initial, ritual transformation, but also with an equally existentially important experience of the *flâneur*'s contingency and her attempts to become *the other*. *Passage*, as a place of transgression and crossing the border, taboo, and mystery, is a key category in the *flâneur*'s discourse. It is characterized by "*a passion for alleys, gates, city isthmuses, courtyards, and […] windows*, i.e., those elements of the city architecture that are most strongly satiated, also symbolically and culturally, with transgressivity" (Szalewska 2012, 218). Thus, the *passage* and symbol of the labyrinth-city is a heterotopian place, with an atopic potential, discursively demanding, emotionally irritating, full of initiatory elements in every rite of passage, and leading to a confrontation with what is new, foreign, disturbing, and often normatively forbidden. It can therefore be *vice* and offense, decision, and gain from that stray perception, which is, however, never wasted. Windows, isthmuses, clearances, and tunnels are, thus, a metaphorical description of combining heterogeneous, busy, flickering spaces, symbols of transcending place and self-flow, understanding difference, experiencing, awakening, and transformation. The passages and corridors of the labyrinth are also an exemplification and a symbol of fate and its semantic "density."

The gate is the place where we gain the value of ourselves, of who we are, how we understand our existential position and relationships. Passages, gates, and other places pregnant with meaning store the memory and traces of man's wandering in the form of palimpsest deposits of collective memory, which can be used as an archive of culture or otherwise defined, a union of *sensorium* and *imaginarium*. It is the multiplicity and diversity in the cross-communication of meanings and attitudes that build the philosophy of the gate. The labyrinth formula will be used here in the context of testing existence and marking its significant, central, border, heterotopian, broken, closed, or detained places. Entrapments in the border spaces of fate, as well as other borderlands of existence, are life-giving places, a chance for a symbolic death and rebirth. At

the same time, they give an opportunity to express the pain in the form of textual insights and narrative studies.

The nomadic status of texts (R. Braidotti). Grateful and ungrateful maps

> "Intellectual nomadism is first and foremost *an existential project*."
> (Rybicka 2014, 65.)

The reading of the city as a palimpsest is, therefore, a constant *re-reading* from the beginning, with the addition of further recognition. It involves taking into account previous readings, insights, and accompanying images, cognitive, emotional, diagnostic, and self-therapeutic circumstances. In this sense, the city "resembles *a construction plan*, an architectural design, or a city-carcass, in which senses can later be built-in, it is a delimited space, but with places of indeterminacy, susceptible to the freedom of thought inherent in the essay" (Szalewska 2012, 194). This distribution of the structure and the very structure of the city-memory-subject distribution can be illustrated in the form of a map or an atlas of the nomadic narrative movements of the individual. Therefore, the city must be thought of as "a fluid structure of connections and switches, from which various branches diverge to all sides, leading to subsequent switches and joints, so that the city appears as a labyrinthine network of neurons" (Sławek 2010, 31). Let me complete the reconstruction of T. Sławek's original idea: "I get to know the city when I create a map of points (and such a map will probably be different for everyone), in which passages are revealed [...]." (Ibid.) The map must, therefore, take into account places that are subjectively marked as gates, *passages*, and fragments (puzzles) of the labyrinth. Such an understanding of the individualized map of the forging and "hatching" of existence will open a *universum* of possibilities and ambiguous horizons and landscapes. It is no coincidence that we read such a confession:

> I think that the writing of many of my texts is like drawing maps [...].
> It is no coincidence that the image of the map or the drawing of it is so often present in my texts. The frequency of spatial metaphors expresses both the nomadic status and the need to draw maps." (Braidotti 2009, 43.)

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Braidotti proposes a metaphor of nomadism, which makes it possible to see thinking as being multiple, running to different sides of activity and mobility that reveal themselves in complex and diverse ways of living. Nomadic consciousness is the critical consciousness that determines conscious choice and decision, often in the paradigm of resistance. The movement of people, objects, images, thoughts, knowledge, information, waste, and other cultural goods in the visual metaphor of mobility is the practice and actualization of critical consciousness, in the dimension of individual autobiographies. Translations of metaphors into the meanings of everydayness are possible thanks to the competence of reading virtual movements of thought slipping and moving in the text-map, reading multiple meanings, making imaginary journeys, and even wandering on the margins of consciousness. The maps are "strongly symbolic, using all kinds and also completely arbitrary markings, figures, shadows, shapes, shading, etc." (Urry 2009, 128). The very process of spatialization of thoughts and memory work of symbolic mapping or mapping of symbols is worth more serious consideration. This is especially true in the case of difficult, tangled, or wounded narratives, which require to be seen in the *space of time* and to be granted with an emotionally weakened, distant narrative and visual character. The cooperation of time and space in auto/bio/geo/graphic writing is the recording of meanings, experiences, and *significant* moments in the individual territory of the cognitive culture of existence, also through the subjective delineation of it through a map. Here, the self-narrative, an illustration of the spatial imagination model, and the dominant (most characteristic of the subject) type of narrative representation meet.

There are many spatial metaphors to be used and filled with subjective content: a cartographic map, space passages, a labyrinth, a warehouse, a library, and a house as a warehouse storing memories and sensory experiences.[4] Mental maps play not only a cognitive role, but also a mnemonic, stimulating, and causative one, which activates bodily memory (cf. Rybicka 2014, 287). Mental experiences become visualized in images stretched over key elements of space, their recognitions (as compatible with the subject) and incarnations (interiorization of places). The causative role of the place in the design of the

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4 Cf. the essay "Metafory, modele i media pamięci" in: Assmann 2013, 89–127.

mental map can be used both in diagnostic processes as well as those that intensify the processes of learning, deepening understanding, or strengthening memorization. Spatial metaphors of thinking and other means of visual representation "can wander in space" (Urry 2009, 128), and show that "moving the map" and animating seemingly motionless margins are epistemologically important (Czapliński 2016).

An archipelago of text. To grant fragments with "the grace of presence"

The virtual landscape is a symbol of man entering the aura of a place with a *topos* potential. About the archipelago (Bogalecki 2008),[5] the image we will use as a metaphor for reading (text) space, E. Rewers wrote in *Post-polis*: "The city in this approach is not an isolated place, a cultural island, but an archipelago of discontinuous, fragmentary cultures."[6]

An archipelago of discontinuous snippets sets in motion games with perspective. *Topoi*, scattered over a space that is not easy to identify, thwart the construction of a landscape map (semiotic landscape) and the planning of the way of passage. Everywhere, we face displacement, transcendence of self, and going beyond, through movement towards *another* fragment, which must be "bestowed with the grace of presence."[7] The archipelago as a structure in unstable suspension is a model and metaphor for the reading of ephemeral, impermanent, disappearing, virtual, moving, and leaping things. This is because "the archipelago trusts in intervals that constitute a living expression of presence" (Scappettone 2010, 162), and the structure of the fissures fascinates with an infinite number of internal connections. Lost in the chasms, cracks, and the "spacing" of this personified *topos*, they generate a troublesome form of understanding and interpretation: dynamic, relational, influential, outflowing, fleeting, and transitory. In these chasms, full of life-giving energy, the seeds of understanding potential forms that require different readings are born. Understanding must be built on a *volta* in thinking, between fluid points

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5 See also Scappettone 2010, 133–172.
6 Quoted according to Scappettone 2010, 133–172.
7 H. James, after Scappettone 2010, 172.

of thought, trying to grasp a hard piece of land. Condemned to a multitude of transitions, reflecting the variety of displacements, the archipelago symbolizes not the unrealizability of the connection, but the possibility of bestowing energy on fragments in leaps and spaces between them.

The virtuality of the archipelago's landscape will be decided on an imaginary plane. It is based on the insertion of a subjective reference to the landscape, an understanding of its dynamics of development, through the forces of transformation and displacement. It needs the aesthetics of fragmented particles of the archipelago, demanding attention and cooperating with the subjective imagination. The sense of incompleteness will generate constant attempts at virtuoso polishing of perception, thoughts, and interpretations.

Passage—an intertextual inheriting of quotations and landscapes. To "obliterate" the fragments and "arrange them according to the hidden melody"

> "So, it remains for me to imitate a bird building the nest: to *obliterate those passages* that correspond to my readings of Nabokov, and *arrange them according to the hidden melody*, which accompanied me while I was reading his novels." (Karpiński 1989, 78.)

> "*Everything is a quotation*, a combination of the already existing parts, from which the author, like a rag […] tries to build a clump." (Delaperrière 1997, 40.)

The synchronous coexistence of various semiotic codes, even tiny parts of codes, is a situation in urban space that is not devoid of epistemological value. The city-text, constituting the passage, is here a kind of intertext, interlaced with sometimes conflicting interpretations, revisions of meanings, the collision of the effects of memory work, revalorization of the memories of places, as well as transit flights and junctures of symbolic communication routes.

Szalewska clarifies the analysis of the metatextual being of fragments in passages, their actualization between texts, stating that in the intertextual co-writing of passages we find various coincidences: "First, individual sentences are woven according to the principle of *a patchwork of quotations*, crypto

citations, allusions, or paraphrases, which are often not separated graphically." (2012, 169.) The question that arises in the analyses not only by Szalewska, is, therefore, to what extent passages make the space covered by the *flâneur* privately, and to what extent a borrowed or repeated experience is the "truth of the mediation of two subjects" (cf. Szalewska 2012, 169)? Interpreting, associating, comparing, marking, and inscribing meanings into space with the body is a quality that can be culturally reproduced and inherited in the network of readings. This happens in the process of collective coexistence in the history of places, in the development of their spiritual, "common" biography. "The passage would become, in such an optic, an ivy developing between texts." (Ibid., 175.) The second property of the intertextuality of passages, according to Szalewska, consists in creating—and here she uses the term by D. Danek— "quotations of structures" *implicite* "manifesting the belongingness to the textual community of text passages, and what is more—through intertextuality somehow creating this community" (ibid., 170). In this sense, "the technique of assembling prefabricated elements, quotations—by cutting them out of their original context and recontextualizing them—would become a dismantling of borrowings and discursive strategies" (ibid., 174), entailing "the necessity to maintain for many years a sharpened attention to every *random quotation*, to every *fleeting mention*" (Benjamin 2005, 517).

The above considerations sensitize us to the fact that the quality of the montage itself will be an issue that is not without significance in the study of text's tiny bits and their compilation "according to the melody." In the work of assembling, we are dealing with a special kind of "prefabricated elements": thoughts, impressions, ephemeral things, personal concepts, intimate variations, and alterations of fragments on the internal plane. Assembling as a rule is "the building of a great structure from the smallest, clearly carved building elements," but also from "short, unspoken fragments, rarely allowing to guess" (Thiedemann 2005, 7).[8] Especially since, according to Benjamin, quotes— "robbers" that we encounter through collection and recontextualization— "attack the reader," and often force us to change perception and montage, imposing a non-subjective path of reflection and even interpretation, making

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8 Cf. also Benjamin 2005, 506 and further.

observation difficult or limiting the meaningfulness of quotation polyphony, which further complicates the smooth flows of passages.[9]

Benjamin writes about the principle of his activity:

> The method of this work: *literary montage*. I have nothing to say; *just to show*. I do not steal anything of value, nor do I appropriate any sophisticated wording. Only *rags and waste*, but not to stock them, but to do justice to them in the only way possible—by using them." (Benjamin 2005, 505–506.)

The non-linearity of "only-to-show"-passages, composed as a kind of collage, labyrinth, or *bricolage*, is related to the transition of narrative into the narrative, with participation in the narrative of the *other*; it is a reflective stop at selected places or the use of a repository of imagination to choose the road and interpret signs on the road: "Stories about places are *bricolages*. They are made from the remains of the world." (Certeau 2008, 108.) Such a collage composition of text passages,[10] often including descriptions and dialogism, reminds us of the fragmentary nature of scraps of memories and thoughts, of interrupting the circulation of thought with the intrusions of the *Unconscious*. It testifies to the need to break the hegemony of what is easily imposed on perception and interpretation: "The passage, through the openness of the form, allows us to add and break in half a sentence, a *deviation* from the main urban route towards the periphery." (Szalewska 2012, 139.)

We read in Szalewska's work: "The collage and the element constituting it—a fragment—as privileged forms epistemologically mediate the complex process of perceiving polyphonic space, repeatedly semiotized." (Ibid.) This indicates another important circumstance that collage, and even more so the

9 In the introduction to his study on Benjamin's *Passages*, R. Rożanowski writes: "Benjamin's work—if we are to refer to his own words—is like *a robber on the road*, he jumps out of an ambush to take away readers' beliefs. Not only on a purely textual level, but also on a more hidden level—funding the 'infinite possibility of discourse' as understood by Foucault." (1997, 10.)

10 "The verbal remains that make up the story, associated with lost stories and incomprehensible gestures, resemble a collage, which—because it is *based on unintended relationships*—constitutes a symbolic whole. They *express themselves through what is lacking*." (Certeau 2008, 108.)

essayization, allows for the juxtaposition of various forms of expression in the text passage, with a particular indication of those that have the power to uncover meanings of some hidden existence that is deeply rooted in the body. This requires stereometric reading (Syndyka 2006, 155–156), which takes into account the breaks in the difficult, "excavating" narrative, and forces to disrupt its course in terms of temporal succession, returns of motifs, fixation on specific issues, and traps of narrative gaps. "*Flâneur*'s work resembles that of a *bricoleur*, using the means at hand, tools found around him, although not necessarily intended for such use. *Flâneur*'s book is written without a plan, without order, without a method." (Loska 1998, 42–43.)

The (self-)creative activities of the subject include the construction of metaphors interpreting the experienced space, arranged in the "edifice of thought," or other textual activity oscillating around some spatial metaphor. These activities relate to the work of the *bricoleur*, which:

> […] consists in introducing into the constructed, intellectual edifice an order, a principle that is inherent in every collage, even if it is expressed in deliberate chaos. Order, which is at times hidden for the recipient, is always recognizable by the *flâneur*, because it constitutes his testimony—passage." (Szalewska 2012, 194.)

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The processual and personalized character of the passages is also associated with the placement of certain accents, which make the text passages into separate, individualized wholes of narrative labyrinths, strategies of disguising in costumes (Szalewska 2012, 135). This is regardless of the invariant features of the passage, resulting from the *flâneur*'s speaking structure. Walking is a form of discourse, and we will remain in this aesthetic, although we will go beyond the content of the material and the cityscape. Finally, let us ponder the idea of a garbage can. Along with the segregation of cultural waste, there appears the concept of the "certainty of recovery," which must be associated here with "rummaging in the garbage can of the culture of waste."[11]

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11 K. Miklaszewski states: "[…] well-segregated garbage is a certainty of recovery. In

The "garbage dump of ideas" generates the possibility of saving fragments from being lost or historically, ideologically, and aesthetically disregarded. It is worth looking at it with one more remark in the background:

> The artist, like the "diver" (this is how a poor man living off waste is called), will never give up the garbage can. He will plunge into it every day and persistently, and will always find something interesting. Especially, since a real garbage can, next to the matter almost completely consumed, contain many elements prematurely and hastily discarded. What is more: the "professional diver" chooses appropriate garbage cans, well-promising ones, i.e., garbage cans of ideas, garbage cans of styles and conventions, garbage cans of form, as well as all media dumps. (Miklaszewski 2007, 9.)

A professional garbage-diver who chooses "promising garbage cans" is a wandering author, and her "wandering" is a "disagreement with the meaning at the first level" (Lupa 2003, 183).

How to read those "tiny pieces" "emerging to the surface" that force you to repeat (yourself)? How to elicit fragments, pregnant with meaning, from these historically stored wholes? How to infer meaning (Benjamin), how to *pick out pearls* (Lupa), and how to *immerse yourself* in the search for ideas (Lynch)? To articulate this most emphatically, it is about connection and communication with "*the whole spectacular junkyard of history*" (Debord 2007, 43). Is this the creative archaeology of ruins and palimpsest-city gathering, as in Benjamin, or "burying" in "trash cans," as in Žižek? Or, maybe, it means "approaching eternity through a rubbish bin," as in Kantor,[12] or still something else?

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the garbage can, everything is only seemingly someone else's. The moment we start digging into it, it is ours. I realized then that *Kantor's 'waste'* had so much contributed to my home dumpster that *it began to live anew* and affect not only me. Therefore, I would like to share this abundance of inspiration once again, arranging *a new collage* out of my film, radio, and text recordings, many of which come to light for the first time." (2007, 11.)

12 Cf. Miklaszewski 2007. This is a publication, about which A. Burzyńska wrote in

In lieu of conclusion. The body "takes" space and voice. On the right to "search through our interiors"

"Each body occupies *its place*." (Augé 2010, 35.)

"An average human being makes text into a performance, in text and through text." (Certeau 2008, 6.)

"*The human body is conceived of* as a part of space, with its own boundaries, centers of vitality, its defense mechanisms, and weaknesses, its armor and shortcomings." (Augé 2010, 40.)

"Different loves give the right to *rummage through our inner being*, to demand explanations, and yet in our lives there are such thoughts that haunt us, push us no one knows where, which only open prospects and call to some misty horizons." (Herbert and Elzenberg 2002, 54.)

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"I travel *to learn my own geography*."[13]

Even "a collective noun has its bodily equivalent," argues Benjamin (1996, 71). Writing the city in the body, the text passage reminds us of the relationship between literature and the body, which is interestingly problematized by Szalewska (2012, 105). As the author of *Text Passage* clarifies, the relationship between body and utterance is more about the physiology of the creative subject, about the interconnection between thought, walking, the work of feet, and the play of steps.

Tygodnik Powszechny (13. 11. 2007): "Miklaszewski's assumption was the most correct: he collected various documents, a 'garbage can' composed of 'waste'—unused notes, conversations, photographs, drawings, important and trivial materials. […] 'Saving through the garbage'—this is a beautiful metaphor patronizing this publication. // The book has the form of a collage, *silva rerum*, where next to conversations, scenarios of reportages and programs, quotations from reviews, and statements […] there appear memories, as well as interpretative and polemical texts by Miklaszewski. The whole is complemented by photocopies of press clippings and unique photos and reproductions of Kantor's more widely unknown works." (Burzyńska 2007, 5.)

13 M. Réja, after Benjamin 2005, 461.

I would like to draw attention to the elements that connect the subject and its *possible* worlds in the philosophy of walking. They combine the intimacy of symbolic spaces of the subject, which mediate in reading and writing, with a significant existential input. "Books are nothing but metaphors of the body," writes Certeau (2008, 141), and in this poetics of the experience of the body and writing, we will remain. The body can be written in different ways. It can be done through the erasure of symbolic wounds by means of narration or through the building of a visual-spatial utterance. Photography, image, and collage are manifestations of the conceptualization of the subject's utterances in such a representational form, no less appealing than a written or printed text. Thus, writing the body is a process of self-analysis, self-therapy, and communication.

Flâneuring or vagabonding in the form of constructing auto/bio/geo/graphic subject experiments is also about taming the fear of expected and planned initiation into death in places of transits. The participation of the individual gaze in the creation of collective phantasms is related to place. The individual perception of symbolic space and time causes the subject, speaking in the passage, to create a kind of inventive, existential semiosis, where fear, resistance, pain, and other variants of survival are combined with *the need for creation* and contain extratextual substrates. Images, in various senses, as "images of thought" or as a medium-tool in the diagnosis and therapy of memory (and texts), serve the role of reinforcing these "bent lines of writing." The process is difficult and painful, because "experience and recalling will never be fully synchronized as there is a chasm between them, in which the object of memory is changed, forgotten, distorted, reworked, and reconstructed" (Assmann 2013, 124).

Memory works in different places, and symbolic wounds or the writing of scars on the body can often be read in unforeseen circumstances, when memory seizes the opportunity to connect distant elements, including the unconscious ones. The text written on the body embodies knowledge and culture. In this perspective, L. Shriver's (2011)—the author of the famous novel *We Must Talk About Kevin*—statement that we experience culture with our whole bodies seems to be quite adequate. The textualization of space, by locating individual experience in it, is the construction of a subjective, semiotic territory that is

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recorded in experience and can be written down by means of the subjects' projections and phantasms.

Text-passage created as a personal *flâneuring* of real and imagined worlds is a project of self-analysis, which, taming the unknown, wild, and dark areas, inevitably, leads to an intense work of seeing and interpreting what has not been named or has been difficult to express so far. Moreover, it can lead to a re-reading of one's experience, revisioning, and re-semiotization of existential signs that have led to a specific shape (literary or artistic) of the text passage, to its heteroglossia, heterogeneity, and material polymorphism of expression. Text passage as a journey through possible worlds, non-places, *topoi*, etc., is a complex semiotic system, most often palimpsestic, with numerous accumulations of emotions, images, and meanings, generated by time. There is also another explication of the association with the palimpsest, e.g., in relation to the brain: "What is the brain, if not a natural and powerful palimpsest? *Eternal layers of ideas, images, and feelings* rest in your mind […]. *Each new layer seems to bury everything that came before it.* However, in fact, all content is preserved." Another fragment that we need to encircle as an area of interest states: "All these memories can, however, *regain strength* […]. They are not dead, but *dormant.* […] there are no such passions or diseases that would be able to erase *these imprints*."[14] The brain, mind, and body, as an existential alignment, act (happen) in a space that is not easily attainable. One can emphasize the unavailability of content and the covering of layers that require many trials of the memory work. Memory works as a medium that elicits, recovers, and exploits the meanings of what is *significant* for the subject, and deeply hidden or invisible. In this work of memory, however, something "resists until you can hear the noise of the covered distances."[15]

Distances are not only covered, but also interpolated, perforated by the intensity of the effort of recalling and the impossibility of uncovering larger wholes, especially since "the places, in which we live, are like presences of absence" (Certeau 2008, 109). The unearthing and retrieval, as well as the awakening of the content that lies "dormant" in deep memory, is semantically

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14 De Quincey, after Assmann 2013, 95.
15 M. Proust, after Assmann 2013, 107.

associated with metaphor and the act of digging, and is invoked in its relationship with the work of language. To the metaphors of reading and its illustrative developments, we also add the idea of the *reading* of psychological content, traces of archaic layers of the psyche, *as digging* in the ground and traversing the ruins (of the edifice) of identity. This is done to recover what will be revealed in the excavations, to tear off what is embedded in the palimpsest, and what can be taken from the garbage. Places, according to Certeau, are:

> […] fragmentary and cobbled stories, pasts, devoid of a possibility to be read by the other, accumulated times that can develop, but which appear here rather as potential stories, riddles to be solved, and finally symbolizations obtained from the pain or pleasure of the body. (Certeau 2008, 109.)

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Participating in the text, the body learns to recognize the languages of communication between the "received" meaning and the unspeakable desire or unspoken spell. The uttering of *the meaningful*, circulating in the body, reflected in the scraps of afterimages, and gathering itself in places of post-*understanding*, is an example of the intermittent, confused, and stray discourse mediated by the *unconscious*. Giving symptoms, allowing to track down the repressed, body-writing, and reading open up other types of reading spaces; reading tactics, applied in the places of *the other*, open up to unbiased meanings, either socially or canonically.

From these places emanate afterimages of the art of living, the normative power of these excerpts of existence, and their subjective elaboration radiates and invokes. The invisible past, in which they remain, will reveal itself in signs. "Place endorses and verifies the narrative" (Assmann 2013, 174), and can, additionally, symbolize the wound that lies in the palimpsest of impressions associated with it. "A traumatic place, referring to the past that does not want to pass, *does not become distant*, nor does it allow itself to be embraced by a positive interpretation." (Ibid., 175.) These are important excerpts from Assmann, which introduce the complexity of understanding the aura of places, sensual concreteness, and a metaphor for emotions. In our reflection on the text, the body, and space, we are also interested in places symbolically marking

the subject. What counts is: its diachrony, anthropological overwriting, habitual mediation, places interrupted by its existence, and "the strangeness of everydayness, escaping imaginary integration" (Certeau 2008, 95). These are, rather, non-places, heterotopias, where discursive orders are mixed, content is eclectic and *blurred*, and the text becomes an existential production of an expression of everydayness that is *significant* in art. Strangeness, anxiety, and tension—are to be in the act of trying to (completely) understand what was written from the body; it is necessary to get rid of what hurts, what destructively synchronizes identity with difficult everydayness.

Writing can take the form of "erasure" (T. Bernhard) or symbolic "vomiting" (J. Kristeva). Writing out from the body, in the mode of reducing excess and compensating for deficiencies, would be the use of acts and processes: "cutting, plucking, pulling out, removing, etc., or inserting, setting, sticking, covering, bonding, stitching, joining" (Certeau, 2008, 147).[16]

The cultural code will be the regulator of social tailoring to the normative formula. So, let us repeat the thesis that culture imprints the body with the text of the *law*, and the body is forced to express itself in a certain code. "There is no law that is not written on the body," says Certeau (2008, 140). This power over the body came into being during the development of social and cultural normativity. The body is "taken into possession" and marked, persecuted, and stigmatized by cultural patterns in exchange processes and other transactions. The body *is to be* the text of culture, it is written on and erased, marked, and eclipsed; in this aligned resistive communication of the body with culture, there are no winners, but there are victims.

It is the body—susceptible, orderly, and positioned in cultural settings—that will seek its identity in writing. This is because "normative discourse 'works' only when it is transformed into a *story*, a text connected with reality and speaking on its behalf, that is, into the law told by bodies and changed into

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16 Certeau interestingly develops this motif, showing that clothing is also the tool of power. Clothing is a susceptible intermediary of social control over bodies. In this interpretation, the entire sphere of experiencing everydayness (codes of use) can be classified as tools. "*Where and when can one find in the body something that is not written, reworked, nurtured, recognized by the instruments of social symbolism?*" (Certeau 2008, 148 et seq.)

history" (Certeau 2008, 149). Therefore, "living images of rules and customs" must somehow be written out of oneself, because culture with its normativity and social regulations efficiently and consistently imprints the body, forcing subjects to react according to the cultural order. Thus:

> […] the printed text refers to all that is reflected in our body, that imprints on it the Name or the Law, and finally that which permeates it with pain and/or delight, to make it a symbol of the Other, to transform it into what is *spoken, summoned, named*. (Certeau 2008, 141.)

The tools for writing down and imprinting the body as cultural and placed in an established order work in the body. So, what is writing in its union with the body? Certeau claims that it is the *building* in the space of a text that has power over the exterior, from which it was first isolated (cf. Certeau 2008, 135–136).

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Beauty and the Beast
The Dark Sides of Love

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Abstract

My paper departs from the classic French fairy tale authored by Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve about a handsome prince turned into a hideous beast by a magic spell that only love could break. The Beauty is a beautiful, young, albeit poor woman who eventually falls in love with the Beast and frees the prince from him. By pairing beauty with ugliness and attraction with repulsion, the fairytale allows introspection into the phenomenon of love, which is the natural and appropriate response to Beauty,

according to Plato. I am reading the story of the Beauty and the Beast together with Alexander Nehamas's Neoplatonist book *Only a Promise of Happiness. The Place of Beauty in a World of Art* trying, first, to establish who the Beauty is as the sovereign and who the Beast, and then inquire into the adventurous liaison of the couple. Finally, I argue that beauty not only promises happiness, as Stendhal's famous quote states, but also threatens its lovers with misery, frustration, and disorientation. Furthermore, in all love affairs, beauty alternates with ugliness, i.e., the one replaces the other, exactly as the Prince becomes the Beast only to turn again into a Prince, *ad infinitum*, thus representing desire and its psychic palimpsest.

Keywords: Alexander Nehamas, beauty, love, beast, Plato, Jacques Lacan.

Lepotica in zver. Temne strani ljubezni

Povzetek

Članek izhaja iz klasične francoske pravljice Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve o čednem princu, spremenjenem v ostudno zver zaradi čarovnega uroka, ki ga lahko prekine samo ljubezen. Lepotica je lepa, mlada, a revna ženska, ki se sčasoma zaljubi v Zver in princa odreši spod njene oblasti. S tem ko lepoto vzporeja z grdoto in privlačnost z odporom, pravljica omogoča vpogled v fenomen ljubezni, ki je po Platonu naraven in primeren odziv na Lepoto. Zgodbo o Lepotici in Zveri berem skupaj z neoplatonistično knjigo Alexandra Nehamasa *Only a Promise of Happiness. The Place of Beauty in a World of Art* (*Samo obljuba sreče. Mesto lepote v svetu umetnosti*) pri čemer skušam najprej ugotoviti, kdo je Lepotica kot suveren in kdo Zver, in nato raziskati pustolovsko razmerje ljubezenskega para. Nazadnje zagovarjam trditev, da lepota ni samo obljuba sreče, kakor pravi Stendhalov znameniti citat, temveč ljubimca tudi ogroža z bedo, frustracijo in dezorientacijo. Poleg tega se znotraj vseh ljubezenskih razmerij lepota izmenjuje z grdoto, se pravi, ena nadomešča drugo natanko tako, kakor tudi Princ postane Zver samo zato, da se spet spremeni v Princa, *ad infinitum*, s čimer ponazarja željo in njen psihični palimpsest.

Ključne besede: Alexander Nehamas, lepota, ljubezen, zver, Platon, Jacques Lacan.

"You see I am trying in all my stories to get the feeling of the actual life across—not just to depict life—or criticize it—but to actually make it alive. So that when you have read something by me you actually experience the thing. You can't do this without putting in the bad and the ugly as well as what is beautiful. Because if it is all beautiful, you can't believe in it. Things aren't that way. It is only by showing both sides—3 dimensions and, if possible 4 that you can write the way I want to."

Ernest Hemingway, from a letter to his father[1]

Beauty and the Beast is a classic French fairy tale, the original version of which was authored by the 18th-century writer Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve. It was made into a film in 1946 by Jean Cocteau, and subsequently became a Disney cartoon: first as an animated movie (1991) and recently as a musical (2017) (Image 1).

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Image 1:
Jean Cocteau: *La Belle et la Bête*, 1946 (film poster).

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The fairy tale is reputedly based on the ancient story of Eros and Psyche, which was written by Lucius Apuleius Madaurensis in the 2nd century AD (Image 2).[2] The French version involves a very handsome prince who is turned into a hideous Beast by a fairy because of his selfishness through a curse that can be broken only by love. Beauty is a beautiful, young woman, kind and pure of heart, but poor. After her father pledges her to the Beast in exchange for his own life, Beauty decides, for the sake of her family, to go and live with the Beast at his castle, honoring her father's agreement. Yet, while the Beast manages to win her friendship, she consistently refuses his marriage proposals. Only at the very last moment, when the Beast is about to die, does the Beauty shed a tear and confesses her love. Then, all of a sudden, the Beast becomes the handsome prince who had visited Beauty in her dreams and for whom she had been searching the castle in vain.

2 Cf. Bottigheimer 1989.

By pairing beauty with ugliness and attraction with repulsion, the fairy tale invites investigation into the phenomenon of love, which, according to Plato's *Symposium*, is the natural and appropriate response to beauty. As love cannot be imagined without seduction and the desire to conquer and possess the other, so beauty cannot be imagined without ugliness, that is, without a dark and deceptive aspect that is essential to it.

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Image 2:
Antonio Canova: *Eros and Psyche*, 1793 (Louvre, Paris).

Beauty falls in love with the Beast, and Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty, is often portrayed in company with a satyr, a strange and ugly beast, part human and part animal, who is in permanent erection (Images 3 and 4).[3] By reading *Beauty and the Beast* alongside Alexander Nehamas's Neoplatonist account of beauty in *Only a Promise of Happiness. The Place of Beauty in a*

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3 Umberto Eco devotes an entire chapter to the beauty of the monsters and beasts, which he examines in a historical way starting from the Greeks, passing from the Church fathers, and concluding with Karl Rosenkrantz. A beautiful representation of ugliness renders it enchanting. See Eco 2004, 131–153. On the other hand, in his treatise *On Ugliness*, Umberto Eco claims that ugliness ought not be seen as simply the opposite of beauty and is far more complex especially in the Greek world, where it has an independent and positive existence and a role parallel to that of beauty. See Eco 2007, 34–42.

World of Art, largely inspired by Edouard Manet's 1863 *Olympia* painting (Image 5)[4] as well as by Arthur Danto's seminal book *The Abuse of Beauty* (cf. Danto 2003), I shall attempt to establish who Beauty and the Beast are and then inquire in their adventurous liaison, in order to argue that beauty not only promises happiness as Stendhal famously states, but also threatens its enthusiasts with misery, frustration, and disorientation. In all love affairs, furthermore, beauty alternates with ugliness, the one replacing the other, exactly as the prince becomes the Beast only to turn again into a prince, *ad infinitum*, in this way representing desire and its psychic palimpsest.
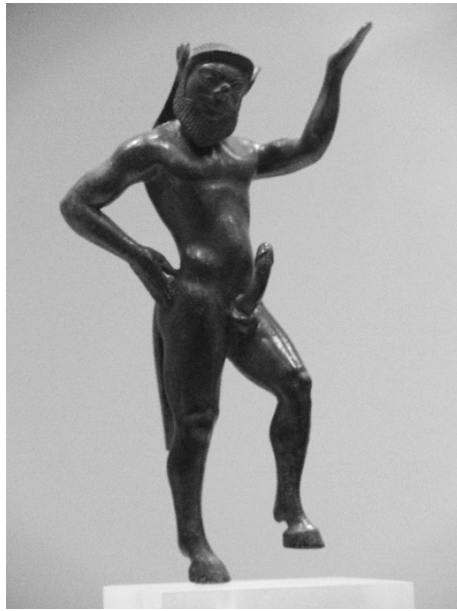
Image 3:
Statue of a Satyr, Silenus, from a Corinthian workshop, 6th century BC, discovered in Zeus's Temple at Dodoni (National Archaeological Museum, Athens).

4 One of the greatest merits of Alexander Nehamas as a philosopher is the fact that he takes time to seriously look at art and thus crosses "the boundary from philosophy to art history" avoiding both the philosophers' aversion for the untidiness of artistic actuality and the art historians' mistrust of philosophical reasoning. See Gaskell 2007.

Image 4:
Aphrodite, Pan and Eros, Hellenistic marble statue, c. 100 BC, discovered in Delos
(National Archaeological Museum, Athens).
The satyr attempts to remove Aphrodite's hand, with which she, out of modesty,
covers her nudity while with her other hand she threatens to hit him with her sandal.

Image 5:
Edouard Manet: *Olympia*, 1863, oil on canvas (Musée d'Orsay, Paris).

Beauty is lovely, kind, and morally good, but unfortunately misunderstood

It is no accident that Nehamas begins his reflection on beauty with a quote from Plotinus: all beautiful things produce "awe and a shock of delight, passionate longing, love and a shudder of rupture" (Nehamas 2007, 1). Nehamas embeds himself in the long tradition of Neoplatonism: he thinks of beauty both as sensuous and as intelligible,[5] and, in addition, as an ultimate value in life, a value that makes life worth living, according to Plato's *Symposium*. For beauty, according to both Plato and Plotinus, is not solely the good looks of the beloved, but ultimately converges with moral goodness and virtue. A life devoted to beauty gives birth to beauty, that is, beautiful thoughts and actions (cf. Nehamas 2007, 131). Plato claims in the *Symposium* that we start by desiring a body that we deem beautiful,[6] then ascend to the beauty of thought, the beauty of the soul, the beauty of institutions, laws and reason, until we reach the very idea of beauty itself. As beauty is inextricably linked with moral goodness, so love of the beautiful means desire for the good, according to Plato's contentious formulation (cf. Nehamas 2007, 127).

The desire to possess beauty is eros, which, according to Nehamas, does not mean to own beauty (ibid., 57), but to understand it and to interpret it for what is distinctly its own (ibid., 55 and 132). Every time we find someone beautiful, we are actively engaged in interpretation, i.e., we are trying to understand this person. This is because beauty is not easily discernible, especially at the highly intellectual steps of the Platonic ladder that are described by Diotima in the *Symposium*. Perceiving beauty requires critical intelligence (cf. Nehamas 2007, 16) and effort (ibid., 30), for it is revealed only partially in appearance (ibid., 70–71) as it is not a matter of perception alone (ibid., 99). According to Nehamas, beauty is a mystery (ibid., 78), that is always just beyond understanding (ibid., 76). Thus, the experience of beauty calls forth the movement of interpretation, which itself is always a work in progress (ibid., 105). There is always more to learn about the beautiful person in front of me that is valuable in ways I

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5 See Plotinus 1992, 64–73.
6 Cf. Plato 1989, 10a4–d7.

can only subsequently understand (ibid., 76). Love is precisely the desire to know and understand (ibid., 120) beauty, which, according to Stendhal, is the promise of happiness (ibid., 63).

Love as the desire to possess beauty is fundamentally misunderstood, because modern philosophy is deeply suspicious of both love and desire, and thus relegates both to the realm of passions that need to be controlled, if not entirely side-lined. Love and desire are deemed inappropriate (ibid., 2) much in contrast to the ancients, above all Plato who celebrated them as means to attain goodness, wisdom, and truth (ibid.). The 21st century relegates beauty to biology, psychology, fashion, advertising, marketing, and philosophical aesthetics (ibid., 3), the latter having become the theory of art rather than beauty (ibid., 13), as artistic value is increasingly independent of beauty and pleasure (ibid., 28). Whereas Plato claimed that beauty calls for love and the desire to possess it, Immanuel Kant argued that beauty produces a satisfaction without interest, pleasure without desire, and can be approached by disinterested contemplation alone (ibid., 4). For Kant, the model of beauty is the rose whereas for Plato it is the beautiful boy. After Kant, then, beauty came to be replaced by the aesthetic, "which, completely isolated as it is from all relationships with the rest of the world, promises nothing that is not already present in it, is incapable of deception, and provokes no desire" (Nehamas 2007, 10). Exiled to the domain of everyday experience (ibid., 13), beauty signifies nothing beyond a stereotypical value judgment. In the modern world, beauty is divorced from both goodness and wisdom, a development, which has ultimately led to its demise. This demise is then reflected in the words of the highly respected modernist artist, Barnett Newman, that the "impulse of modern art is to destroy beauty" (ibid., 3).

The Beast is dark, sexy, and lacking

Beauty is also deceptive, however, and has a dark side of its own (cf. Nehamas 2007, 9). We fundamentally do not know what beauty may ultimately bring to light, just as we do not know what we find beautiful, or why we love it as we do. The desires that beauty sparks and the pleasures it promises seem dubious, such that beauty may become "the seductive face of evil, a delightful appearance

masking the horrid skull beneath the skin" (ibid., 10), promising one thing and delivering another, "a mere surface and for that reason alone morally questionable" (ibid.). One may here quote, as an example, the Sirens, those nymph followers of Persephone, mentioned in *The Odyssey* who, according to the ancient Greek mythology, lured the sailors with their beauty and song, only to kill them once they approached near enough for their monstrous attack.[7] However, this is the only world there is, as far as we know, and beauty is part of it, namely it participates in "the everyday world of purpose and desire, history and contingency, subjectivity and incompleteness" (Nehamas 2007, 35). Beauty calls forth love and, as Søren Kierkegaard claimed,[8] love requires a leap of faith. Nevertheless, it is not guaranteed that I will put my faith in the right person; nothing ensures that my trust may not turn out to be a mistake (cf. Nehamas 2007, 58).

Nehamas reports that "love as Plato said is beauty's attendant and constant companion and has no place for ugliness" (ibid., 60). According to this view, I cannot love someone I find ugly. Ugliness appears when love fades (ibid., 52). Yet, we often witness love for that which might be considered ugly. Towards the end of the *Symposium*, Alcibiades, the most handsome man in Athens, recounts how he pursued Socrates in vain in his younger years, wanting the latter to become his lover, despite the fact that Socrates was thought to be one of the ugliest men in Athens. How can we explain Alcibiades's attraction to and love of Socrates? Does appearance no longer matter once we get to know people? Do we find people we love beautiful regardless of physical appearance (cf. Nehamas 2007, 59)? Or is it rather the case that "inner and outer beauty are distinct and is perfectly possible to love someone who is physically repulsive but psychologically or morally magnetic" (ibid.)? All the aforementioned are important factors, but the last of these is of course the case of Socrates in the *Symposium*, a satyr-like being on the outside, but a remarkable human on the inside. It may also be that there is a paradoxical love for the ugly (ibid., 61), for that which arouses dislike, disapproval, disgust, contempt, and hatred.[9] Love

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7 Cf. Homer 1999, 12, 39–54.

8 Cf. Kierkegaard 1992, 332.

9 See Ronald Moore's entry on ugliness in the *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics* and his discussion of the paradox of ugliness leading to a pleasant, engaging, and ennobling

aroused by unworthiness leads to desire that is excited by sexual repulsiveness (ibid., 61). Love for better or for worse may be provoked by anything and thus may benefit or harm the lover (ibid., 99 and 104). This is why the relation of beauty and morality is always in question (ibid., 127). This is also the reason why, if we think of beauty as a promise of happiness then we must be ready to live with inescapable uncertainty, without assurance of success, a life that may equally be happy or miserable (ibid., 130–131).

Marcel Proust maintains that "love is born, it lives only for so long as there is something left to conquer. We love only that which we do not totally possess." (Nehamas 2007, 63.) This is the reason why the measure of beauty does not lie in its past or in the present, but mostly "in its pledge for the future" (ibid., 72). Thus, beauty holds the promise of happiness, but is also "the emblem of what we lack" (ibid., 76). It is this lack that sparks our desire for beauty and directs our attention to everything that needs to be learned and acquired in order to possess it. Everything else recedes into the background and we are completely absorbed by the emergence of beauty precisely because of this constitutive lack that makes us promise to give to our loved what we do not have.[10] This constitutional lack explains the origins and provenance of love according to ancient Greek mythology. Love, according to the myth recounted in the *Symposium*, is the offspring of *Poros* and *Penia*, Resourcefulness and Destitution or Lack, respectively. The impoverished mother, *Penia*, who initiates the love affair with *Poros*, has by definition nothing to give to her lover, except her constitutional lack, her *aporia*, her query and puzzlement, and this is what she finally gives. To accept one's lack is, as Jacques Lacan emphasizes in his seminar on Plato's *Symposium*, the essence of what it means to love, and one cannot love except by becoming someone who does not have, positively espousing the lack[11] and, furthermore, promising to give to the other that which one does not have, his or her flesh.[12]

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aesthetic experience (cf. Moore 1998, 417–421, particularly 420).

10 Cf. Lacan's *Seminar V* (sessions of January 29, April 23, and May 7, 1958; cf. Lacan 1998) and *Seminar VIII* (1960–1961; cf. Lacan 1991).

11 For the Lacanian analysis of the *Symposium*, see *Seminar XII* (session of June 23, 1965). Cf. Lacan 2000.

12 Cf. Marion 2003, 239–242.

The couple. Who is finally Beauty and who the Beast?

In the fairy tale, Beauty is a woman and the Beast is a man, but these gender designations do not seem sufficient to characterize them, despite the fact that the love of beauty is the principal way, in which life generally perpetuates itself by sexually uniting men and women (cf. Nehamas 2007, 66). Thus, beauty is deeply ingrained in biology, although attraction is also a matter of psychological and other non-physical factors (ibid., 69). Despite the fact that attractiveness is close to beauty it would be wrong to identify the two. Likewise, it would be wrong to strictly identify Beauty with the woman and the Beast with the man (Image 6).

Image 6:
Henri Rousseau: *La Belle et la Bête*, 1908 (private collection).
The print depicting the Beauty and the Beast offers a different reading of the story that emphasizes the bestial aspect of the relationship. The couple consists of a woman and an animal.

The fact that the prince transforms to a beast and then the beast transforms back to a prince demonstrates that things may be more fluid than the strict binaries of Beast/Beauty and man/woman, and suggests rather that Beauty and Beast are tropes, representing symbolic orders that shape the idea and regulative content of the couple, whether this consists of a man and a woman, two men, two women, or any other couple combination we may think of. It

indicates, furthermore, that beauty and ugliness alternate in every relationship, as do the symbolic orders of masculinity and femininity, which are now equally available to both sexes. This latter alternation between masculine and feminine roles is also indicated in artistic representations of the fairy throughout history: whereas in *Beauty and the Beast* it is the woman who saves the dying man, in the antecedent story of Eros and Psyche it is the man who saves the dying woman, as Canova indicates in his sculptural complex. Furthermore, representations of satyrs situate the "Beast" not only in the position of the lover or pursuer, but also in that of the pursued, or the beloved, that is as the object of desire (Image 7). The alternation between femininity and masculinity echoes the alternation in the power dynamic: Beauty is the sovereign with a privileged access to power, and the formation of law as the romance with the Beast is entirely dependent on her will and desire, after the Beast has fallen in love with her, whereas the Beast is inferior in terms of culture, but superior in terms of natural prowess.[13]

As the story unfolds, we see power shifting from the one individual to the other, just as in most contemporary couples. This shift interests Jacques Derrida for, in his own words:

> [...] the social, the political, and in them the value or the exercise of sovereignty are not but disguised manifestations of the animal force or conflicts of pure force whose zoology delivers the truth, to be blunt, the bestiality or the barbarism or the inhuman cruelty. (My translation; Derrida 2008, 35.)[14]

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13 Cf. Derrida, 2008.

14 The French original of the first session (December 12, 2001) reads: "[...] le social, le politique, et en eux la valeur ou l'exercice de la souveraineté, ne sont que des manifestations déguisées de la force animale ou des conflits de force pure, dont la zoologie nous livre la vérité, c'est-à-dire au fond la bestialité ou la barbarie ou la cruauté inhumaine."

Image 7:
Barberini Faun, the drunken satyr, c. 3ʳᵈ or 2ⁿᵈ century BC, discovered in Italy in 1620
(Glyptothek, Munich).

The fairy tale of Beauty and the Beast illustrates the light and dark sides of a couple's love, beginning with the pursuit of beauty heeding to the animal forces, the bestiality, barbarism, and inhuman cruelty of power associated with beauty and love. Although Nehamas does signal the dangers of love, its dark side, he ultimately affirms the claim of his title and the notion that beauty is the promise of happiness is preponderant and occupies most of his rhapsodic, highly personal, passionate, and felicitous book.[15] While his Platonic notion of beauty impelled by love is quite compelling, it may be misleading and idealistic to the extent that it means assigning a prominent role to beauty to the expense of ugliness, discordance, irony, and the like, which make art and reality seem infinitely more complex, particularly nowadays (Image 8). Love does transform ugliness into beauty in the eyes of the lover, but ugliness also

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15 Cf. Benfey 2007 and Donougho 2009.

has an independent and positive role and may also be the object of attraction and love. It is useful to remember that neither beauty nor love are pure by signaling their anarchic, dark, ugly, and dangerous sides, as the fairy tale does, precisely in order to "get the feeling of the actual life across." Furthermore, to truly appreciate beauty and "believe in it," as Hemingway claims, one must equally consider and appraise its other sides, the ones that are ugly, dangerous, and dark.[16]

Image 8:
Yasumasa Morimura: *Portrait (Futago)*, 1988, photograph (San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco).

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16 It is one of the central points, which Friedrich Nietzsche attempted to make in *The Birth of Tragedy*, that the appreciation of the Apollonian aspects of Greek culture, beauty, harmony, restraint, and measure cannot be undertaken without appraising and taking under consideration its Dionysian aspects, ugliness, incongruity, dissonance, and excess. See Nietzsche 1967, 4.

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Imagination Now
In Conversation with Richard Kearney

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Transformation of our lives and the world we live in is imperative and inevitable, as well as unpredictable and unsettling. The pace of social and political changes we have faced in the last decade was unprecedented. The social media revolution, the migration crisis, and the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic have drastically altered our everyday existence. The new challenges call us to find new ways of navigating in the increasingly technological, globalized, and complex world. We need to rethink our place within it without succumbing to a nostalgic desire for the past. At this turning point (from Greek *krísis*), we have an excellent opportunity to imagine new modes of being for ourselves and our societies (Husserl 1970). Whether we seize the opportunity to become more thoughtful, caring, and just or become divided, isolated, and self-centered, depends largely on our imagination. However, today, the capacity of creative imagination is at risk: the crisis of the Humanities and the Liberal Arts seriously undermines creative imagination. Various media overflow us

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with a heavily polarized vision of the world. We are not encouraged to imagine a given problem, let alone envisage another perspective on a given subject.

The freedom of the creative imagination is also undermined by "big tech." Sophisticated algorithms make choices for us, such as: what to watch, when to watch it, or whose opinions to confront. The growing digitalization of our social and professional lives is diminishing our capacity for embodied imagination. Contact via the screen reduces our embodied experiences of otherness and the capacity for intersubjective understanding. The COVID-19 pandemic has only accelerated the growth of "excarnation," adding an ethical component to it (by social distancing, I am protecting others from infection) (see Kearney 2021). Dealing with the rapid changes discloses the fundamental importance of imagination for our being in the world. Far from being a frivolous luxury in a time of crisis, imagination is a phenomenon that today urgently "calls for thinking" (Heidegger 1971).

Imagination Now: A Richard Kearney Reader, a collection of essays edited by M. E. Littlejohn, is an invaluable invitation to think seriously about imagination. Powerfully displaying the centrality of imagination in Richard Kearney's thinking, it stimulates us to consider imagination as vital for the opening of the new horizons of our being in the world and for the creative rethinking of the traditional oppositions: between reason and body, faith and atheism, word and touch, philosophy and literature, high and popular culture, cosmopolitanism and nationalism, and more. Kearney takes us on a fascinating journey through imagination's various meanings and potentialities across an impressive array of disciplines: philosophy, literature, theology, visual arts, and politics. Inspiring us to awaken the creative potential within each of us: to live fully, beautifully, and sensitively, he draws us into conversation on what it means to imagine now.

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The imagining subject

Kearney places his reflections on imagination within the phenomenological and hermeneutic tradition. In his personal and philosophical path to the realm of the imaginary, the influences of Charles Taylor and Paul Ricoeur became grounds for his conviction on imagination's central role in human lives. They

inspired his project to challenge imagination's enduring undervaluation in the western philosophy. This unparalleled and ambitious endeavor requires extending Kant's reflections on the transcendental and creative power of the imagination while not losing sight of its negative potential (Kant 1998 and 2000).

Reflecting on contemporary art and philosophy, Kearney argues that postmodernist culture undermines the belief in the image as an authentic expression of the creative imagination of an individual subject. The deconstruction of anthropocentric humanism and its anthropology brings about the deconstruction of the notion of creative imagination. By challenging the legitimacy of narrative coherence and identity, radical postmodernism risks "abandoning the emancipatory practice of imagining alternative horizons of existence" (Kearney 2020m, 16). The pessimism and despair that the impossibility to think beyond the givenness of the situation could bring about is a threat to humanity itself. However, a nostalgic return to humanist ideals is not a solution. Bringing postmodern critique and humanist ideals into a genuine conversation requires us to envision a notion of imagination that incorporates postmodern thinking and discloses that the imagining subject is not self-sufficient and egocentric, but open to and oriented toward the other.

Advocating the narrative theorists' idea of the imagining subject, Kearney allows us to appreciate the narrative model of selfhood as a promising response to the need to overcome the essentialist notions of the person without doing away with subjectivity altogether. Upholding Ricoeur's narrative theory, he skillfully elucidates it with reference to the basic characteristics of narrativity—*mythos*, *mimesis*, *catharsis*, *phronesis*, *ethics* (Ricoeur 1984). *Mythos* (plot) designates a specifically human experiencing of time. We "humanize" circular cosmic time by transforming it into a plot of our lives that begin with birth and end with death, instead of seeing it as a mere passing of instants. This transformation, which makes each life "storied," conditions agency since human action "is always a dynamic synthesis of residual sedimentation and future-oriented goals" (Kearney 2020k, 57). Ricoeur's analysis of *mythos* also divulges that imagination is central to action by allowing us to transcend reality and envisage the future (see Ricoeur 1978). *Mimesis* reveals the importance of self-narration for self-understanding. Although there is a crucial "gap"

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between the life lived and the life recounted, narrating opens up perspectives and possibilities of being that were not available at the moment of experience. They can be explored in storytelling. Temporarily inhabiting the story world may amplify our sensibility and expand our being in the real world. *Phronesis* refers to the crucial ability to relate our universal values to specific situations disclosed in stories. The *cathartic* power of stories refers to their ability to disclose experiences of others, otherwise not available. By allowing us to experience the world through other perspectives and to suffer and love with others, narrative inspires more profound and extensive modes of sympathy and empathy. As many narrative theorists claim, here lies the basic ethical and political function of the narrative (cf. Nussbaum 1995 and Benhabib 1992). In this regard, Kearney openly states that "[i]f we possess narrative sympathy—enabling us to see the world from the other's point of view—we cannot kill. If we do not, we cannot love." (Kearney 2020k, 61.) Moreover, since the narrative mode of selfhood presupposes a self that perdures over time between birth and death, it entails moral responsibility. Situating his reflections on imagination within the horizon of the narrative theory of subjectivity, Kearney anticipates an in-depth re-conceptualization of the ethical-poetical function of the imagination and its practical implications.

The ethical imagination

Imagination's crucial relation to freedom and responsibility is explored through the intriguing scrutiny of various notions of the imagination in Greek and Judeo-Christian mythical traditions, Greek and Latin philosophy, Modern philosophy, Romantic poetry, and contemporary phenomenology and hermeneutics—*yetser*, *phantasia*, *eikasia*, *imaginatio*, *Einbildungskraft*, *fantasy*, *imagination* (cf. Sheppard 2014). While all traditions share an understanding of imagination as a specifically human ability to convert "absence into presence," it is the phenomenological-hermeneutical tradition that, by focusing on imagination's creative (and not merely representational) potential, discloses with greatest force that freedom requires the ability to imagine—to surpass the givenness of a situation and envision and anticipate "the world as if" (cf. Ward 2006). Imagination's relation to responsibility is disclosed in

the context of subjectivity and intersubjectivity. Kearney invites us to consider narrative imagination as a condition of subjectivity to the extent that it allows one to constitute oneself, despite one's fundamental mutability and openness, as "a perduring identity over time, capable of sustaining commitments and pledges to the other than self" (Kearney 2020m, 28). This self-constitution is not an autonomous act of an isolated self since it requires both creativity and receptivity to others' narratives. Imagination conditions intersubjectivity, insofar as its cathartic function allows us to imagine what it is to be someone else and see the world through their perspective. Imagining another as oneself and oneself as another is a crucial ethical ability.

Being in conversation with the book encourages further reflection on the possibility of rapprochement between ethics (understood as "responsibility of self toward other") and poetics (understood in the broad Aristotelian-existential sense as "creation") in light of the hermeneutic understanding of imagination. Ever since Aristotle, the sharp distinction between *poiesis* and *praxis* has marked the way we understand poetics (Aristotle 1996). In his uncompromising analysis, Kearney invites us to overcome this dichotomous understanding and affirms that poetics serves ethics, since the poetic text "invites us to enter into its otherness and recognize ourselves in it, putting ourselves into question, losing ourselves in order to find ourselves" (Kearney 2020h, 42). Drawing on Hannah Arendt's observations that, in order to recognize something as an ethical action, we need to tell the story about it, Kearney deems *poiesis* indispensable to communicate and cultivate *praxis* effectively in a community (see Arendt 1998 and Wiercinski 2020). He goes further than Arendt, arguing that *praxis* is not only disclosed in *poiesis*: it also finds there its end. We move from action to text, and back to action.

Modifying the Aristotelian understanding of *poiesis*, Kearney puts forward an original suggestion: that the end-products of *poiesis* are not "things" (texts, songs, buildings), but our actions in the world. Since *poiesis* and *praxis* share a fundamentally non-theoretical and non-speculative character, *poiesis* can inform our understanding of the relation between virtue and happiness or misfortune. Due to its potential to concretize our understanding of the abstract ideals of good and evil, just and unjust, suffering and happiness, *poiesis* is pivotal to our capacity to set our motives, goals, and actions accordingly. By

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acknowledging its end in the realm of action, *poiesis* can become a guarantor of responsibility. Being in dialogue with Kearney, we might ask whether such understanding of *poiesis* does not run the risk of limiting the possibility of free artistic creation. There remains more to be said in regard to Kant's worry that the freedom of imagination could be lost, if the aesthetic becomes too directly defined or constrained by the moral (see Guyer 1996). Kearney tackles this problematic in his considerations on the relation between universality and particularity in ethical judgments and concludes that the poetics of judgment comes very close to the hermeneutics of imagination. It might be beneficial to develop this topic further (cf. Arendt 1989 and Zerilli 2005).

Through Kearney's fascinating analysis of *Genesis*, we are led to consider the risks of imagination and its negative potential. In *Genesis*, the birth of imagination coincides with the birth of consciousness of good and evil, as well as temporal consciousness of past and future. Adam's and Eve's sin throws them into a historical time where "the spirit is no longer at one with itself" (Kearney 2020g, 69). The temporality of identity marks it as fundamentally torn—one no longer lives in the immediacy of a moment. But this is also what makes human beings fundamentally free to transcend themselves and become other than they are, to imagine and reach toward alternative scenarios of existence. Thus, "the freedom to choose between good and evil, and to construct one's story accordingly, is […] intimately related to the *yester* (imagination) as a passion for the possible: the human impulse to transcend what exists in the direction of what might exist" (Kearney 2020g, 72). This creative power is what makes human beings the rivals of God. *Genesis*, similarly to the myth of Prometheus, exposes that imagination bears within itself a threat of transgression. It is "a power that supplements the human experience of insufficiency and sets man up as an original creator in his own right" (Kearney 2020g, 78). In imagination, we create or destroy freely and unreservedly. For ancient philosophers, the feeling of unlimited power that imagination temporarily provides is the basis of human *hybris*. They deem imagination a mimetic capacity, re-productive rather than productive, an imitation that should ultimately remain subservient to reason. While opposing the ancient dismissal of imagination, Kearney recognizes that imagination prompts arrogance and dissociation from reality, when imagination becomes an end in itself. He agrees with Plato

that "imagination can never forget that its art is artifice, that its freedom is arbitrary, that its originality is a simulation, repetition, mimesis" (Kearney 2020g, 78). Conversing with Kearney on the negative power of the imagination, we might add that apart from its transgressive potential, it always runs the risk of becoming a destructive rather than constructive capacity. It can become a space of dwelling on our fears and anxieties, to the extent of limiting or paralyzing our actions and guiding us onto an undesired future. Anticipating Kearney's observation that imagination might lead us to project our fears onto other human beings by creating imaginary monsters, we might appreciate the complexity of the relationship between imagination and ethics and the need to ponder this challenging topic further.

The embodied imagination

Imagination has rarely been explored as an embodied capacity. Kearney's "carnal hermeneutics" is perhaps his most significant contribution to contemporary continental philosophy. While he had previously published an edited volume on carnal hermeneutics with Brian Treanor, placing the project in the context of his thinking of imagination widens its scope and extends its prospects (see Kearney and Treanor 2015). Kearney counsels us to stay in a productive conversation about the possibility of a "carnal turn" in hermeneutics and the significance of carnality for our being in the world. Developing the theme of carnal hermeneutics seems particularly urgent today, in what Kearney calls the "age of excarnation" (Kearney 2020b, 121). Delving on the potentialities of an incarnate philosophy, Kearney sees it as a genuine possibility to respond to today's crisis of embodiment. The importance of his project cannot be overemphasized, considering that philosophy, despite its many attempts, had great difficulties in restoring the body to its place alongside reason. After the Platonic divide between reason and the senses, the body has remained at the margins of the history of thought throughout the centuries. The disembodied subject became the center of inquiry. The revolutionary attempt to restore the body to philosophy arguably began with Husserl's phenomenological movement. Explicating the developments in the phenomenology of the body advanced by Husserl, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty,

Levinas, and Irigray, Kearney regrets nevertheless that the hermeneutic turn of the 1960s has again brought about "an embrace of language at the expense of body […] replacing body with book, feeling with reading, sensing with writing—as if the two could be separated" (Kearney 2020b, 96). The ontological hermeneutics of the disembodied *Dasein*, whose destiny was language, has led to the triumph of temporality (of understanding) over spatiality (of flesh), not only in Heidegger, but also in Gadamer and Ricoeur. While embracing Ricoeur's narrative theory of identity, Kearney does not shy away from disputing his "regrettable" division between a hermeneutics of texts and a phenomenology of affectivity and his privileging of the former. The project of carnal hermeneutics constitutes Kearney's proposal of a return journey, reconnecting hermeneutics and phenomenology, sensation and interpretation, through which we are led to appreciate that, as human beings, we are "*reading* the flesh, *making sense* of sensibility, and *discerning* bodies in lived passion and place […]" (Kearney 2020b, 101).

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We are invited to join Kearney in exploring carnal hermeneutics through a detailed account of an adjacent idea, that of diacritical hermeneutics. Diacritical hermeneutics comprises: a) a critical function in the double sense of deciphering "the conditions of possibility of meaning" as well as a critical exposure of injustice and power inequality in the name of liberation; b) a diacritical function of discernment between competing claims to meaning; c) a grammatological attention to inflections of linguistic marks, that is, a micro-reading between gaps and oppositions (this bears similarities to deconstruction); and d) a therapeutic function based on a diagnostic reading of the body and discernment between health and disease (Kearney 2020c, 90). These characteristics point to a fundamentally carnal aspect of diacritical hermeneutics understood as sensing the other. Drawing on Merleau-Ponty's notion of "diacritical perception," which stresses that meaning is never given as an isolated item, but as part of a complex and flowing interaction of elements, Kearney assimilates diacritical understanding to incarnate understanding (see Merleau-Ponty 2012). As incarnate, such understanding is applied—it is an understanding that "responds to a life of suffering and action" and "has an application to human embodiment as its original and ultimate end" (Kearney 2020c, 96).

We are encouraged to reflect on the fundamental question: how do we discern? In his ample elaboration of the notion of carnal hermeneutics, Kearney follows Aristotle and Husserl in arguing that central to our capacity for discernment is the sense of *touch*. Aristotle describes touch as a discriminating sense or medium for understanding, disputing the Greek hierarchy of the senses, whereby the highest allows for the most distance (thus the primacy of sight, *opto-centrism*, and the dismissal of touch as the lowest of senses—unmediated). Touch is the most universal yet complex of the senses. It constitutes the basis of our openness to the world—it is through touch that "we have 'contact' with external sensibles, and that we 'transmit' these with 'tact' to our inner understanding" (Kearney 2020b, 105). It also constitutes our fundamental exposure to things, since to touch is to be touched simultaneously (unlike the other senses, where I am not necessarily heard by what I hear or seen by what I see). Tactility "is the ability to experience and negotiate the passion of existence, understood etymologically as *pathos/paschein*—suffering, receiving or undergoing exposure to others who come to us as this or that. To touch and be touched simultaneously is to be connected with others in a way that opens us up." (Kearney 2020b, 104.) The essential openness and exposure of flesh through touch is also a source of experiences of vulnerability, insecurity, and fear. However, precisely those experiences make us pay special attention to the world and take nothing for granted. We experience risk and adventure through flesh and thus become more perceptive, intelligent, and "savvy." Re-conceptualizing our beliefs about the very core of what we understand by touch, Kearney affirms that "our deepest knowing is sensing and touching" (he points out that *sapientia* comes from *sapere*—to taste), and that wisdom "is about taste and tact" (Kearney 2020b, 100). Since all senses involve touch (receiving something external to us), someone sensible is someone sensitive—one who has "the touch." Conversely, bad taste and bad touch indicate a lack of sensibility. The distinction between the two is crucial—touch without sensibility, unilateral rather than receptive, is a perversion of touch.

Aristotelian considerations on touch are complemented by Husserl's analysis of the primacy of touch in chapter three of *Ideas II*. Husserl managed to challenge the primacy of sight over touch and unveil the centrality of touch

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as constituting us as both active and passive agents (drawing on the example of touching one's own body). However, his carnal phenomenology lacked carnal hermeneutics. Kearney proposes to fill this gap by analyzing flesh as a site of the most primordial experience of otherness—a way paved by Ricoeur in "Study Ten" of *Oneself as Another*. For Ricoeur, the experience of my flesh is the utmost guarantor of my experience. For this reason, touch gives us the greatest certainty that something exists as unquestionably as myself. It discloses the otherness of another to me.

Moreover, flesh also discloses my otherness to me—and allows me to see myself as a body among other bodies (as "another" in the eyes of the other). In this sense, "it is through the body that I realize that when I say, 'she thinks' I mean 'she says in her heart: I think'" (Kearney 2020b, 117). From this perspective, touch becomes the most crucial guarantor of intersubjectivity. Kearney's considerations on carnality and intersubjectivity are somewhat in line with Martha Nussbaum's reflections on imagination, particularly as developed in her more recent works in the context of embodied experiences of play (see Nussbaum 2016 and Winnicott 1991). In her writings on literature, education, and political theory, Nussbaum sustains that narrative imagination is vital to our capacity to acknowledge the unique subjectivity of another human being. In her later scholarship, she acknowledges the limits of narrative imagination in disclosing the otherness of another to me—and argues for the importance of supplementing such imagination with embodied experiences of otherness. However, in her account, she does not address the limits of intersubjective understanding. While touch is the most fundamental guarantor of intersubjectivity, Kearney's stress on the Aristotelian "gap" is a reminder that flesh is a medium between me and other that does not allow for fusion. By maintaining difference, flesh keeps open the task of transit between self and other, the task of interpretation. It discloses to me that "she thinks and feels in a way that I can never think or feel" (Kearney 2020b, 117). What is brought to the fore in Kearney's considerations on embodied imagination (touch) and narrative imagination, is that they do not prompt the fusion of subjects. In both, there is a crucial gap that "makes all the difference," insofar as the gap prevents the synthesis between consciousnesses and bodies, and thus preserves the basic individuality and uniqueness of subjects. "In touch,

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we are both touching and touched at the same time, but we do not for all that collapse into sameness. Difference is preserved." (Kearney 2020b, 102.) Flesh is, therefore, a medium, which allows for transfer, but prevents fusion. This central characteristic of flesh seems worth stressing in the context of the evolving ethics of vulnerability, which at times risks overlooking the fundamental necessity of keeping open the task of interpretation between self and other. Kearney's exceptional sensitivity to the potentialities and limits of flesh allows us to appreciate the need for a critical carnal hermeneutics.

Thinking with Kearney about the centrality of carnality for the human condition encourages further reflection on its role in our increasingly virtual and technological world. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the progressive digitalization was making us more alienated from the flesh in almost all dimensions of human life: in dating, politics (war), medicine, to give just a few examples. The digital world, in which we are separated from one another by our screens, allows us to have contact without "tact." It enables a unilateral, excarnate communication, whereby we can see others without being seen, heard, or scented—that is, without being exposed in our basic vulnerability. While this unilateral experience might give us a temporary sense of comfort, or even power, it cannot substitute the incarnate contact with another human being, in which we uncover and give a part of ourselves. Already Heidegger warned that "abolition of all distances brings no nearness," and indeed, today, many studies confirm that the increasing online interconnectedness does not prevent loneliness, but can increase it (Heidegger 1971, 165). Our human mode of being and communicating *is* incarnate. The alarming rates of depression and anxiety among social media users confirm that alienation from touch causes great suffering. The pandemic has dramatically accelerated this growing alienation. Real-life encounters become limited to the necessary minimum, and many of us need to inhabit the virtual world to a greater extent than we could ever have predicted. In many cases, social distancing and self-isolation have become a mark of responsibility.

This presents us with new challenges related to corporeality. Kearney's reflections on touch invite us to ask: can we avoid excarnation in the new, post-pandemic reality? Or perhaps, paradoxically, the pandemic has made us more aware of the importance of touch? While the book was published before

the pandemic and did not directly tackle the challenges that arose with it, it is a remarkably resounding reminder of the importance of the return to the body and into the tactile world. Kearney accentuates: "Full humanity requires the ability to sense and to be sensed in turn: the power to 'feel what wretches feel' (Shakespeare), or what artists, cooks, musicians, and lovers feel. We need to find our way in a tactile world again. We need to return from head to foot, from brain to fingertip, from iCloud to earth… So that soul becomes flesh, where it belongs." (Kearney 2020i, 23.)

How can we find a way back into the tactile world and our bodies? Kearney's carnal hermeneutics offers a fruitful perspective to ponder this question. Rethinking the theme of healing, Kearney sees in the "twin therapy" of storytelling and touch the possibility of responding to today's crisis of carnality. His insights into the topic of trauma, substantiated with an original and emphatic analysis of Joyce's *Ulysses*, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and Homer's *Odyssey*, lead us to appreciate the significance of the twin therapy for "working through" at the symbolic level what remains unattainable or intimidating at the level of lived experience.

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Kearney draws a distinction between two types of healing: the heroic-Hippocratic method, which only works when our interventions can manage pain and disease, and Chiron and Asclepios's healing through touch and song, through being with or near to the pain that cannot be cured, but can be healed. While the former is crucial and has come to define western medicine, it is the healing potential of compassionate being near the incurable pain that calls for our attention. The therapeutic role of narrative *catharsis* stems from myths' and stories' ability to express repressed feelings and events that could not be appropriately processed and registered. The cathartic character of storytelling is possible due to the "gap" that offers a broader perspective to view one's life. However, it is also dependent on the empathy, tact, and touch of the receiver of the story. Healing happens through the "subtle interplay of word and touch, narrativity and tactility, effect and affect" (Kearney 2020o, 134).

Having opened this exciting terrain, Kearney invites us to occupy it by discussing the relation between narrative catharsis and touch. While he stresses that the two are inseparable, the readers might still feel that the narrative is given more attention. However, from the therapeutic perspective,

it might be worth considering the role of embodied imagination developed through performing arts. Donald Winnicott's psychological research into the importance of play, developed by Nussbaum in the context of vulnerability, seems particularly helpful in disclosing the importance of performative arts for embodied therapy. When we are infants, play is fundamental to our identity formation. We first learn to experience otherness and vulnerability in a safe environment by playing. This way, they become a source of wonder rather than anxiety, and thus can be embraced rather than rejected. Art is a form of adult play. By engaging with art, adults sustain and develop their capacity for play after they have abandoned the realm of children's games. It allows us to experience and explore our shared vulnerability and embodiment in the imaginative space of "play." Performative arts, such as music or dance, seem crucial from the perspective of carnality and its ethical significance. Music is an art form that represents striving: desire, joy, effort, pain, and more. Unlike the arts based on images, which represent striving indirectly, music does so directly, through rhythm, accent, and dynamics (see Nussbaum 2001). Those forms of temporality and bodily movement have, in turn, a direct effect on the body of a listener, allowing him or her to explore the passions and the interplay between striving and constraint in the space of play. This incarnate aesthetic of music can also be a basis for solidarity. Singing with others, which includes great vulnerability to the extent that it requires blending one's breath (and, in this way, one's body) with someone else's, connects the singers in a truly incarnate encounter.

Similarly, dance constitutes an experience of shared vulnerability that invites the participants to transcend their individuality, and unite with other dancers through embodied exposure to others and the need to react to their movements and synchronize with them. Expanding access to artistic and other embodied activities could be an essential element in the therapy of carnality. Forms of artistic "play" that engage the body seem critical in restoring the "tact" in our contact. As such, they could be further explored in the context of Kearney's therapeutic approach. Other experiences of touch—such as direct contact with nature and animals or other forms of embodied practice—could also be highly therapeutic. This is not to say that they can substitute the narrative imagination. They should work in tandem. Dialoguing with Kearney

on the notion of "twin therapy" of storytelling and touch inspires us to be open to new ways of returning to ourselves and our bodies.

The imagination of God

Creative imagination is central to Kearney's thinking about God. His idea of anatheism entails a "returning to God after God" (Kearney 2020e, 161). It emerges from a crucial moment of a-theism—doubt—and constantly wrestles with it. The moment of "a-" is indispensable, because it strips us from cheap, comforting illusions and conditions the possibility of "opening oneself, once again, to the original and enduring promise of a sacred stranger […]" (Kearney 2020f, 159). Through his unique study, Kearney allows us to appreciate the indispensability of the dialectic between faith and the loss of faith, between theism and a-theism. Far from being mutually exclusive, a-theism thus becomes a crucial element of theism! Doubt becomes a precondition of faith. This negative capability of doubt, which, like *epoche* includes a suspension of one's received beliefs, becomes central to genuine faith.

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Nonetheless, Kearney is not proposing a negative theology but an onto-eschatology, situated "between the poles of negative theology and onto-theology" (Kearney 2020f, 158). From this perspective, God is, above all, a possibility. His existence is neither certain nor unimaginable. It is to be found in "a place where stories, songs, parables, and prophecies resound as human imaginations try to say the unsayable and think the unthinkable" (Kearney 2020f, 158). Thus, we participate in the mystery of divine existence: it is the task of our imagination to think God as possible or impossible. This unveils an idea of a vulnerable God, a God that is dependent on us to exist (in the words of Etty Hillesum). We can imagine the divine only from the place of our vulnerability. Kearney strikingly suggests that by recognizing our vulnerability, we become "empowered to respond to God's own primordial powerlessness and to make the potential Word flesh" (Kearney 2020f, 151). The idea of such a God excludes predestination—and, thus, it also unveils our radical responsibility for the world. Since we are free to act in it, we are responsible for what we make of it. This fascinating proposal could be perhaps deepened by feminist theology, in order to further explore new perspectives of thinking about such a "God-who-may-be."

The relationship between art and spirituality becomes central for Kearney's further meditation on anatheism. The "making" of the possible god, *theopoiesis*, happens above all through art. A divine mind is a mind that makes, a poietic mind (here, Kearney evokes the notion of "Christ as the Lord of Dance and Supreme Artist"). By creating, we participate in the divine power to the extent that "God co-depends on us so that the promissory word of Genesis may be realized in embodied figures of time and space, image and flesh, art and action" (Kearney 2020j, 200). Through his in-depth analysis of three examples of theopoetic art: Andrei Rublev's *Trinity*, Antonello da Messina's *Annunziata*, and Sheila Gallagher's *Pneuma Hostis*, Kearney illustrates how creations of artistic imagination (*poiesis*) often have greater potential to express the complexity of meaning than *theoria* (the conceptual systems of metaphysics and theology). Images are more potent than abstractions, because they are more concrete and related to our embodied experience. Works of art are "the first bridge between word and flesh" (Kearney 2020j, 213). For this reason, we need art to recover "God after God." However, it is not only high art, but everyday cultural practices that can disclose the sacred in the secular.

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To see the sacred in the secular, we need to return to the natural world of simple embodied life, of *sensus communis*, where we may confront one another face-to-face again. Such a return requires four reductions: the transcendental reduction of Husserl, the ontological reduction of Heidegger, the donological reduction of Marion, and finally—the eschatological (or microeschatological) reduction of Kearney. The latter entails a reconciliation of ethics with aesthetics, poetics with philosophy, and the sacred with the everyday. Kearney is convinced that the four reductions are necessary, because we need to break away from the everyday, from the lived experience, to learn to appreciate its meaning. Here is where the central place of philosophy is disclosed: drawing on Nussbaum's assertion that philosophy lets us "see things that have gone unnoticed in our daily lives," Kearney adds that it "gives us special pause to review things at a more considered remove than is afforded by our usual nights of the soul or exposures to estrangement" (Kearney 2020d, 197). The theory is inseparable from experience and enables us to experience more fully. We are led to grasp that we need to break away from the everyday to be able to return to the everyday. Those considerations

seem crucial in light of our growing passion for images at the expense of writing and abstract thinking. Separating images and art from theory limits our capacity to interpret the image. Our loss of the capacity to theorize changes not only the way we communicate (thus a suggestion that we are currently heading back to pictography), but also the very way our societies operate (see Dukaj 2019). Far from exalting philosophy, we are reminded of its inseparability from and its important place in the everyday.

Imagining the other

The theory is also crucial in our relationship with the other, with the *persona*. Kearney's phenomenology of the *persona* points to the significance of vulnerability in his eschatology. He considers *persona* as the eschatological aura of "possibility" that each person embodies and that "eludes but informs a person's actual presence here and now" (Kearney 2020p, 171). It is each person's condition of possibility, openness, and unpredictability. *Persona* entails that we can never "grasp" the other. By trying to do so, we disregard and objectify them. And yet, we seem to do just that on an everyday basis. Often, incapable of accepting our fundamental powerlessness to control the other, we project onto them phantasies of omnipotence. Kearney, similarly to Nussbaum, points to the incapability of accepting our vulnerability as a source of such phantasies. Like Martha Nussbaum and Gregory Vlastos, he notices the tendency to overlook the fundamental independence of the other—which reduces the other's unique singularity to a personification of an idea—in Plato's ideas of Eros and Republic. Even Husserl seems to fall short of genuinely appreciating this fundamental independence to the extent that he attempts to ground interpersonal relations in "an imaginative projection of one ego onto another" (Kearney 2020p, 175). However, the other always transcends my attempts to fully understand him/her or turn him/her into an alter ego. I can only grasp his/her trace (Lévinas's "*la trace d'autrui*"; see Lévinas 1974). Such an understanding mirrors Arendt's considerations on the "who" that constantly eludes us. Nonetheless, it is astonishing how often this fundamental independence of another is diminished. Kearney's phenomenology of the *persona* resonates powerfully against reductionist or deterministic accounts of

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otherness. He prompts us to understand that acknowledging the *persona* is a difficult task, of which we should constantly be reminding ourselves.

It is mainly through imagination that this task can be achieved. We are led to appreciate the peace-making potential of the imagination and the relevance of the hermeneutics of imagination for practical peace initiatives. Central for such hermeneutics is the exploration of the paradigm of hospitality between affirmation and suspicion. Reflecting on the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, Kearney follows Kant's analysis of the sublime terror (in which we experience freedom from nature), and suggests that watching the montages of terror gives us the possibility to face nature from a distance courageously. Such sublime experience of imagination is only possible, when we confront terror from an aesthetic distance, performing a particular negation in its face. We are drawn to imaginary monsters, because they offer the possibility to re-experience horror in the unreal world. In this context, works of art or philosophy offer more insightful ways to deal with terror than the media. They provide us with a greater "gap" from the events due to their style, language, and scope.

However, the sublime does not entail empathy. By re-experiencing horror in art or philosophy, we can continue to demonize the other. Kearney's hermeneutics of affirmation presents us with an ongoing task to imagine ourselves as others and empathize with them: "It is hard to be cruel once you permit yourself to enter the mind of your victim. Imagining what it is like to be someone other than oneself is at the core of our humanity. It is the essence of compassion, and it is the beginning of morality." (Kearney 2020l, 237). As Kearney leads us to understand, cruelty is, above all, a failure of imagination. Without negating imagination's violent potential (whereby we project our fears or anger onto another), empathic imagination can lead to transitions in the understanding of another. The Guestbook Project, a practical peace initiative founded by Kearney in 2009 that allows participants to confront their stories with those of their enemies or adversaries, is an impressive example of applied hermeneutics' role in transforming hostility into hospitality (see guestbookproject.org).

While embracing the need for openness and hospitality to the other, Kearney is careful not to follow Derrida's and Levinas's radicality on the matter. Contrary to Levinas's tendency to annihilate selfhood for the sake of the other,

Kearney stresses the centrality of narrative identity for his critical ethics of hospitality. Selfhood is a prerequisite of alterity. Complete fusion between subjects would erase the possibility of distinguishing between host and guest, and consequently, there would be no one home to welcome the newcomer in the first place. In the critical hermeneutic approach, on the other hand, "the other is neither too near nor too far to escape my attention" (Kearney 2020a, 266). Hospitality also entails the need to discern (legally as well as ethically) between guests and enemies (*hostis*). Such distinctions are to be found in what Kearney calls a diacritical hermeneutics of action—which includes critically informed judgments. Discernment is crucial for ethical relations, because "we need to compare, contrast, and adjudicate between different kinds of other if we are to properly care for others and for their good" (Kearney 2020a, 266). While we may argue that critical judgment is never the final ingredient of an ethical relation, it is important to stress its role in the face of some ethical tendencies that seem to negate its significance. Kearney's emphasis on the need to balance between affirmation and suspicion is an important reminder that *phronesis* requires both. What allows us to operate between them is poetry—due to its capacity to combine the powers of linguistic and carnal hermeneutics.

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Imagining a new Europe

The question of hospitality leads Kearney onto a more political ground, as he reflects on the possibility of imagining an alternative for the paradigm of national sovereignty. After examining the development of the concepts of nationalism and sovereignty until their merging in the French constitution of 1791, he concludes that today we need post-nationalist thinking, both in the context of Britain and the European Union. However, it is unreasonable to dismiss all kinds of nationalism—which would, indeed, be a repetition of the errors of reductionist rationalism or totalitarian imperialism. In some forms, nationalism can be a legitimate expression of an acceptable need for identification (unlike regressive nationalism). Kearney not only differentiates between various kinds of nationalism—insurgent, ethnic, civic, exclusive—, but also argues that we cannot do without the concept of nations completely. We should not try to revoke the desire for regional-national identity—which

could paradoxically result in a revival of extremist nationalism—, but search for more creative forms for its expression. What Kearney sees as necessary is a "regional model of cultural and political democracy within an overall federal framework" (Kearney 2020n, 289). In what seems to be an attempt to reconcile cosmopolitanism in the Kantian spirit with the Greek ideal of the polis, he proposes the model of a "Europe of regions"—a federal association (at transnational level) and regional self-government (at subnational level). Kearney argues that such federalist regionalism would find support in many philosophies of contemporary European politics (liberal democratic, social-democratic, Christian democratic), and answer the current legitimate need for multiple layers of identification and the disclosure of various complex identities. While the details of this idea may find supporters as well as critics, it is yet another example of Kearney's moderation and care not to succumb to sectarian thinking. His capacity to enter into imaginative dialogue between various viewpoints makes his voice reverberate strongly today, in the turbulent age of political polarization and conflicts. The extensive and personal interview with Kearney that concludes the volume elucidates and concretizes many of the previously made points, and invites us to continue the dialogue on imagination's role in philosophy and our lives.

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Far from being a purely theoretical notion, in Kearney's work, imagination becomes a practical response to the realities of our times. Considering the challenges brought to the forefront during the COVID-19 pandemic, and which arise in the new, post-pandemic reality, Kearney's project of overthrowing the prolonged undervaluation of imagination in philosophy and ethics appears particularly urgent. While many of the questions tackled by Kearney remain open and could be further developed by contributions from different fields, the main question is whether we are ready to embrace imagination and risk following its path. As Littlejohn, the editor of the book, asks: "Can we dare to reimagine that our world might be refigured, that there remain for us new possibilities yet untapped? Can you and I imagine now?" (Littlejohn 2020, xxii.)

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Poetic (Dis)closures
In Conversation with Małgorzata Hołda's Hermeneutic Reading of Literature

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What is more important in life than learning to listen to and speak with one another? Sharing life is the greatest gift (*Gabe*) of being invited into a conversation with the Other. *Con-versatio* becomes the ultimate task (*Aufgabe*): to be a responsible human being in the world with the Other (*Mitsein*). Heidegger prompts us to live responsibility (which is not the same as exercising responsibility) without paternalizing, moralizing, and imposing moral and social rules on ourselves and others.[1] We are called (*vocatio*) to be in the world responsibly. The primordial meaning of responsibility (*ursprüngliche Verantwortung*) guides us to the inviting call to answer somebody/something that addresses us (*Ver-Antwortung*). To respond, we must hear the voice of Being. It is the language as the house of Being (*das Haus des Seins*) that speaks

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1 Cf. Heidegger 1977b, 287. The metaphoricity of poetry calls for particular attention to the path of thinking (cf. Heidegger, "The Thinker as Poet," in: Heidegger 1971, 1–14).

(*die Sprache spricht*).[2] Human life is a permanent exercise in attuning oneself to this voice. To recognize that understanding is the way of being: a human being in the world is, as Ricoeur would say, a *via longa* of the discernment that we are historical, lingual, finite, and temporal human beings in the productive tension between αἰὼν, χρόνος, and καιρός.[3] Living this tension helps us grasp the indispensability of being attuned to the present moment, which is congenially elaborated by St. Paul, Kierkegaard, and Heidegger as an instant, *Augenblick*: neither a vague notion of this age (αὐτῷ οὔτε ἐν τούτῳ τῷ αἰῶνι) nor the age to come (οὔτε ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι [αἰῶνι], Mt 12: 32).[4] We recognize that we dwell in the lingual space, and are called to care (*cura*, *Sorge*) for this dwelling in the concentration of attention.[5] Heidegger privileges thinkers and poets (*die Denkenden und die Dichtenden*) in Being's self-revealing and self-manifesting.[6] With this privilege comes an immense responsibility to be constantly vigilant, attentive, and alert to the revelatory power of Being. It is precisely the attentiveness of thinkers and poets which brings Being's self-disclosure to shine (φαινέσθαι).[7] As the witnesses to a powerful interplay of

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2 "It is language which speaks, not the human being." (Heidegger 1997, 161.) In "Letter on Humanism," Heidegger proclaims language as the *house of Being*, and calls a human being "the shepherd of Being," responsible for all-that-exists (cf. Heidegger 1967, 162, 172). See also, e.g., Vattimo 2019, 36–37.

3 "The Greeks, who had a name for every concept, imagined three different deities to denote time: kronos is the time that passes, the time that measures daily activities and the phases of life; aion is infinite time, eternity, while kairos is the right, opportune time, suitable for carrying out an action or achieving a goal: it is the time that takes the form of an opportunity that, if not taken, is lost forever." (Bordoni 2019, 110.) See also Wierciński 2018, 52–62.

4 Cf. McNeill 1999. See also Ward 2016.

5 Cf. Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," in: Heidegger 1971, 143–159, especially 144.

6 The truth of Being is the self-concealing/self-revealing Event, in which beings are disclosed. Cf. Hodge 2015 (especially chapter: "Heidegger's Later Philosophy," 15–27).

7 This hermeneutic insight is based on Heidegger's understanding of the formal meaning of phenomenology as letting "that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself" (Heidegger 1962, 58). Cf.: "Gods are dangerous when they manifest themselves clearly" (χαλεποὶ δὲ θεοὶ φαίνεσθαι ἐναργεῖς, Iliad 20.131). See Henrichs 2013 (especially chapter: "What is a Greek God?," 19–40). Gadamer views ἀλήθεια as the *event* of revelation: "In einem ursprünglicheren Sinne 'geschieht' Unverborgenheit, und dieses Geschehen ist etwas, was überhaupt

ἀλήθεια, of concealment and unconcealment (*Verbergung/Entbergung*), they bring the revelation of Being into language and preserve it in language.[8]

Witnessing to Being's self-disclosure is an indefatigable and delightful, but also frightening and worrisome (*fascinosum et tremendum*) exercise of the imagination. In the public realm, the free play of imagination finds its concretization in a conversation. A hermeneutician is particularly captivated by the work of art and the creative productivity of such an engagement. The imaginative process concerns questioning and facing the matters worthy of being addressed (*fragwürdig*).[9] It is the ability to explore productive questions through a human encounter and, thus, promote a culture of questioning.[10] Gadamer problematizes the question regarding the productive scholar and the production of something new. For him, "it is imagination [*Phantasie*] that is the decisive function of the scholar. Imagination here naturally has a hermeneutic function and serves the sense for what is questionable." (Gadamer 2008, 12.)

The question to be addressed in this conversation concerns "the decisive function of the scholar." Is Małgorzata Hołda a scholar who, with her dignity (*Würde*) and ingenuity, can identify, recognize, and appreciate that which is primarily questionable (*das ursprünglich Fragwürdige*)? Is she a thinker and a poet (*Denker und Dichter*) who can responsibly care for Being (*Wächter der Behausung des Seins*)?[11] Can she offer us anything new? Is imagination

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erst möglich macht, daß Seiendes unverborgen ist und richtig erkannt wird. Die Verborgenheit, die solcher ursprünglichen Unverborgenheit entspricht, ist nicht Irrtum, sondern gehört ursprünglich zum Sein selbst." (Gadamer 1987a, 259.)

8 Gadamer maintains that language happens in the *in-between* of concealment and unconcealment (*im Zueinandergehören von Verbergung und Entbergung*). For Gadamer, "language is not just one of man's possessions in the world; rather, on it depends the fact that man has a *world* at all. […] Language has no independent life apart from the world that comes to language within it." (Gadamer 2000, 443.) Cf. Brasser 1997; Boeder 1997.

9 For Heidegger, questioning is not the interrogation in a general sense, but an ability to think between what is questionable (*das Fragliche*) and what is worthy of being questioned (*das Fragwürdige*). See Heidegger 1966, 44–46.

10 Cf. Weber and Wolf 2016, 74–82.

11 "Die Sprache ist das Haus des Seins. In ihrer Behausung wohnt der Mensch. Die Denkenden und Dichtenden sind die Wächter dieser Behausung. Ihr Wachen ist das Vollbringen der Offenbarkeit des Seins, insofern sie diese durch ihr Sagen zur Sprache bringen und in der Sprache aufbewahren. […] Das Denken handelt, indem es denkt.

(*Phantasie*) her way of being a scholar who finds fulfillment in being *l'homme capable comme agissant et souffrant*?[12]

Małgorzata Hołda holds a Ph.D. in British literature from Nicolaus Copernicus University (2006). In her doctoral thesis, *Between Liberal Humanism and Postmodernist Fun: The Fiction of Malcolm Bradbury*, she positions Bradbury's fiction between the liberal humanist's and postmodernist's approach to literary art. Her reading of Bradbury's fiction allows her to unearth aspects that can be seen as evocative of postmodern writing: discontinuity, disruption of language, incongruity, plurality, and unfixed subjectivity. Bradbury's novel way of understanding the writer's genuine right not just to present and represent but celebrate life and entertain brings Dr. Hołda to a philosophically profound inquiry into the (in)comprehensibility of self-understanding's transparency as thematized in Ricoeur's work on narrative identity.[13] Human life can prove intelligible once the story of the life in question has been told. It is the narrative of one's life that constructs one's identity. Human responsiveness to others causes the narrative of one's life to become a coherent unity.[14]

510   Małgorzata Hołda's dissertation in Philosophy at the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, *Paul Ricoeur's Concept of Subjectivity and the Postmodern Death of the Subject*,[15] clearly demonstrates that she is ready to face an array of remarkably complex challenges and offer valuable insights on the hermeneutics of the self. Her research into the postmodern philosophy of Jean Baudrillard, Jean Francois Lyotard, Jacques Derrida, Fredric Jameson, and especially Michel Foucault's "technologies of the self" discloses the vicissitudes of the postmodern construction of the self. The efficacy of Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics in recuperating the human "self" in the age of the

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Dieses Handeln ist vermutlich das einfachste und zugleich das höchste, weil es den Bezug des Seins zum Menschen angeht. Alles Wirken aber beruht im Sein und geht auf das Seiende aus. Das Denken dagegen läßt sich vom Sein in den Anspruch nehmen, um die Wahrheit des Seins zu sagen. Das Denken vollbringt dieses Lassen. Denken ist l'engagement par l'Être pour l'Être." (Heidegger 1967, 313.)

12 Cf. Wierciński 2013, 18–33.

13 Cf. Hołda 2016, 225–247.

14 For an explication of Ricoeur's notion of narrative identity as a coherent unity, see Hołda 2017, 71–88.

15 Cf. Hołda 2018.

"death of the subject," particularly the dialectics of *idem* and *ipse* identity, allows for the identification of the self as it changes over a span of time.[16] Ricoeur upholds human subjectivity by deploying an extensive theory of interpretation that relies upon the analysis of discourse, metaphor, and symbol. Such an art of interpretation speaks for a clear belonging together (*Zusammengehörigkeit*) of theory and practice.[17]

In her other published work, Hołda addresses an impressive number of topics pertaining to the relationship between contemporary philosophy and literary theory. She contributes substantially to Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia, Ricoeur's hermeneutics of the self, the polyphony of human speech, the dialectic of question and answer, and language's essential dialogic contextuality. Interrogating the topic of narrative identity, Hołda extends the scope of her research on the relevance of narrative in the formation of selfhood and the role of narrative in the understanding of human existence by drawing on a broad spectrum of theoretical standpoints, which indicate the resurgence of narrative and narrativization in literary studies, contemporary philosophy, and historiography: Linda Hutcheon, Jean François Lyotard, Alasdair MacIntyre, and Hayden White.[18]

In the sequence of articles engaging the fictional works of Malcolm Bradbury, David Lodge, Kazuo Ishiguro, Rose Tremain, Graham Swift, Angela

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16 Ricoeur develops his dialectic of *idem* and *ipse* identity that accounts for both the changeability and sameness of the self in time. Cf. Ricoeur 1991a, 425–438; 1991b, 73–81. See also, e.g., Hołda 218, 122–124.

17 Gadamer developed his hermeneutics as practical philosophy through the philosophical practice of interpretation. Initially, it was the interpretation of texts, and subsequently, the totality of human experience. To understand means to interpret: "Heidegger's temporal analytics of Dasein has, I think, shown convincingly that understanding is not just one of the various possible behaviors of the subject but the mode of being of Dasein itself. It is in this sense that the term 'hermeneutics' has been used here. It denotes the basic being-in-motion of Dasein that constitutes its finitude and historicity, and hence embraces the whole of its experience of the world. Not caprice, or even an elaboration of a single aspect, but the nature of the thing itself makes the movement of understanding comprehensive and universal." (Gadamer 2000, xxvii.)

18 Cf. Hołda 2006b, 89–100; 2019, 6–26; 2016a, 225–247; 2017c, 37–49; 2010, 123–130; 2005b, 61–71.

Carter, Beryl Bainbridge, and Ian McEwan,[19] Hołda discusses a host of topics featuring in British postmodern fiction. She enriches her already substantial interrogation of human subjectivity by exploring how postmodern writers evoke socially constituted selfhood and pursue the culturally determined models of femininity and masculinity. Discussing the intricacies of the representations of gender in postmodern fiction, she extensively draws on the critical feminist perspectives of Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, Judith Butler, and Rosi Braidotti. These articles also address the question of the violation of ethical values and the transgression of humanity pervasive in the postmodern culture. Hołda skillfully examines not only the versatility of themes but also the form of postmodern fiction and, more specifically, the elements of self-reflexivity, metafiction, and pastiche.[20]

Researching various understandings of *mimesis* in postmodernity, she focuses on the ways in which postmodern writers use fabulation, surrealism, and expressionism, acknowledging, at the same time, the impact of modern fiction's experiment on the development of the artistic forms of expression in postmodern fiction.[21] Exploring the themes of temporality, desire, mourning, and epiphany in her analyses of the modern works of Woolf, Eliot, Joyce, and Kipling, she touches upon the fundamental question of the rejection or continuity of the modern in the (post)modern.[22] Tracing the roots of the postmodern destabilization of the referential function of language in the classic works of modernism, she advocates for *the hermeneutics of continuity* rather than the *hermeneutics of rupture*.[23] Speaking of continuation and rapture, it is essential not to be mistaken by the simple opposition of the notion of continuation and rapture, but to think change and permanence in time hermeneutically.[24] Here,

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19 Cf. Hołda 2007, 143–148; 2006a, 135–143.
20 Cf. Hołda 2015, 41–52; 2008a, 128–138; 2005a, 125–133.
21 Cf. Hołda 2008b, 39–48.
22 Cf. Hołda 2016c, 157–168.
23 In the theological debate, Benedict XVI calls for a "hermeneutics of continuity" rather than a "hermeneutics of rupture." Cf. Millare 2020.
24 For Ricoeur, the self is mediated by the dialectic of analysis and reflection (explanation and understanding). The other dialectic is the dialectic between *ipse* and *idem* as two forms of identity corresponding to a different permanence/change in time. "The dialectic of the same and the other crowns the first two dialectics." (Ricoeur 1992, 18.)

further deepening of the Heideggerian destruction (*Destruktion*, *Zerstörung*, *Abbau*) and the Derridean deconstruction is instrumental.[25]

Hołda's double allegiance to literature and philosophy and her intense attunement to their interweaving paths transpire in her apposite exploration of the topics that profoundly permeate literary and philosophical discourse alike: being-in-the-word, the unique unrepeatability of the self, and the situatedness of human experience. Her examination of the dialectic of familiarity and strangeness[26] and her insights into the hermeneutic ethics of forgiveness exemplify her creative contribution to the hermeneutics of the self and the ontological understanding of our being-in-the-world, which is always being-with. Situating her reflection in the horizon of Heidegger's philosophy of facticity, she probes the understanding of human existence as being-toward-death (*Sein zum Tode*) and the complex nature of mourning.[27] Following her commitment to delve deeply into Heidegger's ontological hermeneutics and Ricoeur's phenomenological hermeneutics, she is also interested in the less known thinkers, such as the late Pamela Sue Anderson, an excellent reader of Ricoeur through Kant.[28] Brooding on the legacy of Ricoeur's hermeneutics of the capable subject (*l'homme capable*) in Anderson, she elaborates on her inimitable way of theorizing feminine capability.

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The main title of Małgorzata Hołda's new book, *On Beauty and Being: Hans-Georg Gadamer's and Virginia Woolf's Hermeneutics of the Beautiful* (Hołda 2021), indicates that the author attempts to think Beauty and Being. The hermeneutics of the beautiful will be discussed with reference to Hans-Georg Gadamer and Virginia Woolf. *On Beauty and Being* is envisioned as a song of praise, a hymn on τὸ καλὸν and τα οὐσία. What happens then when

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25 For Heidegger, the task of philosophy is the destruction of the history of metaphysics: "We understand this task as one in which by taking the question of Being as our clue, we are to destroy the traditional content of ancient ontology until we arrive at those primordial experiences in which we achieved our first ways of determining the nature of Being—the ways which have guided us ever since." (Heidegger 1962, 44.) Heidegger uses various terms to *describe destruction, dismantling, unbuilding* (*Destruktion, Zerstörung*), *and deconstruction* (*Abbau*). Cf. Heidegger 1956, 73.

26 Cf. Hołda 2016b, 13–28.

27 Cf. Hołda 2017b, 151–166.

28 Cf. Hołda 2020, 7–24.

the hymn on τὸ καλὸν is sung? What could this enchantment possibly mean? Plato gives us a fabulous hint in *Symposium*:

αὐτὸ τὸ καλὸν ἰδεῖν εἰλικρινές, καθαρόν, ἄμεικτον, ἀλλὰ μὴ ἀνάπλεων σαρκῶν τεἀνθρωπίνων καὶ χρωμάτων καὶ ἄλλης πολλῆςφλυαρίας θνητῆς, ἀλλ᾽αὐτὸ τὸ θεῖον καλὸνδύναιτο μονοειδὲς κατιδεῖν;

But tell me, what would happen if one of you had the fortune to look upon essential Beauty entire, pure, and unalloyed; not infected with the flesh and color of humanity, and ever so much more of mortal trash? What if he could behold the divine Beauty itself, in its unique form? (*Symposium* 211e; Plato 1991, 207.)

The Platonic Beauty, in its ethical and transcendent dimension, is never totally separated from the beautiful figures like Helen or Aphrodite or beautiful paintings of ὅ παῖς καλός, an inscription frequently found on Attic vases and graffiti, mainly during the Classical period from 550 to 450 BC. This "looking upon" and "behold the divine beauty itself" are the source of happiness and sorrow since we are not yet there to enjoy it fully. We are on the way (*Unterwegssein*) to Beauty, "infected with the flesh and color of humanity." The experience of Beauty can be encountered in the disorder of reality, as Gadamer reminds us, "with all its imperfections, evils, errors, extremes, and fateful confusions" (Gadamer 1987b, 15). Beauty has its clear ontological purpose: it bridges the chasm between the ideal and the real.

Philosophical reflection on Being, revolutionized by Heidegger's critiques of the forgetfulness or oblivion of Being (*Seinsvergessenheit*), centers around the distinction between Being (*das Sein*) and a being (*das Seiende*). This is apparently the primary source of the forgetfulness of Being, the forgetfulness of the ontological difference (*ontologische Differenz*).[29] The translation of the Greek ὕπαρξις as *existentia* and οὐσία as *essentia*, while reserving ὑπόστασις for *subsistentia* has created substantial tension in understanding Being (ὕπαρξις

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29 Cf. Hee-Cheon 2002.

versus οὐσία) in its being Being (*das Sein in seinem Seiendsein*).[30] Since Dasein is always in relation to Being, it understands itself explicitly in its being-there of Being. As Heidegger clarifies: "Man remains referred to Being, and he is only this. This 'only' does not mean a limitation but rather an excess. A belonging to Being prevails within man, a belonging which listens to Being because it is appropriated to Being."[31] We distinctly experience here the longing for the primordial belonging together in this relationship. And one of the constitutive elements of this bond is Dasein's listening attunement to Being.[32]

It might be an interesting question to ask why *On Beauty and Being* rather than *On Being and Beauty*, or simply *On Being*, or *On Beauty*. It could be a matter of *ars poetica*, a hermeneutic ear, or a hermeneutic eye. But it could also be a matter of metaphysics when we think of an axiom: "*Ens, verum, bonum et pulchrum convertuntur in unum.*" (Thomas Aquinas 1953, 1.1.)

Hołda's *Habilitationschrift* reveals that the hermeneutic reading of literature engages deeper and more versatile insights into what we commonly understand as literary and philosophical texts. Treating them as pertinently influencing one another, she sets herself with a task to trace their intersecting pathways, focusing on Gadamer's philosophical thought and Woolf's fictional creations. Indicating the limitless possibilities, which arise from the deployment of such a perspective, her work brings to the fore the inexhaustibility of understanding and the richness of the hermeneutic approach to philosophizing as well as to conceiving and interpreting literary texts, and, thus, overarching, and welcoming that which is marginal and underappreciated. Rather than viewing Woolf's fiction as a *belles lettres* stage for the dramatization of Gadamer's philosophical ideas, by situating her insights on philosophical and literary works in a singular work of criticism, Hołda focuses on the two authors' common idiom and the centrality of the hermeneutic thought, in which their discourses partake. A hermeneutic reading of literature provides a very close examination of the subject whose vulnerability is a constitutive trait of consciousness and who is bound to and blessed by the bodily experience.

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30 Cf. Davis, Kendall, and O'Collins 2004 (especially on οὐσία and ὑπόστασις in the Cappadocian Fathers).

31 Heidegger, "The Principle of Identity," in: Donkel 2001, 19.

32 Cf. Aguilar Rivero 2004. See also Contreras 2013, 63–65.

Placing side by side those two apparently separate strands of writing, she leads us on a pathway that resists the instant and surface associations with what each of the two modes of thinking purports to offer. And thus, questioning the oft-claimed distinctions, she successfully unsettles the preconceived ideas of what literature and philosophy encompass, inspiring us to approach them in a more open and challenging fashion. Hermeneutic reading of literature is not about deciphering philosophical aspects or ideas in literary texts. It is not a deliberation on philosophy in literature, philosophy of literature, or philosophy and literature, but a response to what I call "the imperative to think the incommensurable."[33] I love the poetry of Fernando Pessoa, but unfortunately, when he says about himself that he is not a philosopher with literary interest but "a poet interested in philosophy" (Pessoa & Co. 1988, 9), our ways part. What makes us thinkers is that we think Being and Beauty in their primordiality and share our thinking with others. The *modi* of thinking and the *modi* of expression are the subjects in themselves.

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Hermeneutic reading of literature follows the logic of conversation with the text in its *Wirkungsgeschichte*. According to Gadamer, the conversation partners are being led by the conversation rather than leading it.[34] There is the matter (*die Sache*), which finds its way of articulation in "convincing illumination of truth and harmony, which compels the admission: 'This is true.'" (Gadamer 1987b, 15.) The hermeneutic conversation as the mode of being in the world and the way we experience the beautiful in art becomes the way we approach the work of art in its enticing Beauty, "which shines forth most clearly and draws us to itself, as the very visibility of the ideal" (ibid., 15). What is so essential in this hermeneutic interpretation of art is that the

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33 "For understanding the relationship between philosophy and theology, the two need to be perceived as equal yet different. Looking at the much-troubled relationship between those two disciplines, at a long history of despicable falls, but also strange and successful recoveries, we can hope for hermeneutic insight in the age of the return of the religious. Hermeneutics calls us not only to negotiate the space between the disciplines but also to re-think the reasonability of translating the unique discourse of one discipline into the language of the other. It shows us that the confinement of language to one theoretical idiom can stifle the quest for that which cannot be fully articulated." (Wierciński 2010, 317.)

34 Cf. Gadamer 2000, 383. See also Gadamer 2001, 56.

work of art captivates us, takes us into its own possession, and presents us with the unapologetic ethical appeal to radical personal responsibility, which is powerfully expressed by Rilke's verse from the poem "Archaic Torso of Apollo": "You must change your life. *Du mußt Dein Leben ändern.*" (Rilke 2022.)[35] There is nobody who can give an answer for us (*re-spondeo*). Therefore, any interpretation of an artwork happens in this horizon of radical responsibility. It underscores the hermeneutic claim to universality (*Universalitätsanspruch der Hermeneutik*), which expresses that *anything* can be understood, and: "Being that can be understood is language. *Das Sein, das verstanden werden kann, ist Sprache.*" (Gadamer 2000, 470.)[36]

Philosophy and Literature, Philosophy as Literature, Literature in Philosophy, Literature as Philosophy—all those areas of academic research testify to the multifaceted approaches to the intimate but also problematic liaisons between literature and philosophy. Instead of simply deciphering philosophical themes and ideas in literature, Hołda's book leads us to acknowledge the incommensurability of Philosophy and Literature. This division is not to be overcome but thought through, faced, and lived.

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Sensitizing her readers not to follow the artificially constructed and clear-cut differentiation between philosophy and literature, Hołda's book potently demonstrates that they belong together while participating in the Beauty of the unpredictability of language as an *event*. Her close readings of Woolf's three major novels: *To the Lighthouse*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, and *The Waves*, draw our attention to the novelist's firm belief in the power of language to enact Being. At the same time, she argues that, being intensely aware of language's potential to perform, Woolf not only knows the ways in which the flow of discourse gets deconstructed by the unavoidable gaps and fissures, but makes those

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35 See also Gadamer, "Aesthetics and Hermeneutics," in: Gadamer 2007, 131.

36 "What is essential is the speculative unity of language, which expresses the difference between the Being of a being and its self-manifestation. The ontological significance concerns not the verbal expression of a being, but the self-presencing of Being in a being, which cannot happen without a concretization in the word itself. The word is not just a mere instrumental tool to allow Being to show itself in beings. The word is a word by participation in the revelation of Being. When something is said, when Being discloses itself in a being, the word becomes part of the truth of Being, αλήθεια, and thus disappears (*aufgeht*) into what is said." (Wiercinski 2019b, 60.)

meaningful crevices and pregnant silences into part of her modernist stylistics. Embarking on a journey to hermeneutically investigate Woolf's fictions, Hołda reveals how those narratives, riven with ambiguities, equivocations, as well as syntactical inconsistencies, participate in the hermeneutic interplay of the said and the unsaid (*das Gesagte und das Ungesagte*),[37] and how Woolf's writing concords in manifold ways with Gadamer's gloss on language and his explication of the concealment/unconcealment of Being (*Verborgenheit/ Unverborgenheit*) as enacted through language.[38]

Highlighting the import of the recognition of language's metaphoricity as constitutive of the literary and philosophical discourse alike, *On Beauty and Being* focuses on aesthetic queries and unfolds the intimate connections between language, Being, and Beauty (understood here in terms of the beauty of artistic creation, nature, human beings, and objects). It is the Aristotelian notion of ποίησις, elaborated later by Heidegger and Gadamer, which stands at the very center of Gadamer's and Woolf's aesthetics.[39] They both show that

37 "What is said is poor, what is unsaid is filled with richness. *Das Gesagte ist das Dürftige, das Ungesagte erfüllt mit Reichtum.*" (Heidegger 1991, 249.)

38 As the eventing of Revelation, ἀλήθεια goes beyond un-concealment (*Unverborgenheit*) or dis-closure (*Entbergung*). "In einem ursprünglicheren Sinne 'geschieht' Unverborgenheit, und dieses Geschehen ist etwas, was überhaupt erst möglich macht, daß Seiendes unverborgen ist und richtig erkannt wird. Die Verborgenheit, die solcher ursprünglichen Unverborgenheit entspricht, ist nicht Irrtum, sondern gehört ursprünglich zum Sein selbst. Die Natur, die sich zu verbergen liebt (Heraklit) ist dadurch nicht nur hinsichtlich ihrer Erkennbarkeit charakterisiert, sondern ihrem Sein nach. Sie ist nicht nur das Aufgehen ins Lichte, sondern ebensosehr das Sichbergen ins Dunkle, die Entfaltung der Blüte der Sonne zu ebenso wie das Sichverwurzeln in der Erdtiefe." (Gadamer 1987a, 259.)

39 "This delight in everydayness is the reason for interrupting χρόνος and letting ourselves be overwhelmed by the καιρός of vision, which contains an inaugurating character and is, as such, oriented toward action. Thus, it forms and transforms our expectations and decisions and makes us aware of 'the between' of χρόνος and καιρός from the experience of acting and the dynamic tension between πρᾶξις and ποίησις. Fundamentally, our relational mode of being in the world (*in-der-Welt-sein*) is characterized by a kairological manner of 'doings' (πρᾶξις) and a chronological manner of 'making' (ποίησις). Understanding that there is the right time for everything inspires us to think about life in all its dimensions and to face everything that happens in our life. The temporary nature of human endeavors requires a realistic approach to life: To learn to see things as they are in their complexity, variability, ambiguity, and precious beauty." (Wierciński 2019b, 290–291.)

in the making of poetry (ποίησις) and our reading of it, something emerges. For Gadamer and Woolf alike, poetic language is the space in which Being discloses itself to us. Sensitizing us to the power of the poetic word to enact Being, Woolf's lyrical narratives and Gadamer's interrogation of poetry show that in Being's meaningful disclosures, understanding occurs as an *event*:

> Poetry is the unique space in which we can experience Beauty as a gateway to Being. In the poetic word Being reveals itself to us. After Heidegger, Gadamer argues that the poetic word embraces the whole of the human experience. In a similar vein, Woolf's lyrical narratives disclose that it is the poetic word that can hold the entirety of an experience of being a human being. (Hołda 2021, 204.)

The focus on the hermeneutics of the beautiful opens the possibility of reaching out for the uniquely rich regions pervasive in the intellectual paths of the two authors. Gadamer commences his hermeneutic inquiry in his ground-breaking work *Truth and Method* with recourse to art and the notion of the beautiful, viewing aesthetic encounter as the model of hermeneutic interrogation. Woolf satiates her artistic vision with aesthetic questions, bringing the issue of Beauty to the center of her literary enterprise. Hołda capably discusses the multifarious aspects of the hermeneutics of the beautiful while touching upon a vast range of topics that pertain to it, also the less obvious ones. At the heart of her work lies the question of Beauty and Truth as belonging together. This Platonic view of Beauty is explored alongside an array of other crucial themes: melancholy beauty, the circularity of time, and the universal patterns of the beautiful shown against the backdrop of the exterior (the clock time) and the interior time (relating to human inward experience). The enactment of the beautiful in Woolf's literary art goes arm in arm with her reflection on subjectivity and intersubjectivity:

> The problem of intersubjectivity that *The Waves* tackles is entwined with the scheme of listening and responding. For Heidegger, the crux of poetry is the interplay of those two faculties. Using the German word *Zugehörigkeit*, which could be translated as "belonging in listening,"

he asserts that listening is a response to Being's call. In the response, the call first resounds like an echo […] The poetic world of *The Waves* operates in accord with the paradigm of listening and responding. As the six differing voices constitute an individuated poetic lyrical "I" each time they are "given a voice," the images which are created through them comprise a response to the listening to Being, which discloses itself in its manifold ways. (Hołda 2021, 235.)

Elaborating on those issues, Hołda's book offers an important extension of her exploration of the hermeneutics of the self in *Paul Ricoeur's Concept of Subjectivity and the Postmodern Claim of the Death of the Subject.*

In the tripartite composition of *On Beauty and Being*, Hołda renders respectively Woolf's fictional embodiments of Beauty in her three major novels and the significant aspects of Gadamer's hermeneutics of the beautiful. She navigates her interrogation by bridging questions that pertain to the Gadamerian understanding of Beauty and Being with a detailed textual exegesis of Woolf's narratives, indicating the novelist's hermeneutic understanding of Beauty. In the mirror-like fashion, in separate sections, she juxtaposes Woolf's embodiments of the beautiful with analogous claims regarding Being and the beautiful in Gadamer's writing. The simultaneous interpretations of Gadamer and Woolf in the book's main parts are rounded up with a more detailed rendition of the affinities between the two authors in the "Intersections." The book's meticulous analyses of Woolf's fiction show the novelist not only as evoking Beauty, but as meditating on Being and Beauty. Woolf interprets the beautiful in the liveliness of daily human experience and the gloriousness of love, which transcends the temporality of human experience. With the backdrop of human finitude, vividly portrayed via the images of war, loss, and decline, love is captured in Woolf's fictional imaginings in its capacity to intensify our sense that Being and Beauty are close to one another.

One of the central topics tackled by Hołda in her meditation (*Besinnung*) on Beauty and Being, which she locates within a broader philosophical context, is her reflection on the ontology and phenomenology of time. The issue of time emerges here in relation to the notion of authenticity in Heidegger (*Eigentlichkeit*), which is close to the idea of responsibility, and which can

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be understood as one's unique response (*re-spondeo*) and an unrepeatable engagement with the world.

Drawing on Heidegger, Hołda interprets Woolf's novel *Mrs. Dalloway* as reflecting on the possibility of living an authentic life when one genuinely faces the inevitability of death (*Sein zum Tode*). Woolf sees each moment of the passage of time as the dramatization of Being. The intensity of living a life saturates the transience of human experiences. It reveals that human existence both happens in time and escapes the limitedness of being in time, of a life constrained by finitude:

> Even though modern writers mourn the fragmentation of human existence and view this state of being as an irrevocable loss, like Eliot, Woolf sees the Beauty of time in the portentousness of its unredeemable passage. To arrest time is impossible, yet the grandeur of time lies exactly in its passing. The way, however, in which we perceive time as passing is related to a response of an individual, in which the provisionality and contingency of human existence as permeated with time play the most significant role. (Hołda 2021, 186.)

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Pursuing the interconnection between Beauty and Being, Gadamer engages the question of time in relation to art and elucidates the captivating force of aesthetic experience, which happens in the time of lingering in front of an artwork. According to him, human response to Beauty involves a phenomenology of a lived experience. Beauty presents itself to us, captivates us, and entangles us in a conversation.

It is the *presencing* or *eventing* of art that Gadamer sees as the core of the aesthetic experience. Gadamer's *Erfahrungsästhetik* places an accent on the dialogical element in our perception of art rather than on an individual sensation (*Erlebnis*). Contemplating the beautiful, we enter a relationship that is of profound significance. This dialogical model of aesthetic experience focuses on the *being of art* and our *being-as-addressed-by-art*, wherein art puts a claim (*Anspruch*) on us and precipitates a response that acknowledges the *happening* of art on the ontological and phenomenological level. Instead of a passive, atemporal life of art, Gadamer speaks of art that is actualized in an intimate

dialogue with its recipient (*der Angesprochene*): "In the entirety of its uniqueness and importance, an aesthetic encounter is an event (*Ereignis*). Crucially, Gadamer contends that an experience of the beautiful is transformational—an aesthetic experience involves *metanoia*—the recipient undergoes a decisive change." (Hołda 2021, 22.) This can be illustrated by recourse to Iris Murdoch (a great admirer of Woolf), whose double allegiance to literary creation and philosophizing incarnates the intermingling character of the two disciplines. In the climax of her famous novel, *The Bell*, Dora, its female protagonist, enters a moment of revelation while contemplating Thomas Gainsborough's portrait of his daughters in the British Museum. Addressed by art, Dora undergoes a profound change. Her life project is undermined, and she must construct it anew.

Throughout her book, Hołda maintains that Gadamer and Woolf use similar premises in addressing Beauty and Being with clarity and passion. Focusing on the captivating power of the beautiful and its inspiring vision, the two intellectuals see the force of the momentary illumination as lying both in the ontological and the aesthetic. Woolf's deep delving into the aesthetic aspect of the revelatory "moment of being" and Gadamer's philosophy of tarrying in front of an artwork, which engenders a seminal change in the onlooker, borrows from Heidegger's notion of *Augenblick*.[40] In *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Heidegger congenially depicts what is happening in the moment of the vision (*Augenblick*):

> What is important is only whether the contemporary Dasein, in keeping with its existential possibility, is original enough still to see on its own the world that is always already unveiled with its existence, to bring it to words, and thereby to make it expressly visible for others. (Heidegger 1988, 171.)

Revalidating Heidegger's *Augenblick*, Gadamer and Woolf highlight the ecstatic forgetfulness, which occurs as the result of a distinct kind of absorption encountered in aesthetic experience, embracing, at the same time,

40 Cf. Gawoll 1994; Santos-Vieira 2013.

its transformational character. Hołda's inspirational tracing of the affinities between Woolf's "moment of being," the visionary moment, which evokes the experience of the eternal as disrupting the flow of the present time, and a similar idea deployed by other authors, Joyce, Conrad, Hopkins, Thoreau, T. S. Eliot, and Duns Scotus, testifies to her employment of a broader literary and philosophical perspective, which fittingly emphasizes the book's interdisciplinary character.

Hołda's reflection on Heidegger's legacy in Woolf and Gadamer engages an important discussion of both the mystical and the secular aspects of the visionary moment, the breaking into time, which is coterminous with the moment of a substantial change, μετάνοια. This seems to be of great significance, especially in the context of the growing scholarship on Woolf's secular mysticism.[41] The specificity of the Christian experience of time, having its root in St. Paul's teaching, which was later reformulated by Heidegger, encounters in Woolf's philosophical thinking and her hermeneutic approach to human temporality an interesting realization.[42] Her fictions dramatize the experience of the tension between finitude and infinity. Hołda emphasizes that Gadamer's and Woolf's view of aesthetic experience rests on the human capacity to succumb to Beauty's enticing power and undergo a decisive change (*Kehre*).[43]

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Woolf's ingenious descriptions of the beauty of nature, the dinner party, or a journey to the Lighthouse disclose her understanding of the importance of placing her heroes and future readers in an intermedial space of experience. Thus, art becomes *Erfahrungsästhetik*, since the reception of the work of art is an *event*, and the visual aspects are not delimited to merely playing an ornamental role. They essentially contribute to the new tangibility of an affective dimension of acting and creating meaning.

Gadamer's and Woolf's reconfigured inheritance of Heidegger's *Augenblick* encourages us to interrogate their conceptualizations of Beauty more inclusively and profoundly. Beauty is not just a superfluous adornment

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41 For more on Woolf's secular mysticism, see Knight 2007.
42 Cf. O'Rourke 2020; Delahaye 2013; McGrath and Wierciński 2010.
43 Cf. Nassirin 2021; Hemming 1998.

added to human existence, but it is rather so overwhelming that it arrests us in time, radiates, and speaks forth. The radicality of transformation that is occasioned when we contemplate Beauty reveals its intervening nature and expresses its co-belongingness with Being. *On Beauty and Being* persuasively demonstrates Hołda's knowledge of Gadamer's and Woolf's revalidation of the Platonic philosophy of Beauty. The intimate liaison between Beauty and Truth animates both the philosophical thought of Gadamer, which draws on Plato's distinction of Beauty's self-evidence, radiance, and proportionality, and the literary imagination of Woolf. The wide range of meanings that the Greek term for Beauty encompasses is, as *On Beauty and Being* shows, present both in Gadamer's hermeneutic aesthetics and Woolf's fiction, most prominently in her novel *To the Lighthouse*:

> Woolf 's evocation of the beautiful in *To the Lighthouse*, when juxtaposed with Gadamer's ontology of Beauty, foregrounds her understanding of Beauty as a mode of being in her suggestive and vibrant explorations of the moment of being. Her dexterity in capturing the Beauty of the moment manifests itself in the evocations of the unity of *kalon* and *aletheia*. Woolf's embodiments of those notions meaningfully coalesce with Gadamer's reaffirmation of Plato's ideal of Beauty. (Hołda 2021, 31.)

One of the most appealing parts of Hołda's meditation is her engagement with Beauty in the repeatable: Gadamer's concentration on the beautiful as epitomized in ritual and play[44] and Woolf's evocations of the universal patterns of repetitions in nature and human existence.[45] Hołda's insights

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44 In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer devotes the chapter "Play as the clue to ontological explanation" (Gadamer 2000, 102–130) to showing that play and language are genuine experiences of the subject. "Seriousness is not merely something that calls us away from play; rather, seriousness in playing is necessary to make the play wholly play. Someone who doesn't take the game seriously is a spoilsport." (Ibid., 103.) Cf. Williams 2018.
45 Woolf embodies in her lyrical narratives the universal patterns of repetitions of day and night, the up-and-down and the back-and-forth movement of the sea waves, the cyclic time and the changes of the seasons of the year, and the ebbs and flows of human existence.

contribute to the scholarship on Gadamer's ontology of play as a model of aesthetic experience, as well as highlight the importance of Woolf's unflagging interest in the rites of repetition, in which Beauty inheres, inviting us to a more profound understanding of it.

The reading of Gadamer and Woolf discloses that the great works of art are always in conversation with one another. Their reciprocal interrogation makes a claim on their readers (*Anspruchsnahme*) and invites them to participate in this conversation. *On Beauty and Being* escapes any facile classifications or overhasty assertions of the final shape of the issues that it tackles. Instead of following the standard pattern of literary criticism as created in the shadow of philosophical inquiries and reflecting on philosophical ideas as instantiated in works of fiction, Hołda manifests her understanding of the hermeneutic investigation by employing the *to-and-fro* movement, shifting from the philosophical to the literary, and allowing to make her insights transpire in the openness to the mutual influence of and conversation between philosophical and literary texts. Considering the versatility of the themes and motifs that *On Beauty and Being* explores through its aptly applied hermeneutic approach to literature and aesthetics, one could pose a question about the relevance of Hołda's hermeneutic reading of literature in the light of the growing number of inter- and cross-disciplinary studies in the humanities. Undoubtedly, Hołda's book returns us to Heidegger's fundamental question of how it is possible for us to pose this most pressing and riveting query: "What it means to be?"[46] Rather than focusing, in her reflection, merely on an explication of theoretical stands, Hołda invites us to recognize our individuated ways of posing this ontological question and responding to it while apprehending its profound, existential implications. Prompting us, the readers, to see the issue of Beauty as inhering in the question about Being, we are called to respond to Beauty creatively.

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46 Essential part of Heidegger's understanding of what it means to be concerns his analysis of technology. For the ancient Greeks, the "making" of something was perceived as "helping something to come into being." Heidegger's rereading of the ancient Tradition inspires him to interpret modern technology as rather a "forcing into being." Cf. Heidegger 1977a.

McGregor's experiment in translating literary source material into a three-act ballet (2015) is one of the examples of an inspiring way of reading Woolf.[47] Interpretation is never a simple retelling but an imaginative journey from hell to heaven, from literal to abstract, monochrome to color, negative to positive. Understanding is not a simple re-production, but it is always productive: "*Verstehen ist kein reproduktives, sondern stets auch ein produktives Verhalten.*" (Gadamer 1986, 301.) Understanding changes alongside the history of the reception (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) of that which wants to be understood. Understanding is always understanding differently (*anders verstehen*)[48] since Tradition (*Überlieferung*) emphasizes transmission rather than conservation.[49] This transmission (*trans-fero*) does not mean a direct bringing to the opposite side while keeping things unchanged and preserved in their original appearance. It is far more challenging to see things anew and express the old in a new way.

Hołda is an engaged listener experiencing the work of art as a communicative event, which calls for active participation (*participatio actuosa*). The work of art is capable of addressing us, and its call for understanding is an invitation or a command to be attuned to the work to the point of being entirely captivated by it. Here, we can go back to Heidegger's and Gadamer's understanding of existence as *ex-sistence*, *ex-stasis*.[50] This ecstasy is not a matter of being outside of ourselves in order to lose ourselves. Being outside of ourselves is a condition of the possibility of being with the Other or otherness. To be genuinely present, we need to experience self-forgetfulness (*Selbstvergessenheit*), which allows us for the undisturbed turning (*Zuwendung*) to the matter of understanding. To understand the work of art means to welcome a radical exposure of our own world to the world of the Other in our human condition as being-in-the-world, which is always a being with-other (*Mitsein*).

Hołda pursuits the interdisciplinary research from hermeneutics as an art of interpretation in relation to literary texts, literary criticism, and theory to

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47 Inspired by Virginia Woolf's three novels, *Mrs. Dalloway, Orlando*, and *The Waves,* Wayne McGregor's *Woolf Works* is first full-length production for The Royal Ballet that translates Woolf's literary works to the stage.

48 Cf. Gadamer 2000, 296.

49 Cf. Wierciński 2019a.

50 See Gadamer, "Zur Problematik des Selbstverständnisses," in: Gadamer 1986, 129.

the studies on hermeneutics in philosophy with an in-depth discernment of its ontological status. Resultantly, the broadening of the hermeneutic horizon by understanding hermeneutics as a *mode of being* means for her an engagement in a new way.[51]

Hołda's reading of literature is hermeneutics in enactment (*Hermeneutik im Vollzug*).[52] Whoever has ever read Gadamer cannot read literature anymore only as the testimony of a triumphant or wrecked talented human being who lived either before us or is living in our time. Essential for Gadamer is that understanding is always in relationship to the history of its effects (*wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein*).[53] What we understand is not the text as the artifact, but the text in its *Wirkungsgeschichte*, i.e., what is interpreted is not the text itself but all the subsequent interpretations that make the text live in the real history of real people. Understanding belongs to the being of that which is understood. We can understand literature only in its *Wirkungsgeschichte*, an artwork of the author, and how this work has been read, interpreted, and transmitted through time to us as contemporary readers.[54] And this remark

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51 "The *conditio humana* is the condition of a human being rooted in the world, i.e., a human being who poses questions about him/herself and others, and who does not give in to stagnation and self-satisfaction due to having achieved successes, but who asks creatively, consistently, and in a new way the question regarding one's mode of being. With that, we understand an integrally developing existence within the horizons of the truth of struggling for one's life as a life struggle and concrete experience." (Wierciński 2019b, 315.)

52 "Hier wird also nicht Literatur als ein Gegenstand zum Thema gemacht, wie etwa der Forscher seine Beispiele oder Belege unter einer bestimmten Fragestellung und mit dem ganzen Aufgebot wissenschaftlicher Zurüstung behandelt. Hier ist meine Absicht allein, dem Vollzug zu dienen, durch den Dichtung zum Partner eines nachdenklichen Gesprächs zu werden vermag. Was das meint und warum das nottut, bedarf selbstverständlich philosophischer Rechtfertigung." (Gadamer, "Vorwort," in: Gadamer 1993, v.

53 "Our historical consciousness is always filled with a variety of voices in which the echo of the past is heard. Only in the multifariousness of such voices does it exist: this constitutes the nature of the tradition in which we want to share and have a part. Modern historical research itself is not only research, but the handing down of tradition. We do not see it only in terms of progress and verified results; in it we have, as it were, a new experience of history whenever the past resounds in a new voice." (Gadamer 2000, 285.)

54 "Die Spannung zwischen besonderer Information und solcher, die man aus dem

applies equally to the interpretation of Tradition's masterpieces and the love letter written last night in the bliss of joy or trails of misery. Hermeneutics is not only the way of reading texts but the way we live our lives as human beings.

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Gedicht selbst schöpfen kann, ist nicht nur […] eine relative. Sie ist wohl auch eine veränderliche von der Art, daß diese Spannung sich im Laufe der Wirkungsgeschichte eines Werkes mehr und mehr abschwächt. Vieles wird am Ende selbstverständlich bekannt sein, so daß jeder es weiß." (Gadamer 1993, 429.)

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"... THE POWER OF LANGUAGE TO TRANSCEND ITSELF."
A POSTSCRIPT

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Throughout its richly ramified history, hermeneutics, not only as an ever diversely elaborated theory of interpretation, but also already as an always anew effectuated practice of understanding, has found itself, as a distinct discipline of (philological and philosophical) reasoning, engaged with the linguality of traditionally transmitted human experience safeguarded, secured in writing. If the hermeneutic movement—at least, in its predominant formation—, in essence, encompasses—as (all) reading—bringing (back) in-to language that which is, or had previously been, textually fixated, the response of interpretive intercession requires thorough attention particularly with regard to an understanding encounter with what one of the founding fathers of contemporary hermeneutics Hans-Georg Gadamer calls "eminent texts": with literary texts as works of (accomplished) art.

Although it might, at first glance, maybe seem that the present thematic issue of the *Phainomena* journal, "Hermeneutics and Literature," attempts

to re-configure, perchance to re-define, from a different and a differing, this time round hermeneutical stance, the—age-old, "ancient"—question of the relationship between philosophy and poetry, between thinking and poetizing, which within the development of the 20th-century culture, once more, especially under the overwhelming influence of Martin Heidegger's thought, rose to become, for both of them, one of the foremost prominent of concerns, the titular juxtaposition, by shifting somewhat the counterbalance of accents, by "universalizing"—the particularity of—"poetry" to—the generality of— "literature" and by "particularizing"—the universality of—"philosophy" to—the speciality of—"hermeneutics," aims not as much at a parallelizing, potentially contentious confrontation—a comparison of the non-comparable?—, which would in the proximities of opposites seek to state their distance and which would in the divergencies of composites seek to state their convergence, but rather at the (im-?)possibility of a dialogical inter-mediation of the—*that*— "in-between" that, despite the strain of a in-conceivably in-surmountable abyss between hermeneutic comprehension and literary creativity, fraught with tears in the fragile fabric of the un-common, dis-closes the time and the place, the spaciality and the temporality of the—horizon(s) of—inter-human experience, insofar as it expresses itself through the self-transcending faculty of language. Accordingly, hermeneutics (perhaps) cannot—and should not—be considered as a separate scientific methodology of interpretation with prefabricated philosophical presuppositions and precepts to be followed and applied to research matter, but as a dimension—a measure?—of openness, which inheres with-in, in-habit(uate)s all approaches authentically denoted by the desire to understand the worded world and the worlded word, the wor(l)d of literature.

The contributions gathered in the issue bear witness to the abundantly varied versatility of hermeneutically accentuated discussions of literary art in respect both to thematic multiplicity and genre heterogeneity of selected works as well as to certain specifically or broadly observed con-textual aspects addressed through them. Outlining the manifold facets of the (for) ever fragmented totality of literature, yet thereby also complexly combining hermeneutic practice with theoretic contemplations, the articles span— without obliterating them by ill-fitting appropriations—geographical and historical boundaries with deliberations, which reach from the most primordial

embodiments of written culture imbued with the mythical that co-constitutes civilizations to the intricately dispersed development of post-modern modes of literary authorship in an era of continually secularized and individualized globality, and which, thus, through problems of the present, inter-connect topics presumably pertaining solely to the past with the salience of caring for the future of human(e) community. Whereas, on the one hand, some of the presented papers in a minutely detailed manner delve into reflections crucially characteristic of Heidegger's considerations relating (to) poetry and thinking, several authors, on the other hand, offer analyses critically focusing (on) the notions of prime importance for a meticulously consummate hermeneutic conceptualization of literature. Beside concluding contributions, which demonstrate the way writing can come to call for(th) other realms of (artistic) expression, such as architecture or painting, two exhaustive examinations of pertinent publications in the field of hermeneutic philosophy, a short book review, and an homage in honor of the recently deceased colleague Dimitri Ginev, member of the journal's International Advisory Board, complement and complete this issue of *Phainomena*.

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The poem by Edvard Kocbek (1904–1981), one of the greatest literary voices and one of the central intellectual personalities of the Slovenian language, who had, as a poet and as a politician, witnessed, with-in his being, the turbulent times of the 20th century, the poem that, (as if) in a single, exalted and halted breath, trans-pierced with pondering pauses, be-speaks (of) the craft of poetry, the handiwork of creation, capable, at once, at the same time, through primal play, of pre-serving memory and of pre-ceding history, the poem that, through its own poetic utterance, circumscribes the tran-script of humanity through the—powerless?—power of language, the poem from the collection *Nevesta v črnem* (*Bride in Black*; 1977), which I would like to let with-stand, (as)—a sort of—a prescript, (with: against) the present postscript—is (not) the nature of all interpretation, however precise, however perceptive, such: un-necessarily supplemental?—, for poetry—of poetry—, in the Slovenian original and in the English translation, sings:

DAREŽLJIVOST PESMI

V vseh časih so naročali pesnikom,

naj kot slovesni zgodovinoslovci

skušajo s posebnimi besedami uloviti
spomina vredne usodne človeške dogodke,
da bi se jih stari in mladi naučili
na pamet in jih prepevali za žalost,
v slavo in poduk vsem rodovom. In

glejte, pesniki so se vselej razigrali
in svojo sveto dolžnost do zgodovine
povezali z nezadržno slo po prvinski igri.
Napisali so pesmi kakor dež in sneg

opravita svojo dolžnost v naravi
in kakor marljivi sejavec poseje
zorane njive jeseni in jih poleti požanje.
V tem hipu čutim posebno darežljivost.
Hranjena je iz vsega, kar je bilo
in kar je ostalo v človekovem čaščenju
in presega moj spomin in se spaja z vsem,

kar živi z občestvom in z domišljijo.
Zdaj čutim, kakor tega še nisem, da je
pesem strnjena sila vseh človekovih
sposobnosti in da je njena vzornost
v presežnosti jezika.

Edvard Kocbek: *Zbrane pesmi II*
(Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1977),
328.

THE GENEROSITY OF THE POEM

Poets   throughout   the   ages,   like   solemn
[historians,
have been commanded to capture with special
[words
those   fateful   human   accidents   worth
[remembering,
so that old and young may learn them
by heart, and sing them in sorrow,
as a celebration and a lesson for the generations.
[But
you see, poets have always gotten carried away
and combined their sacred duty toward history
with an unstoppable lust for primitive play.
They have written their poems the way rain and
[snow
do their duty to nature,
the way the patient laborer sows the plowed field
in fall and harvests it the following summer.
But just now I feel a special generosity.
It is nourished by everything that ever was
and has remained in human worship
and   overflows   my   memory   and   fuses   with   all
[things
that dwell in community and fantasy.
I feel now, as never before, that
a poem is the condensed power of all human
abilities, and that its ideal lies
in the power of language to transcend itself.

Edvard Kocbek: *Nothing Is Lost. Selected
Poems*, trans. by M. Scammell and V.
Taufer (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton
University Press, 2004), 157.

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On behalf of the editors and the publishers of the *Phainomena* journal, as well as myself personally, I would like to extend our sincere gratitude for the kindness of generosity to all the colleagues who graciously dedicated not only their extensive scholarly expertise, but also their profoundly engaged humanity to the preparation and the completion of the present issue on "Hermeneutics and Literature." Likewise, I express our, my heartfelt appreciation to the president of the International Institute for Hermeneutics Prof. Dr. Dr. Andrzej Wierciński for all his friendly help in editing the publication, for all his tireless efforts in furthering the modalities of hermeneutic thinking, indeed, of being in the world.

Ljubljana (Slovenia), July 2022

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Reviews | Recenzije

Mateja Kurir: Arhitektura moderne in *das Unheimliche*. Heidegger, Freud in Le Corbusier.

Ljubljana: Inštitut Nove revije, zavod za humanistiko, 2018.
ISBN: 978-961-7014-14-3.

Študija Mateje Kurir *Arhitektura moderne in* das Unheimliche. *Heidegger, Freud in Le Corbusier* že v naslovu zasega soodnos filozofije in arhitekture, kakršen prestopa arhitekturno teorijo in se giblje v smeri filozofije arhitekture (Schwarte, Derrida), ki ni zgolj umetnostno-zgodovinska disciplina (Baumberger), marveč sega v presečišče filozofije in arhitekture. Če filozofija govori o temelju, mestu, kraju, poti, prostoru, točki, liniji, smeri in hiši, arhitekturo vodi, določa in razpostavlja ἀρχή: to vodilno, obvladujoče, gospodujoče.

Kot nas pouči Grimmov slovar, beseda »unheimlich« merodajno vstopi v nemški jezik in sčasoma postane ena najbolj uporabljanih besed ob prelomu 18. stoletja, nadomesti besedo »ungeheuer«, ki je zatonila v znanstveniško rabo. Sledi tega dogajanja nam pušča raba nemških predromantikov in romantikov, medtem ko pretanjena študija Mateje Kurir na eni strani predoča rabo Martina Heideggra od *Biti in časa*, prek predavanj *Uvod v metafiziko* in *Hölderlinova*

himna »*Der Ister*«, do spisov *Gradnja Prebivanje Mislenje* in *Pesniško prebiva člověk*, na drugi strani pa strukturirano razgrinja rabo besede pri Sigmundu Freudu, Jacquesu Lacanu in drugih.

Najpovednejše v pripovednem loku študije je razvitje, ki sledi Heideggrovi rabi in privede do besede *das Unheimliche* kot prevoda za *deinon, deinotaton* v stajanki Sofoklejeve *Antigone*. Čeprav so Friedrich Hölderlin, Rudolf Otto in drugi ponudili drugačne prevodne rešitve, Heidegger, sledeč Reinhardtovemu in Novalisovem namigu, da je *filozofija domotožje, gon, biti povsod doma*, prestopi numinozno (Otto), silno in neznansko (Hölderlin) ter za določilo *tujosti na Zemlji* (Trakl) izbere *das Unheimliche*. Avtorica suvereno zastavi soočenje s poglavitnim »terminom« iz *Biti in časa*, *das Dasein*, pri čemer je očitno neprestano razvijanje in premeščanje konstelacij, ki jih Heidegger vsakič zastavi drugače.

Če *das Unheiliche* sovpada z obeležjem moderne arhitekture, kot temeljno in vodilno razpoloženje dobe, je po izzvenenju začetne polnosti sveta Akropole mogoče zaslediti poskuse obnove in prenove arhitekturnega, ki – najsi gradi sakralno (*Pantheon*) ali profano (*Panoptikon*) – s svetom svetega ne ve kaj početi, a tudi ne izhaja več iz prebivanja samega, marveč v njegovo igro stopi tehnično, inženirsko, načrtujoče, kakršno je v arhitekturi udomovljeno kot risbo prestopajoči jezik gradnje in kakršno znotraj nje preostaja, tako se zdi, kot edina dediščina »prehajanja iz nebivajočega v bit« (Platon).

Dom–prebivanje–domačnost je sklop, ki tvori podlago omenjenih razpravljanj: zdi se, da se arhitektura in filozofija v zasnovi ne razlikujeta, kolikor gre za postavljanje mere, ki je vsakokrat različna, a vseeno ista: ubranost končnega prebivanja na zemlji, pod nebom, med smrtniki in bogovi.

Das Unheimliche nastopi iz zabrisa in izbrisa tovrstne ubranosti, kot »sodobno« *Unvordenkliche* (Schelling) prestopa geometričnost, sprevidnost vnaprej izdelanih rešitev, ki naj bi jih arhitektura in filozofija prinesli: ugodje, udobje, urejenost, na hrbtni strani breztemelja in brezdanjosti. Govor o takšnem izvoru, *archephasis*, mora sam misliti na to in iz tega, o čemer je govor: zgodovinsko dogajanje ni zgolj grško ali nemško, vzhodno ali zahodno, tok tistega, *kar bi moralo ostati skrito, a je vseeno prišlo na dan* (Schelling, Freud), je, da se *ničesar ne naučimo težje, kot proste rabe lastnega* (Hölderlin, Allemann). Lastno lastnega ni vnaprej dana lastnóst domačega in domačijskega,

brezdomovinskost nedomačnega tiči v nesprejemanju končnosti in smrtnosti kot Heglove pozitivne neskončnosti. Zato naj zaključim z besedo mojstra Plečnika, glasnika *arhitecture perennis*: »Čas […] se boji piramid.« (Hrausky)

Aleš Košar

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In memoriam

Babette Babich

Dimitri Ginev
(July 3, 1956–June 5, 2021)[*]

Dimitri Ginev was so energetically creative that a book was already ready—in line to be published as it was, posthumously, *Practices and Agency*,[1] along with other texts, when he died, early this past summer, 2021. In my preface for his forthcoming article in the journal, *Social Science Information*, I wrote that Dimitri was

> an elegant man, gifted with a rare rigor and, still more exceptionally, of a systematic scope that kept his work at the highest level. That high level could (and often did) mean that colleagues did not always know his work or were, at best, challenged to understand it.[2]

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[*] The homage to the late Bulgarian philosopher, which was originally published in the journal *Divinatio* (vol. 50, autumn–winter 2021, pp. 9–24), is reprinted here with the gracious permission of the author.

1 Dimitri Ginev, *Practices and Agency* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2021).

2 Babette Babich, "Dimitri Ginev (1956–2021)," *Social Science Information*, 61 (2022): 5–7.

Image 1:
Dimitri Ginev, November 30, 2013, Zürich.
(Photograph: Babette Babich.)

As Tracy B. Strong is fond of reflecting, and you can see him in the photo above, behind Dimitri on the left: "*death always comes from outside the frame.*"

I wrote a different memorial for the rock star—and stage and film actor—Meat Loaf (1947–2022) who held views contra the currently received, i.e., government-decreed "health" mandates: "Dionysus in Music,"[3] less to explain his award-winning single *I Would Do Anything for Love* (trending, non-hermeneutically, on Twitter) than to counter calumny.

There's no calumny in Dimitri's case but there is complexity. And, by the same token, there is also a great legacy, his texts, that can be revisited.

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3 Babich, "Dionysus in Music: On the 'God of Sex and Drums and Rock and Roll,'" *Los Angeles Review of Books. The Philosophical Salon*, January 31, 2022, https://thephilosophicalsalon.com/dionysus-in-music-on-the-god-of-sexand-drums-and-rock-and-roll/?fbclid=IwAR25nqhKZKIRKk_ciDGaxkrFIazal-8QdYF9ZMtW9YilRuG0Yyozq1C690HA. For a version including images, see: https://babettebabich.uk/2022/01/31/dionysus-in-music-on-the-god-of-sex-anddrums-and-rock-and-roll/?fbclid=IwAR3m4Ss1fYIGrIZQwRoRFBU4UCLFYeMzFfrYW1uVeW4JDwSI78_o_AOTns.

Hermeneutics is about right reading and right parsing, interpretation and thus the metonymic association with Meat Loaf, love. Philosophy is the love of wisdom and the *ars interpretandi*, as we know, is hermeneutics. "*Two out of Three*," Meat Loaf tells us, "*Ain't Bad*," which leaves science, a fairly non-wordish affair. Hermeneutic philosophy of science thus needs the doubling nuances Dimitri added, and for a *triple* hermeneutics, I'd supplement what I have named a material hermeneutics.[4]

In my editor's contribution to *Hermeneutic Philosophies of Social Science*,[5] I opted to render the plural in the title not, Rickert-style, by adverting to the various *Geisteswissenschaften* because, and this is also culturology in part, in all their diversity (Rickert takes care to foreground history for obvious reasons having to do with his own formation along with psychology crucial then and crucial today to then-positivist and today's analytic trends in philosophy, now rebranded as cognitive science or neuroscience, depending on whether one's affinities run to information or life sciences) what was at stake for me was the various kinds of philosophy of science. Aligning, this is an editor's task, the table of contents, like a dinner party list, after Steve Shapin, who judiciously avoids even the word hermeneutics in his "The Sciences of Subjectivity,"[6] I set Dimitri's "Studies of Empirical Ontology and Ontological Difference,"[7] followed by my editor's contribution, "Hermeneutics and Its Discontents in Philosophy of Science,"[8] in which I revisited themes including Alan Sokal's feigned hoax back in the mid-1990s,[9] on the very idea of hermeneutics in science discourse.

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4 Babich, "Material Hermeneutics and Heelan's Philosophy of Technoscience," *AI & Society*, 35 (Apr. 14, 2020), https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00146-020-00963-7.
5 Babich, ed., *Hermeneutic Philosophies of Social Science* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017).
6 Steve Shapin, "The Sciences of Subjectivity," in: Babich, ed., *Hermeneutic Philosophies of Social Science*, 123–143.
7 Ginev, "Studies of Empirical Ontology and Ontological Difference," in: Babich, ed., *Hermeneutic Philosophies of Social Science*, 143–162.
8 Babich, "Hermeneutics and Its Discontents in Philosophy of Science: On Bruno Latour, the 'Science Wars,' Mockery, and Immortal Models," in: Babich, ed., *Hermeneutic Philosophies of Social Science*, 163–188.
9 Babich, "Sokal's Hermeneutic Hoax: Physics and the New Inquisition," in: Babich, ed., *Hermeneutic Philosophy of Science, Van Gogh's Eyes, and God: Essays in Honor of Patrick A. Heelan, S.J.* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2002), 67–78, and cf., too, my "Paradigms

I highlighted an interpretive ambiguity that is the legacy of literary scholarship and criticism, infused as this is with theological sensibilities or (sometimes) Marxist ideology. The problem is not a matter of politics per se, though it can be, as much as it is the text as such. This is the *sola scriptura* that sets "hermeneutics" as the most durable legacy of the protestant revolution in texts, a revolution that was as successful as it was not least because it told everyman that nothing need come between himself and his reading—whatever he was reading, be it the *Bible* or Hobbes or Nietzsche or Heidegger, or indeed Galileo. As Bruno Latour (1947–) puts it in his 2013 book, *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence*, using a certain amount of rhetorical polish:

> didn't Galileo triumph all by himself over institutions, against the Church, against religion, against the scientific bureaucracy of the period?[10]

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Galileo is his own problem and I will come back to this below. There, I argued that the problem of hermeneutics had been under attack for some time, positivism being what it is but also in the wake of György Márkus's contribution to the first issue of *Science in Context* in 1987, using the rhetorically simplistic tactic of assuming one's conclusion in advance, *petitio principii* already in his title: "Why is There No Hermeneutics of Natural Sciences?"[11] I pointed out that Márkus spared himself the trouble of reading those who had actually written on the topic, skipping over to a traditionally historical understanding of interpretation as opposed to hermeneutic philosophy of science as such. We know the tactic today as what social media names "cancel culture."

I argued that, by arguing in his own closed circle, Márkus used his literary critical prejudice as prejudice works best to automatic effect. Thus, repeating the canard of supposed hostility to the natural sciences, Márkus made only

and Thoughtstyles: Incommensurability and its Cold War Discontents from Kuhn's Harvard to Fleck's Unsung Lvov," *Social Epistemology*, 17 (2003): 97–107.

10 Bruno Latour, *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence: An Anthropology of the Moderns*, trans. by Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 5.

11 György Márkus, "Why is There No Hermeneutics of Natural Sciences?" *Science in Context*, 1, 1 (March 1987): 5–51.

passing reference to a single article by the physicist and philosopher, Patrick Aidan Heelan (1926–2014), a name he manages to misspell throughout and to reduce (rather than to expand as Heelan would) to Polanyi, and thus without noting Heelan's published legacy of arguments for a hermeneutic philosophy of physics, specifically advanced with reference to nothing less crucial for the natural sciences than quantum mechanics.[12] Márkus also made no reference to Joseph J. Kockelmans (1923–2008), if he does note Theodore Kisiel (1930–2021) from whom he seems to have gotten the reference to Heelan but not Thomas Seebohm (1934–2014) or Gerard Radnitzky (1921–2006)—in fact there are quite a few names he skipped over, though he does mention Manfred Riedel (1936–2009). When Heelan wrote a detailed response to Márkus' first article,[13] which Márkus had subtitled as if inviting discussion, "A Few Preliminary Remarks," Márkus would offer no response.

To mistakenly limit hermeneutics as a literary critic, Lukács-style as Márkus was, is to limit hermeneutics to what he called the "interpretive encounter of a reader with a text" thereby missing the text as existentially active as Ginev would argue, or as working "otherwise," as Gadamer would argue[14] but not less as experimental setup or instrumental context articulated in and through Heelan's language of "readable technologies." I.e., and in terms of Heelan's "objectivity," this augments and complements Dimitri's double hermeneutics on the level of the subject, and is thus, as noted above, specifically *material*.[15]

Now Heelan himself, who was absolutely charmed and delighted by Dimitri, was concerned with mathematics and measurement which he read as laboratory observation which he expressed in Husserlian and Heideggerian terms of the scientist's perception and of the "world" of the laboratory for the sake of what Heelan called, speaking as a physicist, "objectivity" and "meaning making." The active engagement of the scientist as a researcher is indispensable,

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12 Patrick Aidan Heelan, *Quantum Mechanics and Objectivity* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1965).

13 Heelan, "Comments and Critique: Yes! There Is a Hermeneutics of Natural Science: A Rejoinder to Markus," *Science in Context*, 3, 2 (1989): 477–488.

14 See on this Babich, "Understanding Gadamer, Understanding Otherwise," *International Institute for Hermeneutics*. Online first and archived: https://www.academia.edu/66050431/Understanding_Gadamer_Understanding_Otherwise.

15 Babich, "Material Hermeneutics and Heelan's Philosophy of Technoscience."

requiring what Heidegger for his own part unpacks as the logic of questioning. The critical logic of questioning is, as I seek to unpack this, the method of experimental, critical, juridical science, quite as Kant specifies for his own part in *The Critique of Pure Reason*. As Heelan writes in his first book, *Quantum Mechanics and Objectivity*, "Of itself, the instrument is 'dumb'; it waits to be questioned by the scientist, and the form of the question structures its response."[16] In my own work I argue, and Heelan remains useful here, that it is essential to raise the question of models in today's age of "pandemic science."[17]

I was born in 1956, placing me in the same *Jahrgang* as the Germans say. As a peer in this sense, I knew Dimitri as colleague and friend. But that should be qualified as, although we saw one another with some frequency over the years, I never visited him at his own university nor was I able to find students interested in hermeneutic philosophy of science such that I might invite him to mine (as if I might compete with the many prestigious fellowships and invitations he already enjoyed). Thus I knew, and I do believe this recognition mutual, that I was far from knowing him as well as I might have known him.

550   The common projects we worked on were related, centrally so, to the names I have mentioned above on the topic of hermeneutic philosophy of science which resulted in a 2014 book collection, co-edited and inspired by (and in memory of) Kockelmans: *The Multidimensionality of Hermeneutic Phenomenology*.[18]

This was by no means an after-thought, a posthumous *Festschrift* for a man who never had a *Festschrift* (the honor is not extended to all scholars and publishers give you grief, as I know having edited two of these, if you propose one). Kockelmans, although today increasingly forgotten, even among Heideggerians (a bit unfair as he was a founding member of the American Heidegger Circle), was well known across the board: quite to the

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16 Heelan, *Quantum Mechanics and Objectivity*, 174.
17 Babich, "Pseudo-Science and 'Fake' News: 'Inventing' Epidemics and the Police State," in: Irene Strasser and Martin Dege, eds., *The Psychology of Global Crises and Crisis Politics Intervention, Resistance, Decolonization. Palgrave Studies in the Theory and History of Psychology* (London: Springer, 2021), 241–272.
18 Babich and Ginev, eds., *The Multidimensionality of Hermeneutic Phenomenology* (Frankfurt am Main: Springer, 2014).

mainstream peak of being elected president of the Eastern APA, *the* foremost American philosophical society. The 1994 volume in his honor, *The Question of Hermeneutics*,[19] covered mostly non-science themes limited to four essays on philosophy of science, including a contribution from Heelan and from Bas van Fraassen, who had been Kockelmans's student.

The association of hermeneutics and philosophy of science remains fraught despite efforts to integrate these perspectives. By addressing this multifarious character head on, Dimitri had hoped (I was and remain less sanguine) that by highlighting "multidimensionality" and including phenomenology the general vision of hermeneutic philosophy of science might be taken a little further. One might have wished, in a world of contrary-to-fact druthers, that Ted Kisiel would have been the man to celebrate Kockelmans at greater length—although Ted did offer us an essay on hermeneutic instrumentality attending to the working dynamics of GPS[20]—but Kisiel's own life's work, coupled with the obstacles to hermeneutic philosophy of science, took Kisiel to vastly greater reception on the theme of the life work of Martin Heidegger.

To say that the volume we edited together was inspired by Kockelmans hardly means (indeed, it almost never means) that the contributors engaged Kockelmans. In fact, some of the authors of some of the chapters had never read a word Kockelmans wrote and, arguably, would not have known what to make of it if they had. This is ordinary, ordinal life in the academy and it is complicated, rife with fiefdoms and boundaries, all for the sakes of, as is often pointed out, tiny and increasingly tinier stakes: owing to the same pandemic that deftly reduces resources, automatically achieving, without debate, what university and other public administrators had long desired.

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19 Timothy Stapleton, ed., *The Question of Hermeneutics* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1994).
20 Theodore Kisiel, "Heidegger and Our Twenty-First Century Experience of *Gestell*," in: Babich and Ginev, eds., *The Multidimensionality of Hermeneutic Phenomenology*, 137–152.

Image 2:
Ginev in discussion.
(Photograph: Babette Babich.)

Dimitri generously wrote to thank me for broadening those stakes a bit in the essay I contributed to the beautifully produced *Festschrift* in his honor, a gloriously substantive book, edited by Paula Angelova, Jassen Andreev, and Emil Lensky: *Das interpretative Universum: Dimitri Ginev zum 60. Geburtstag gewidmet*.[21] The breadth of this collection, the luminary voices who contributed to it, testifies to Ginev's life and work. Again: the editors' articulation of these contributions is instructive: beginning with Gadamer's outstanding biographer, Jean Grondin, reflecting on the hermeneutic circle,[22] but also

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21 Paula Angelova, Jassen Andreev, and Emil Lensky, eds., *Das interpretative Universum: Dimitri Ginev zum 60. Geburtstag gewidmet* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2017).
22 Jean Grondin, "Entering the Hermeneutical Circle Also Means that One Wants to Get Out of It," in: Angelova, Andreev, and Lensky, eds., *Das interpretative Universum*, 17–26.

Scholtz on Boeckh and Droysen,[23] several essays on Dilthey,[24] textual voices include Renato Cristin on Husserl.[25] There is also an important reflection by Dean Komel on questioning,[26] this festschrift is as a *Festschrift* should be and as the graphic design on its cover suggests: a treasure trove. Science is there, including my own reflections on Ginev's "Double Hermeneutics" and the conflicting fortunes of designating collegial contributions "good" or "bad,"[27] sometimes rightly, often owing to other less-than-pure motivations (thus peer cartels are probably a greater "elephant" in the room of contemporary history and philosophy of science than any other hobby horse *du jour*), but also Nick Rescher on pragmatism[28] and Hans-Jörg Rheinberger,[29] about whom more below, among others—and, on political "science" and Europe on the crucial theme of "*Gastlichkeit*," Burkhard Liebsch,[30] in addition to Pierre Kerszberg, on music,[31] and the late Peter Janich (1942–2016) on technology, nature, and culture,[32] and so on.

23 Gunter Scholtz, "Interpretation und Tatsache. Überlegungen im Ausgang von Boeckh und Droysen," in: Angelova, Andreev, and Lensky, eds., *Das interpretative Universum*, 27–46.

24 Gudrun Kühne-Bertram, "Wilhelm Dilthey's Begriff der Philosophie" and Helmuth Vetter, "Wilhelm Dilthey, Martin Heidegger und Heideggers Anti-Semitismus," in: Angelova, Andreev, and Lensky, eds., *Das interpretative Universum*, respectively, 47–66 and 67–119.

25 Cristin, "Tradition in Husserl's Phenomenological Thought," in: Angelova, Andreev, and Lensky, eds., *Das interpretative Universum*, 121–130.

26 Komel, "Kontemporalität als Fragehorizont der Philosophie," in: Angelova, Andreev, and Lensky, eds., *Das interpretative Universum*, 471–484.

27 Babich, "Are They Good? Are They Bad? Double Hermeneutics and Citation in Philosophy, Asphodel and Alan Rickman, Bruno Latour and the 'Science Wars,'" in: Angelova, Andreev, and Lensky, eds., *Das interpretative Universum*, 239–270.

28 Rescher, "Prismatic Pragmatism," in: Angelova, Andreev, and Lensky, eds., *Das interpretative Universum*, 131–150.

29 Rheinberger, "Über die Sprache der Wissenschaftsgeschichte," in: Angelova, Andreev, and Lensky, eds., *Das interpretative Universum*, 283–292.

30 Liebsch, "Angefeindet von innen und außen: Europa im Zeichen der Gastlichkeit," in: Angelova, Andreev, and Lensky, eds., *Das interpretative Universum*, 441–470.

31 Kerszberg, "Les trajets intérieurs de la musique," in: Angelova, Andreev, and Lensky, eds., *Das interpretative Universum*, 377–390.

32 Janich, "Technik im Spannungsverhältnis von Natur und Kultur," in: Angelova, Andreev, and Lensky, eds., *Das interpretative Universum*, 271–283.

I have not named every name but I am taking care to name more names than is typically done because one of the automatic ways of refusing scholarship is via non-mention, inattention, silencing—*Totschweigerei*. This is intellectual "ghosting" or banning, called "cancel culture" today in a world where calls for censorship have a good conscience, not that this is new if the blatant character of such calls can seem to be.

If Paul Feyerabend (1924–1994) continues to be *both* unreceived *and* admired in mainstream meaning analytic philosophy of science, a great part of the reason has to do with the complexity of his own writerly style, thus the need for hermeneutics which in his case includes the fact that as Feyerabend would explain, he had never studied philosophy as such. This did not mean that he lacked a broad formation: far from it.

Going beyond Popperian conventionalities with respect to the contexts of discovery and justification, Feyerabend reminds us in his *Farewell to Reason* that contextualization is constituted quite by way of an "unwritten" doctrine, as Cornford speaks of this,[33] as Hans Joachim Krämer speaks of this in his reading (with Konrad Gaier), of Plato via Schleiermacher articulating the relation between artistic morphology and philosophical content, as articulated by way of an "oral culture."[34] Reading Feyerabend here requires reference to "the 'living discourse' Plato regarded as the only true form of knowledge" equating it with high level mathematics and for Feyerabend this extends to advanced physics:

> The "hermeneutic" school in philosophy […] tries to show that even the most "objective" written presentation is comprehended only by a process of instruction that conditions the reader to interpret standard phrases in standard ways in this manner: there is no escape from history and personal contact, though there exist powerful mechanisms creating the illusion of such an escape.[35]

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33 F. M. Cornford, *The Unwritten Philosophy and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950).
34 Hans Joachim Krämer, *Plato and the Foundations of Metaphysics: A Work on the Theory of the Principles and Unwritten Doctrines of Plato with a Collection of the Fundamental Documents*, trans. by John Catan (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990).
35 Paul Feyerabend, *Farewell to Reason* (London: Verso, 1987), 111.

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As we may read here in Jassen Andreev's essay, "Jimmy," as Jassen called him, admired Feyerabend and I corresponded with Feyerabend when I was in Germany and met him when I was teaching in Tübingen, when he was in Zürich, and thus, locative, I was put in mind of him when I last met Dimitri in the company of one of Feyerabend's students, Paul Hoyningen-Huene (1946–).

Image 3:
Paul Hoyningen-Huene, November 2013, Zürich
(Photograph: Babette Babich.)

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Photographs are hermeneutic objects to be read, an insight I develop in an ekphrasis of the iconic photograph of Heidegger and Gadamer, signed by Heidegger in 1975, and which waited more than 50 years after it was taken of the 23-year-old Gadamer to be sent to Gadamer (1900–2002) which he then featured in his Lehrjahre.36 Gadamer was my teacher and when I read his philosophical autobiography, this photograph was revelatory for my reading of technology and so I paid for the rights to reproduce it in the text

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36 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophische Lehrjahre* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977), 33.

I contributed to our collective volume, reading between Heidegger's Gefahr and Ge-Stell.[37]

Feyerabend was more radical than Dimitri and he was certainly more radical than his students tend to be. He referred to Galileo throughout his work and in his letters and he also sent me a draft of his *The Conquest of Abundance* and I did not take the hint—I didn't realize that was the reason, even though he wrote this quite explicitly in his letters to me, that I might edit it. I was consumed with respect and my approach to hermeneutics typically leads me to leave all the words of an author unchanged in context and to add more.

Now as I have written elsewhere, and in spite of Feyerabend's best efforts, Galileo remains the Teflon saint of science: no matter how many times the complexities of the discoveries that, as Feyerabend shows, were not quite Galileo's discoveries (or observational data or calculations that were not quite *his* data or *his* calculations, or instruments that were not quite or could not have been) as they were said to have been are spelled out in detail to Galileo's detriment, Galileo (one should perhaps attempt to sing this Freddy Mercury style), Galileo escapes unscathed.

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A scientist by formation, Feyerabend was, like Bob Cohen, another friend Dimitri and I had in common, an open-minded spirit in the philosophy of science and both lacked today's limitedly analytic formation in philosophy (this does not make one "continental"). Like Heelan, both were trained in physics not philosophy (though Heelan, being a Jesuit, promptly took a second PhD in philosophy).

Kockelmans articulated the theme of the *constitution* of modern science, in its technological and mathematizable (meaning measurable, calculable, model-oriented) expressions, as just this constitution was for Ginev highly significant. For my own part, embodied in the instrument as such, be it a telescope, think of Feyerabend's Galileo or a tablet today, I tended to follow Heelan's attention to the *making* dimension of meaning-making, in terms otherwise more reflected in the mainstream and highly visible work of Hans-Jörg Rheinberger (1946–). Thus highlighting the standardized manufacture of specifically institutional

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37 Babich, "Constellating Technology: Heidegger's *Die Gefahr/The Danger*," in: Babich and Ginev, eds., *The Multidimensionality of Hermeneutic Phenomenology*, 160.

and standardizing technologies (from Geiger counters, an example of which Heelan was fond, to microscopes, as Ian Hacking spoke of these, to electron microscopes as Heelan also varied the metaphoric profile in ways inspiring for Rheinberger in turn and which, in another direction again, may also be found in Latour).

Image 4:
Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, November 2013, Zürich.
(Photograph: Babette Babich.)

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It is hard to trace connections of this kind and at this level. Elsewhere I attempt (one needs the provisional language of an attempt, the German "*Versuch*" is better as such indications are only effective if noted, footnoted, etc.) to point to the work of Louis Basso quite where Heelan emphasized Bachelard and scholars today, inspired by Latour and others, privilege Gilbert Simondon.

The photographs in this essay were taken during a November 2013 conference: *Ludwik Fleck and Hermeneutic Studies of Science*, organized by Dimitri Ginev at the Ludwik Fleck Center in Zürich. I spoke, on Dimitri's invitation, as did everyone there, in my case, because I have long worked

on Fleck, on things medical and hermeneutic, titled, "Fleck's *The Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact* and the Pseudo-Sciences—Or How to talk about AIDS, Homeopathy, and Other Damned Things."[38] The Ludwik Fleck Center maintains the lectures as research resource, archival access of which gives us the opportunity to hear Ginev in his own voice, including the dynamism of his presentation, on "Ludwik Fleck's Implicit Hermeneutics of Trans-Subjectivity."[39]

Image 5:
Ginev with Dr. Rainer Egloff, November 30, 2013, Zürich.
(Photograph: Babette Babich.)

Years ago, and there I failed him, Dimitri invited me to contribute to a project on feminist philosophy of science. Being a rigorous scholar, I knew that what he meant by that was what mainstream or analytic voices in philosophy and history

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38 https://video.ethz.ch/speakers/collegium-helveticum/fleck/hermeneutics/1fa09d91-edf4-4b6f-a898-715c92d68272.html?fbclid=IwAR327WEE7cS05yBWJNeG4XH917QgOs-dp6Y_mEfM-yNF939Z9eN6C5VTaOc.
39 https://video.ethz.ch/speakers/collegium-helveticum/fleck/hermeneutics/1310b9ca-1895-4648-ae3f-d611b1590b49.html.

of science meant by that: dedicated to bringing out and setting in contemporary scholarly relief the unjustly neglected contributions of women. Traditionally in analytic philosophy of science, and Dimitri had many sympathies with this approach, the idea was to highlight otherwise unadverted to scholars, a reasonable undertaking as prejudice silences reception, along with, although by absent hermeneutics this works less well, attending to the influence of masculinist assumptions—for example, in paleontology pointing to the tendency to "read" artifacts as weapons (axes and the like) rather than as other tools (for cultivation, for example), although and of course specific identification as a specific anything may tell us more about the researchers' assumptions than anything else. More significant, and here the historian David Noble's work deserves attention, is the absence of women in general, typically or traditionally explained away by pointing out that women's gifts would be found in other fields. Andrea Nye, whose work was poorly received until she shifted to the approach acknowledged by the mainstream (this is a *sine qua non* if one wants any colleagues to engage one's work), wrote an early book that irritated scholars (she cannot be accused of a continental approach and the history of philosophy is an analytic rubric rather than hermeneutic or phenomenological), *Words of Power: A Feminist Reading of the History of Logic.*[40]

My reading is integrated into my take on the politics of professional philosophy.[41] I invited Dimitri to contribute to a *Festschrift* for Heelan, a collection that remains somewhat unusual in the genre, dedicated to the triad of hermeneutic concerns reflected in Heelan's work, from science to perceptual aesthetics and theology: *Hermeneutic Philosophy of Science, Van Gogh's Eyes, and God*. It is unusual in that many of the essays reflect the multidimensionality of Heelan's work. Ginev's essay, which I set among the first chapters in the volume, remains insightful: "The Hermeneutic Context of Constitution."[42]

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40 Andrea Nye, *Words of Power: A Feminist Reading of the History of Logic* (London: Routledge, 1990). Full text here: https://archive.org/details/wordsofpowerfemi0000nyea.
41 The text of my 2009 New School lecture is archived on Fordham University's digital repository and *Academia.edu*: "Great Men, Little Black Dresses, The Virtues of Keeping One's Feet on the Ground: On the Status of Women in Philosophy." https://www.academia.edu/67767126/On_the_Status_of_Women_in_Philosophy.
42 Ginev, "The Hermeneutic Context of Constitution," in: Babich, ed., *Hermeneutic Philosophy of Science, Van Gogh's Eyes, and God*, 43–52.

I already mentioned the collective volume I edited, *Hermeneutic Philosophies of Social Science*, a challenging undertaking just to the extent that hermeneutics tends to be misunderstood, and this is surprising, precisely by social theorists. Ginev's contribution was key to the collection[43] and Steve Fuller's popularly explosive contribution,[44] if it does not quite illuminate the ongoing problem of hermeneutic philosophies of social science as such, is worth reading between Weber and Husserl and what is conventionally read, analytically speaking, as the much maligned "postmodern." Dimitri's own monograph would appear a year later, with its affinities clearly articulated in the title: *Toward a Hermeneutic Theory of Social Practices: Between Existential Analytic and Social Theory*.[45]

Ginev wrote on the Dilthey scholar (and expert in positivism), Georg Misch,[46] cognitive existentialism, a variety, as he pioneered this to a great extent, of *analytic* existentialism as this may be compared with newer trends in philosophy, as Dimitri also worked on the most recondite but also mainstream and systematic accounts of social theory. His recent, *Scientific Conceptualization and Ontological Difference* shows the nuances of both.[47]

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But Dimitri's contributions are not to be ranged on the margins and if anyone can be said to truly work between the analytic/continental divide, which context has its own limitations complete with inviolate dominion (thus most German research institutes are open, typically, exclusively to analytic scholars), Ginev did so, though sometimes he wrote to me about the strain.

To this extent, the best person to write an encomium of hermeneutic philosophy of science valorizing analytic approaches would be the British born, Canadian philosopher, Patricia Glazebrook as she wrote an insightful review of Ginev's 2016 *Hermeneutic Realism: Reality Within Scientific Inquiry* but who discovered his work only late as all of us must now discover and rediscover his works, in print. Ginev published Trish's work and I believe that in future he

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43 See, again, Ginev, "Studies of Empirical Ontology and Ontological Difference."

44 Fuller, "Hermeneutics from the Inside-Out and the Outside-In—And How Postmodernism Blew It All Wide Open," in: Babich, ed., *Hermeneutic Philosophies of Social Science*, 109–120.

45 Ginev, *Toward a Hermeneutic Theory of Social Practices: Between Existential Analytic and Social Theory* (London: Routledge, 2018).

46 Ginev, *Das hermeneutische Projekt Georg Mischs* (Vienna: Passagen Verlag 2011).

47 Ginev, *Scientific Conceptualization and Ontological Difference* (Berlin: de Gruyter 2019).

would have hoped for more collaboration as they were of affine sensibilities.

Here I recommend her review, recalling the first line:

> When Dimitri Ginev left a career in pharmacobiochemistry to avoid experimenting on animals, he was not at all happy with the state of philosophy of science that had displaced "mirror of nature" approaches by means of structuralist tendencies that make reality "a prisoner of formal semantics" (xi).[48]

Trish could have been writing about me as Dimitri's reasons for leaving his initial plans for work in the life sciences were my reasons for abandoning university studies in biology, complete with years of lab work, for philosophy.

The affinity between Glazebrook's pro-analytic style and Ginev is patent and both thinkers find that hermeneutics may be read for its contributions to mainstream philosophy of science, that is significantly also a matter of what analytic philosophy calls *realism*.

For my part, I find rather more occasion for diffidence and even antagonism as analytic philosophy refuses both regard and interest, so much so that sometimes scholars opt to speak of "interpretation" in place of "hermeneutics" to avoid upsetting conventional, analytic philosophers and historians of science.

Where I agree with Dimitri has everything to do with history and constitution and rigor and where I want to be wrong and I want him to be right is in his optimism concerning the openness of traditional philosophy of science to his approach.

Between philosophers and scientists, as the examples of Heelan and of Feyerabend already suggest, one finds sometimes more sympathetic alliances than between philosophers and philosophers. (The latter being the "internecine" battles of which Kant warned and Derrida mused latterly for his own part, only to suffer from them in turn, now resolved as analytic philosophy has since

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48 Patricia Glazebrook, "Dimitri Ginev, *Hermeneutic Realism: Reality Within Scientific Inquiry*," *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, 2018.08.44, https://ndpr.nd.edu/reviews/dimitri-ginev-hermeneutic-realism-reality-within-scientific-inquiry/.

coopted his thinking having long ago coopted both Nietzsche and Heidegger).

On models, and I already noted that these are decisive in our lives today, I had already drawn attention to the reflections of mathematicians drawing on hermeneutics in addition to coastal scientists concerned with models, like Orrin Pilkey who took up the question of real-life feedback as it turns out that data is rarely used to modify models and thus he writes on the persistence of incorrect models over decades and decades as the received view turns out, very mathematically so, to be embedded in the allure of such models.[49]

My approach to philosophy of science dovetailed with Dimitri's even as I pushed a bit more radically, arguing that it was to be thought and rethought in careful ways, as I sought beyond Ginev's doubling reflex, a hermeneutic of prejudices along with practices, conventions, or givens, and words. In this spirit, I countered Alan Sokal who dedicated an astonishing proportion of his own life-energies and time to calumniating not Meat Loaf but Bruno Latour.[50] Latour to be sure moves above the fray and in his own anthropological field, neatly doubled, social science of science, including the natural sciences, he began, after Azerbaijan, with field work at the Salk Institute in San Diego, thus with ethnographic studies of science and society, having left the concerns and objections of others, to be read on the merit, as is fitting, of his own work as this is not only rigorous but, and this is important in science as a matter of research projects, in terms of the further research programmes his work has inspired.

One last informal word, necessary in homage: Dimitri was an ailurophile, perhaps the quintessential trait for a hermeneutic thinker having that along with other things in common with Gadamer and with Heelan and myself.

I have included other names in this memorial reflection as tributes and owing to a certain astonishment, as Eliot wrote repeating Dante who was

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49 See the latter part of Babich, "Hermeneutics and Its Discontents in Philosophy of Science," here 180 ff., on the challenges of deploying (and interpreting) mathematic models quite in the context of real or life-world application. It hardly needs to be said that we are living our lives today in the current and ongoing "pandemic" on the terms of such models.

50 See on this a section of one of my several studies dedicated to the so-called "science wars," entitled "*Les 'Pseudos'*: Science vs. Pseudo-Science," in: Babich, "Hermeneutics and Its Discontents in Philosophy of Science," 165 ff.

himself repeating the 2nd-century Lucian: *I had not thought death had undone so many*. It is our mortality that compels us to note those around us and not only the young to the extent that in academia, as in most of life, we tend to be future-oriented, ahead of ourselves. Thus we celebrate only the latest thing on the music horizon, the film horizon, the philosophical horizon.

Dimitri Ginev left us a great legacy. Even if we cannot hope to read adequately those contributions like Dimitri's that are, as noted at the start, "too much" for us, there remains a great deal to discover, a great deal to learn.

Manuscript Submission Guidelines

The journal *Phainomena* welcomes all submissions of articles and book reviews in the field of phenomenological and hermeneutic philosophy, as well as from related disciplines of the humanities. Manuscripts submitted for the publication in the journal should be addressed to the editorial office, the secretary of the editorial board, or the editor-in-chief.

The journal is published quarterly, usually in two issues. The tentative deadlines for the submission of manuscripts are: March 31, for the June issue; August 31, for the November issue.

The submitted manuscript should preferably be an original paper and should not be concurrently presented for publication consideration elsewhere, until the author receives notification with the editorial decision regarding acceptance, required (minor or major) revision(s), or rejection of the manuscript after the concluded reviewing procedure. After submission, the contributions are initially evaluated by the editorial office and may be immediately rejected if they are considered to be out of the journal's scope or otherwise unfit for consideration. The ensuing process of scientific review, which can—provided that no additional delays occur—take up to 3 months, includes an editorial opinion and a double-blind peer review by at least two external reviewers. The articles that do not report original research (e.g.: editorials or book reviews) are not externally reviewed and are subject to the autonomous decision of the editor-in-chief or the editorial board regarding publication. When republishing the paper in another journal, the author is required to indicate the first publication in the journal *Phainomena*.

guidelines

The journal publishes original papers predominantly in Slovenian, English, French, and German language, as well as translations from foreign languages into Slovenian. Authors interested in the publication of their work in another language should consult the editors regarding such a possibility prior to the submission of the manuscript. Before publication, the texts are proofread with regard to guidelines and formatting, but the authors are responsible for the quality of language.

The manuscripts submitted in the MS Word compatible format should not exceed 8,000 words (ca. 50,000 characters with spaces) including footnotes. The submission should include a separate title page with the author's full name, academic qualification, institutional affiliation(s), and (email) address(es), bibliography of referenced works at the end of the main body of text, and an abstract of the article (accompanied by up to 5 keywords) in the language of the original as well as in English translation (100–150 words).

The contributions should be formatted as follows: Times New Roman font style; 12 pt. font size; 1.5 pt. spacing (footnotes—in 10 pt. font size—should, however, be single spaced); 0 pt. spacing before and after paragraphs; 2.5 cm margins; left justified margins throughout the text. Instead of line breaks please use internal paragraph indentations (1.25 cm) to introduce new paragraphs. Do not apply word division and avoid any special or exceptional text formatting (e.g.: various fonts, framing, pagination, etc.). Footnotes and tables should be embedded using designated MS Word functionalities. Do not use endnotes. Notes should be indicated by consecutive superscript numbers placed in the text immediately after the punctuation mark or the preceding word.

The author should use **boldface** for the title, subtitle, and chapter titles of the manuscript, and *italics* for emphasis and interpolations of foreign words or phrases, as well as for the titles of cited books and journals. Double quotation marks—in the specific typographical format of the text's original language—should be used for the citation of articles published in journals and collective volumes, as well as for the quotations enclosed in the contribution. Single quotation marks should be used only to denote material placed in double quotation marks within the citation. Any block quotation of 40 or more words should be denoted with additional 1.25 cm margin on the left and separated from the main text by a line space above and below the paragraph (without

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As a general rule, please use the (shorter) lengthened hyphen (the en-dash) to denote a range of numbers (e.g.: 99–115) or a span of time (e.g.: 1920–1970). The (longer) lengthened hyphen (the em-dash) can be used (only) in the English language to indicate an interruption in thought or an interpolated sentence (e.g.: "[…] thus—for instance—Aristotle says […]"). The standard hyphens (-) can be (in the English language) used for compound nouns, adjectival phrases, or between repeated vowels.

The author of the paper is required to adhere to the author-date source citation system according to the rules of *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Within the in-text parenthetical reference the date of publication immediately follows the quoted author's name, the indicated page number is separated by a comma, e.g.: (Toulmin 1992, 31); (Held 1989, 23); (Waldenfels 2015, 13). The bibliography list at the end of the text should include all referenced sources in alphabetical order of the authors' surnames, as in the following example:

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Held, Klaus. 1989. "Husserls These von der Europäisierung der Menschheit." In *Phänomenologie im Widerstreit*, edited by Otto Pöggeler, 13–39. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag.

Toulmin, Stephen. 1992. *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Waldenfels, Bernhard. 2015. "Homo respondens." *Phainomena* 24 (92-93): 5–17.

Only exceptionally other reference styles can be accepted upon previous agreement with the editor-in-chief or the guest editor of the issue.

The authors are expected to submit a consistent manuscript free of typographical, grammatical, or factual errors. The author bears the responsibility for the content of the contribution submitted for publication consideration within the journal *Phainomena*.

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Naslov, podnaslov in poglavja rokopisa je potrebno pisati **krepko**, medtem ko se za poudarke in vstavke tujih izrazov ali fraz ter za naslove navedenih knjig in revij uporabljajo *ležeče črke*. Z dvojnimi narekovaji – v tipografski obliki, značilni za izvirni jezik besedila – se označuje naslove člankov, objavljenih znotraj revij ali zbornikov, in dobesedne navedke. Enojni narekovaj naznanja gradivo, znotraj navedka označeno z dvojnimi narekovaji. Daljši navedek (40 ali več besed) je potrebno izločiti v samostojen odstavek z dodatnim desnim zamikom (za 1,25 cm) in s prazno vrstico nad in pod njim (brez narekovajev, velikost pisave 10 pik). Izpuste iz navedkov, njihove prilagoditve ali vrivke vanje označujejo oglati oklepaji.

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Toulmin, Stephen. 1992. *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Waldenfels, Bernhard. 2015. »Homo respondens.« *Phainomena* 24 (92-93): 5–17.

Samo izjemoma je mogoče, po vnaprejšnjem dogovoru z glavnim ali gostujočim urednikom revije, uporabiti drugačne načine navajanja.

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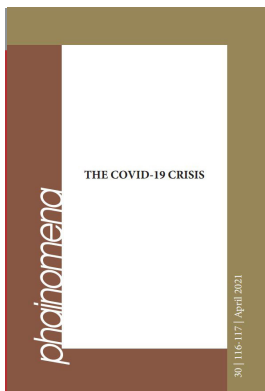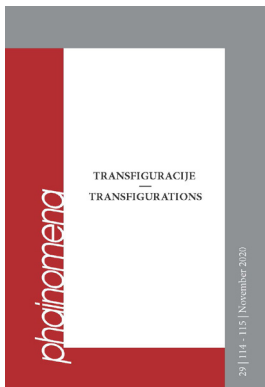
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